



Message from the Project Steering Committee

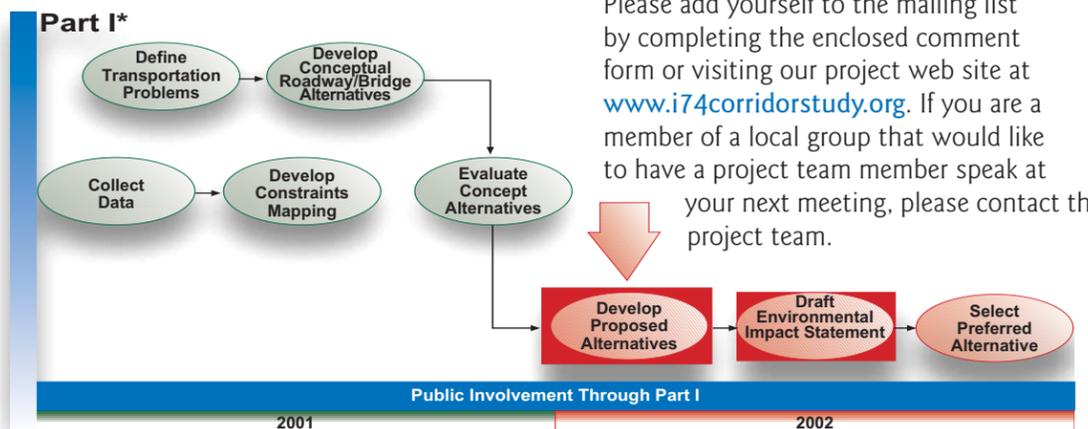
The I-74 Project Steering Committee has been hard at work since the last newsletter. We've been working with the project engineering team to ensure that study recommendations are compatible with community goals and other area transportation initiatives. As a group, we strive to reflect the public's views as we develop an improved "gateway" to the region. Ultimately, we plan to improve traffic flow, while respecting the environment and enhancing the economic development in the region.

The project has progressed significantly during the past several months. We have confirmed the transportation needs and objectives, considered initial concept alternatives along the corridor, participated in the evaluation of concept alternatives, and have begun to consider the travel needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users in the corridor. While the options presented to date have been conceptual in nature, we have been able to reduce the number of reasonable alternatives under consideration (see Page 7 of this newsletter).

During the next few months, the project team will develop more detailed engineering plans for the alternatives. During this same period, the Steering Committee faces some challenging tasks. First, we will begin to consider the aesthetics of the improved Mississippi River crossing to create a visually pleasing and technically viable structure that provides a gateway to the Quad Cities. Our goal is to develop sound design concepts that compliment the character of our communities.

Another important task includes project funding and implementation strategies. At this time, we are only in the first steps of project implementation. The overall construction of the I-74 project is not likely to occur before the year 2010, given the limited transportation funds, length of time required for project development, and anticipated cost of this project. While funds are in place to complete the preliminary engineering and environmental studies, there is currently no funding for the final design engineering, right-of-way acquisition, or project construction. A substantial portion of the project cost will be covered by federal and state (Iowa and Illinois) funds; however, local funding will be required to complete some required local roadway improvements. As we continue to work towards overall project construction, we also understand the need for some near-term improvements and relief. Therefore, we will work with the project team to identify and pursue funding for reasonable near-term improvements and continuing engineering efforts. In the coming months, we will develop project funding and implementation strategies for both near and long-term I-74 corridor improvements.

We are pleased with the progress that has been made over the past year, and encourage you to get involved in the process. Please add yourself to the mailing list by completing the enclosed comment form or visiting our project web site at www.i74corridorstudy.org. If you are a member of a local group that would like to have a project team member speak at your next meeting, please contact the project team.



****Part II of the I-74 study, including preparation of a Final Environmental Impact Study Statement would be initiated after selection of a Preferred Alternative**

- Comment Form
 - Proposed Alternatives
 - Concept Alternatives
 - What We've Heard
 - Purpose and Need
 - Message from the Project Steering Committee
- In This Issue:



The I-74 Iowa-Illinois Corridor Study is jointly sponsored by the Iowa and Illinois Departments of Transportation

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Next Steps:

- More Detailed Engineering
- Aesthetics/Design Features
- Environmental Studies/Documentation
- Funding/Financing Strategies
- Improvement Implementation Plan

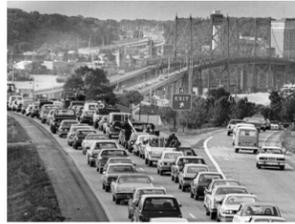
For Further Information

Please contact the project office.

Iowa Department of Transportation
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Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-3150

Purpose and Need

Travel along the I-74 corridor and across the Mississippi River has become increasingly congested and unreliable in recent years, making improvements to I-74 one of the top transportation priorities in the Quad City area.



A variety of factors and conditions result in the need for an improved roadway. Congestion, narrow roadways and bridges, poor merging and weaving conditions near interchanges, closely-spaced interchange ramps, and undesirable roadway curvature and grades, collectively result

Need for the Proposed Action

- Improve safety performance (reduce traffic crashes)
- Correct functional (design and condition) deficiencies
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Improve dependability of travel
- Improve transportation connections
- Enhance economic development

in poor driving conditions. These conditions are most noticeable near the Mississippi River bridges. Crash rates in parts of the corridor are almost three times higher than the national average crash rate for interstate routes.

In order to maintain and expand the economic vitality of the Quad Cities, it is necessary to address and correct some of the transportation deficiencies in the existing transportation network.

Why should we improve I-74?

- Crash rates in parts of the corridor are almost 3 times higher than the national average.
- The existing river crossing has inadequate lane and shoulder widths yielding uncomfortable driving conditions, and little recovery room for errant drivers.
- Interchange spacing throughout downtown Moline and Bettendorf is well below design standards, making safe maneuvers difficult.
- Many of the ramps in the corridor do not provide adequate distance for drivers entering I-74 to accelerate to safe highway speeds.

Thus, the purpose of improving the I-74 corridor is to improve the safety and efficiency of travel through the corridor to meet the current and future travel needs of the region.

Public Involvement

The public plays an important role in the I-74 project. Input is needed from all interested parties and individuals to ensure the recommendations that are developed both comply with sound engineering practice and also provide a plan respectful and complementary of adjacent communities.

Since the publication of our prior newsletter in the spring of 2001, we have continued to provide opportunities for the public to obtain information and comment on the I-74 project. Meetings have been held with area officials, municipal staff, and interested groups to discuss transportation problems and possible solutions. Also, we have continued to update the project information on our web site at www.i74corridorstudy.org. Lastly, we conducted our first round of public information meetings to obtain early public input on the purpose of the project and early improvement concepts.

Our first public information meetings were held in July 2001. The main topics presented at the meetings were: a summary of current I-74 conditions, the purpose and need for proposed improvements, and the initial concept alternatives. In addition, information and exhibits regarding the public involvement program, the overall study process and schedule, and environmental resources and documentation were presented. A complete set of exhibits displayed at the public information meetings is available on the project web site.

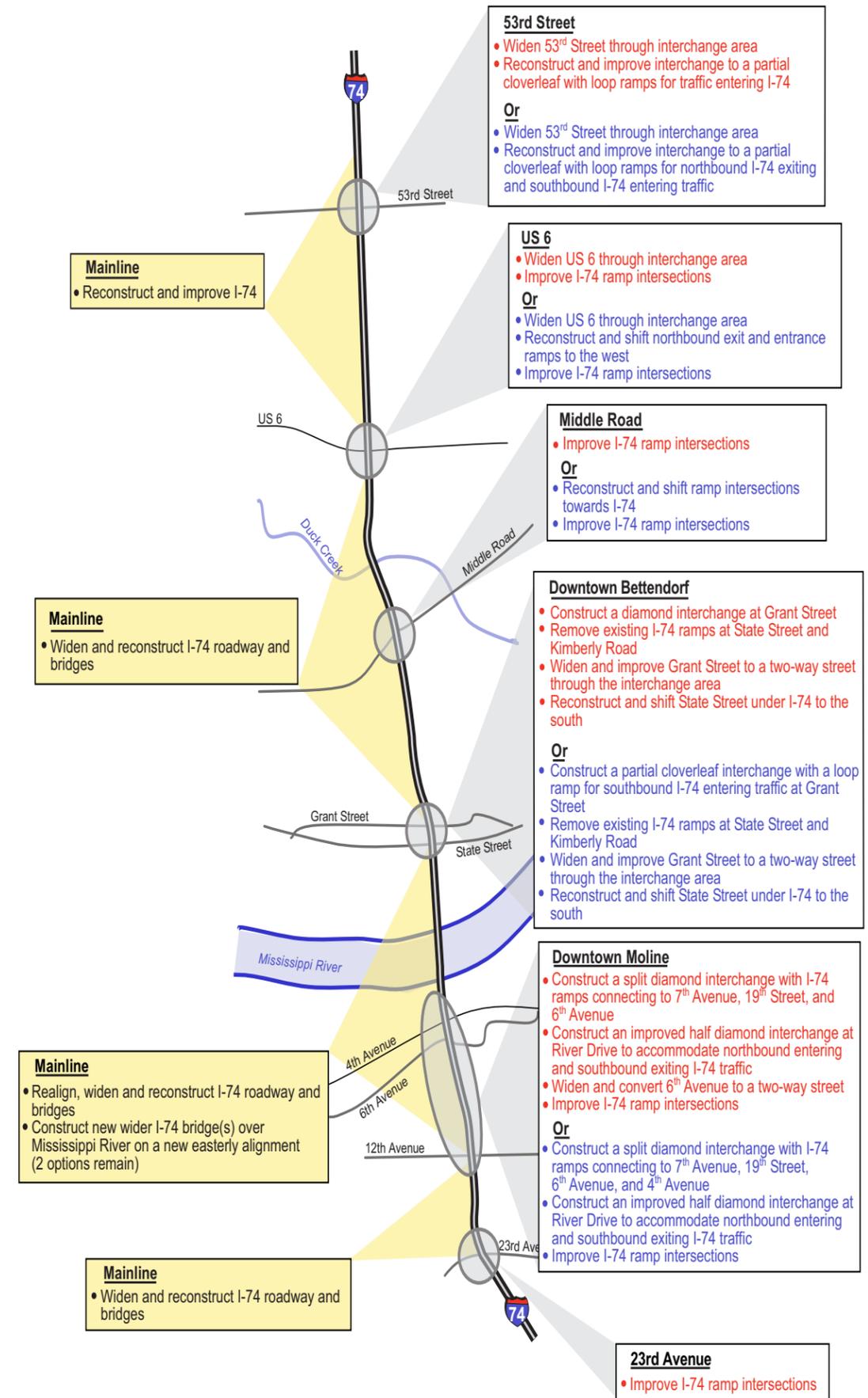
The meetings provided a forum for the public to learn about project activities, and an opportunity for the project team to receive input from the residents and business owners in the corridor. Some of the frequent comments are noted on page 3 of this newsletter.

Our next round of public information meetings will be held this summer. Also, in the coming months, we will continue to meet with area officials, interested groups, and individuals as we proceed with the development of more detailed alternatives for I-74. We will be seeking early feedback on the design features and potential impacts of the I-74 alternatives, and will be asking for community input regarding possible aesthetic and architectural treatments for the I-74 Mississippi River bridge alternatives. We encourage all interested groups and individuals to contact Cathy Cutler with Iowa DOT at 1-800-866-4368 with any questions, comments, or to schedule a meeting regarding the I-74 project.

Proposed Alternatives

Based on initial evaluation and public input, a set of reasonable alternatives has been selected for further development and analysis. These alternatives incorporate improvements along the I-74 mainline, interchange improvement options, and I-74 realignment alternatives for the Mississippi River crossing. In the vicinity of the Mississippi River, two alternatives remain that both involve shifting I-74 to the east of its current alignment and constructing a wider river crossing (shown as Alignments E and F in the figure on page 4). The new bridge(s) would provide 6 lanes of travel and have the capability of future expansion to 8 lanes of travel. Features of the proposed alternatives are depicted on the adjacent graphic.

In the coming months, we will begin developing more detailed engineering plans and bridge concept plans for the alternatives; we will also identify approximate right-of-way needs. This will allow us to further compare and analyze each alternative and to prepare a comprehensive evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.



Iowa Department of Transportation
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Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-3150

----- Fold here, tape, and mail. No envelope necessary. -----

What have we heard?

The Quad Cities need an improved I-74.

Problems cited by the public include congestion, narrow roadways, poor merging and weaving conditions, and inadequate sight distance.

How will interchanges be improved?

All interchanges will be improved to meet current design standards. Improvements include eliminating or relocating select ramps, improving ramp curvature and grades, providing longer merging areas along I-74, and improving local roadways near interchange ramps.

Pedestrians and cyclists need consideration also.

Options under consideration include accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists on the existing bridges and/or improving transit amenities for bicyclists. Other transit improvements could include a select expansion of the regional bus system, or the construction of features such as park and ride lots.

What will happen to the existing Mississippi River bridges?

The twin suspension bridges across the Mississippi River are an important historical element in the Quad Cities. The design of the existing Memorial Bridges is such that they cannot be widened to accommodate the additional capacity needed on I-74. For this reason, a new bridge crossing is being considered. However, reuse of one or both of the existing structures is being considered for other transportation purposes. These may include transit access or a bicycle/pedestrian crossing. Maintenance of the bridges for such uses would be the responsibility of a local agency.

What improvements can be accomplished in the near term?

The concepts developed during the initial stages of this project focus on long-term solutions to improve safety and travel efficiency in the Quad Cities. Given the immediate need for transportation improvements, possible near term projects will be identified and considered. These improvements could include motorist information systems, traffic signal improvements, and local roadway and intersection improvements adjacent to interchange ramps.

Concept Alternatives

Our early efforts focused on developing and considering a broad range of alternative solutions for improving travel and addressing the project purpose and need. We considered non-roadway improvements, established basic roadway improvement requirements, and then identified and evaluated possible concept alternatives. Reasonable concept alternatives that meet the project purpose and need and satisfy the roadway improvement requirements will be advanced for more detailed development and analysis.

Non-Roadway Alternatives

A variety of non-roadway improvements are being considered with this project. These improvements could include **transportation system management (TSM)** strategies, such as traveler information systems or signal coordination. **Transit improvements** could include select expansion of the regional bus system, or the construction of features such as park and ride lots. **Pedestrian/bicycle improvements** under consideration include accommodations on existing bridges or improving transit amenities for bicyclists. However, given the nature and extent of problems along I-74, non-roadway improvements alone will not eliminate the problems along the I-74 corridor. Therefore, they will not be “stand alone” alternatives. Some of the aforementioned strategies, however, will be included as elements of the roadway alternatives to enhance travel connections and to encourage use of alternative transportation modes.

Roadway Improvement Requirements

There are numerous deficiencies and problems along I-74. Basic engineering requirements were defined to ensure that alternatives would correct these problems, address the project purpose and need, and provide a safe and efficient roadway facility for a reasonable period of time. These requirements include:

- Provide acceptable traffic flow conditions for a reasonable period of time beyond construction, requiring widening along I-74
- Improve the operation and capacity of interchanges and connecting local roadways
- Maintain access across the Mississippi River and along I-74 during construction.

