

# SADDLE CREEK ROAD RELOCATION FEASIBILITY STUDY

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## COORDINATION PLAN

For Compliance with SAFETEA-LU Section 6002



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## **Section 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Purpose of the Coordination Plan**

In an effort to provide for more efficient environmental reviews for project decision making, Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU 6002) implemented the development of a coordination plan outlining the process for public and agency participation during the environmental review process.

The purposes of the SAFETEA-LU 6002 coordination plan are to facilitate and document the lead agencies' structured interaction with the public and other agencies and to inform the public and other agencies of how that interaction will be accomplished. The coordination plan is meant to promote an efficient and streamlined process and good project management through coordination, scheduling, and early resolution of issues.

This Coordination Plan will:

- Identify cooperating and participating agencies,
- Identify early coordination efforts,
- Establish milestones for agency coordination, review and comment, and
- Establish a framework for public involvement activities and describe the methods that will be used to inform the community about the project.

The Coordination Plan will be updated at the conclusion of Phase 1, once the level of NEPA documentation has been determined. Additionally, the Coordination Plan will be updated as needed to reflect any changes in the above elements that may be required over the course of the project.

### **1.2 Lead Agency**

The University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) is the project sponsor and is seeking U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) approval for future construction of the Saddle Creek Road Relocation Project.

Since it is anticipated that Federal funding will be used for the Saddle Creek Road Relocation Project (the Project), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will serve as the lead federal agency for the project. The City of Omaha, as the recipient of the Federal funds, is the joint lead agency. The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) will also serve as a joint lead agency because of their oversight role for transportation projects involving Federal funds.

### **1.3 Project Background**

UNMC, in coordination with FHWA, NDOR, and the City of Omaha, is initiating a Feasibility Study for relocation of Saddle Creek Road.

This study will investigate alternatives to the current alignment of Saddle Creek Road as a means of enhancing the economic, environmental, social and functional conditions of the overall Saddle Creek Road Study Area. Figure 1 shows the Project Study Area from Center Street to Cuming Street, and between 42nd Street and 48th Street. The Study Area is highly urbanized with a mix of commercial, residential, and industrial land uses. This area is larger than what the actual construction impact area would be for road reconstruction, but is the area that would be considered for potential impacts associated with the Project.

The goal of the study is to analyze the opportunity to relocate the current Saddle Creek Road so as to effectively increase transportation capacity and utility, address flooding in the area, create a new campus entrance for UNMC and an open space amenity along the realigned roadway, and spur new economic development through the creation of new and viable real estate development sites. The study will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 will consist of a feasibility study and initiation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Phase 1 goals include:

- Development of "Purpose and Need" for the project,
- Development of a range of alternative alignments, including the major impacts and costs of the alternatives,
- Determination of the feasibility of the project, and
- Determination of the type of environmental document that will be required for the project.

Assuming that the relocation of Saddle Creek Road is determined to be feasible, Phase 2 will generally extend the study through the completion of the environmental review process. Phase 2 goals include:

- Identification of a "Preferred Alternative" for the project,
- Completion of the environmental review process, including approval of the environmental document, and
- Stakeholder and public support of the project.

Figure 1

## Section 2 Agency Coordination

The following sections outline the agency coordination process for the Saddle Creek Road Relocation Feasibility Study, including a list of agencies, roles, and contact information, description of early coordination efforts and identification of the primary agency coordination points.

### 2.1 List of Agencies, Roles, and Responsibilities

Agency Name	Role <sup>1</sup>	Point of Contact
Federal Highway Administration	Lead Agency	Edward Kosola, Realty / Environmental Officer
Nebraska Department of Roads	Joint Lead Agency	Patrick Schafer, Urban Off-System Coordinator
Nebraska Department of Roads	Joint Lead Agency	Len Sand, Highway Environmental Program Manager
City of Omaha	Joint Lead Agency	Charlie Krajicek, City Engineer Steve Jensen, Planning Director
University of Nebraska Medical Center	Project Sponsor	Ron Schaefer, Director of Facilities Planning and Construction Ken Hansen – Assistant Vice Chancellor - Facilities
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Participating Agency <sup>2</sup>	Candace Gorton, Chief Environmental & Economics Cheryl Goldsberry, Nebraska Program Manager
U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife	Participating Agency <sup>2</sup>	Steve Anschutz, Ecological Services Brooke Stansberry, Ecological Services
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Participating Agency <sup>2</sup>	Joe Cothorn, NEPA Section Tom Taylor
U.S. Department of Interior	TBD	Robert F. Stewart, Office of Environmental Policy Nick Chevance, Regional Environmental Coordinator
U.S. Department of Agriculture	TBD	Stephen Chick, State Conservationist
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	TBD	Greg Bevirt, Environmental Officer
U.S. Air Force	TBD	Major Bart Barnhart, Base Civil Engineer
Federal Aviation Administration	TBD	Mark Schenkelberg, Environmental Specialist
Federal Emergency Management Agency	TBD	Dick Hainje, Regional Director
Federal Transit Administration	TBD	Joni Roeseler, Director of Planning and Program Development

Agency Name	Role <sup>1</sup>	Point of Contact
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality	Participating Agency <sup>2</sup>	Hugh Stirts, NEPA Coordinator John Bender, Water Quality Standards Coordinator Terry Hickman
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources	TBD	Roger Patterson, Director
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Participating Agency <sup>2</sup>	Frank Albrecht, Assistant Division Administrator Troy Rahmig, T&E Species Specialist
Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office	TBD	Robert Puschendorf, Deputy SHPO
Nebraska Department of Aeronautics	TBD	Stuart McTaggart, Director
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services	TBD	Chris Peterson, System Policy Secretary
Nebraska Commission of Indian Affairs	TBD	Judi Gaiashkibos, Executive Director
Metropolitan Area Planning Agency	TBD	Paul Mullen, Director
Metro Area Transit	TBD	Gary Ruegg, Executive Director
Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District	TBD	Marlin Peterman, Assistant General Manager
City of Omaha Parks, Recreation, and Public Property	TBD	Steven Scarpello, Director
<p><sup>1</sup> Cooperating Agencies are those governmental agencies specifically requested by the lead agency to participate during the environmental evaluation process for the project. Participating Agencies are a new category of agencies identified in SAFETEA-LU to participate in environmental reviews. Participating Agencies are Federal and non-Federal agencies that may have an interest in the project because of their jurisdictional authority, special expertise, or statewide interest.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> A request for participating agencies has not yet been made to resource agencies. Agencies listed as participating agencies are those who are signatory agencies on the Nebraska NEPA/404 merge agreement.</p>		

## 2.2 Early Coordination

An early coordination package was prepared and distributed to 63 agencies and organizations on January 26, 2007, including the agencies listed above and other local organizations and Indian tribes who may have an interest in the Project. The distribution list was developed from the standard list that NDOR uses for agency coordination on roadway and bridge projects and was supplemented with local and regional stakeholders identified for the project. The package included a transmittal letter, project summary and a Study Area map. The project summary included information on the Study Area, anticipated impacts and the development procedures to be used for the environmental process.

### 2.3 Agency Coordination Points

The Nebraska Local Operating Procedures for Integrating NEPA/Section 404 will be used in the development of the NEPA document. The Local Operating Procedures include four concurrence points for environmental assessments (EAs) and environmental impact statements (EISs):

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives Carried Forward
- Selected Alternative
- Impact Minimization

At each of these concurrence points, FHWA requests concurrence from the signatory agencies that the project can move forward to the next stage of development. At that time, agencies are also requested to provide comments on any concerns they may have about the project, including potential issues related to the Section 404 permit. Although it is unlikely that a Section 404 permit would be required for the project, initial coordination with NDOR determined that NEPA/404 merge process would be used for agency feedback.

The table of the following page lists each of the coordination points that will be used for Saddle Creek Road Relocation Study, including the NEPA/404 concurrence points. The table includes the information to be provided to agencies as well as which agencies are responsible for which activities.

<b>Coordination Point</b>	<b>Information Out</b>	<b>Agency Responsible</b>	<b>Information In</b>	<b>Agencies Responsible</b>
Purpose and Need	Provide participating agencies with draft purpose and need statement via letters; solicit comments	FHWA City of Omaha	Comments on Purpose and Need and issues of concern	Participating Agencies
Alternatives Carried Forward	Provide participating agencies with information regarding alternatives carried forward via letter submittal of the draft NEPA document; solicit comments	FHWA City of Omaha	Comments on Alternatives Carried Forward and issues of concern	Participating Agencies
Selected Alternative	Provide participating agencies with information regarding the Selected Alternative via letter submittal of the final NEPA document; solicit comments	FHWA City of Omaha	Comments on the Selected Alternative and issues of concern	Participating Agencies
Impact Minimization	Provide participating agencies with information regarding the minimization of impacts via letter submittal of the final NEPA document; solicit comments	FHWA City of Omaha	Comments on impact minimization and issues of concern	Participating Agencies

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS would be developed if initial evaluations recommend that an EIS is the proper NEPA classification. The NOI would be coordinated with NDOR, FHWA, the City of Omaha, and UNMC.

## Section 3 Public Involvement

A project specific plan for public input has been developed and is documented in this overall coordination plan. This plan describes strategies for encouraging public input and describes the opportunities to be provided to the public to encourage early and ongoing involvement in the project development process. As required by SAFETEA-LU Section 6002, the public will be provided opportunities to provide specific input on the Purpose and Need and the Range of Alternatives.

### 3.1 Public Involvement Objectives

The Saddle Creek Road Relocation Study has the potential to affect the lives of midtown Omaha residents who live in or near the Study Area, additionally, the project would also affect the many people who travel on the roadway each day. As such, this project requires a proactive public involvement program in order to promote public acceptance of and timely completion of the Project. The primary objectives of the public involvement program are as follows:

- Establish a public involvement framework for the duration of the project,
- Provide clear and concise information to the public,
- Provide opportunities for participation from all segments of the public, including low income and minority populations,
- Ensure that the issues and concerns of all segments of the public are heard and considered during the decision making process, and
- Engage the public and target audiences in an effective dialogue to resolve project issues.

### 3.2 Community Background

The City of Omaha is located on the west bank of the Missouri River in Douglas County, Nebraska. Omaha is a thriving community of 390,007 people<sup>1</sup> who work in a variety of industries, from banking and insurance to education to manufacturing.<sup>2</sup> The Study Area includes a variety of retail, light industrial and educational businesses, including the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). The population of the study area is very diverse and includes racial and ethnic minorities as well as areas of low income populations.

### 3.3 Public Involvement Activities

The following public involvement plan addresses the need to effectively engage and receive input from three primary groups: (1) the general public, (2) low income and minority populations, and (3) interested groups. A series of activities has been identified below that will accomplish the goal of engaging each of these groups.

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<sup>1</sup> 2000 US Census

<sup>2</sup> Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Website: [www.omahachamber.org/OmahaCloseu/upclose.html](http://www.omahachamber.org/OmahaCloseu/upclose.html)

**General Public**

Several methods will be employed to ensure that the Saddle Creek Road Relocation Study engages the general public and all interested groups in order to gather information and input regarding the potential improvements. The public involvement plan for this project will be a coordinated effort with multiple groups participating in each activity and all activities being linked together for maximum effectiveness. The methods to be employed are described below:

***Public Meetings and Public Hearing***

Two public information meetings will be held during the first phase of the project. Phase 2 will include at least one public meeting which will be the public hearing for the NEPA document. Additional public meetings may be held during Phase 2, depending on the level of NEPA documentation required and the need to provide information to and receive input from the public. Meetings will be held in locations in or near the Study Area that are accessible and maximize the ability of interested groups to attend. These public meetings will be utilized to disseminate information to and gather feedback from the public regarding the project. The general schedule and preliminary topics for each public meeting is included below:

Public Meeting No.	Timeframe	Topics
<b><i>Phase 1</i></b>		
1	Spring 2007	Purpose and Need Range of Alternatives
2	Summer 2007	Alternatives Carried Forward for Detailed Study
<b><i>Phase 2</i></b>		
Public Hearing	Dependent on NEPA classification	Draft NEPA Document

All public meetings will include a period of time for an open house with stations set up to provide information on various topics and allow the public a chance to discuss the project one on one with the project team. Presentations, visual aids, and handouts will be utilized as needed to clearly illustrate the project process and progress to the public. Comment forms will be available in English and Spanish and will be distributed to all public meeting attendees, providing citizens with the opportunity to provide comments at the meeting or mail them to the project team afterward. In addition, a Spanish-language interpreter will be present at the initial public meeting and will be used in later meetings as needed. Sign language interpreters will be provided if requested prior to each meeting.

The public information meetings will be advertised via press releases to the local media and with an ad in the legal notices section of the local newspapers. A meeting announcement will also be placed in the local Spanish language newspaper, El Perico (published weekly). Meeting announcements will be distributed via the Destination Midtown e-mail list. In addition, flyers

announcing each public meeting will be distributed throughout the Study Area and announcements will be posted on the City of Omaha and Destination Midtown web sites.

### ***Project Website***

A separate project website will not be developed for the Saddle Creek Road Relocation Study; however, project information will be posted on the City of Omaha and Destination Midtown websites. These websites will be utilized as another means of providing information to and gathering feedback from the public. Project information such as meeting handouts and displays, contact information, and other pertinent project information will be posted.

### ***Media Outreach***

Media outreach will be key to involving the community in the project and attaining a high level of attendance at public meetings. Outreach will be performed via two means: press releases and direct contact with members of the media. Press releases will be prepared to announce key project milestones, including public information meetings and publication of the NEPA document. Direct contact with the media will be accomplished by having Project Team representatives available for consultation with the media before and after public meetings.

### **Low Income and Minority Groups**

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Environmental Justice (EJ) Executive Order (EO) 12898 require that minority and low-income populations impacted by federally funded projects be identified and that impacts to these populations be addressed as appropriate. One component of the analyses required by these laws is the use of a public involvement program that engages minority and low-income segments of the population.

It is anticipated that a relatively large number of minority and low-income persons may be present in the Saddle Creek Road Relocation Study Area, therefore having the potential to be adversely impacted by the project. Hispanics are one of the largest ethnic groups<sup>3</sup> within the Study Area. It is also likely that significant numbers of the Hispanic population may not speak English as their first language. Recognizing the potential for impacts, the Saddle Creek Road Relocation Study public involvement program will include specific efforts to reach out to the Hispanic population. These efforts will include the following:

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<sup>3</sup> 2000 US Census

- Spanish language comment forms will be available at public information meetings. Public meeting materials, such as project display boards, will be made available to Spanish speaking members of the public on an as needed basis. A Spanish interpreter will be provided at public meetings.
- Spanish-language interpreters will be utilized, as necessary, for individual or small group meetings with members of the Hispanic community.

Steps specifically targeted at low-income populations include:

- Distribution of flyers and other information at local businesses and public places where low-income populations are likely to have access to them.
- Public information meetings will be held in locations that are accessible by public transit or transportation will be provided to interested parties.

In addition to the steps outlined for outreach to the Hispanic and low income communities, care will be taken to engage all minority groups in the project development process. As the project progresses, if additional minority groups are identified, steps will be taken to implement strategies to effectively engage those groups in the process.

### **Interested Groups**

Although the primary focus of this public involvement plan is to involve all members of the public, the project team recognizes that interest groups often have the most at stake during roadway improvement projects and as a result, require additional attention from a public involvement standpoint. The following methods will be utilized for outreach to interested groups:

#### ***Small Group Meetings***

Small group meetings will be conducted on an as needed basis to address the specific concerns of particular interest groups. The Project Team will be proactive in identifying groups or topics that may require a one on one or a small group setting to engage in a detailed discussion of specific project issues. Examples of small groups include business associations, neighborhood groups, residents or businesses with similar geographic or other interests in the project (potentially relocated businesses or residents, environmental groups, etc). Meeting notes will be prepared, documenting each small group meeting.

#### ***Speakers Bureau***

Members of the Project Team will be available to make presentations to civic groups such as Optimist Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and various other civic groups upon request. This element of the public involvement plan will primarily serve as an avenue for information dissemination and will assist the Project Team in informing a broad cross-section of the community about the project.

#### ***Project Team Availability***

The project team is available to meet with interested members of the public or make presentation to small groups on an as needed basis.

## Section 4 Schedule

The following table outlines the preliminary schedule for Phase 1 activities involving the public and resource agencies. The majority of the agency coordination relative to the project will occur during Phase 2 as the NEPA document is developed.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	
Public Information Meeting #1	Spring 2007
Public Information Meeting #2	Summer 2007
Determine NEPA document classification	Summer 2007
<b>Phase 2</b>	
Update Coordination Plan with NEPA document coordination activities	Fall 2007

## Section 5      Revision History

Version	Date	Document Name	Revision description and why it was needed.
1.0	2-22-07	Saddle Creek Coordination Plan	Initial distribution