

CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COORDINATION

This chapter describes how the Study Team involved and consulted with members of the public and project stakeholders regarding potential improvement alternatives along I-70 in Kansas City, MO. The chapter includes a discussion of the tools used to involve the public. Summaries of the public comments from all of the outreach efforts are in **Appendix D**. The chapter also explains how the Study Team followed the guidelines for public and stakeholder coordination as mandated by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), and other transportation legislation.

Why is Public Involvement Important?

Public involvement for projects like the I-70 Second Tier EIS is important for the following key reasons:

1. MoDOT wants the public to be aware of the project and how it may affect them.
2. MoDOT needs public input to make the project better. Public input is used to define, evaluate, and refine improvement alternatives. Public input also helps identify important community resources to ensure the project is responsive to the needs of the communities.

Public involvement should be timely and used to make the project better. Quality public involvement requires that everyone who wants to be involved in the process has an opportunity to do so. The Study Team used a variety of tools to reach out to the public which is especially important with the large number of low-income and minorities within the Study Area.

Who are stakeholders?

Stakeholders are individuals and groups who are affected by or have an interest in a particular project or action. Stakeholders include property owners and residents, community groups, business groups, developers, utility companies, school districts, umbrella organizations (chambers of commerce, neighborhood associations, etc.), and elected/appointed officials at the federal, state, county, and local levels.

What is SAFETEA-LU?

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) is the law that governs the U.S. federal transportation spending at the start of this study. The current transportation law is MAP-21.

What was MoDOT's Plan for Involving Members of the Public?

What is the Federal Register?

The Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents.

What is MindMixer?

MindMixer is a platform for conducting online town hall meetings. The I-70 SEIS online meeting was available at www.metroi70.com. The public used the site to share their thoughts and views about the conditions and safety of the highway as well as the possible improvement alternatives that could address stated issues and concerns.

The Study Team developed a detailed Public Involvement and Agency Coordination Plan specifically for the I-70 Second Tier EIS. This plan complied with the requirements of SAFETEA-LU, the National Environmental Policy Act, and MoDOT. The plan was circulated to the study's cooperating and participating agencies for review and comment. The plan was also posted on the project website for public review and comment. This plan can be found on the project website at www.metroi70.com.

The goals of the Public Involvement and Agency Coordination Plan regarding public involvement included:

- Identification of early coordination efforts.
- Establishing the timing and format for the public to have opportunities to be involved and comment on the project.
- Describing the communication methods to be implemented to inform the community and solicit feedback.
- Developing a process that achieves informed public consent regarding the project and its outcomes.

How Did MoDOT Announce the Project?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is lead federal agency for this Second Tier EIS and needs to officially notify the public when the project will begin. The FHWA satisfied this requirement by publishing a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. This notice was issued on December 14, 2011 and published in the December 20, 2011 issue of the Federal Register (Vol. 76, No. 244, Pg. 78967). A copy of this Notice of Intent is located in **Appendix D**.

MoDOT announced the project to potential stakeholder agencies through a press release, a series of letters sent out to resource agencies and local organizations, and informally announced the project to the public through the project website, social media, and MindMixer in December 2011.

How Could Members of the Public Learn More About the Project?

MoDOT developed several ways for members of the public to learn more about the project. These included a project website, a project phone number, project newsletters, a Community Connections Team, listening posts, mobile meetings, Twitter, MindMixer, and other project interactive tools and activities.

Project Website: MoDOT setup a project website to provide convenient access to project information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The website went live on December 2011 before the first round of public meetings. The website address is www.modot.org/kansascity/metroi70/. MoDOT received five comment forms submitted through the project website.



MindMixer Page

MindMixer: MoDOT setup a MindMixer site to provide convenient access to project information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. MindMixer also went live on December 2011 before the first round of public meetings. The site is located at www.metroi70.com. The MindMixer site was advertised through project meetings, media releases, newsletters, postcards, business cards handed out at events, and kiosks. The public was also notified of the website using the variable message signs along I-70 operated by Kansas City Scout. Approximately 190 participants have used the online town hall meetings.

Project Phone Number: The project used the MoDOT information line, 1-888-ASK-MoDOT, as the phone number for the public to get information about the project. Calls were forwarded to the MoDOT Project Manager. Approximately 10 phone calls were received with comments and questions about the study.

Community Connections Team: MoDOT established a Community Connections Team for the project. Study Team members are available to attend neighborhood, business, and community organization meetings by request. The Study Team sent an invitation letter to more than 30 organizations along the corridor inviting them to request a speaker. The

What is the Community Connections Team?

The I-70 Second Tier EIS Community Connections Team includes designated Study Team members who will attend neighborhood, business, and/or community meetings, by request, to discuss the I-70 Second Tier EIS project.

Study Team also posted a Community Connection Team request form on the project website. As of May 2013, Study Team members have presented at 19 community group meetings reaching over 200 participants.



Newsletters and Bracelets

Newsletters, Postcards, Door Hangers, Flyers, and Kiosks: The Study Team used a series of newsletters (over 1,300 copies), postcards (about 3,900 delivered), door hangers (1,500 dropped off), flyers, and kiosks to provide information about the project, upcoming public involvement opportunities, to invite people to access the MindMixer site, and to invite them to sign-up on the project mailing list. They were made available at meetings and placed on the project website and MindMixer site. Newsletters will be developed for the Public Hearing for the Draft EIS document and the I-70 Second Tier Final EIS document.



Mobile Meeting Event

Mobile Meetings: The Study Team held mobile meetings at neighborhood stores, libraries, museums, and other community places to collect input from the community. MoDOT used a vinyl wrapped 12-passenger van and provided a display backdrop to share information about the I-70 Second Tier EIS alternatives with the community. The mobile meetings were set up for two-hours at each event. Some mobile meetings were held indoors due to weather. The seven mobile meetings attracted approximately 130 participants.

How did the Study Team coordinate with Federal, State, and Local Agencies?

Agreement and input is critical in order to proceed through the study. As a result, an early effort to coordinate with federal and state agencies took place. Early coordination letters and preliminary study information were sent to these agencies in December 2011. The agencies listed below and their response letters are included in **Appendix D**.

Participating and Cooperating Agencies

MoDOT invited the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to be a cooperating agency for the I-70 Second Tier EIS due to USACE's jurisdictional control over floodplains and wetlands which will require permit approval. They elected to be involved in the study as a participating agency. The following agencies were invited to become participating agencies:

Environmental Resource Agencies:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 7 (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
- Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)
- Missouri Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Missouri Department of Economic Development (MoDED)
- Missouri State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA)

Local Study Management Agencies:

- City of Kansas City, Missouri
- Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA)
- Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)

In addition, FHWA invited nine tribal governments as consulting parties to identify properties of tribal interest. The invitation letters and responses are included in **Appendix D**.

The resource agencies and local study management agencies were invited to attend a scoping meeting on February 7, 2012 to describe the study, identify key environmental issues to be considered for the project, and offered a site tour of the Study Area. Agencies received copies of and were asked to comment on the project's Purpose and Need document, Environmental Impact Assessment Methodologies Memorandum, and Public Involvement and Agency Coordination Plan. These agencies also had the opportunity to review the Initial Alternatives Screening Memoranda.

What are cooperating and participating agencies?

The most recent major federal transportation legislation, MAP-21, included two types of agencies for specific involvement in the preparation of environmental studies.

Cooperating Agencies are federal and state agencies with a specific expertise or authority (such as needing to issue a permit) for the project.

Participating Agencies are a wider group of government stakeholders. All federal, state, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the project are invited to serve as participating agencies.

What Public Involvement did MoDOT Do?

MoDOT held three rounds of public involvement outreach prior to the publication of this I-70 Second Tier Draft EIS. Public meetings and/or listening posts allowed members of the public to speak one on one with the Study Team. All meetings were held in an open house format over two to three hours and members of the public could stop by at any time during the meetings.

Public Involvement Period #1



Listening Post

The Study Team held the first series of public input meetings from March 12 to June 10, 2012, details are shown in **Table 4-1**. The purpose of the first public involvement period was to introduce the project, explain why improvements are needed, discuss environmental constraints, and provide information on the initial alternatives for improving I-70. The Study Team used a number of approaches to reach the public including a listening post, Community Connection Team meetings, mobile meetings, Government Relations Briefings, and MindMixer.

The Study Team asked members of the public attending the meeting the following three questions:

- What are the problems in the corridor?
- What needs to be fixed and how would you fix it?
- How does the corridor affect your everyday life?

Table 4-1 Public Involvement Period #1		
Meeting	Location and Date	Meeting Type
Listening Post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gregg Klice Community Center (April 17, 2012) 	Weekday Evening Public Open House
Community Connections Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Valley Neighborhood Association (April 19, 2012) • Westside Neighborhood Association (May 23, 2012) 	Weekday Evening Neighborhood Meeting
Mobile Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lucile H. Bluford Library Branch (May 2, 2012) • Wild Woody's Happy Foods (May 7, 2012) 	Weekday Afternoon
MindMixer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Town Hall Meeting 	Online Meeting

Members of the public were also able to discuss their concerns one-on-one with Study Team members.

The March 12 to June 10, 2012 public outreach events were promoted through the following methods:

- Approximately 1,740 postcards were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. Postcards with Spanish translations were sent to encourage participation of this language group in the Study Area.
- Approximately 400 newsletters were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. These were also translated into Spanish.
- A letter was sent to organizations reminding them that the Community Connections Team was available to speak to their organization.
- A media release was sent by MoDOT to local media outlets in the Kansas City area.
- KC Scout electronic variable message signs along the corridor advertised the online town hall meeting.

The Study Team provided a Spanish translator at the listening post.

Public Involvement Period #1 Online Town Hall Meeting

MoDOT posted the I-70 Second Tier Purpose and Need on the project website and as part of an online town hall meeting for public review and comment from March 12 to June 10, 2012. The online town hall meeting provided a series of questions that each visitor could comment on at their own pace, provide blog comments, and e-mail comments to MoDOT.

Approximately 85 individuals visited the online town hall meeting. The comment form was also available in Spanish.

Public Involvement Period #2

The second public involvement period formally ran from July 15 to August 17, 2012. The purpose of the second public involvement period was to show the 12 initial alternatives. The Study Team used a number of approaches to reach the public including a listening post, Community Connections

What is Kansas City Scout?

Kansas City Scout is the metropolitan region's traffic management system that provides traveler information to the public through the local media, variable message signs, and the internet.

Team meetings, mobile meetings, Government Relations Briefings, and MindMixer. The meeting details are shown in **Table 4-2**. Members of the public were also able to discuss their concerns one-on-one with Study Team members.

Table 4-2 Public Involvement Period #2		
Meeting	Location and Date	Meeting Type
Listening Post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pioneer Community College (July 26, 2012) 	Weekday Evening Public Open House
Community Connections Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washington Wheatley Neighborhood Association (June 12, 2012) Mid-America Regional Council Total Transportation Policy Committee (July 17, 2012) Mid-America Regional Council Transit Committee (August 1, 2012) Downtown Council- Infrastructure Committee (August 10, 2012) Kansas City, MO Third District Meeting (August 13, 2012) 	Weekday Day and Evening Meetings
Mobile Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WalMart at Blue Ridge Crossing (August 7, 2012) The Museums at 18th and Vine (August 17, 2012) 	Weekday Afternoon
Government Relations Briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John McGurk, Mayor James' Chief of Staff (June 21, 2012) Kansas City Councilman Russ Johnson (June 21, 2012) Representatives from Jackson County Executive Mike Sanders Office (June 21, 2012) County Legislator Theresa Garza-Ruiz (June 25, 2012) Kansas City Councilman Jermaine Reed (July 11, 2012) Kansas City Councilman Dick Davis (July 11, 2012) Missouri State Senator Shalonn "Kiki" Curls (August 21, 2012) 	One-on-one meetings with elected officials
MindMixer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Town Hall Meeting 	Online Meeting

The July 15 to August 17, 2012 public outreach events were promoted through the following methods:

- Approximately 1,140 postcards were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. Postcards with Spanish translations were sent to encourage participation of this language group in the Study Area.

- Approximately 400 newsletters were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. These were also translated into Spanish.
- Approximately 1,500 English/Spanish door hangers were distributed door to door at residences and businesses near the corridor ahead of the public involvement period 2 listening post.
- A letter was sent to organizations reminding them that the Community Connections Team was available to speak to their organization.
- A media release was sent by MoDOT to local media outlets in the Kansas City area.
- KC Scout electronic variable message signs along the corridor directed travelers to the online town hall meeting.

The Study Team provided a Spanish translator at the listening post.

Public Involvement Period #2 Online Town Hall Meeting

MoDOT posted the I-70 Second Tier EIS initial alternatives and information on the MindMixer site for public review and comment from July 15th to August 17th as part of an online town hall meeting. The online town hall meeting provided a series of questions that each visitor could comment on at their pace, provide blog comments, and e-mail comments to MoDOT.

More than 120 individuals visited the online town hall meeting. The website has an online comment form that could be filled out and sent to the Study Team. The comment form was also available in Spanish.

Public Involvement Period #3

The Study Team formally conducted the third public involvement period from January 25 to March 8, 2013. The purpose of the third public involvement period was to receive comments on the three alternatives that were proposed to be carried forward. The Study Team used a number of methods to reach the public including mobile meetings, Community Connections Team Meetings, Government Relations Briefings,

and MindMixer. The meeting details are shown in **Table 4-3**. Members of the public were also able to discuss their concerns one-on-one with Study Team members.

The Study Team promoted the January 25 to March 8, 2013 public outreach events through the following methods:

- Approximately 1,050 postcards were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. Postcards with Spanish translations were sent to encourage participation of these language groups that live in the Study Area.
- Approximately 525 newsletters were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. These were also translated into Spanish.
- A letter was sent to organizations reminding them that the Community Connections Team was available to speak to their organization.
- A media release was sent by MoDOT to local media outlets in the Kansas City area.
- KC Scout electronic variable message signs along the corridor directed travelers to the online town hall meeting.

Public Involvement Period #3 Online Town Hall Meeting

MoDOT posted the three I-70 Second Tier EIS alternatives proposed to be carried forward on the project website for public review and comment as part of an online town hall meeting. The online town hall meeting provided a series of questions that each visitor could comment on at their pace, provide blog comments, and e-mail comments to MoDOT.

More than 190 individuals visited the online town hall meeting. The website has an online comment form that could be filled out and sent to the Study Team. The comment form was also available in Spanish.

Table 4-3 Public Involvement Period #3

Meeting	Location and Date	Meeting Type
Community Connections Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Valley Industrial Association (January 8, 2013) • Truman Plaza Area Plan Implementation Committee (February 1, 2013) • Kansas City Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (February 7, 2013) also broadcasted on public television • Jackson County Legislature (February 11, 2013) also broadcasted on public television • Pendleton Heights Neighborhood Association (February 12, 2013) • Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council (February 12, 2013) • Washington Wheatley Neighborhood Association (February 18, 2013) • Scarritt-Renaissance Neighborhood Association (March 4, 2013) • Northeast Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (March 5, 2013) • Kansas City Police Department (March 14, 2013) • U.S. Postal Service Distribution Facility (March 19, 2013) • St. Stephens Baptist Church (March 28, 2013) 	Weekday Day and Evening Meetings
Mobile Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Museums at 18th and Vine (February 1, 2013) • Metropolitan Community Colleges – Pioneer Campus (February 6, 2013) • St. Paul School of Theology (February 12, 2013) • Linwood Family YMCA (February 19, 2013) 	Weekday Morning and Afternoon
Government Relations Briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Legislator Crystal Williams (January 23, 2013) • Kansas City Councilman Jermaine Reed (February 8, 2013) • Kansas City Councilman Dick Davis (January 23, 2013) • Kansas City Councilwoman Melba Curls (February 15, 2013) • Goeff Jolly for Representative Cleaver (January 30, 2013) • Corey Dillion for Senator McCaskill (February 15, 2013) <p>Mailed information to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kansas City Councilman Russ Johnson • County Legislator Scott Burnett • County Legislator Fred Arbanas 	One-on-one meetings with elected officials
MindMixer	Online Town Hall Meeting	Online Meeting

What Other Activities and Meetings Did MoDOT Use to Involve the Public?

The Study Team used a community advisory group and government relations meetings to supplement the public outreach efforts.

Community Advisory Group

The I-70 Second Tier EIS Community Advisory Group (CAG) focused on providing meaningful input to MoDOT as it plans for the improvement of I-70. The CAG was one of several tools MoDOT used to gather public feedback. The CAG consisted of appointed members of the public by several interested agencies and organizations. The following agencies and organizations are represented on the CAG.

- City of Kansas City, MO
- Mid-America Regional Council
- Jackson County, MO
- Kansas City Industrial Council
- 3rd Council District Kansas City
- Downtown Council of Kansas City
- Jackson County Sports Complex Authority
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
- City of Independence, MO
- Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association
- City of Raytown, MO
- Northeast Chamber of Commerce



CAG Meeting

Each CAG member was responsible for providing I-70 study updates back to these agencies and organizations. MoDOT has held six CAG meetings to date on the following dates:

- January 18, 2012
- March 23, 2012
- May 3, 2012
- June 7, 2012
- September 6, 2012
- January 10, 2013
- April 19, 2013

Government Relations Briefings

The I-70 Second Tier EIS employed a Government Relations Briefings approach designed to create meaningful project-related learning and input opportunities for 42 potentially affected elected officials and staff. This was done by working with Government Relations stakeholders to:

- Educate them about the EIS process, purpose, activities, schedule, and potential impacts
- Provide them with the information they need to respond to anticipated or actual EIS-related constituent questions or concerns
- Keep them informed of EIS progress and milestones
- Offer them formal and informal opportunities to provide personal or constituent input about the EIS and specific issues under study
- Assist them in creating a fact-based foundation from which to make decisions affecting future I-70 improvement funding and timely implementation

How Did MoDOT Use the Public Comments?

MoDOT used the public responses, along with the environmental and engineering analysis, to help define the improvements to propose in the Preferred Alternative. Some of the Preferred Alternative improvement decisions based on public comments are described below. The Northeast Neighborhood raised concerns over the Benton Boulevard ramp closure. The U.S. Postal Distribution Center representatives expressing access concerns with the closure of ramps at Truman Road and 18th Street.

These concerns led the Study Team to redefine the improvement options in this area of I-70. As a result, the Preferred Alternative is proposed to have a connector road between Truman Road and Benton Boulevard connecting at a new signalized intersection which will then have access to westbound I-70. This will consolidate two access points on I-70 into one while maintaining connections to I-70 from both Benton Boulevard and Truman Road.

In response to 18th Street, the Study Team proposes to leave the 18th Street interchange open and extend the acceleration lane to accommodate the large volume of U.S. Postal Service trucks. With 18th Street remaining open, the proximity of 23rd Street needed to be addressed. The proposed improvement is to provide a separated collector-distributor road for westbound I-70 between these two interchanges.

The Blue Valley Industrial Area and the City of Kansas City, Missouri (via resolution) had concerns with closing the Manchester Trafficway interchange which the Study Team proposes to leave open.

The Study Team also heard support for improvements to the Benton and Jackson Curves, longer ramp lengths, and longer weaving areas.

How Did MoDOT Provide Information Through the Media?

MoDOT used a variety of media outlets to provide public meeting information. For the I-70 Second Tier EIS, press releases were sent to 87 representatives of Kansas City area newspapers, television stations, and radio stations.

What are the Next Public Participation Steps?

The Study Team will host another public involvement period which will include the public hearing on the Second Tier Draft EIS in the Winter 2014.