



Chapter 6

Comments

The Milton-Madison Bridge Project has included many opportunities for the public, various stakeholder groups and resource agencies to be involved in the project process. Special outreach efforts were made to involve federal, state, and local governmental agencies under Section 6002 regulations of SAFETEA-LU. Consultation efforts prescribed in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act provided an opportunity for historic preservation groups and interested individuals to take part in the assessment of project effects on historic resources. The Project Advisory Group (PAG), a working group of area residents representing a cross-section of community interests, met regularly to advise the project team and provide a balanced local perspective on project issues.

Besides extensive coordination with local media outlets, several measures were used throughout the project to circulate information to interested parties. Newsletters and other project related informational documents were produced at key milestones and widely distributed. Displays were placed in key locations in both communities. A project website (www.MiltonMadisonBridge.com) was created to distribute documents and to keep the public informed of ongoing project tasks. Paper copies of all documents on the website were made available upon request.

The following sections describe key meetings and other coordination activities scheduled since the project began. Meeting summaries for all public, PAG, and Section 106 meetings are available on the project website.

6.1 Initiation Activities

The Milton-Madison Bridge Project began in the summer of 2008. A Notice of Intent to prepare an EA/FONSI was published in the Federal Register on August 14, 2008.

In September 2008, information was sent to over 100 federal, state, and local government agencies requesting their participation in the project as Cooperating or Participating Agencies under Section 6002. Responses were received from almost 30 agencies, including the US Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Park Service. At the same time, invitations to join the Section 106 process as a consulting party were sent to over 30 federal, state, and local historic preservation interest groups and Native American tribes. A number of

these groups expressed an interest in consulting on the project and have been involved throughout the process; **Appendix P** contains a list of consulting parties.

During the fall of 2008, the Project Advisory Group (PAG) was formed and its members were recommended by local officials in Milton and Madison. The PAG met for the first time in October 2008. This meeting served as a kick-off event to introduce PAG members and the communities to the key tasks of the bridge rehabilitation/replacement project.

6.2 Data Collection & Project Needs

The second and third PAG meetings (November & December 2008) were spent reviewing initial traffic and transportation data collected. PAG members and other attendees were asked to comment on the importance of the bridge and what the project should accomplish, assisting in the development of the Purpose and Need. At these early meetings, attendees suggested new bridge location alternatives to be considered.

Once an initial outline of the project purpose was developed, this was sent to Section 6002 Agencies for review and comment in December 2008. Replies were received from five agencies and will be included in the administrative record for the project.

Based on public and agency input through these venues, a Purpose and Need Statement for the project was written. The existing transportation-related conditions in the study area were documented in the *Needs and Deficiencies Report*. In February 2009, both of these draft documents were circulated through Section 6002 agencies for comments. Eight responses were received and incorporated into the final version of the documents; copies of the correspondence will be included in the administrative record for the project. The *Needs and Deficiencies Report* was made available to the public through the project website. The public was offered an opportunity to comment on the Purpose and Need statement during Public Meeting 1 held February 12, 2009.

6.3 Development of Alternatives

PAG meeting #4 in January 2009 gave the project team an opportunity to share preliminary data on the location alternatives identified at previous PAG meetings. At this point, nine potential new bridge locations had been suggested. The team also previewed the bridge type selection exercise that would occur at the upcoming public meeting.

The first public meeting for the project was held February 12, 2009, at the Brown Gym in Madison. At this event, stations were set up to share information on the Purpose and Need, the Section 106 consultation process, and the initial Location Alternatives. Surveys were distributed to gauge public opinion regarding the project purpose and the initial location alternatives. Bridge Type Selection polling occurred at this meeting, recording aesthetic preferences of PAG members, consulting parties, and the general public. A comprehensive record of this meeting – including display materials, presentations, and surveys returned – is on file with KYTC and INDOT.

An initial meeting for Section 106 consulting parties was held the same day as the first public meeting to encourage parties to attend the public meeting and participate in the polling session.

At the time of the first public meeting, 14 of the 16 alternatives discussed in Chapter 3 had been developed and entered into the alternatives evaluation phase. In February, Section 6002

agencies were provided with a list and description of these alternatives and were asked for any comments and input.

6.4 Alternatives Evaluation Process

Opportunities to provide input on the evaluation of alternatives were provided to PAG members, Section 6002 agencies, and Section 106 consulting parties. The results of these coordination efforts were used in the development of the *Initial Location Alternatives Screening Report*, available on the project website.

The fifth PAG meeting (March 2009) was formatted as a group exercise to get input on the screening of the 14 initial location alternatives. PAG members screened alternatives against the Purpose and Need and against a list of secondary considerations, developed alongside the purpose.

At two different webinars in April, agencies were given an opportunity to discuss and provide input on the alternatives screening process. Agencies were provided with the summary of input received at PAG meeting #5, copies of the draft Purpose and Need Statement, and a worksheet listing the alternatives and screening factors.

At PAG meeting #6 in late April, the results from the Bridge Type Selection were reviewed. The project team also presented an initial subset of alternatives recommended for detailed study, based on input received from agencies, PAG members, and public meeting participants.

In May 2009, copies of the draft *Environmental Overview Report* and draft *Initial Location Alternatives Screening Report* were submitted to Section 6002 agencies and Section 6002 consulting parties for review and comment. Written responses were received from ten individuals and organizations. A webinar for Section 106 consulting parties in late May provided an opportunity for historic preservation groups and individuals to discuss the alternatives screening process.

The second public outreach effort took two formats: an all-day open house in Madison and an online forum. The open house was held on May 19, 2009, at the Visitor's Center. Project team members were available to answer questions and discuss issues in a one-on-one setting with members of the public. The online forum was held June 2, 2009 as a second opportunity to reach out to the communities and provide a more convenient setting for discussion. A comprehensive record of this meeting – including display materials, presentations, and transcript of the forum– is on file with KYTC and INDOT.

6.5 Refinement of Alternatives

Over the summer of 2009, formal involvement opportunities slowed as the project team worked to refine the four alternatives recommended for detailed study. During this time, field visits and environmental surveys were conducted while engineers added cross-sections, alignments, and other detailed features to the corridors.

Once the alternatives for detailed study were identified, a draft Area of Potential Effect (APE) for aboveground historic resources was developed with input from consulting parties. This effort included mailed materials and a meeting in Madison in mid July. Throughout August, consulting parties reviewed materials containing information regarding historic structures within the APE that could be considered eligible for listing in the National Register for Historic Places. At a two-

day workshop in Madison (August 31-September 1, 2009), consulting parties discussed eligible structures and potential effects that could result from any of the remaining alternatives. At this meeting, potential mitigation measures were also suggested by the group. Supplemental materials formally documenting effects on historic resources were submitted to consulting parties for comments following the workshop.

Also during this timeframe, the availability of federal stimulus funding through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant was announced. In light of the deteriorating condition of the bridge, anticipated impacts on Section 4(f) resources, anticipated impacts to the National Historic Landmark District, and the structural displacements associated with other alternatives, the project team decided to pursue TIGER grant funding for the Superstructure Replacement with Minimal Approaches Alternative. The TIGER grant could make adequate funding for a replacement bridge available quickly, a special concern in light of the bridge condition and funding limitations facing both INDOT and KYTC.

In mid August 2009, the PAG met for a seventh time to review the status of ongoing environmental reviews and to discuss the TIGER grant. Later that month, a webinar for Section 6002 agencies gave participants an opportunity to discuss environmental data collection tasks and the direction of the project in light of the TIGER grant.

A third public outreach effort also took two formats: a standard open house in Milton and online forum. The open house was held on September 10, 2009 at the new Milton Elementary School. A presentation covered the refinement of the remaining alternatives and the rationale behind the decision to pursue a TIGER grant. Project team members were available to answer questions and discuss issues following the presentation. Written comments were received from a number of attendees. The online forum was held September 17, 2009, as a second opportunity to reach out to the communities and provide a more convenient setting for discussion. A comprehensive record of this meeting – including display materials, presentations, and transcript of the forum– is on file with KYTC and INDOT.

6.6 Proposed Action

After selecting the Superstructure Replacement with Minimal Approaches as the Proposed Action, coordination activities have continued.

A Mitigation & Aesthetics meeting in October 2009 gave consulting parties an opportunity to discuss direct effects on historic resources, cumulative and indirect effects, and proposed mitigation measures. The cumulative and indirect effects were presented and proposed mitigation measures were discussed. The session also included a discussion on aesthetic elements that should be incorporated into the design of the bridge. Surveys were distributed to poll consulting parties on their preferences for color, portal shape, barriers, and pedestrian railing.

PAG Meeting #8 was held December 10, 2009 and covered the economic cost of the 12-month bridge closure, the ferry operation, and aesthetics. PAG members and public attendees were surveyed to gather input on their preferences for aesthetic elements like truss color, traffic barriers, sidewalk railing, pier shapes, and abutment textures.

A Section 106 meeting was also held December 10th to discuss the economic effects of the 12-month bridge closure, details of the ferry operation, the draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), mitigation, and aesthetics. Consulting parties were surveyed to determine their

aesthetic preferences on bridge design elements like truss color, traffic barriers, sidewalk railing, pier shapes, and abutment textures. Discussion items at this meeting will be used to revise the Draft MOA prior to the completion of the NEPA process.

Following the release of this Environmental Assessment, a public hearing will be held in mid January during the 30-day comment period. Comments received during this period will be considered in the decision-making process and incorporated into the final environmental document for this project.