

## 5.0 Agency Coordination

Meetings with state and federal environmental resource agencies took place several times during the study. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss locations of potential environmental impact and concern within the study area, to review the purpose and need for the study and the corridor protection process, and to solicit feedback from agency representatives. These meetings took place as follows:

- August 27, 2003;
- October 3, 2003;
- November 4, 2003; and
- September 22, 2004.

In addition to IDOT and consultant team staff, representatives of the following agencies were in attendance:

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources;
- Illinois Department of Agriculture;
- Illinois Nature Preserves Commission;
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and
- Federal Highway Administration.

As a result of these meetings, a number of issues were found to be of concern to the agencies, IDOT, and the consultant team. Of particular concern was the karst topography and Stemler Cave Recharge Area in the vicinity of Columbia and Millstadt, and the potential impacts of a corridor through this region. Groundwater quality, threatened and endangered species, and secondary and cumulative impacts were also points of discussion in these meetings. There was general consensus that the proposed corridor should have as little impact as possible on sensitive environmental areas, and that a corridor south of the recharge area should be considered. It was understood that the study team's scope of analysis was limited primarily to information of record, and that a more detailed National Environmental Policy Act assessment would take place during a subsequent Phase I study and would include additional agency coordination.

## 6.0 Public Involvement

An inclusive, interactive public involvement program designed to solicit input and inform the citizens, civic leaders, property owners, special interest groups, and other stakeholders in the study area was a key component of the Gateway Connector Corridor Protection Study. A Public Involvement Plan prepared for the study outlined the anticipated methods of communication and outreach tools necessary to involve all potentially affected interests.

Effective public involvement in transportation planning gives people a voice in the decision-making process and is responsive to the information needs of all citizens. The Gateway Connector study's Public Involvement Plan recognized that public outreach activities for the study would need to be flexible and responsive in order to provide as many opportunities as possible for public feedback at key study milestones as well as throughout the study process.

Key to the study's public involvement efforts was engaging the public early; maintaining an active, open dialogue for the duration of the study; and providing consistent messages and information in all public outreach activities. Listening to and understanding the public's viewpoints was vital to the overall process. Public feedback and comment were encouraged at all public meetings, individual and group meetings, and in all printed material distributed to the public. All public comments were reviewed as part of the public involvement process. Reasonable suggestions or recommendations that addressed the study's purpose and need, or revealed potentially significant issues or impacts, were incorporated into the team's analysis and decision-making.

The public involvement process is not a vote - statements of support or opposition are not tallied and a "winner" subsequently declared. Rather, the process is designed to help the study team understand the views and concerns of everyone interested in the study and address those concerns in the best manner possible.

The purpose of the study, the need for and benefits of a protected corridor, and details of the corridor protection process were consistently and clearly stated in all public communications and outreach during the study. It was explained that: the study was being conducted now to protect a corridor for future anticipated transportation needs in the region; current growth trends were projected to continue with or without a protected corridor in place; this growth would result in greater stress on existing transportation systems; and failing to protect a corridor now would mean greater impacts to residential areas, businesses, agriculture, and the natural environment if the issue is addressed in the future when the need becomes critical.

A unique identity "Gateway Connector: Planning Now for the Future" and logo were created through a collaborative process between IDOT District 8, the consultant team, and the Study Management Group. Whereas the Feasibility Study referred to the proposed corridor as the "Route 158 Outer Belt" (a title which inferred a new corridor would take this state route designation), the purpose of this effort in the corridor study was to emphasize the regional character and long-term benefits of the corridor study with a distinctive, easily-remembered identification.

## 6.1 Communication Protocols

Guidelines for communication to and from the public (external), as well as between IDOT and consultant team members (internal), were developed at the study's outset. The goal was to ensure that consistent, timely, and accurate information was being shared with the public in the most responsive and efficient manner possible. These guidelines included the following:

- Points of contact for the public, including postal and e-mail addresses and phone/fax/TDD numbers;
- Production and distribution of meeting agendas and summaries;
- Production and review of handouts, newsletters, and printed material for public distribution;
- Cataloging, distribution, and responses to communications from public, legislators, and civic leaders; and
- Media inquiries.

## 6.2 Summary of Public Feedback

As detailed in Section 6.3 below, outreach activities during the study took place in many different forums and through the use of a variety of tools. Feedback was received through written correspondence, e-mails, and phone calls from citizens as well as in face to face discussions at all meetings, including public meetings. Several general and consistent themes were apparent in comments and input obtained during the course of the study, and are summarized here.

- Support for the Study:
  - A protected corridor will benefit the region by improving safety and traffic flow and will help stimulate the region's economy;
  - The study is far-sighted in addressing the region's future transportation needs resulting from continued growth and development;
  - The protected corridor should follow existing roadways and should avoid impacts to residential areas, businesses, farms, and the environment as much as possible;
  - Preference for or suggestions to modify specific corridor alternatives were stated;
  - Suggestions for location of additional corridor alternatives were stated; and
  - Skeptical or not fully supportive of study but understand its purpose and that the region is changing.
- Opposition to the Study:
  - A protected corridor will encourage urban sprawl, will negatively impact the region's rural character and way of life, and will further erode Metro East urban communities;
  - A protected corridor will result in residential and agricultural displacements and will be harmful to the natural environment;
  - The corridor protection process will place hardships on property owners and devalue property;
  - Air and noise pollution and traffic volumes will increase;
  - Existing facilities are adequate; IDOT should devote funding and resources to other more necessary improvements, including mass transit;
  - Study is a poor use of taxpayer dollars; and
  - Feasibility Study conclusions based on flawed data.

In February 2004, the study team received a petition from residents and property owners along Douglas Road in St. Clair County. Approximately 35 individuals signed the petition, which

rather than oppose the study or overall project need encouraged the study team to select a corridor alternative that avoided populated areas (specifically Douglas Road) and that was located over undeveloped ground.

In October 2004, the study team received a petition from Millstadt resident William Cunningham. Seventeen individuals had signed the petition which requested that the corridor selected for the study avoid impacts to Mr. Cunningham's home which dates to the mid-1850's and could have some historic significance.

Public comments from all public informational meetings, e-mails, phone calls, and other correspondence were compiled in Appendix C, which is not part of this report. Appendix C can be examined by appointment at the IDOT District 8 office, 1102 Eastport Plaza Drive, Collinsville. Appendix C is contained in eight separate binders as follows:

- Volume A: Public Meetings 1 and 2
- Volume B: Public Meeting 3
- Volume C: Public Hearings
- Volume D: Public Correspondence
- Volume E: Special Interest Groups & Other Individuals
- Volume F: Website Comments
- Volume G: Comment Line, Phone Calls, and Mailing List
- Volume H: Meeting Summaries, Petitions, and other material

### **6.3 Outreach Activities**

Throughout the study, IDOT and the consultant team emphasized the importance of sharing information and exchanging ideas with all groups and individuals interested in the study. A hallmark of the study's public involvement efforts was the scope and volume of engagement between the study team and public officials, residents, property owners, special interest groups, developers, and all who expressed an interest in the study. In addition to three series of public informational meetings, over 60 group and individual meetings and briefings were held during the course of the study.

These meetings served several purposes: they engaged the public at a grass-roots level and involved people in the decision-making process; they provided a forum for discussion and dialogue between the study team and the public; and they added transparency to the overall study process by giving people access to IDOT and consultant team members and to pertinent study-related information and data.

#### **6.3.1 Study Management Group (SMG)**

A Study Management Group (SMG) was assembled to provide technical guidance to the study team as well as act as a sounding-board for the study team's assumptions and decisions. The format, makeup, and general focus of this group was also utilized in the previous Feasibility Study. The group was not a voting body. The group's members included Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe county engineers; representatives of East-West Gateway and FHWA; and IDOT staff from District 8 and Bureau of Design and Environment.

The group's overall purpose was as follows:

- Collaborate with study team in defining problems and issues in the study area;
- Provide input and feedback to study's decisions and assumptions;
- Identify anticipated long-range planning and land use needs;

- Provide comment and feedback on preliminary corridors and Preferred Corridor;
- Act as liaison between the public and the study team; and
- Review findings from public involvement activities.

SMG meetings took place at key study milestones and prior to public information meetings. The group's meetings always included study progress updates and a schedule of upcoming activities. SMG meetings took place as follows:

- March 3, 2003 "Kickoff" meeting;
- October 14, 2003 Presentation of alternative corridors;
- May 4, 2004 Presentation of revised Columbia-area alternatives; and
- August 6, 2004 Presentation of Preferred Corridor.

### 6.3.2 Public Officials

Meetings with state and federal legislators, as well as elected officials and executive staff of the counties and municipalities in the study area, played an important role in the study's public involvement efforts. These meetings took place at key study milestones, prior to public meetings, and at the request of civic leaders. The purpose of these meetings was to provide these officials with an update on the study's progress and supply them with relevant details about the study in order to answer constituents' questions. The meetings also served as a forum for discussing the study team's findings, data, and analysis and offered an opportunity for comments and feedback.

Legislators' update meetings took place on the following dates:

- April 7, 2003;
- October 10, 2003;
- August 6, 2004; and
- September 8, 2004.

Meetings with community and county officials took place as follows:

- March 10, 2003 Monroe County and Columbia (combined meeting);
- March 19, 2003 Belleville;
- March 19, 2003 St. Clair County, O'Fallon, Belleville, Shiloh, Freeburg, Mascoutah, Smithton, Millstadt, Dupo (combined meeting);
- March 28, 2003 Madison County and Troy (combined meeting);
- April 8, 2003 Columbia;
- April 21, 2003 O'Fallon;
- July 10, 2003 Troy;
- Aug. 4, 2003 Freeburg, Smithton, Millstadt (individual meetings);
- Aug. 7, 2003 Mascoutah;
- Aug. 12, 2003 Dupo;
- Sept. 9, 2003 Scott Air Force Base;
- Sept. 10, 2003 Shiloh;
- Oct. 20, 2003 Columbia, Freeburg, Millstadt (individual meetings);
- Oct. 22, 2003 O'Fallon;
- Oct. 23, 2003 Mascoutah, Belleville, Shiloh (individual meetings);
- Oct. 24, 2003 Scott Air Force Base;
- Oct. 30, 2003 Smithton, Belleville (individual meetings);
- Nov. 13, 2003 Troy;
- Dec. 10, 2003 Scott Air Force Base;

- May 4, 2004 Madison County, St. Clair County, Monroe County, Troy, O'Fallon, Mascoutah, Freeburg, Smithton, Millstadt, Columbia, Waterloo, Scott AFB (combined meeting);
- May 7, 2004 St. Clair County, Millstadt (combined meeting);
- May 7, 2004 Monroe County, Columbia, Waterloo (combined meeting);
- Sept. 14, 2004 Belleville;
- Sept. 15, 2004 O'Fallon;
- Sept. 20, 2004 Columbia;
- Sept. 23, 2004 Smithton, Scott Air Force Base (individual meetings);
- Sept. 24, 2004 Waterloo, Mascoutah (individual meetings);
- Sept. 28, 2004 Millstadt, Freeburg (individual meetings);
- Oct. 1, 2004 Troy; and
- Oct. 12, 2004 Columbia.

### 6.3.3 Public Information Meetings

Three series of public meetings were held at key study milestones, as described below. A total of 1,744 people attended the meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to provide a forum for public comment on the study and give interested citizens access to relevant study information, to study team members, and to the study's decision-making process.

All meetings were held in an open-house format from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. No formal presentations or oral statements were made. Meeting attendees were greeted by team members, asked to sign an attendance sheet, and provided with informational handouts and fact sheets. A variety of study-related exhibit boards could be examined by meeting attendees. These exhibits consisted of: aerial maps showing the general study area, environmental features, land use, and alternative corridors; displays explaining the study's purpose and need, corridor protection process, and other relevant information; topographic displays showing environmental features and concerns; anticipated schedule; and points of contact. IDOT and consultant study team members were present to discuss the study, answer questions, and address concerns of meeting attendees. IDOT environmental and property acquisition staff were also in attendance. Comment forms, provided at all meetings, could be filled out during the meeting or returned by mail to the study team. An audiotape recorder was available for those wishing to make oral comments (none did).

A variety of methods were used to notify the public of each series of meetings: news releases were distributed to local media outlets; a newsletter was produced prior to each series of public meetings and mailed to individuals on the study's mailing list; meeting dates, times, and locations were posted on the study website; and variable message boards were placed on selected high-volume roadways in the vicinity of each meeting location.

#### **First Public Information Meeting**

The study's first series of public information meetings took place in July 2003 and was attended by 559 people. The meetings were held as follows:

Date (2003)	Location	Attendance
July 7	Troy - Triad High School	195
July 8	Columbia - Parkview Elementary School	210
July 9	Belleville - Southwestern Illinois College	154

The purpose of this first round of public meetings was to introduce the study to the public, outline the purpose and need for the study, review the Feasibility Study, and provide a forum for public comment and feedback. No preliminary corridors had been developed at this point in the study; meeting attendees were presented with aerial maps depicting the limits of the study area, environmental features, and land use. A narrated power point presentation explaining the corridor protection process and the need for and benefits of a new corridor could be viewed by meeting attendees.

Eighty-one comment forms were returned: 17 at Troy; 15 at Columbia; 21 at Belleville; and 27 by mail. One form submitted did not indicate the meeting the individual had attended. Of these, 33 expressed some form of support for the study and/or a new corridor; 18 expressed opposition; 13 requested study maps or to be placed on the study mailing list; and 17 made comments unrelated to the current study.

Comments received at this round of public meetings can be summarized as follows:

- Satisfaction with meeting and support for the study;
- Proposed corridor should avoid residential and agricultural areas and use existing facilities as much as possible;
- Options utilizing existing roadways were suggested;
- Potential impacts to sensitive natural areas should be evaluated;
- General dissatisfaction and opposition to the study;
- Proposed corridor will result in sprawl and will adversely impact farmland and residential areas;
- Existing roadway facilities should be improved instead of protecting a new corridor; and
- IDOT should promote mass transportation options in region.

### **Second Public Information Meeting**

The second series of public meetings was held in November 2003 and was attended by 638 people. The meetings took place as follows:

<b>Date (2003)</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Nov. 12	Columbia - The Falls Reception & Conference Center	318
Nov. 13	Belleville - Southwestern Illinois College	152
Nov. 19	Troy - Triad High School	168

The purpose of the second set of public meetings was to present the study's preliminary alternative corridors for public review and comment. Meeting attendees were presented with aerial maps depicting the limits of the study area, environmental features, and land use with the preliminary alternatives overlaid.

One hundred twenty-seven comment forms were returned: 42 at Columbia; 30 at Belleville; 12 at Troy; and 42 by mail. One form submitted did not indicate the meeting the individual had attended. Of these, 64 expressed support for the study; 43 expressed opposition; 15 requested study maps or to be placed on the study mailing list; and 5 made comments unrelated to the current study.

Comments received at this round of public meetings can be summarized as follows:

- General support for the study; proposed corridor will benefit region;
- Preference for a specific alternative, modifications to alternatives, or suggestions for other corridor options was stated;
- Proposed corridor should avoid impacts to residential, agricultural, and natural areas and use existing facilities as much as possible;
- Skepticism of study but understand process and that the region is changing;
- General opposition to the study; study is unnecessary and a waste of money;
- Proposed corridor will result in sprawl and will adversely impact farmland, residential areas, environment, and quality of life;
- Existing roadway facilities should be improved instead of protecting a new corridor;
- Feasibility Study results and current study's population and traffic data are flawed; and
- Air and noise pollution and traffic will increase.

### **Third Public Information Meeting**

The third series of public meetings was held in May 2004 and was attended by a total of 547 people. The meetings took place as follows:

<b>Date (2004)</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
May 25	Columbia - The Falls Reception & Conference Center	446
May 27	Belleville - Southwestern Illinois College	101

This series of meetings was not originally scoped. Following the second set of public meetings, the study team received feedback from environmental resource agencies, local officials, and the general public that indicated additional corridor alternatives should be developed in the Columbia area to minimize potential environmental and residential impacts and provide consistency with future land use plans. Therefore, the purpose of the third set of public meetings was to present these additional and revised alternatives in the Columbia area for public comment, and to show the alternatives that had been eliminated in the preliminary evaluation prior to this series of public meetings.

One hundred four comment forms were returned: 55 in Columbia; 12 in Belleville; and 37 by mail. Of these, 26 expressed support for the study; 57 expressed opposition to the study; 16 requested study maps or to be placed on the study mailing list; and 5 made comments unrelated to the current study.

Comments received at this round of public meetings can be summarized as follows:

- General support for the study; proposed corridor will benefit region;
- Preference for a specific alternative, modifications to alternatives, or suggestions for other corridor options was stated;
- Proposed corridor should avoid impacts to residential, agricultural, and natural areas and use existing facilities as much as possible;
- Elimination and modification of alternatives showed responsiveness to public; new alternatives will be beneficial to Illinois Route 3 traffic;
- General opposition to the study; study is unnecessary and a waste of money;
- Proposed corridor will result in sprawl and will adversely impact farmland, residential areas, environment, and quality of life;
- Study and proposed corridor will benefit politicians, developers, new residents; and
- Existing roadway facilities should be improved instead of protecting a new corridor.

### 6.3.4 Public Hearing

In accordance with Illinois State Statute 605 ILCS 5/4-510 (the “Corridor Protection” statute) a series of public hearings were held in November 2004 to present the study’s Preferred Corridor for public review and comment. The hearings were attended by a total of 1,270 people, and were held as follows:

Date (2004)	Location	Attendance
Nov. 3	Belleville - Southwestern Illinois College	303
Nov. 4	Columbia - The Falls Reception & Conference Center	765
Nov. 10	Collinsville - Gateway Convention Center	202

These public hearings were the fourth and final series of public information meetings for the study, and were held in an open-house format from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. each day. No formal presentations or oral statements were made.

As with the previous public meetings, attendees were greeted by team members, asked to sign an attendance sheet, and provided with informational handouts, fact sheets, and a comment form. Exhibits available for inspection included:

- General study area map with Preferred Corridor highlighted;
- Detailed “flip chart” maps showing affected properties in the Preferred Corridor;
- Maps showing evolution of study area and alternatives;
- Projected traffic in study area and Preferred Corridor;
- Environmental features in the Columbia area;
- Population trends in the study area and Metro East region;
- Project and improvement process timelines;
- Purpose and need for the study;
- Study activities;
- Anticipated Phase I activities; and
- Corridor protection explanation and process

IDOT Location Studies staff and consultant study team members were present to answer questions, discuss the Preferred Corridor, and address concerns of meeting attendees. IDOT Environmental and Land Acquisition staff were also in attendance. Comment forms could be filled out during the hearings or returned by mail to the study team by November 30. An audiotape recorder was available for those wishing to make oral comments (none did).

Notification of the meetings was provided to local media outlets through a news release. A public hearing notice was published in the Belleville News Democrat on October 10; the Waterloo Republic Times on October 13; and the Troy Times Tribune on October 14. The study’s fourth and final newsletter, which provided details about the hearings as well as general study-related information, was mailed to individuals on the project mailing list approximately 2 weeks prior to the November 3 meeting. In addition, information about the meetings was posted on the study website, and variable message boards announcing the meetings were positioned on roadways in each community location. Details of the meetings were also carried on the O’Fallon cable TV electronic bulletin board channel from October 8 to November 10.

In order to provide as much information and notice of the hearings to the general public as possible, a news conference was held on the morning of November 3 (prior to the first hearing). Area media outlets were notified of the conference the previous week, and 12 reporters and

photographers from 8 local newspapers and television and radio stations were in attendance. The purpose of the news conference was to provide the media with an overview of the study, present the Preferred Corridor, and answer questions prior to the public hearings. Subsequent reports were published and aired over the next several days, including a Belleville News-Democrat editorial in support of the project. Reporters and photographers also attended the hearings, which resulted in several published and broadcast reports.

One hundred eighty-one comment forms were returned: 25 in Belleville; 68 in Columbia; 31 in Collinsville; and 57 by mail. Of these, 57 expressed support for the study; 69 expressed opposition to the study; 27 requested study maps; and 28 made comments or questions of a nature that suggested neither support nor opposition to the study. These comments can be summarized as follows:

- General support for the study, the Preferred Corridor, and IDOT's overall planning efforts;
- Statements that early planning efforts will minimize impacts and costs in the future;
- Statements that a new corridor is needed now; that growth is outpacing transportation needs; and that traffic congestion and safety conditions are bad now;
- Appreciation of public meetings; outreach efforts; and availability, knowledge, and helpfulness of team members;
- General opposition to the study and corridor protection process; corridor is not needed; and Preferred Corridor will impact home, farm, property, and environmental/natural areas;
- Statements that corridor will result in increased development and urban sprawl and will alter rural, agricultural, and small-town way of life of region;
- Perception that construction is imminent and that project represents wasteful, politically-motivated spending; and
- Statements that IDOT should concentrate on other transportation needs (i.e., new Mississippi River bridge and existing facilities), urban redevelopment, and mass transit

Prior to the public hearings, 35 letters of support for the corridor and the study were received from area business people and residents. Following the public hearings, letters of support for the corridor and the study were received from State Senator David Luechtefeld; State Representative Ron Stephens; and State Representative Thomas Holbrook. Other official support for the study received by the study team prior to the public hearings was documented in resolutions passed by the St. Clair County Board and the Mascoutah City Council.

In late November 2004, the Stop 158 group delivered to the study team a summary of comments received on the group's website between April and November 2004. This summary is discussed in detail in Section 6.3.6 of this report.

Just prior to the public hearings (October 2004), a petition was also received from Millstadt resident William Cunningham and is discussed in Section 6.2 above.

### **6.3.5 Small Group and Individual Meetings**

Small group and individual meetings were an important component of the study's overall public outreach efforts and served to facilitate a meaningful exchange of information, ideas, and dialogue between the study team and interested groups and individual citizens. Meetings took place throughout the study. Many meetings were held at the request of these groups and

individuals, who contacted the study team in order to obtain more specific information than could be provided by the website or through phone discussion.

These meetings took place as follows:

- April 9, 2003 Floyd Schlueter and business associates;
- May 30, 2003 United Congregations of Metro East;
- June 13, 2003 United Congregations of Metro East;
- Aug. 11, 2003 Donald Egelston;
- Aug. 11, 2003 Donald Divers;
- Aug. 11, 2003 Dean Pruitt;
- Aug. 14, 2003 Vision Group (also attended by Belleville staff);
- Aug. 18, 2003 Bob Ramsey;
- Sept. 22, 2003 Stop 158;
- Oct. 23, 2003 Mid-America Airport;
- Nov. 4, 2003 Stop 158;
- Dec. 1, 2003 Belleville constituents of Sen. Clayborne (also attended by Sen. Clayborne)
- Dec. 3, 2003 Bill Hawn;
- Dec. 9, 2003 David Mueller;
- Dec. 9, 2003 Floyd Schlueter and business associates (also attended by Belleville staff);
- Dec. 12, 2003 United Congregations of Metro East;
- Dec. 17, 2003 Tom and Susan Wann;
- Dec. 29, 2003 Dennis Herzing (also attended by Frank Heiligenstein and St. Clair County staff);
- Jan. 9, 2004 The Pines residents;
- Jan. 22, 2004 Columbia Flying Club;
- Jan. 28, 2004 St. Clair Associated Vocational Enterprises (SAVE);
- March 4, 2004 Monroe County Farm Bureau;
- March 25, 2004 Madison and St. Clair County Farm Bureaus;
- May 4, 2004 Phil Sheets;
- May 24, 2004 Vision Group (also attended by Belleville staff);
- June 15, 2004 Frierdich Developers;
- June 16, 2004 Algonquin Forest residents;
- June 21, 2004 Bill and Leo Sander;
- Aug. 19, 2004 Carlyle Mueller;
- Oct. 19, 2004 Belleville Rotary Club;
- Oct. 25, 2004 Stop 158;
- Nov. 17, 2004 Mr. and Mrs. Larry Alves;
- Dec. 6, 2004 Brad and Kevin Schaller; and
- Dec. 29, 2004 Mrs. Larry Alves.

### 6.3.6 Group and Individual Opposition

The participation and input of organized and individual (i.e., local residents and property owners) opposition was important to the overall corridor study process by helping the study team gain an understanding of their concerns, viewpoints, and opinions. A number of one-on-one meetings with groups and individuals, as well as numerous telephone conversations, e-mail correspondence, and discussion at public meetings facilitated a respectful exchange of ideas and information. In all cases, the study team sought to reiterate the purpose for the study, the projected need for a new corridor, and the consequences of failing to protect a corridor now. An effort was made to find common ground on topics of importance to those opposed to the study, such as the need for collaborative action in addressing regional growth and transportation improvement issues.

Much of the comment in opposition to the study or the proposed corridor expressed concern that a protected corridor would adversely impact property; would destroy the area's rural character and way of life; would encourage sprawl at the expense of Metro East urban communities; and would result in irreversible environmental impacts. Among many opponents there was a general perception that the Corridor Protection Study would result in immediate property acquisition or condemnation; would place unnecessary hardships on property owners within the corridor; and would result in imminent construction of a high-speed, limited access roadway facility in the corridor. Some opponents objected to what they perceived was a misguided use of state funding for the corridor study and the Gateway Connector project in general.

Organized opposition to the study was represented by Stop 158 (a group of residents of the Troy/O'Fallon area) and United Congregations of Metro East (UCM - an interfaith organization focused on equity issues). In addition, the study team engaged residents' groups from The Pines in Columbia and Algonquin Forest in the Millstadt area.

### **Stop 158**

Meetings with Stop 158 took place on September 22, 2003; November 4, 2003; and October 25, 2004. An informal meeting with group member Bob Ramsey was held August 18, 2003. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss issues of concern to the group and provide them with relevant study facts and information. Prior to the September 22, 2003 meeting, the study team was asked by the group to provide responses to a prepared list of 57 questions. In August 2004 the group delivered to IDOT a petition containing approximately 1,200 signatures in opposition to the study. The members of Stop 158, whose goal is to encourage state officials to cease all planning for the proposed corridor, also launched a website ([www.stop158.org](http://www.stop158.org)) which outlined their rationale for ending the project.

Following the public hearings in November 2004, the group delivered to the study team a summary of opposition messages received on the Stop 158 website. These electronic "signatures" and comments represented 174 individuals and were submitted to Stop 158 between April and November 2004 (those dated prior to June 16, 2004 are also on the above-referenced Stop 158 petition). In general, the comments questioned the financial expenditures and need for the corridor; expressed concern that the corridor would impact the area's rural character and way of life; stated the perception that construction of a multi-lane facility was imminent; and questioned the political and economic motivations for the corridor.

### **United Congregations of Metro East (UCM)**

Meetings with UCM took place May 30, June 13, and December 12, 2003. As with Stop 158, these meetings were useful in discussing issues of concern and in sharing study information.

### **Other Groups and Individuals**

The study team met with residents of The Pines neighborhood on January 9, 2004. Of concern to this group were corridor alternatives that would have represented significant residential displacements. In February 2004 the group delivered a petition to the study team containing approximately 270 signatures in opposition to the alternatives. In response to this feedback, and in conjunction with other input, the study team made modifications to the alternatives (see Section 6.5).

On June 16, 2004, the study team met with residents of the Algonquin Forest neighborhood in the Millstadt area. The group expressed concerns about potential impacts to their neighborhood and the environment, and asked the study team to respond to a prepared list of 24 questions.

## 6.4 Outreach Tools

A variety of tools and techniques were employed to solicit public feedback and to provide study facts and information in a timely, responsive manner. Traditional public outreach tools such as newsletters, handouts, fact sheets, news releases, and public meeting comment forms were utilized. As well, several non-traditional methods of public involvement proved to be useful in disseminating study information and soliciting feedback. These included a study website and e-mail address, a toll-free comment line, study “business cards,” and a list of Frequently Asked Questions. The combination of these tools provided tremendous flexibility in distributing information about the study and in responding to the concerns and input of the public.

A mailing list was created at the study’s inception. The foundation for this list came from sign-in forms from the Feasibility Study’s public meetings. Names were added to the list following each of the corridor study’s public meetings and throughout the study as requested by interested citizens. As of September 2004, nearly 1,700 individuals were on the mailing list.

### 6.4.1 Website and E-Mail

A dedicated study website ([www.gatewayconnector.com](http://www.gatewayconnector.com)) was developed and launched early in the study. The purpose of the website was to provide an always-available source of project information to interested citizens. A link to the website was available from IDOT’s main website. The website was updated periodically with relevant information and maps, particularly following the public meetings.

Visitors to the website could review and download a variety of study information including:

- General study facts such as the purpose and need for the study;
- Feasibility Study;
- Corridor protection statute;
- Timelines and anticipated schedule;
- Public meeting information and public involvement updates;
- Maps of study area and corridor alternatives;
- Frequently Asked Questions; and
- Study points of contact (mailing address, phone number, e-mail address).

One page of the website provided a form by which comments could be submitted electronically to the study team. An e-mail address, [studyteam@gatewayconnector.com](mailto:studyteam@gatewayconnector.com), was linked to this comment form and could also be utilized for standard e-mail messages. As of December 2004, over 480 comments had been received from the website or e-mail. Website visitors could also register for the study mailing list by way of the comment form.

### 6.4.2 Comment Line

A dedicated toll-free phone line (866-772-9148) was established for public access to the study team. Callers could speak directly to a team member for answers to their questions or to voice their comments. If a call was placed outside of regular business hours or when team members were unavailable, an announcement encouraged callers to leave a message which was returned by a team member. Calls were logged with caller’s name, date and time of call, team member responding, and purpose of call. As of December 2004, over 100 calls had been registered.

### 6.4.3 Newsletters and Business Cards

A newsletter was produced prior to each series of public meetings and the public hearings for a total of four separate newsletters. The newsletters were distributed to the study mailing list and were also available at the public meetings and at the IDOT District 8 office. The newsletters provided updates of study activities to date, addressed issues such as the corridor protection process and the purpose and need for the study, and announced dates and locations of upcoming public meetings.

“Business cards” were produced and distributed at public meetings, in individual meetings, at public facilities such as village and city halls, and were made available at the IDOT District 8 office. The size of a standard business card, these cards were intended to provide citizens with a handy reference for the study’s points of contact. Included on the cards were the study’s postal and e-mail addresses, toll-free phone/fax/TDD numbers, and website address.

### 6.4.4 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) was created early in the study. This was a useful tool for answering common questions about the study, corridor protection, and addressing other issues relevant to the study. The list was updated as necessary with new questions and corresponding answers. The FAQ list was posted on the website and distributed at all public meetings.

## 6.5 Study Modifications Resulting from Public Input

All public comments were reviewed as part of the public involvement process. Reasonable suggestions or recommendations that addressed the study’s purpose and need, or revealed potentially significant impacts, were incorporated into the team’s decision-making and analysis. The following illustrate several instances of actions made by the study team as a result of public input:

- Illinois Route 4:

Input – Stop 158 and the general public asked the study team to look at Illinois Route 4 as a corridor option.

Action – Subsequent analysis by the team showed that Illinois Route 4 would not serve the expected traffic need, would be a redundant system, and would add length and costs to the corridor.

- Feasibility Study:

Input – Stop 158 and the general public asked for electronic access to the Feasibility Study.

Action – Entire Feasibility Study was scanned and placed on project website for viewing and download.

- Belleville Area:

Input – St. Clair Associated Vocational Enterprises (SAVE) and residents west of SAVE suggested modifications to Alternative C2 to minimize potential residential and environmental impacts.

Action – Alternative C2 was modified, resulting in fewer potential impacts.

- **Columbia Area:**

Input – Environmental resource agencies, local residents, and the general public expressed concerns that Alternatives E1 and E2 (north of Illinois Route 158) would have potential impacts to Stemler Cave Recharge Area and sinkholes.

Action – Alternatives E1 and E2 were eliminated in the preliminary evaluation on April 21, 2004.

Input – Residents of The Pines subdivision, Columbia city officials, and the general public all opposed Alternatives E4, E5 and E6 which traversed the northern portion of The Pines and would have resulted in significant displacements.

Action – Alternatives E4, E5 and E6 were eliminated in the preliminary evaluation on April 21, 2004.

Input – Local residents and the general public suggested that a shared segment of Alternatives E7, E8 and E9, which touched the southern edge of The Pines and traversed Joyview Acres, should be moved to minimize impacts.

Action – The segment was shifted several hundred feet south of The Pines following the November 2003 public meetings. The segment was moved again after the January 9, 2004 meeting with Columbia area residents. It is now approximately 2,000 feet south of The Pines and also avoids impacts to Joyview Acres.

Input – Environmental resource agencies, Columbia and Monroe County officials, and the general public recommended that new alternatives should be developed south of Columbia and the Stemler Cave Recharge Area.

Action – The study area was expanded further south of Columbia, and new alternatives were developed to examine the potential for lower environmental, human, and agricultural impacts; greater consistency with future land use; and improved safety and traffic conditions on Illinois Route 3.

## **6.6 Media Relations**

Contact with the media was important throughout the study. The study team recognized the media's role in helping inform the general public about the study. To this end, team members answered questions, provided background and other relevant information, and gave interviews to print and broadcast media representatives. Press packets containing study-related information useful to reporters and editors were prepared for each series of public meetings. Numerous newspaper, radio, and television reports were produced during the study.

As discussed in Section 6.3.4 above, a News Conference was held prior to the study's public hearings.

## 7.0 Summary and Recommendations

In response to the expansion of development and projected future traffic growth in the Gateway Connector study area, IDOT initiated a study to identify and preserve a corridor for future transportation use. The purpose of this corridor protection study is to accomplish the following:

1. Identify a future corridor that will accommodate a range of transportation improvements that can address identified needs;
2. Preserve a future transportation corridor that will minimize impacts to the human and natural environment; and
3. Minimize costs associated with the development of a future transportation facility.

The development of corridor alternatives for the Gateway Connector was undertaken using a stepwise interdisciplinary approach within each of five sections of the study area. Corridor development was a dynamic process that entailed a consideration of factors related to engineering feasibility and cost, land use, traffic operations and safety, social and economic impact, natural resources impacts, and specific input from the public and agency representatives.

Constraints, or limitations to corridor development, were mapped to assist in the development of initial 1,000-foot wide preliminary alternative corridors. Environmental and engineering information was used in the development of alternatives and in the analysis of potential environmental impacts. This information was developed by acquiring and consolidating information from a variety of sources including public involvement meetings, file information from IDOT, other state agencies (i.e., Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois State Geological Survey, Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program and federal agencies (i.e., NRCS, USFWS, USEPA, FEMA, USGS), public input, and field reconnaissance.

As a result of extensive review of available information, a number of key environmental and engineering issues were identified and considered in alternative development and selection of the Preferred Corridor:

- **Traffic, Access and Safety Issues.** The Gateway Connector will provide service to future growth in traffic within the study area by improving movement and circulation and relieving congested roadways. Improvement in access and relief of congestion will also enhance safety on the existing roadway network. Two areas represent important constraints pertaining to traffic and access. The existing intersection of Illinois Route 158 and U.S. Route 50 and its proximity to I-64 (about 3,900 feet north) poses some challenges to managing access and weaving between these three busy routes. Existing Illinois Route 3 through Columbia is also heavily traveled (approximately 24,000 vehicles per day) and provides limited access via several signalized intersections. Adjacent land use is commercially developed posing costly constraints to widening opportunities along Illinois Route 3 through Columbia.
- **Engineering Issues.** There are some engineering elements that pose challenges to the development of a future transportation facility in the study area. The major interchanges at I-55/70 in Madison County, I-64/U.S. Route-50 in St. Clair County and I-255/Illinois Route 3 in Monroe County all are heavily traveled and the addition of a new facility (the Gateway Connector) at these interchanges requires more complex engineering designs to ensure that the new facility handles the various movements at these interchanges. Consideration

must also be given to proper engineering design in crossing of previously mined lands as well as the karst terrain of the Illinois Sinkhole Plain. Additionally, the design of the new facility needs to consider the floodplain of the Mississippi River. This portion of the facility will need to be designed to be above the 100-year floodplain elevation, which will pose design challenges in maintaining access to the adjacent road network.

- **Social and Economic Conditions.** Existing and proposed residential and business developments were identified within the project area. The communities within the study area and served by the future Gateway Connector have demonstrated rapid development and are projected to continued their expansion in the future. In many areas, agricultural lands are undergoing rapid conversion to residential development. Given the rapid rate of development in the region, this information required frequent updating over the course of the study as new residential subdivisions were identified in previously undeveloped areas of Troy, O'Fallon, Belleville, Shiloh, Millstadt, Freeburg, and Columbia. Such developments were considered carefully to avoid displacement effects and access issues as well as noise related impacts.
- **Agricultural Impacts.** Agricultural land uses represent the greatest type of land use affected by the Gateway Connector. Rapid development in many areas of the corridor is observed to be contributing to the conversion of agricultural lands to residential use. Consideration was given to avoiding and minimizing impacts to prime and unique farmlands, farm operations, and centennial farms throughout the alternative development phase of the project.
- **Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species.** Federal and state listed threatened or endangered species potentially occurring in the region include the bald eagle (federally threatened, FT), decurrent false aster (FT), Indiana bat (federally endangered, FE), gray bat (FE), Illinois cave amphipod (FE), interior least tern (FE), and common moorehen (state threatened, ST). Among these, however, the Illinois cave amphipod is of greater concern as the amphipod had primarily been reported from Stemler Cave east of Columbia. Even though the amphipod has not been observed since 1965, Stemler Cave is considered to be an important part of the recovery plan for this species. Potential impacts to this listed species were minimized by avoiding the previously defined recharge area of Stemler Cave.
- **Cultural Resources.** A review of recorded NRHP listings resulted in several listed historic architectural resources in the project vicinity. Additionally, several previously recorded archaeological sites were also identified, as were high potential archaeological areas within selected stream valleys. Numerous small cemeteries are also known to occur within the study corridor. No impacts are anticipated to occur to identified cemeteries or NRHP-listed sites.
- **Parklands.** Several natural areas dedicated as part of the Illinois Nature Preserves system are located within the project study area east of Columbia. These nature preserves are located within the Illinois Sinkhole Plain and consist of a subterranean cave system (Stemler Cave), as well as surface sinkhole-containing areas that support a range of upland community types. The Preferred Corridor avoids all listed Illinois nature preserves, but will cross several linear bike trails.
- **Floodways/Floodplains.** The study area crosses several floodplains, most of which are perpendicular crossings. These include Ogles Creek, Engle Creek, Loop Creek, Richland Creek, Douglas Creek and the West Fork of Richland Creek in St. Clair County; and Carr Creek and the Mississippi River in Monroe County. A portion of the Carr Creek and Mississippi River floodplain is partly levee-protected and is designated as the American Bottoms.

Consideration of these various constraints resulted in the development of preliminary 1,000-foot wide alternative corridors which were refined and narrowed to 400-foot wide “final corridor alternatives.” In order to provide for the full range of future transportation facilities, the 400-foot wide corridor was expanded in selected areas (e.g., potential future interchange locations). Alternative development within each section was undertaken by formulating “reasonable” alternatives that satisfactorily met the overall project Purpose and Need, while also avoiding and minimizing environmental and engineering constraints.

Following another series of input, comment, and corridor adjustments, the final alternative corridors were evaluated in detail to select a single Preferred Corridor that would form the basis of the preserved corridor. This alternative evaluation process, utilized extensive quantitative data developed for each final alternative corridor as a basis for decision-making. In all, a total of 24 separate criteria were used to evaluate each alternative and select the Preferred Corridor.

Table 7-1 presents a brief summary of the impacts of the Preferred Corridor. The Preferred Corridor was selected because it represents an alternative that meets engineering objectives of feasibility, provides the best solution for existing and future traffic and safety needs, and minimizes disruption to the human and natural environment.

The Gateway Connector is recommended as a future transportation facility that will meet the future anticipated transportation needs in the region. Communities within the study area have experienced dramatic growth in recent years and are projected to continue their expansion in future decades. This advancing trend in development must be met with advanced transportation planning in order to set aside and preserve a corridor for future transportation use. Preservation of the Gateway Connector corridor will facilitate the establishment of a protected corridor that will minimize future disruption of the human and natural environment and will minimize costs associated with land acquisition and construction of the future facility.

**Table 7-1. Summary of Impacts of the Preferred Corridor**

Resource	Impact
Social and Community Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential</li> <li>• Commercial/Industrial</li> </ul>	Displacements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 118 residences</li> <li>• 12 businesses</li> <li>• 1 church</li> <li>• Filipino-American Association</li> <li>• Columbia Flying Club, Columbia Historical Society</li> </ul> No significant effect on neighborhoods or community cohesion Potential for enhanced community planning
Traffic and Safety	Potential for improved circulation and movement within and between communities of the study area Potential for alleviation of future congestion and projected high traffic volumes Potential for improved safety due to more efficient transportation system
Agricultural Land (acres)	2,042 acres of agricultural land directly affected Parcel effects, severances, and adverse travel impacts may also occur
4(f)/6(f) Lands	No impact to 6(f) lands Several bike trails crossed, effects not determined

**Table 7-1. Summary of Impacts of the Preferred Corridor**

Resource	Impact
Cultural Resources	Archaeological Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on one previously identified archaeological site</li> <li>• Potential effects to high potential archaeological areas</li> </ul> Architectural Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No impact on listed NRHP architectural sites</li> <li>• 5 historic structures may be eligible for listing on NRHP</li> </ul> No impact to known cemeteries
Air Quality	Potential for regional air quality benefits Potential for local improvements in congested intersections
Noise	Greater change in noise levels in rural, undeveloped areas. Direct impacts to sensitive receptors (residences, etc.) that are in close proximity to the corridor.
Mineral/Geologic Resources	No significant effect to geologic resources Geotechnical stability issues to be investigated in previously mined areas and in karst areas
Natural Areas/Nature Preserves	No direct effects to natural areas and nature preserves Stemler Cave and its recharge area avoided to minimize impacts
Sensitive Species	No direct effects to sensitive species Stemler Cave and its recharge area avoided to minimize impacts to the Illinois cave amphipod.
Wetlands (acres)	5.6 acres potentially affected
Surface Water Resources	25 jurisdictional streams crossed 10.4 acres of lakes/ponds affected Potential for surface water/groundwater linkage in Sinkhole Plain requires detailed study and minimization measures
Ground Water Resources	Close connection with subsurface aquifer systems in the vicinity of the Sinkhole Plain will require further study and proper minimization measures
Floodplains (acres)	12 floodplains crossed, 188.1 acres affected, 5 longitudinal floodplain encroachments 6 floodway crossings
Hazardous/Special Waste	No CERCLIS, RCRA or NPL sites affected 7 sites identified that may have the potential to contain or generate special waste
Visual Environment	Alteration of agricultural landscape by the development of a transportation facility. However, landscape in many areas of the corridor are undergoing rapid residential development

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