

## Meeting Summary

### **IMPROVE I-70 ADVISORY GROUP**

1<sup>st</sup> Meeting  
Holiday Inn Select  
Columbia, Missouri

September 19, 2002

This is a summary of the first meeting of the Improve I-70 Advisory Group. It summarizes key informational and action items from the meeting.

#### GENERAL

##### Members Present

Members of the Advisory Group attending the initial meeting: Bernie Andrews, Ed Baker, Bob Bechtold, Elaine Blodgett, Susan Clark, Chip Cooper, Roy Dudark, Dave Griggs, Chris Janku, Kory Kaufman, David Mink, Larry Moore, Tom Moran, Lorah Steiner, Garry Taylor, Bob Walters.

Dennis Donald and John Huyler of The Osprey Group facilitated the meeting.

##### Materials Available at the Meeting

Materials available for discussion at the meeting, in addition to the agenda, included:

- A list of the Improve I-70 Advisory Group membership;
- A decision-making flow chart that depicted graphically the general flow of information, advice, recommendations and decisions that will be made during the I-70 Second Tier Environmental Studies in Columbia;
- Draft operating agreements that described the purpose of the Advisory Group and the roles and expectations for the Advisory Group and the facilitators;
- A summary of issues and criteria from The Osprey Group survey and report;
- A draft Columbia Area Project Schedule, which outlined a process of screening the three corridors, developing preliminary alternatives, and evaluating and screening these alternative that is projected to be complete by the end of 2003 (the formal EIS process will take considerably longer); and
- Correspondence from the City of Columbia to the Missouri Department of Transportation and MoDOT's response to the City.

##### Meeting Goals

- Discuss and accept Operating Agreements for the Advisory Group;

- Create understanding of the relationship between the overall planning process and the Group's input;
- Review key issues and criteria for making choices among I-70 corridor alternatives.

## SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND INPUT FOR THE DOCUMENTS

### Welcome

Mr. Roger Schwartz, District Engineer from the Missouri Department of Transportation, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking the members of the Advisory Group for their willingness to participate in this effort.

He stressed that this is obviously something that is very important to MoDOT, because I-70 is the major highway corridor going across the State of Missouri. MoDOT has created this Advisory Group in Columbia to help the Department gain community input about the ultimate decision for improving Interstate 70 in the Columbia area.

The reality is MoDOT does not have the funding available today to build the ultimate I-70 improvements. But MoDOT believes it is important to conduct this planning in a thoughtful way recognizing that the planning process is both necessary and time-consuming. Even though funding is not available to build the ultimate project, there are incremental resources to make some improvements. Those improvements will be made in the context of the ultimate goal for I-70. Mr. Schwartz cited the I-70 and 63 interchange as a case in point.

He noted that this is purposely a diverse group with differing viewpoints about the I-70 improvement options in Columbia. He commented that these decisions will be difficult, but he hoped that this process will lead to better education for the community, better community input to MoDOT, and perhaps some consensus on a solution, a solution that is best for Columbia, Boone County and the State of Missouri.

### Operating Agreements and Group Composition

The Group reviewed and discussed the proposed operating agreements. One part that was highlighted was the decision-making process. By law, MoDOT has the responsibility for making final decisions about the improvement of I-70. As the name of the Group implies, it is advisory to MoDOT on matters of general interest to the community as they relate to the planning, design and construction of the interstate improvements. There will be no votes and consensus is not required. At the same time, it might be useful for the Group to find common ground on a range of issues it will be discussing. Representatives from MoDOT will attend every meeting, a transcript of the full discussion will be produced, and a meeting summary (this document) will be developed and distributed to the Advisory Group and other interested parties by The Osprey Group following each meeting. The Group adopted the agreements as presented, recognizing the operating agreements may evolve over time.

The Group reviewed and discussed the membership of the Advisory Group for its adequacy. Two additions were recommended. It was noted that Patricia Smith, the Chair of the County Planning and Zoning Commission had expressed interest in being part of the Group. A second recommendation was to add an individual with a retailing interest along the existing I-

70 corridor. There was some discussion about university and residential interests north of the interstate. The Group discussed these concerns and agreed to the existing composition with the addition of Ms. Smith and another retailing interest.

### Most Important Issues

The issues and criteria that emerged as priorities, based upon The Osprey Group interviews, were presented to the Group. A variety of issues, 31 in total, were presented to interviewees with a request that they highlight the five to seven they thought were the most important. Based upon the responses, the most important issues (those cited ten or more times) were:

- Improvement plan recognizes future capacity needs (17 mentions)
- Growth/sprawl to the north (14 mentions)
- Local east-west traffic accommodated (14 mentions)
- Growth in Columbia continues (12 mentions)
- Trucks diverted to bypass (11 mentions)
- Displacement of residents (10 mentions)

In addition to specific issues cited as most important, Osprey made the following observations:

- Based upon what we heard, there is a strong desire to make a decision about the highway alignment that meets long-term community needs.
- There is concern about the bifurcation of the community by the interstate and the amount of growth that is expected to occur to the north.
- Some see growth to the north as something that should be anticipated. Others see this growth as negative and something that should not be encouraged.
- While there are some who believe growth has more negative than positive aspects, most of the interviewees thought continued thoughtful growth in Columbia was a valuable characteristic for the community.
- The amount of truck traffic traveling through Columbia was viewed as a problem. This issue, along with the traffic and safety issues related to the intersection of U.S. Highway 63 and I-70, were most often cited as significant negatives of the present corridor.
- Access is considered an issue that ties directly to the impact to the businesses located along the interstate. Some downplayed the near-term access issue as something that would need to be tolerated during the construction phase as a necessary condition to solve a bigger problem. Some were also concerned about access as it might impact the downtown area over the longer term.

### Suggested Criteria for Evaluating Alternatives

Interviewees were also asked about the criteria they would suggest be used in making a choice among the three broad corridors under consideration. The most frequently mentioned criteria were:

- Meeting the traffic needs
- Taking a longer-term perspective
- Cost

- Safety
- Short-term construction impacts
- Economic impacts on the community

Other criteria mentioned less frequently included dislocations of residents or businesses, truck traffic, alternative modes of transportation, the ability to bring traffic into Columbia, and environmental impacts.

The Group was asked about its assessment of the critical criteria that should be used in evaluating alternatives. Comments and questions from the Group included:

Understand the costs of widening I-70. Any widening of the existing interstate corridor will have a physical, economic and fiscal impact. How do we weigh these costs in comparison with a short bypass.

Understand the impact on traffic. What are the implications of the various alternatives on distance, traffic volumes and travel time? How will this change over time? Similarly, what will the future distribution be between local versus non-local traffic demand? And, do these answers suggest alternative planning or design options? Can the City address the east-west traffic demand?

Status of existing I-70 with a bypass. There is concern that if a bypass were to be constructed, the existing interstate could be susceptible to deterioration over time. What are the plans for the existing corridor should a bypass route be chosen? How can the existing interstate remain as an attractive asset for the community?

Economic and fiscal impact. There is a desire to have a better understanding of the impact (e.g., retail sales, employment, property and sales tax) that a new bypass would have on existing businesses along the current interstate. It was reported that 99 percent of Columbia's hotel inventory, probably 50 percent of the restaurant inventory, and probably at least 35 percent of our major retail is on I-70. Can the businesses along the existing I-70 remain competitive if a new bypass is constructed? If not, what are the dimensions and degrees of the problem economically and fiscally? What are the likely economic gains to be had with a bypass? Which corridor leads to be best community option from an economic point of view?

Traffic speed and dedicated highways. The ultimate choice might be a function of the extent to which speed can be reduced on the existing corridor or an alternative route could be designated for truck traffic only. Can we make a longer bypass more attractive if those driving it can drive faster? Is it legally possible to require that truck traffic be diverted to the bypass?

Analogous situations. What can be learned from other communities that have faced a similar choice in terms of their decisions and the resultant economic and fiscal impacts?

The impact during construction. It would be helpful to have a better understanding of the impact of a construction phase, especially if the decision were to be made to widen the existing interstate. What will be the impact on traffic during construction? How long will the construction phase last? What can be done to mitigate impacts? "We can all sit here and say, gosh, it's gonna be awful, but there are several degrees of awful."

Planning and zoning. In addition to minimizing the number of interchanges on a new bypass, the City and County have tools that can minimize the land use changes and economic development that might occur with a new interstate. To what extent might these tools be used to guide future development?

There were also expressions of concern about environmental impacts, noise impacts, and safety as choices are made and design alternatives considered.

#### Background: The First Tier Study

Mr. Jerry Mugg from HNTB presented information about the First Tier studies that preceded the present effort.

Recognizing problems with I-70, MoDOT initiated a study to identify the needs for improvement. They concluded that a comprehensive approach was needed to address a range of needs on the 200-mile interstate between Kansas City and St. Louis. The options explored ranged from having a brand new Interstate 70 to addressing multi-modal needs, from having toll roads to addressing freight options. The agency also came to the conclusion that there needed to be a more comprehensive dialogue with other agencies and the public as part of the decision-making process.

MoDOT determined that a thorough study, in the form of an environmental impact statement or EIS, was needed and that it should be done in phases. The sponsors of this effort are MoDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. The first phase, called Tier One, was to examine I-70 from a big picture or statewide perspective, define an improvement strategy, and set forth an action plan. It evaluated various improvement alternatives, assessed the impacts of these alternatives from an environmental, engineering and traffic viewpoint, and culminated in an EIS document that was completed with a Record of Decision (ROD) in December 2001.

The fundamental conclusion was that the best approach was to reinvest in the existing interstate. The first study identified two areas that, due to tight constraints and a mix of local and interstate traffic, warrant additional consideration of other improvement options. Columbia is one of these areas (the other is in the area near St. Louis).

The First Tier did address some local issues, but the focus was again on a statewide perspective. It also suggested that seven areas across the 200-mile system be evaluated. These areas were called “sections of independent utility” or SIU’s. The Columbia area is known as SIU 4. The Second Tier study, now beginning, is to add depth to the analysis of each of the SIU’s. The First Tier also included a prioritization plan. Columbia is considered one of the higher priorities within the overall corridor.

With the Second Tier studies complete, projected to be 2005, MoDOT, with funding, will be able to move forward into the design and construction of the improvements.

Some Columbia-specific findings:

- Projections for 2030 show that traffic through the Columbia area will be around 90,000 to 100,000 vehicles per day. This volume suggests that about eight to 10 lanes of traffic will be necessary.
- There is quite a mixture of local and through traffic. However, even without local traffic, there is enough projected traffic along I-70 to show that improvements in the Columbia area are necessary.
- The First Tier identified three broad (mile-wide) corridors for consideration – the existing alignment, plus near north and far north corridors. These corridors were intended to be very conceptual in nature. This second phase study will add detail and specificity to these alternatives.
- Even recognizing there would be impacts associated with each of the alternative corridors, none of the proposed corridors were found to have fatal flaws. Relocation to the south of Columbia was not considered feasible due to land use issues, parklands, and greater density of development.
- Should a bypass alternative be viewed as the preferred choice ultimately, improvements to the existing interstate will still be necessary.
- A statewide travel demand forecasting model was used to assess how much traffic would use either of the bypass options. Traffic projections suggested that the far north alternative would divert or attract about 6,000 to 8,000 vehicles per day. The near north would attract about half the projected 90,000 to 100,000 vehicles. Each of the three corridor options will be evaluated again, using local information and a local travel demand forecasting model.

Background: The Second Tier Study

Mr. Tim Nittler, from the firm of CH2M Hill, provided additional information about what the Second Tier will include.

Referring to the schedule in the Group’s packet, it was noted that there are seven major tasks to be completed. The Second Tier, as noted above, is intended to dive deep into the details, evaluating existing conditions, setting forth and screening preliminary and final alternatives. The tasks and projected completion date are:

Task	Projected Completion
Corridor Screening	December 2002
Develop Preliminary Alternatives	April 2003
Evaluate Alternatives and Screen to Reasonable Ones	November 2003
Develop Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)	June 2004
Public Review of DEIS and Public Hearing	July 2004
Develop Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)	May 2005
Record of Decision (ROD)	August 2005

The initial step is to revisit the three proposed corridors. The hope would be that the number could be reduced before the more detailed study of alternatives begins. Key variables in making this decision will be incorporating more detailed Columbia land use plans as well as the new traffic forecasts for 2030. This information will be brought before the Group as it is developed.

Once the corridors are defined, the process of actually drawing lines on maps begins. The goal will be to be much more definitive about the location of proposed alternatives while avoiding and minimizing impacts. Once defined, each alternative will be evaluated for its environmental, social and economic impacts.

A considerable amount of time will be needed to develop and review the draft EIS and the final EIS. However, the plan is that the Advisory Group will be involved in much of this analysis and assessment prior to the drafting of the EIS. The intention is to have many of the more sensitive issues aired openly before and while drafting of the EIS is occurring so that the preferred alternative does reflect thoughtful community input. The Group can play a particularly valuable role in the review of the corridor options and the screening of alignment choices.

### Discussion

Group discussion followed the presentations by Mr. Muggs and Mr. Nittler.

Key variables and cost estimates. Initially there was some discussion about which is the driving variable in making a decision about the alternatives. Are we principally concerned about maximizing the amount we can construct within a fixed budget? Are we primarily concerned with the cheapest alternative that diverts truck traffic? Are we concerned about drawing people into town? The view was that, without answering some of these preliminary questions, it is difficult to determine which answer or alternative is preferred.

Mr. Nittler responded that there is no fixed budget. Rather, a budget will be developed for each alternative. That will be one variable in making a choice about the preferred alternative. Cost plays a role, but it might not be the ultimate driver. The various benefits associated with each alternative will also have to be compared with the cost.

Mr. Mugg noted that the First Tier did give some general guidance as to cost. A cursory level of study suggests that improving the existing I-70 would cost around \$350 million in current dollars. Early estimates are that either of the bypass alternatives would cost about \$50 million less.

Speed and diversion of truck traffic. Mr. Nittler responded to the question of reducing speed on the interstate through Columbia. He thought it would be difficult to lower the speed limit without major adjustments to the roadway. However, he thought that with direction from MoDOT and the Advisory Group, it would be a variable CH2M Hill could evaluate.

Mr. Mugg noted that the traffic projections assumed 65 miles per hour along the existing interstate and 70 miles per hour for the relocated highway alternatives. He also said there

would be other things, such as the interstate configurations at both ends and signage, which could be explored to encourage through traffic to use one of the northern corridors.

Noise. A question was raised about how noise might be impacted by moving truck traffic from one alternative to another. Mr. Nittler responded that the question of the truck traffic should be answered in the coming months as the new traffic data are developed. The model will indicate the split of traffic by alternative. In addition, additional noise studies will take place in the Second Tier. Mr. Mugg noted that noise studies are very site or line specific. Early screening will occur without the benefit of these studies. Once specific alignment alternatives are identified, however, there will be more detailed noise studies.

Construction options. A question was raised about the possibility of doing an over/under interstate. In response, Mr. Mugg said they considered a number of alternatives. For example, one was to separate the through traffic from local and turning traffic. The concept would be to have basically a viaduct or a double deck through town. The goal would be to minimize the impact by, rather than spreading the highway footprint, going vertical. The top lanes would be reserved for express or through traffic. Even though it is a short distance, it is cost prohibitive, with the cost per mile being roughly double a typical freeway construction. As a result, it was one of the options not recommended to be studied in greater detail during this second phase.

A bypass with no exits. Another question was asked about having a bypass that was exclusively for through traffic (i.e., it would have no exits). The response was that the bypass alternatives did incorporate the idea of minimal exits to encourage through traffic to use the bypass. An option with no exits was not considered viable.

Current estimates of interstate traffic. Mr. Schwartze noted that in the rural area of I-70, the traffic volume is currently about 33,000 to 35,000 vehicles per day. The maximum in Columbia right now is around 60,000 vehicles per day. Thus, the difference of 25,000 to 27,000 vehicles per day can be assumed to be attributable to local traffic. He also noted that truck traffic constitutes 28 to 30 percent of the traffic on the rural portions of the highway.

Truck traffic. There was interest in knowing if trucks cause a disproportionate impact on the system and how the percentage of truck traffic might change by the year 2030. Mr. Muggs noted that trucks in the overall corridor are nearly 30 percent. The percentage is greater in rural areas, so the estimate is 10,000 to 12,000 trucks per day on the interstate. He also noted that truck traffic nationally is growing at a faster rate than auto traffic, two-and-a half to three percent per year for trucks versus around two percent for automobiles. This information is available in the First Tier report.

Size of the median. There was some discussion about the size of the median. Mr. Mugg noted that 80 percent of the corridor is rural. That, combined with the desire to maintain four lanes of traffic during construction, led to the concept of creating an extra wide median. Since an extra wide median was being created, the thought was to preserve the median for future transportation options, such as passenger rail. There is no rail initiative, but it seems prudent to modestly increase the cost and preserve a future option.

Current design capacity. A question was raised about the existing I-70 and its capacity. The response was that a four-lane highway has essentially the same capacity today as it did in the 1950's, or roughly 30,000 to 35,000 vehicles per day depending on a number of variables.

#### SUMMARY, NEXT STEPS, AND CLOSING COMMENTS

The Group addressed certain logistical issues. It was decided that the preferred time to meet was in the late afternoon, between 4:00 and 7:00.

The Group decided to have its next meeting on November 7<sup>th</sup> and explore holding it at the new library. (This location has been reserved). The Group was asked to hold the 4:00 to 7:00 time slot in their calendars until a more specific agenda is developed. Preliminarily, the agenda will include more detail about each of the corridor options and a presentation about traffic modeling.

The Group decided to have its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

## IMPROVE INTERSTATE 70 ADVISORY GROUP

1<sup>st</sup> Meeting  
5:30 to 8:00 PM  
September 19, 2002

Holiday Inn Executive Center  
(in the Parliament II room)  
Columbia, Missouri

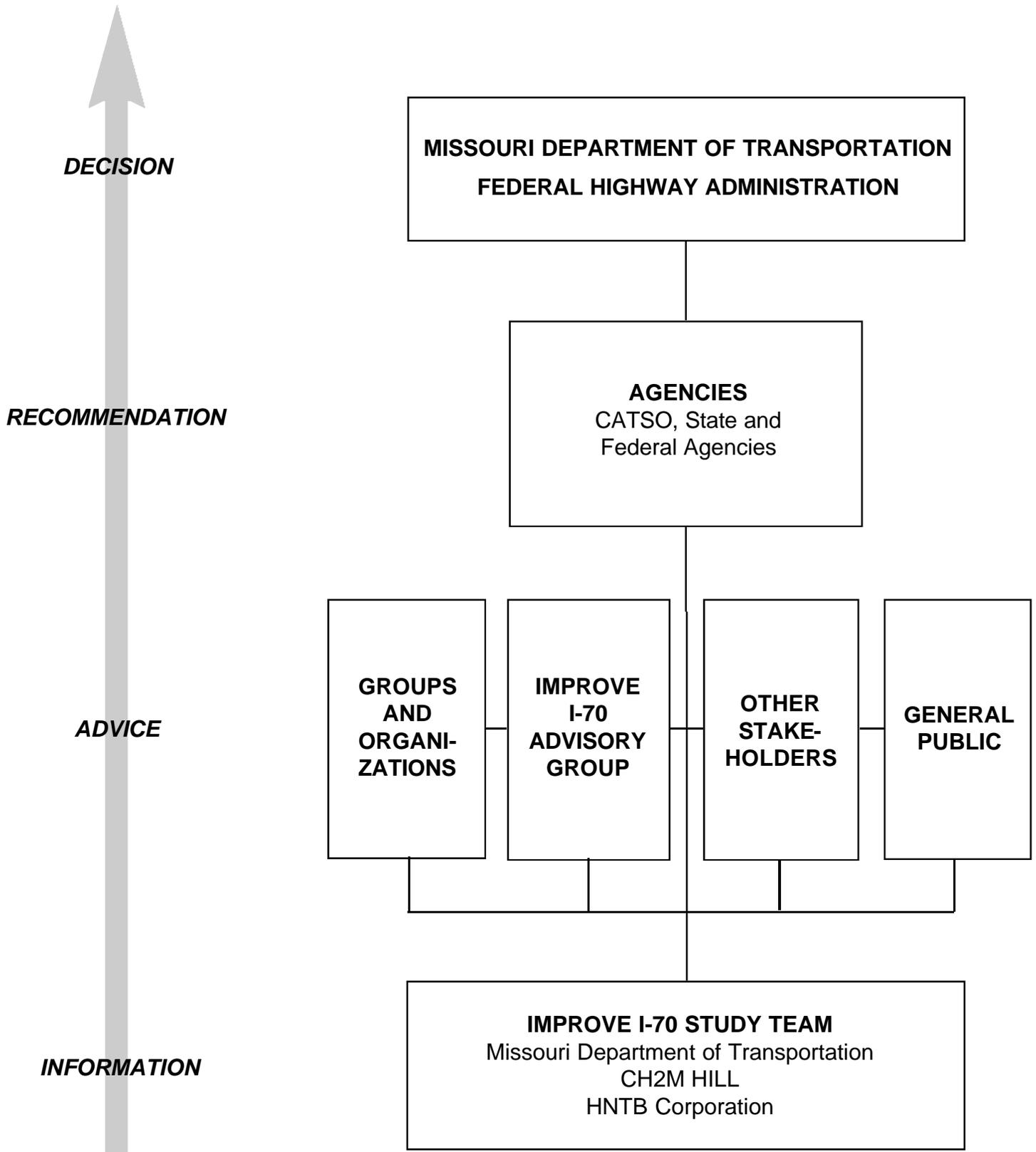
Meeting Goals: Discuss and accept Operating Agreements for the Advisory Group; create understanding of the relationship between the overall planning process and the Group's input; review key issues and criteria for making choices among I-70 corridor alternatives.

- 5:30 Convene the Meeting
- Welcome and Introductory Comments  
*Roger Schwartze, District Engineer, Missouri Department of Transportation*
  - Agenda Review
  - Self-introductions by Members of the Advisory Group
  - Proposed Operating Agreements
- 6:15 Highlights of the Report by The Osprey Group and Discussion
- 7:00 Review of the Overall Planning Process and the Timing of Key Decisions in Columbia  
*Jerry Mugg, HNTB and Dan Dupies or Tim Nittler, CH2M Hill*
- 7:50 Set Date for Next Meeting and Critique of this Meeting
- 8:00 Adjourn



# Decision-Making Flow Chart

This chart illustrates the general flow of decisions that will be made during the I-70 Second Tier Environmental Studies in Columbia.



## Improve I-70 Advisory Group

# Draft Operating Agreements September 2002

### Purpose

The Improve I-70 Advisory Group will focus on providing meaningful input to MoDOT as it plans for the improvement of I-70 in the Columbia area. The Group is one of several mechanisms that MoDOT expects to use to gather public opinion.

### Roles

The Advisory Group is composed of people interested in planning the future of I-70 in the Columbia area. Members include people who reside or work in the area as well as individuals who work for affected governments, organizations and agencies. The expectation is that all members will:

- attend all meetings and prepare appropriately (because of the importance of continuity of participation and the relationships which will develop among members, no provision is made for substitutes in the event of an unavoidable absence),
- clearly articulate and reflect the interests they bring to the table,
- listen to other points of view and try to understand the interests of others,
- openly discuss issues with people who hold diverse views,
- actively generate and evaluate options, and
- keep their agency or organization informed of the Group's work.

The Osprey Group will provide facilitation services to the Advisory Group. The facilitators will:

- design and implement discussion procedures,
- design meeting agendas,
- conduct meetings,
- make strategic suggestions as appropriate,
- develop and maintain an email list for distribution of information,
- prepare a meeting summary for distribution to members and other interested individuals after each meeting,
- remain impartial toward the substance of the issues under discussion,
- remain responsible to the full Group and not to individual members or interest groups,
- enforce discussion guidelines accepted by the Group, and
- work with members to resolve process questions, and construct substantive options for the Group's consideration as appropriate.

Representatives of MoDOT, and its engineering consultants, will attend all Advisory Group meetings in order to listen to the discussion and provide timely information to the Group.

## **Meeting and Discussion Guidelines**

The Advisory Group seeks to have productive and useful meetings. To this end, our collective expectations are:

- Meetings will begin promptly and adjourn by the time specified on the agenda.
- Members will arrive on time and stay through the entire meeting.
- The facilitators will call on people to speak during the meetings.
- Only one person will speak at a time.
- Members will focus on substantive and procedural issues rather than personalities.
- Members will avoid side conversations that might be disruptive.
- Members should ensure cell phones are turned off at meetings.
- Members will be brief in their comments and avoid repeating themselves or others.

The facilitators will distribute material, including an agenda, at least five working days in advance of meetings. Members are expected to read the material beforehand and come prepared to contribute to the discussions.

Members of the public are both invited and encouraged to attend all Advisory Group meetings. However, these sessions are intended to focus on the discussions of the Advisory Group and it is not anticipated that there will be opportunities for the broader public to participate during Advisory Group meetings. Other opportunities, however, will be available for the general public to offer their input to MoDOT at other times.

## **Decision Making**

By law, MoDOT has the responsibility of making final decisions about the improvement of I-70 in Missouri. For this reason, MoDOT is not a member of the Group, although its representatives will attend and participate in all meetings. As its name implies, the Group is advisory to MoDOT on matters of general interest to the community as they relate to the planning, design and construction of I-70 improvements.

While the ideal may be for members to reach consensus on a variety of variables, such as the importance of criteria for decision-making, the pros and cons of identified corridors, or even the preferred alignment, which will be under discussion, it is not required. MoDOT will utilize the Advisory Group's input in its entirety in its own decision-making process. This will happen primarily through:

- MoDOT's listening to the Group's discussions and answering timely questions,
- MoDOT's review of the verbatim transcripts of all meetings. A court reporter will be provided to produce transcripts, and,
- The dissemination of a Meeting Summary which will be drafted and distributed by The Osprey Group after each meeting.

These "Operating Agreements" will evolve as needed to continue to meet the needs of the Advisory Group.



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# Issues and Criteria

**Selected Highlights from the Columbia Survey Results**



# Important Issues

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- ◆ Improvement plan recognizes future capacity needs (17 mentions)
- ◆ Growth/sprawl to the north (14 mentions)
- ◆ Local east-west traffic accommodated (14 mentions)
- ◆ Growth in Columbia continues (12 mentions)
- ◆ Trucks diverted to bypass (11 mentions)
- ◆ Displacement of residents (10 mentions)



# Suggested Criteria

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- ◆ meeting the traffic needs
- ◆ taking a longer-term perspective
- ◆ cost
- ◆ safety
- ◆ short-term construction impacts
- ◆ economic impacts on the community



# Selected Verbatim Comments

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- ◆ A lot more education is needed about the big picture and the magnitude of the challenge.
- ◆ We need to set parameters to ensure usefulness and have the latest updates. Need succinct synopsis – not lots of paper on issues.
- ◆ It really is a regional, not just a Columbia issue, because I-70 is vital to everyone.
- ◆ We'll need a loop in the future because the projected growth numbers are so great.
- ◆ Don't confuse quality of I-70 with traffic – need to improve quality. An 80,000 person town doesn't need a loop.
- ◆ I-70 is like a river dividing the City.
- ◆ Currently I-70 is over capacity. The locals hop on and off. It's not safe.
- ◆ Two interstates two miles apart is unimaginable.
- ◆ Phase I was pro-North and biased.
- ◆ Trying to do the existing alignment is nearly impossible. It would still just be an expressway to get from one side of Columbia to the other.
- ◆ Far North was close to elimination. Didn't seem to make sense when people did the numbers. Something like 16 miles farther.
- ◆ Any one option will be controversial. Will face a good deal of NIMBY concerns.
- ◆ The sooner the decision is made, the better.