

With seven studies underway to determine the location and basic configuration of I-70 improvements, people across the state have become actively involved in the process of improving I-70. Since late last year, more than 1,000 people have attended public meetings, workshops, small group sessions and other events to learn more about MoDOT's efforts and to provide their thoughts and opinions.

Study teams continue to work closely with local communities as they conduct environmental research, develop future traffic projections and establish preliminary alternatives for improving I-70's interchanges and main line lanes. Additionally, the project's comprehensive Web site –www.ImproveI70.org– keeps people up to date on the latest study happenings.

With so much information and so many ideas on the table, many of the Improve I-70 study teams are now turning their attention to the evaluation process – determining which improvement alternatives will provide the greatest benefits and the fewest negative impacts. Evaluation and decision making is guided by the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

Since 1969, NEPA has ensured that decisions about transportation investments are made in cooperation with local communities and that they consider impacts to the natural, social and man-made environments. In this issue of *Momentum*, you'll learn more about NEPA and how I-70 improvement decisions will be made. And as always, you'll find the latest details on the status of Improve I-70 studies across the state.

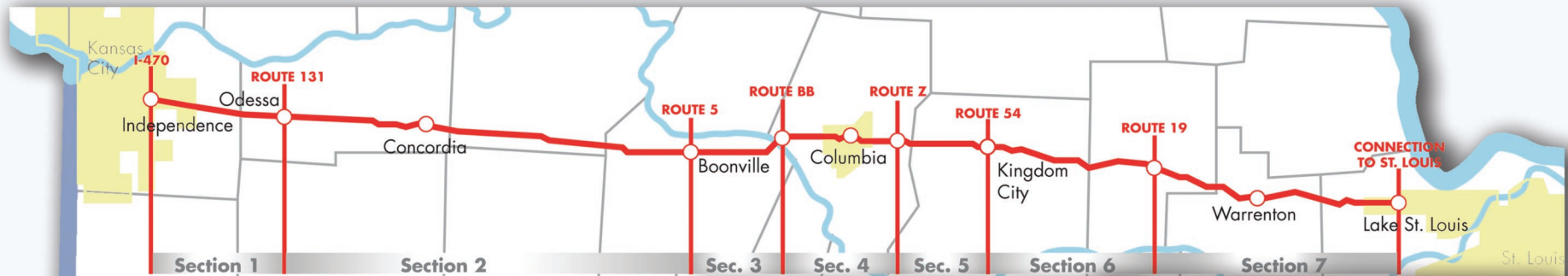
Overall Status

Each of the Improve I-70 studies is at a slightly different phase. Some are just beginning to develop alternatives for improving I-70's interchanges and main line lanes. Others are well into the process of evaluating alternatives to determine which have the most benefits and fewest impacts. Several public meetings will be held over the fall and winter months to share the latest information and gather citizen input. A listing of section status and events can be found inside, or on the project Web site at www.ImproveI70.org.



Calendar of Events

All events are publicized on the project Web site at www.ImproveI70.org and through special mailings. If you receive this newsletter by mail, you will be notified by mail of any public events in your area. If you have questions, or know others who should be included on the mailing list, please contact the project office at 1-800-590-0066.



Section 1

November 18

Public Meeting
4-7 p.m. Open House
Sermon Center
201 N. Dodgion
Independence, MO

November 19

Public Meeting
4-7 p.m. Open House
Oak Grove Civic Center
2100 S. Broadway Street
Oak Grove, MO

Section 2

No public events are planned at this time.

Section 3

November 6

Drop-In Center*
2-7 p.m. Open House
Boonville City Hall
525 E. Spring Street
Boonville, MO

**Less formal than a public meeting, a drop in center allows one-on-one discussions with members of the study team. Maps and other displays will be available.*

Section 5

Information about Section 5 improvements will be on display at public meetings in Section 4 and Section 6.

Section 4

October 23

Advisory Group Meeting**
4-6:30 p.m.
Gentry Middle School
4200 Bethel Drive
Columbia, MO

November 4

Drop In Center*
10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Day's Inn Conference Center
1900 I-70 Drive SW
Columbia, MO

November 20

Advisory Group Meeting**
4-6:30 p.m.
Activity and Recreation Center
1701 W. Ash Street
Columbia, MO

December 11

Public Meeting
4-7 p.m. Open House
Activity and Recreation Center
1701 W. Ash Street
Columbia, MO

Section 6

October 20

Public Meeting
4-7 p.m. Open House
Mineola Area Community Center
State Route N
Mineola, MO

October 22

Public Meeting
4-7 p.m. Open House
North Callaway High School
2700 U.S. 54
Kingdom City, MO

Section 7

No public events are planned at this time. Public meetings were held in Wentzville and Warrenton on September 23 and 25. Displays from those meetings are available on the project Web site at: www.ImproveI70.org

***Members of the public are welcome, however, the agenda does not include public comments.*

NEPA and Decision Making

In 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act established policies for the consideration of the environment in projects that would require federal funding – like the improvement of I-70. NEPA mandates that improvements strike the best balance between transportation benefits and environmental impacts. And where impacts cannot be avoided, steps must be taken to minimize or mitigate them.

As you would expect, some of the environmental factors that must be considered include natural resources like wetlands, designated critical habitats and threatened or endangered species. But federal regulations also mandate consideration of the man-made environment – things like historical and archaeological sites, cemeteries and public recreation lands like state parks. Not only that, improvements also must be evaluated for their potential to change social and economic conditions such as access to jobs, school, shopping and other services and the health of the local economy.

Of course, any improvement to I-70 must be able to handle current and future traffic, address safety and be feasible from an engineering standpoint. But decisions about the best improvements for I-70 must also consider potential impacts to the natural, social and man-made environments.

Quantifying Impacts

Through the NEPA process, Improve I-70 study teams must consider a wide range of factors that could influence where and how I-70 is widened and reconstructed. As improvement alternatives are developed, study teams assess their impact on engineering, traffic, environmental and social/economic factors. That assessment includes gathering data and information to answer questions like these:



Engineering

- Does the alternative meet federal and state highway design criteria?
- Is the alternative constructable?
- Can traffic be maintained during construction of the alternative?
- What are the anticipated construction, right of way, and annual operations and maintenance costs?



Traffic/Safety

- How might this alternative affect safety and accident rates in the area?
- How might this alternative impact incident management and emergency services?
- Does the alternative improve traffic operations, allowing vehicles to flow more freely?
- Does the alternative improve travel efficiency, reducing the hours and miles traveled daily?
- Does the alternative address long term capacity needs?



Environmental

- How much farmland or parkland is impacted by the alternative?
- Does the alternative impact natural resources such as threatened and endangered plant and animal species?
- Does the alternative impact water resources like wetlands, stream crossings or floodplains?
- Are cultural resources impacted by the alternative – things like historic structures or archeological sites?
- Might the alternative cause other actions (such as development) that could have an impact on the environment?
- Are any hazardous waste sites in the path of the alternative?



Social and Economic

- How many existing residences and businesses could be impacted by the alternative through full takings, partial takings or proximity impacts?
- Will this alternative increase the level of noise experienced by those nearby?
- Is the alternative compatible with the community's land use plans?
- How will the alternative impact business operations during construction and in the long-term?
- Are minority or low-income communities disproportionately impacted by the alternative?

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ON The Move

Section status reports

The following pages provide detailed status reports for each section of I-70 under study. If you have questions about Improve I-70 activities, contact the project office at 1-800-590-0066.

Section 1

Independence to Odessa

The Section 1 Study Team has been gearing up to bring this study to completion in late 2004. Community meetings have been held in several locations, including meetings with local elected officials and city staffs. The team also has met with key stakeholders in focus group settings in order to ensure that critical local issues are identified early in the process. The team is working with communities in the area to ensure a complete understanding of the issues that might influence the location and basic configuration of I-70 improvements. This includes traffic projections, future growth plans and impacts to businesses and local traffic operations.

In the western portion of Section 1 (between Independence and Oak Grove), the study team has just begun the process of developing preliminary alternatives for widening and reconstructing this urban area of I-70. Some meetings have been held with local officials and more are expected before the end of the year. Conclusions from the nearly completed I-70 Major Investment Study will be taken into account as improvement alternatives are developed for I-70 from the Jackson County line to the west. A public meeting will be held on November 18 in Independence (details on page 2) to present the status of study activities, including preliminary interchange alternatives in the western portion of Section 1.

In the eastern portion of Section 1 (Oak Grove to Odessa), the study team has determined that widening and reconstruction should occur on the north side of existing I-70. Preliminary improvement alternatives have been developed for the interchanges in this area, and were discussed with local officials this summer. The alternatives have been refined, based on their input, and will be presented at a public meeting on November 19 in Oak Grove (details on page 2). Maps and other information will be on display and study team members will be on hand to discuss residents' questions and concerns.

If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 1, please call the project hot line at 1-800-590-0066.



Section 2

Route 131 to Route 5

Over the course of the summer, the Section 2 Study Team conducted a number of meetings to address issues raised at last spring's public meetings. Those meetings included local elected officials, as well as key stakeholders, and provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and information relative to improvements on I-70. They also enhanced the study team's understanding of local issues and long term plans.

With that information and public input from last spring, the team has continued to refine the preliminary alternatives for I-70 widening between Odessa and Boonville. Widening is recommended on the north side of existing I-70 from Odessa through Sweet Springs, then will shift to the south about 2.5 miles east of Sweet Springs and remain south to Boonville.

The study team is also evaluating of the benefits and impacts of the alternatives. Those evaluations include reviews of engineering, traffic, environmental and socio-economic factors, including impacts to farms, businesses and communities. Copies of exhibits and maps from last spring's public meetings are available on the project Web site at www.ImproveI70.org.

All information developed by the study team will be presented through an Environmental Assessment document expected to be available early next year. An official public hearing will be held in the spring of 2004 to gather input about the study's findings and recommended preferred alternative.

If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 2, please call the project hot line at 1-800-590-0066.

Section 3

Boonville to Rocheport

The Section 3 Study Team is working to refine the alternatives shown at the May 3 public meeting (those alternatives can be viewed at the project Web site). The refinements are based on public input, as well as the ongoing assessment of engineering, traffic, environmental and socio-economic factors, including impacts to farms, businesses and communities. Adding complexity to this section, along with the six interchanges, the Missouri River crossing and Overton Bottoms are also critical components in the determination of alternatives in Section 3.

Maps and information about the refined alternatives will be available for public review at a drop-in center on November 6

at the Boonville City Hall. The center will be open from 2-7 p.m., and representatives of the study team will be on hand to answer questions, review alternatives and take comments. The drop-in center allows members of the public to talk informally and one-on-one with an expert about their questions and concerns.

Early in 2004, all information developed by the study team will be presented through an Environmental Assessment document. An official public hearing will be held next spring to gather input about the study's findings and recommended preferred alternative.

If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 3, please call the project hot line at 1-800-590-0066.

Section 4

Route BB to Eastern Columbia

A public workshop was held on August 21, and an Advisory Group meeting was held on September 18. Both events included review and discussion of five conceptual approaches to widening I-70 along its existing alignment. The concepts included basic widening, one-way frontage roads, two-way frontage

roads, collector-distributor roads and a stacked system. Nearly 120 people attended the workshop to learn more about the concepts and provide their input. Maps and other exhibits shown at the workshop are available on the project Web site or by calling the project office at 1-800-590-0066.

The study team is in the process of considering input provided at the workshop and

Advisory Group meetings as it develops more detailed improvement alternatives for I-70 in the Columbia area. Advisory Group meetings are scheduled for October 23 and November 20, a drop-in center will be held on November 4 and a public meeting will be held on December 11, 2003. Details about all these events are available on page 2 of this newsletter, or on the project Web site.



Section 5

Route Z to U.S. 54

At public meetings last spring, three maps displayed widening of I-70 on the south side of the existing route from Route Z to an area approximately one mile east of the Route J & DD interchange. Based on input received at the meetings and subsequent study, the Section 5 Study Team determined this shift should occur approximately four miles farther to the east to minimize social and economic impacts.

Widening is now recommended to shift from the south to the north of existing I-70 approximately one-half mile west of the M/HH interchange. From there, widening would continue on the north side of I-70 to U.S. 54. Three maps showing the proposed location for widening and the revised north/south shift are available on the project Web site at www.ImproveI70.org, or by calling the project office at 1-800-590-0066.

This fall, at meetings in Kingdom City and Columbia (see page 2 for meeting details),

the Section 5 Study team will recommend the location and configuration for all widening and interchange improvements between Route Z and U.S. 54. Preliminary information about the environmental impacts of the improvements also will be displayed.

After the meetings this fall, the team will finalize their study documentation and make it available for public review. If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 5, please call the project hot line at 1-800-590-0066.

Section 6

Kingdom City to Montgomery City

When Section 6 information was presented to the public last April, nine improvement alternatives for the U.S. 54 interchange in Kingdom City had been narrowed to four, and a number of widening options were being considered in the Mineola Hill and Loutre Valley area. Since last spring, the study team has collected information about the benefits, cost and environmental impacts of the improvement alternatives. The team has also developed preliminary designs for the interchanges at Calwood and Danville.

That information will be displayed at public meetings on October 20 and 22 in Mineola and Kingdom City,

respectively (details on page 2). Public input will be sought to further narrow and refine the improvement alternatives.

After the meetings, the study team will conduct more detailed analysis of the alternatives' benefits and impacts. Study documentation will be made available in advance of an official public hearing, which is expected next spring. The hearing will present the study's findings and recommended preferred alternative.

All maps and other exhibits shown at the October public meetings will be available on the project Web site at www.ImproveI70.org, or by calling project hot line at 1-800-590-0066. If you have questions about activities in Section 6, contact the project hot line.

Section 7

Route 19 to Lake St. Louis

More than 200 members of the public attended meetings on September 23 and 25 in Wentzville and Warrenton to review the latest study information in Section 7. Both meetings displayed detailed maps of the alternatives being considered for improving I-70's main line lanes and interchanges. Those maps and other exhibits shown at the meetings are available on the project Web site at www.ImproveI70.org, or by calling the project hot line at 1-800-590-0066.

The Section 7 Study Team will use information gathered at the meetings to make any final refinements to the improvement alternatives. Then the detailed process of evaluating their benefits and impacts will begin and last well into next year. Study documentation will be made available in advance of an official public hearing, which is expected in the summer of 2004. The hearing will present the study's findings and recommended preferred alternative. If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 7, please call the project hot line at 1-800-590-0066.



Continued from page 3

- Besides property impacts, how might the alternative affect communities and individuals?

Answering these and other questions allows the study team to assess the benefits and impacts of various improvement alternatives. It also provides the public and others with a clear understanding of the changes that could occur as the result of building a particular improvement alternative.

No one evaluation factor is more important than another, and all are considered in the process

of identifying a preferred alternative. There is no magic formula or procedure for determining which alternative is best for a given area.

Decision making rests more on finding the best balance between benefits and impacts and is an outcome of the environmental study process.

You are an important part of the evaluation and decision making process. Improvements to I-70 must serve the needs of the traveling public for many years to come, and those improvements need to reflect an understanding of the public's needs. Therefore to make an informed decision, MoDOT needs your input on environmental and

social issues, and possible constraints in the project area.

Information about alternatives and impacts has already been shared in many parts of the corridor, and will be available in others through next spring. And all study information gathered to date is available on the project Web site at www.ImproveI70.org.

You are encouraged to provide your views and opinions, and become actively involved in the process of improving I-70.

Contact Us

Your questions, comments and concerns about Improve I-70 are always welcome. Contact the Improve I-70 Team by phone at **1-800-590-0066**, by email at **comments@ImproveI70.org**, or by mail at

**Improve I-70
P.O. Box 410482
Kansas City, MO 64141**

You may also visit our Web site at **www.ImproveI70.org**. For questions about other MoDOT projects and initiatives, call 1-888-ASK MODOT, or visit www.modot.org.

Improve I-70

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