

SECTION 4

COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

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This section summarizes the agency coordination and public involvement activities that Iowa DOT conducted during preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

4.1 Federal, State, and Local Agency Coordination

At the beginning of the study, three groups were established to provide a forum for discussing the project and soliciting comments from various agencies and elected officials. The three groups were the Resource Agency Group, the Project Management Team, and the Advisory Committee. Correspondences received from agencies are in Appendix A, *Agency Coordination*.

4.1.1 Resource Agency Group

The Resource Agency Group consisted of federal, state, and regulatory agencies involved in the NEPA process. Table 4-1, *Resource Agency Group Members*, lists the agencies that were included in this group. At the onset of the project, this group received an Early Agency Coordination packet to familiarize them with the study area and project background. The role of the Resource Agency Group was to:

- Communicate issues, concerns, and regulatory requirements associated with resources in the project study area;
- Review technical aspects of the study; and
- Participate in meetings and share agency information.

Table 4-1. Resource Agency Group Members

Name of Agency	Name of Agency
Federal Aviation Administration	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Federal Transit Administration	Federal Railroad Administration
National Resource Conservation Service	National Park Service
US Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District	Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
US Coast Guard	US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region VII	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Iowa Department of Economic Development	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Iowa Geological Survey Bureau	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
SiouxLandmark	State Historical Society of Iowa
Woodbury County Conservation Board	Woodbury County Board of Supervisors
Woodbury County Planning and Zoning Department	Woodbury County Engineering Department

A Scoping Meeting for the I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study (SCIS) was held via video conference on January 26, 2005 at the Iowa DOT Headquarters in Ames, Iowa and at the District 3 Office in Sioux City, Iowa. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the scope of the project and allow the agencies to express concerns for specific resources within the project study area.

The following agencies participated in achieving concurrence on established points from the Iowa DOT's NEPA/404 Merge Process:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

The first NEPA/404 Merge Process meeting for the I-29 SCIS was held via video conference on April 27, 2005, at the Iowa DOT Headquarters in Ames, Iowa and at the District 3 Office in Sioux City, Iowa. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the resource and regulatory agencies to the project, introduce the purpose and need, and introduce the alternatives to be analyzed through the NEPA process. Concurrence was reached on the purpose and need for the project. Additionally, alternatives for fulfilling the purpose and need were reviewed and concurrence was reached on the range of alternatives to be analyzed as part of the NEPA process.

The second NEPA/404 Merge meeting for the I-29 SCIS was held via video conference on July 26, 2006 at the Iowa DOT Headquarters in Ames, Iowa and at the District 3 Office in Sioux City, Iowa. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the alternatives being carried forward for further evaluation in the NEPA process. The meeting resulted in concurrence from the regulatory agencies on the alternatives being carried forward in the NEPA process.

4.1.2 Project Management Team

The Project Management Team consists of representatives from local government, regional planning, and transportation agencies. Agencies represented are listed in Table 4-2, *I-29 Project Management Team Members*.

Table 4-2. I-29 Project Management Team Members

Name of Agency	Name of Agency
Federal Highway Administration, Iowa Division	Iowa DOT District 3 Office
Iowa DOT Local Systems	Iowa DOT Systems Planning
Iowa DOT Office of Bridges & Structures	Iowa DOT Office of Design
Iowa DOT Office of Location and Environment	Iowa DOT Office of Right of Way
Iowa DOT Office of Traffic and Safety	Sioux City Engineering Department
Sioux City Planning and Zoning Department	Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council

The Project Management Team was assembled to guide development of a consensus solution for I-29 to provide a mechanism for key stakeholders to provide input on project actions and decisions. The group met 11 times from 2004 through 2007 to discuss project progress and to provide input at key project decision points. Minutes from each meeting are included in the official administrative record for this study and a summary of each meeting is included in Table 4-3, *I-29 Project Management Team Meetings*.

Table 4-3. I-29 Project Management Team Meetings

Meeting Number	Date	Topic
1	9/22/04	Introduced project, reviewed previous studies, discussed guiding principles and design criteria.
2	10/20/04	Prepared for the November 4, 2004 Public Information Meeting (PIM).
3	12/09/04	Reviewed comments from the November 4, 2004 PIM and discussed existing conditions evaluation.
4	1/20/05	Reviewed the preliminary initial concepts.
5	3/09/05	Reviewed the Existing Conditions Technical Memorandum and discussed the initial concepts.
6	5/11/05	Recommended the initial concepts to be carried forward for further analysis.
7	9/29/05	Divided project into three separate projects and modified project limits so Segments 1 and 3 could proceed as independent Categorical Exclusion projects and Segment 2 could proceed as Environmental Impact Statement.
8	6/15/06	Discussed the Value Engineering study and prepared for the July 12, 2006 PIM.
9	8/10/06	Reviewed comments from the July 12, 2006 PIM and evaluated the Value Engineering study recommendations.
10	11/17/06	Prepared for the November 30, 2006 PIM.
11	1/16/07	Reviewed comments from the November 30, 2006 PIM and recommended further development of a modified Alternative B.

4.1.3 Advisory Committee

An advisory committee called the Siouxland Metropolitan Advisory Committee (SMAC) was developed to assist and advise the design team with the development of concepts. This advisory committee was made up of representatives from the City of Sioux City, City of South Sioux City, City of North Sioux City/Dakota Dunes, Siouxland Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Partners, Iowa Department of Transportation, Nebraska Department of Roads, and South Dakota Department of Transportation. Five meetings were held and are described in Table 4-4, *SMAC Meetings*.

Table 4-4. SMAC Meetings

Meeting Number	Date	Topic
1	2/16/05	Discussed the role of the committee and reviewed the environmental and engineering concept development processes.
2	4/07/05	Discussed proposed concepts, typical cross sections, and problems associated with siting a new interchange south of the Floyd River.
3	9/27/05	Reviewed and discussed proposed concepts that were carried forward from the initial concepts phase.
4	6/28/06	Discussed pros and cons for each of the proposed alternatives.
5	11/29/06	Reviewed information being presented at the November 30, 2006 Public Information Meeting and introduced focus committees for future stakeholder input.

4.2 Public Involvement

Opportunities for general public involvement included three public information meetings and an informational website. Handouts including general information about the project and the proposed alternatives for improving I-29 were made available to the public at the public information meetings.

4.2.1 Public Information Meetings

Three public information meetings were held during the study process for the I-29 SCIS. An open house format was used for all three public information meetings. All three meetings were held at the Sioux City Convention Center located at 801 4th Street, Sioux City, Iowa.

Public Information Meeting #1

The first of the three public information meetings was held on November 4, 2004 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. The project study limits at the time of this meeting included a ten mile corridor with project study limits at the Sergeant Bluff Interchange and the South Dakota border. Seventy-four (74) people attended the meeting. Personnel from the Iowa DOT and their consultant staff were on hand to answer the public's questions. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to the public and gather information and feedback from the public regarding traffic, transportation, and resources within the project study area. This meeting was held concurrently

with the Hamilton Boulevard/Southbound I-29 Interchange Improvements public information meeting.

The advertisement for this meeting was placed in local English newspapers and was translated into Spanish and placed in the local Spanish newspaper. A Spanish interpreter was in attendance for this meeting but their services were not utilized.

Displays at the meeting provided information on the purpose and need of the project, the project development process, the project study area, and previous study concepts. The purpose and need, development steps, project study area, and contact information were also placed in a handout that was available to the public at this meeting.

In general, most of the attendees realized a need for the improvements and the majority felt it was due to existing traffic operation concerns. Eight written comments were received. The following is a summary of the issues associated with written and oral comments received at this meeting:

- Access to businesses during and after reconstruction;
- Safety concerns for existing Wesley Parkway/Tri-Level Interchange;
- Existing signage on the interstate is confusing;
- Drainage problems exist along the median shoulder on northbound I-29 approaching Floyd Boulevard;
- Visibility from the interstate to the downtown area between Nebraska Street and Pierce Street;
- Improve pedestrian and vehicle access to riverfront from downtown;
- Reduce the number of exits and entrances on I-29 in the downtown area; and
- Will options allow for expansion to six lanes at a later time?

Public Information Meeting #2

The second of the three public information meetings was held on July 12, 2006 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. The project study limits at the time of this meeting included only the downtown area of I-29, that was moving forward as an Environmental Impact Study. One hundred twenty one (121) people attended the meeting. Personnel from the Iowa DOT and their consultant staff were on hand to answer the public's questions. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an update to the project and to receive feedback on the proposed alternatives presented. Media representatives from KTIV-TV, KCAU-TV, and the Sioux City Journal were present at this meeting.

Scrolls illustrating the proposed alternatives (Alternatives A, B, and C) for the project were printed and displayed around the room. The handout for the meeting included the three proposed alternatives, a list of the differences between each of the alternatives, and a brief update on the status of the project.

Alternative A received strong public support and Alternative B was also well received. Alternative C received the least amount of support of the three alternatives. Twenty five (25) written comments were received. The following is a summary of the written and oral comments received at this meeting concerning the I-29 SCIS:

- Access to the riverfront for pedestrians as well as vehicles should be considered and included in the design of the interstate improvements;
- Concerns about access to businesses during construction and after the improvements are implemented;
- Concerns about connections and disruptions to the trail system in the downtown and riverfront areas;
- Concerns about impacts to individual business parking lots and public parking in the downtown area; and
- Concerns about access locations and visibility from the interstate to the downtown from northbound and southbound direction.

Public Information Meeting #3

The third public information meeting was held on November 30, 2006 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. One hundred five (105) people attended the meeting. Personnel from the Iowa DOT and their consultant staff were on hand to answer the public's questions. The purpose of the meeting was to give the public an update on the project and to receive feedback on the revisions of the proposed alternatives presented. Media representatives from KTIV-TV, KCAU-TV, KMEG-TV, and the Sioux City Journal were present at the meeting.

Displays at the meeting included prints of revised Alternatives A and B with the original display of Alternative C. Modifications that were made to Alternatives A and B as a result of an Iowa DOT value engineering study and public comments were not made to C because of the lack of public support for the alternative. However, Alternative C was carried forward and subjected to the same level of analysis as Alternatives A and B. A computer generated animated view of what Alternatives A and B might look like when constructed was displayed and repeated continuously on a large screen. Static views of key areas were developed from the computer animation and used as displays.

The handout for this meeting showed Alternatives A and B because they had been revised since the previous public meeting whereas Alternative C had not been revised.

Meeting attendees continued to be split between Alternatives A and B with positive statements being made regarding the overall project. Many of those present at the meeting as well as written comments received after the meeting, indicated that the public does not like the change to Gordon Drive's alignment offered in Alternative A, but do like the additional northbound off-ramp offered in Alternative A for separating downtown and industrial traffic. Thirteen (13) written comments were received. Additional comments that were not presented at the previous two public meetings included:

- Need to connect the existing trails, especially completing the connection from east to south of Bacon Creek to west of the Floyd River, and a pedestrian/vehicular connection from the city to the Riverfront.

4.2.2 Project Website

An informational project website, <http://www.iowadot.gov/i29/index.htm>, was established as another means of disseminating information about the project. The web address for this site was given out to the public at the November 30, 2006 public information meeting. The site includes the goals of the project, a description of the project, background information, and displays and handouts from the most recent public information meeting. This site also contains a “contact us” page with contact information and an online form for submitting questions and comments.

4.2.3 Mailing List

A mailing list of 200 names was developed and updated prior to the public information meetings. This list included property owners, interested parties, and representatives from local interest groups. In addition, the list included state, county, and local elected officials as well as representatives from appropriate agencies. This mailing list was used to invite the public to the project public information meetings.