

# CHAPTER V: COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 established public and agency involvement as one of its fundamental principles in order to ensure the public ample opportunity to participate extensively throughout a project's entire decision-making process. The public involvement effort for the EC-EIS was led by the City of Columbia, Boone County and MoDOT and sought input from all applicable resources agencies, local and regional interest groups, property owners and the general public.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the public involvement effort was carried out in a manner consistent with the provisions of Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU.

This chapter summarizes the public involvement and agency coordination efforts and feedback provided by various stakeholders.

## A. Public Involvement Plan

A comprehensive effort was made to allow all interested parties and agencies the opportunity to provide informed input to the EC-EIS Study. A *Public Involvement Plan* was created in November 2005 outlining the initial communications strategy and planned activities for the study, and was updated throughout the process. **Appendix D** includes the public involvement plan. The plan included:

- A project Web site and e-mail address at [www.EastColumbiaEIS.com](http://www.EastColumbiaEIS.com)
- Public involvement meetings
- A project newsletter and e-mailed interim updates
- Agency coordination

Details about these efforts are described below.

### 1. Project Web Site and E-Mail Address

A comprehensive project Web site ([www.EastColumbiaEIS.com](http://www.EastColumbiaEIS.com)) was established at the project's onset in 2006 to provide stakeholders up-to-date information and an e-mail address ([EastColumbiaEIS@ch2m.com](mailto:EastColumbiaEIS@ch2m.com)) so they could learn information about the project, ask questions and provide input, at any time.

Throughout the course of the study, the site was updated as new information became available. The site included the following sections:

- **Latest Project News**—Included interim updates and public meeting notices

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<sup>1</sup> The public involvement process proactively sought participation from all potentially affected stakeholders regardless of income, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability.



- **Newsletters**—Two newsletters promoting upcoming public meetings and outlining key project milestones and findings
- **Public Meetings**—Information about each of the four public meetings, including a brief summary of the meeting purpose, then a list of meeting materials that could be reviewed including meeting notices, handouts, exhibits and a meeting summary. Large-scale display maps were also made available on the Web site for viewing by the general public
- **Frequently Asked Questions**—Answers to questions commonly asked about the project
- **Contact Us**—The public was able to send e-mailed comments or questions to the study team and sign up for electronic updates

E-mail correspondents expressed opinions for and against the different route options and offered their own ideas. The following e-mail excerpt exemplifies the type of issue raised and the response that was received from the study team.

**E-mail request:**

*Now with the Columbia School Board selecting the St. Charles location for the new high school I would like to change my endorsement from (Alternative) RR-1 to RR-2. I feel that we would need the additional crossing over I-70. However, Clark Lane will then need to be widened from Rt. PP to St Charles Rd. I chose the RR plans due to the fact that they extend Stadium Blvd to the Rt. Z intersection. The new high school will be 4200' West of Rt. Z on St. Charles Rd. with completion date in 2010.*

E-mail from local resident, November 15, 2007

**E-mail request:**

*Thank you for your comments submitted by e-mail on November 15, 2007, regarding the East Columbia - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Study. Your concern about your original endorsement (which was received by comment form at the October 24th meeting and illustrated in our public involvement records) has been noted and is greatly appreciated. Furthermore, your first-hand knowledge of the study area is evident in your response and we welcome any further insight you may have on the recently selected new high school location.*

*We look forward to your continued involvement on this project, and welcome other suggestions or comments you may have in the future.*

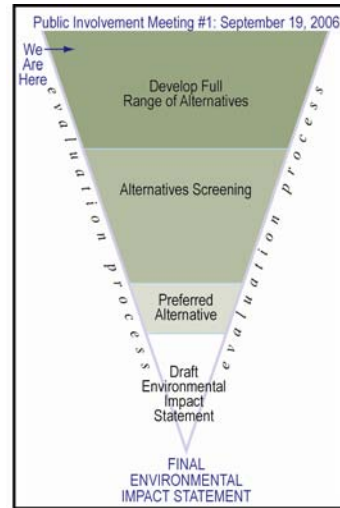
E-mail response from study team, November 16, 2007

## 2. Public Involvement Meetings

Public involvement meetings were held at key points in the alternatives development process. All the meetings were “open-house” format so participants could view information at stations staffed by team members, discuss the project one-on-one with the study team and fill out a comment form to provide feedback. See **Appendix E** for public involvement meeting summaries.

a. **Public Involvement Meeting #1—Purpose of the EC-EIS Study**

The purpose of the first public meeting, held September 19, 2006 in Columbia at the Lighthouse Community Church, was to provide an opportunity for the public to learn the purpose of the study, review data developed by the study team that quantified the transportation problems, identify additional issues and review and provide feedback on preliminary alternative corridors. A half-page advertisement placed in the *Columbia Tribune* and *Missourian* promoted the meeting. Additionally, the local media received a news release and MoDOT’s Mike Dusenberg made a guest appearance to discuss the meeting on Columbia radio station KSSZ-FM. Information regarding the meeting was also posted on the study Web site. Postcards meeting announcements were mailed to approximately 1,850 study area property owners and stakeholders.

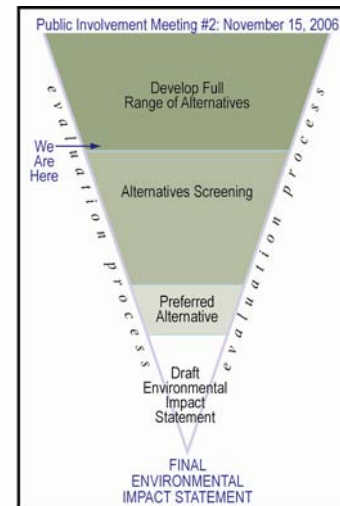


One hundred and sixty-eight people attended the meeting. Each attendee received an information sheet with a layout of the displays, a frequently asked questions handout and comment card with a map of the study area.

Of the 40 comments received at the meeting, approximately 25 percent expressed appreciation for holding the meeting and soliciting public input at this point in the study. Overall, the comments were positive about proposed study area improvements. Some attendees said that, although they knew development would mean road construction was inevitable, it was something they would endure rather than welcome.

b. **Public Involvement Meeting #2—Conceptual Alternatives**

The second public meeting, held November 15, 2006 at the Elk’s Lodge in East Columbia, presented the nine conceptual alternatives (see **Exhibit II-1**). Postcard announcements were mailed to approximately 1,850 study-area property owners and stakeholders. Guest appearances on radio stations KSSZ 93.9 FM, KBIA 91.3 FM and KFRU 1400 AM were conducted to promote the meetings, as well as half-page advertisements in the *Columbia Tribune* and *Missourian*. Meeting information was posted on the study Web site and a news release was sent to the local media. An e-mail notification was also sent to approximately 375 people on the e-mail distribution list.



Approximately 155 people attended. All attendees received a handout summarizing the meeting goals and what they would see at each information station. Participants were also provided a schematic showing the location/configuration of the nine conceptual alternatives, a matrix summarizing the traffic volume for each alternative and a comment form.

Thirty-nine comment cards were submitted at the meeting, representing about 25 percent of those attending, and 2 e-mail comments were submitted within 2 weeks, bringing the total to 41 comments.

Alternative SC-2 was supported by most attendees because it appeared to address congestion concerns at the US-63/I-70 interchange, and because it addressed the needs of those who live north of I-70. Several respondents stated a general preference for widening Route WW to alleviate congestion at US-63 and I-70. Many expressed a desire that the recommended solution should anticipate and address growth. Some respondents cited bicycle/pedestrian and environmental concerns. Other concern included potential property impacts, the accuracy of the traffic forecasts and the open-house format of the meeting.

**c. Public Involvement Meeting #3—Recommendations for Reasonable Alternatives**

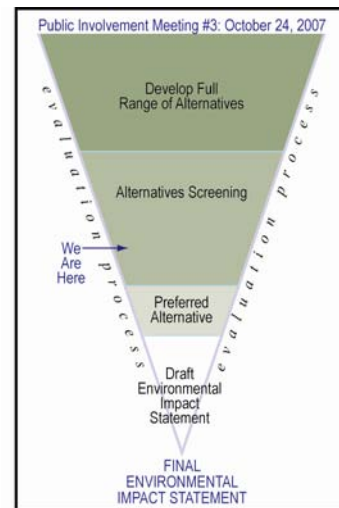
The third open-house public meeting for the EC-EIS Study was held October 24, 2007 at the Elk’s Lodge. This meeting presented a summary of the analyses of the nine conceptual alternatives and sought feedback on the study team’s recommendation for reasonable alternatives to be carried forward in the evaluation process. The public was also asked to comment on the process for evaluating and further narrowing the alternatives.

Newsletters were mailed to each of the more than 1,850 individuals and organizations on the project mailing list, and a news release was distributed by MoDOT. Information about the meeting was posted on the project Web site and disseminated to those on the project e-mail list. Guest appearances on radio stations KFRU 1400 AM and KOPN 89.5 FM took place the Monday and Tuesday preceding the meeting, and a display advertisement appeared in the *Columbia Tribune* and *Missourian* 1 week prior to the meeting.

The October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, held from 4 to 7 pm, drew 211 people. The open-house format enabled attendees to view all the exhibits at information stations and speak directly with the study team on a one-on-one basis.

All meeting attendees received a handout that included a welcome, a list of frequently asked questions, a summary of the reasonable alternatives recommended for further consideration and a matrix summarizing the evaluation of the conceptual alternatives. MoDOT, Columbia and Boone County officials as well as the consultant team members were on hand to present information, respond to questions and obtain public input. Also available for review at a larger scale (scale of 1"= 1,200') was an aerial photo display of each of the recommended reasonable alternatives as well as the results of the screening process leading to the recommendation of the four alternatives for further consideration.

Participants were encouraged to provide comments to the study by November 7, 2007. Comment forms were also available for downloading from the Web site.



Sixty-nine comments were submitted at the meeting, reflecting written input from about 30 percent of those attending, and 8 additional comments were received by mail before the November 7 deadline. Only one oral comment was submitted at the meeting. Thus a total of 78 comments submitted within 2 weeks of the meeting.

Nearly 30 percent of the written comments expressed satisfaction with the recommended reasonable alternatives in meeting the project’s goals and needs. Of those who expressed a preference for a specific alternative, more people (18, almost 25 percent) preferred reasonable alternative RR-2 than any other alternative. Reasonable alternative SC-2 was the second-most preferred alternative, with 12 supportive comments. Other alternatives suggested by respondents included creating a larger loop around Columbia, improving existing roads and extending Richland Road, Ballenger Lane or New Haven Road. Several respondents identified additional criteria to consider in the evaluation, including property impacts (nine comments), project cost (seven) and traffic and environmental concerns. Overall, comments about the meeting’s content and its opportunity to interact with the study team were positive.

**d. Drop-In Center**

After receiving public comment on the recommended alternatives presented at the October 2007 meeting, it was determined a public “drop-in” center would be held to present to the public the detailed alternatives that emerged based on public input and additional technical analysis. Due to inclement weather, the first scheduled drop-in center on December 11, 2007 was postponed and rescheduled for January 8, 2008.

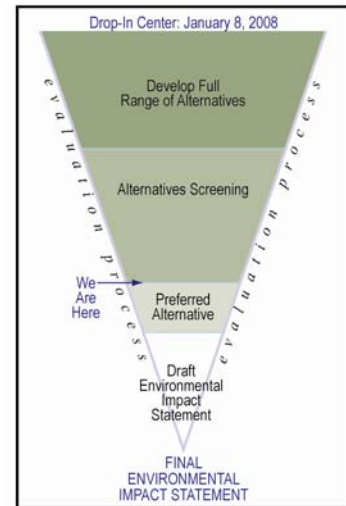
To publicize the rescheduled drop-in date, postcards were mailed to each of the more than 1,900 individuals and organizations on the project mailing list, and MoDOT distributed a news release to the local media. Information about the meetings was also posted on the project Web site.

The drop-in center, held at the Boone County Government Center in Columbia, drew 98 people. The open-house format offered participants a view of all the exhibits and the opportunity to speak directly with the study team on a one-on-one basis.

All meeting attendees received a welcome and frequently-asked questions handout and comment form upon arrival. Available for review were large aerial photo displays of the entire study area (scale of 1”=700’) that showed the alternatives under consideration. MoDOT, Boone County and Columbia officials and consultant team members were on hand to present information, respond to questions and seek public input on the emerging alternatives.

Participants were encouraged to return comments to the study team before January 15, 2008. Comment forms were also available for downloading from the project Web site.

Twenty-one comment forms were submitted at the drop-in center, representing 21 percent of those attending, and 10 comments were received by mail within the 7-day comment



period. Eight e-mailed comments were also received during the comment period. This made a total of 39 comments submitted at, or within 1 week of, the drop-in center.

e. **Neighborhood Meeting—Old Hawthorne**

Study teams members met with 30 residents of the Old Hawthorne neighborhood, a group of citizens affected mostly by Alternative RR-2B, on January 30, 2008 at the Old Hawthorne Club House. All alternatives were displayed on a table for the group to view. Typical sections for an expressway, major arterial and minor arterial were also displayed. The study explained each of the alternatives and answered questions from participants, who were also encouraged to submit written comments via the Web site.

Concerns were expressed about land values dropping because of the presence of an expressway, and about equitable compensation for property acquisition. Some said that Alternative RR-2B might block local access. Residents cited recent and current development of high-cost housing as an impediment to moving forward with this alternative. One comment suggested that moving the alternative from 500 to 1,000 feet north of the north-lot line of Old Hawthorne would address some proximity concerns.

The St. Charles' alternatives received mixed reviews—some preferred them because of their lower cost; others objected because it was their opinion that the St. Charles area would be too built up by the time the road is constructed, or that these alternatives would be too close to I-70 and US-63 to be much relief. Two new alignments were suggested for consideration.

As the reasonable alternatives were evaluated, these discussions with stakeholders and property owners led the study team to consider what became known as the "WW modifications." These focused on improving Route WW in a manner that would make a new extension of Stadium Boulevard unnecessary. These permutations were similar to the conceptual alternative WW-1 and WW-2. Ultimately, they were considered impractical and unsuitable.

### **3. Study Newsletters and Printed Materials**

A variety of printed materials, including newsletters, fact sheets, news releases and postcard meeting announcements were used to communicate information to the public and agencies. Two study newsletters were produced at key milestones. By July, 2008 the mailing list had grown to over 2,000 interested parties. The study newsletters and quantities mailed are listed below.

- EC-EIS Project Update, Volume 1, Number 1, September 2006 (1,750 copies)
- EC-EIS Project Update, Volume 2, Number 1, October 2007 (1,850 copies)

## **B. Agency Coordination**

Interagency coordination on the EC-EIS Study was conducted in accordance with FHWA guidelines to ensure the appropriate agencies were informed and had the opportunity to comment on the study. The project's Agency Coordination Plan is contained in **Appendix F**. All agency correspondence is contained in **Appendix G**.

## 1. Notice of Intent

The FHWA published a NOI to prepare an environmental impact statement, as required by CEQ regulations 40 CFR 1501.7. The NOI was published in the *Federal Register* on February 27, 2006. Cooperating Agencies

## 2. Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are those governmental agencies specifically requested by the lead agency to participate during the environmental evaluation process for the project. FHWA's NEPA regulations (23 CFR 771.111(d)) require that those federal agencies with jurisdiction by law (with permitting or land transfer authority) be invited to be cooperating agencies for an EIS. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was designated as the only agency that would function as a cooperating agency in this study. If, during the progress of the project, new information indicates that an agency not previously requested to be a participating agency does indeed have authority, jurisdiction, acknowledged expertise or information relevant to the project, then MoDOT, in consultation with FHWA, will promptly extend an invitation to that agency. The Missouri Department of Transportation and FHWA will consider whether this new information affects any previous decisions on the project.

## 3. Participating Agencies

A new category of agencies created by Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) (Section 6002) to participate in the environmental review process for EISs includes federal and nonfederal governmental agencies that may have an interest in the project because of their jurisdictional authority, special expertise and/or statewide interest. These potential participating agencies were formally invited to participate in the environmental review of the project. Of the nine federal and state agencies that were invited by letter to participate, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Resource Conservation Service and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources accepted.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined they would not be involved in the project on an ongoing basis, but agreed to review and comment on the document. The U.S. Coast Guard also declined to be involved since the project does not involve bridges over navigable waters of the United States and therefore, a Coast Guard bridge permit would not be required. However, they also provided comment during the course of this effort.

## 4. State and Federal Agency Comments

One goal of the EIS process is to ensure that all of the concerned resource agencies with a potential interest in the project are consulted at major decision milestones. The process called for several collaboration points where input from other resource agencies was formally solicited, in addition to routine requests for agency information.

**a. Collaboration Point #1—Agency-Scoping Coordination**

The first collaboration point occurred during the scoping process prior to the identification of any reasonable alternatives, when the study team had established a study area. The information gathered at this stage in the process was used in the preparation of the alternatives and EC-EIS.

At this first collaboration point, official responses were received from the following agencies:

- Missouri Department of Natural Resources—State Historic Preservation Office
- State of Missouri Emergency Management Agency
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Table V-1** summarizes the comments received at the first collaboration point, agency-scoping coordination.

TABLE V-1  
Agency Scoping Coordination

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Missouri Department of Natural Resources— State Historic Preservation Office  <i>November 10, 2005</i>	Cultural resources are present within the proposed area of study.
State of Missouri Emergency Management Agency  <i>November 18, 2005</i>	Contact City of Columbia and Boone County for permit issuance, if necessary.
Missouri Department of Natural Resources  <i>December 2, 2005</i>	Take necessary steps to ensure protection of the Hinkson and Gans Creek watersheds, particularly during construction.  Cultural resources are present, and records should be examined.  No known caves or sinkholes in the project area, and take note of the coal and clay surface and underground mines present in the study area.  No Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) parks are found within the study area.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  <i>December 19, 2005</i>	No federally listed species or designated critical habitat occurs within the project area.

**b. Collaboration Point #2—Evaluation Criteria Coordination**

The second collaboration point was the circulation on September 5, 2007 of the evaluation criteria matrix to federal and state resource agencies for their review and comment. Input received from these agencies was used to further screen and analyze the merits of each alternative under consideration. A formal letter with this request was sent to the Missouri and Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Missouri Department of Natural



Resources, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The second point of collaboration point in this EC-EIS received official responses from the following agencies:

- Missouri Department of Conservation
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources

**Table V-2** summarizes the comments received for the second collaboration point.

TABLE V-2  
Evaluation Criteria Coordination

Agency	Comment
Missouri Department of Conservation <i>September 18, 2007</i>	Primary concern is avoidance and minimization of impacts to streams and riparian corridors.  May contain areas that serve as habitat and green corridors for the project.
U.S. Coast Guard <i>September 18, 2007</i>	Does not involve bridges over navigable waters of the United States; therefore, no Coast Guard permits are required.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <i>October 4, 2007</i>	The matrix will be useful to narrow down the field of conceptual alternatives, but need to use a relative measurement scale.
Missouri Department of Natural Resources <i>October 5, 2007</i>	Matrix is lacking how each proposed alternative would impact its surrounding environment.  Include environmental impacts, at least in broad terms.

**c. Collaboration Point #3—Evaluation of Preferred Alternative**

The third collaboration point was the circulation on April 10, 2008 containing the recommended preferred alternative SC-2A to federal and state resource agencies for their review and comment. Input received from these agencies reinforced that preliminary conclusions were consistent with the desire to minimize environmental impacts. A formal letter with this request was sent to the Missouri and Federal Emergency Management Agencies, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The third point of collaboration in this EIS received official responses from the following agencies:

- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



**Table V-3** summarizes the comments received for the third collaboration point.

TABLE V-3  
 Evaluation of Preferred Alternative

Agency	Comment
Missouri Department of Natural Resources <i>May 2, 2008</i>	Alternative SC-2A has less anticipated stream impacts than others, but all alternatives are expected to impact one or more streams or wetlands. Coordinate with Army Corps of Engineers to determine permitting requirements
U.S. Coast Guard <i>May 1, 2008</i>	Does not involve bridges over navigable waters of the United States; therefore, no Coast Guard permits are required.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <i>May 6, 2008</i>	All materials appear to be thorough.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service <i>May 20, 2008</i>	Overall disturbance to streams, wetlands and general habitat will be minimized by Alternative SC-2C. Next most favorable alternative is SC-2A.

## 5. Study Management Team and CATSO Meetings

Acknowledging the comprehensive and regional nature of the EC-EIS project, the City of Columbia, Boone County and MoDOT entered into a partnering agreement, to cooperatively undertake the EC-EIS. This agreement formalized the decision-making process that would be followed during the NEPA elements of the project. At its heart was a commitment to consensus decision-making. A copy of the partnering agreement is included in **Appendix C**. The project team/study management team met regularly in person and via conference phone calls to keep each organization updated and engaged as the project progressed. At each meeting the group reviewed the latest technical information and public and agency input, the emerging evaluation of each alternative and identified next steps. This collaborative effort provided ongoing guidance and insight on issues such as each study partner's land use and zoning considerations, transportation plans, floodplains, new school development and community concerns and priorities among other issues.

The study team also made presentations to the CATSO Technical Committee on May 7, 2008 and to the CATSO Coordinating Committee on May 22, 2008. Both presentations were designed to provide CATSO members with an on study progress and to seek direction. In both cases, CATSO committee members asked for more clarification on the alternatives under consideration, how conclusions were reached and what would be the next steps in the process. No objections were raised.