

# CHAPTER I

## Purpose and Need

The Missouri Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration propose improving the Interstate 70 Corridor in Missouri, between the metropolitan areas of Kansas City and St. Louis, to meet the current and future needs of this highly important transportation facility. MoDOT has initiated this First Tier Environmental Impact Statement as the first step to fulfill this goal.

This chapter of the First Tier EIS provides an overview and description of the corridor, as well as identifies the transportation problems in the I-70 corridor, which would be addressed by the proposed project. In review of the comments received from the Draft First Tier EIS and public hearings, no new information relating to the purpose and need for the improvements was made evident that would necessitate new descriptions or evaluations of the existing or projected needs of the Study Corridor. Consequently, the Draft First Tier EIS is referenced by this Final First Tier EIS.

### A. Summary of Purpose and Need

The goal of I-70 improvements between Kansas City and St. Louis is to provide a safe, efficient, environmentally sound and cost-effective transportation facility that responds to the needs of the study corridor and to the expectations of a nationally important interstate. The specific purpose and need for this project can be summarized as follows:

- **Roadway Capacity** – Increase roadway system capacity in accordance with the projected travel demands to improve the general operating conditions of I-70.
- **Traffic Safety** – Reduce the number and severity of traffic-related accidents occurring along I-70 between Kansas City and St. Louis.
- **Roadway Design Features** – Upgrade current roadway design features along I-70, including interchanges, roadway alignment and roadway cross sections.
- **System Preservation** – Preserve the existing I-70 facility as needed to carry existing and future loads.
- **Goods Movement** – Improve the efficiency of freight movement using I-70.
- **Access to Recreational Facilities** – Facilitate the usage by motorists of nearby regional recreational facilities through improved accessibility.

Each of these specific needs is discussed in Chapter I contained in the Draft First Tier EIS. The ordering of these specific needs is not intended to imply any relative prioritization or order of importance. Furthermore, the numbering of the individual needs of the I-70 Study Corridor is not intended to replace the findings of the Missouri Long-Range Transportation Direction regarding the prioritization of MoDOT's statewide needs.

## B. Clarification of Draft First Tier EIS

The following issues or questions were raised during the review of the Draft First Tier EIS that warrant clarification or further elaboration:

- **Definition of Safety Clear Zone** - Safety Clear Zone is defined as an unobstructed, relatively flat area provided beyond the edge of the traveled way for the recovery of errant vehicles. The traveled way does not include shoulders or auxiliary lanes. The standard width of the safety clear zone is a function of the design speed for the highway. As the design speed increases, the width of the zone becomes greater.
- **National Defense** – Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, when the United States was attacked by terrorists, changes in travel patterns within the Study Corridor were observed. Due to the interruption of air transportation service in response to the terrorist action and hesitations by the traveling public to utilize air travel due to the perceived threat of terrorism, a modal shift of regional travel from air to surface occurred. Through these tragic events, the important and critical role of I-70 in national defense was highlighted. During the second tier studies, a more detailed review of I-70's role in national defense will be conducted for use in the preparation of the second tier study documentation.

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