

## **I-80 Mississippi River Bridge**

*Public Meeting Summary / May 11, 2022*

The second Public Meeting for the I-80 Mississippi River Bridge study was held at 4 p.m. on May 11, 2022, to provide study information to date, present potential improvement alternatives, and receive public feedback. More than 400 participants joined the interactive online meeting at [i80mississippibridge.com](http://i80mississippibridge.com), which included a video presentation, review of study exhibits and discussion with representatives of the Illinois and Iowa departments of transportation, and the project consultant team.

### **BY THE NUMBERS:**

- **763** Registrations
- **408** Participants
- **2** hours, **38** minutes: total meeting time
- **6** media representatives
- **111** questions and comments submitted

### **STATE/FEDERAL ELECTED OFFICIALS (or representatives):**

- Representatives for:
  - US Senator Dick Durbin (IL)
  - US Senator Charles Grassley (IA)
  - US Senator Joni Ernst (IA)
  - US Representative Cheri Bustos (IL)
  - State Representative Tony McCombie (IL)
  - State Representative Mike Halpin (IL)

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTED OFFICIALS & STAFF:**

- Rock Island County, IL
- Scott County, IA
- Bettendorf
- Davenport
- East Moline
- Eldridge
- Hampton Township
- LeClaire
- Moline
- Port Byron
- Rapids City
- Rock Island
- Silvis

### **MEDIA PARTICIPANTS:**

- WHBF (CBS/FOX)
- WQAD (ABC)

- KWQC (NBC)
- QC TIMES/Dispatch-Argus
- QC Business Journal
- WVIK

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:**

- Bi-State Regional Commission
- Visit Quad Cities
- Quad Cities Chamber
- LeClaire Chamber of Commerce
- Living Land & Waters
- Bison Bridge Foundation

**QUESTION/CONCERN/COMMENTS TOPICS INCLUDED:**

- Support & Opposition to Bison Bridge
- Comments on specific alternatives
- Reuse of bridge possibilities
- Bike & Pedestrian accommodations
- Detour routes
- Government agency coordination
- Impacts of alternatives
- Timing of construction
- Options to retain existing bridge
- Noise impacts
- Timing of Bison Bridge discussion
- Wider bridge center span for river traffic
- Canal Shore Drive during construction
- Evaluation criteria, priorities
- Economic Development opportunities
- Cost of alternatives
- Location of new bridge
- Traffic interruptions and detours
- Changes in study area
- Compensation and disruptions for property owners
- Costs of traffic impacts
- Road Noise
- Bridge at SW 35<sup>th</sup> in Bettendorf
- Consideration of economic development
- Jurisdiction
- Influence of Corps of Engineers

**MEDIA**

- **KWQC (NBC)**  
<https://www.kwqc.com/2022/05/12/illinois-iowa-dots-lay-out-7-options-new-i-80-bridge-bison-bridge-still-up-air/>  
**Illinois and Iowa DOTs lay out 7 options for new I-80 bridge**  
*Bison Bridge still up in the air*
- **WQAD (ABC)**  
<https://www.wqad.com/article/news/local/i80-bridge-bison-bridge-idot-plans-options-new/526-83d54fc8-7ec3-4724-9896-99177f1d128f>  
**IDOT reveals 7 locations for new I-80 crossing, won't take Bison Bridge into consideration**
- **QC TIMES**  
[https://qctimes.com/news/local/the-dot-says-the-best-i-80-realignment-plan-will-be-chosen-without-taking-the/article\\_368cd2da-d604-54ba-a840-3ac93ea19682.html](https://qctimes.com/news/local/the-dot-says-the-best-i-80-realignment-plan-will-be-chosen-without-taking-the/article_368cd2da-d604-54ba-a840-3ac93ea19682.html)  
**The DOT says the best I-80 realignment plan will be chosen without taking the Bison Bridge proposal into consideration. But that doesn't rule it out.**
- **QC BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
<https://quadcitiesbusiness.com/meeting-unveils-options-for-new-i-80-bridge/>  
**Meeting unveils options for new I-80 bridge**
- **WVIK / NPR RADIO**  
<https://www.wvik.org/2022-05-10/i-80-mississippi-river-bridge-update-public-meeting>  
**I-80 Mississippi River Bridge Update & Public Meeting**

**QUESTION AND ANSWER PANEL:**

- **32 Questions were asked during the Public Meeting Question & Answer session, which lasted for approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes**
  - Similar topics and questions were grouped to address all subject matters
  - Comments submitted with no questions were acknowledged during Q&A, with confirmation they would be included in the public record
  - Two follow-up communications were sent to all who submitted comments or questions during the meeting, providing direction to the project website for more information and to submit additional comment
  - Any questions and comments received outside of the meeting but during the official comment period received an acknowledgment or response as appropriate

***The following is a report of questions posed to the panel and their responses. Responses have been edited for clarity.***

***QUESTION:*** We have quite a few (questions) that are in relation to the repurposing of the current I-80 Mississippi River Bridge. A lot of them are about what is happening with the Bison Bridge. Along

*those lines ...is the Bison Bridge part of an alternative that is being considered?*

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

The project team is certainly aware of the Bison Bridge concept, and we know there is a lot of interest in a bison bridge; it is a unique concept that has been brought forward. For our project, however, we are required to follow the National Environmental Policy Act, which is law that we commonly refer to as NEPA. As part of the NEPA process, we develop a Purpose and Need, which has been summarized here tonight. The Purpose and Need was developed, and it specifically relates to the transportation facility.

Once we have the Purpose and Need developed, we develop alternatives aimed at addressing the Purpose and Need for the project. So NEPA is law and NEPA specifically states there cannot be any undue outside influence on the determination of what meets the Purpose and Need.

The development of the alternatives and the assessment of the alternatives is done through this NEPA lens, and the next step within that is to do an environmental evaluation. Within the presentation, Tony & Mark shared some graphics that summarized potential impacts, such as relocations and impacts to the natural environment.

We evaluate the full impact of any alternative on the environment. Some folks might think environment means just plants and turtles and mussels – and I think any of us who know about the I-74 project know about mussels in the Mississippi River – those things are all important, but also important is the impact on people. So, we also evaluate relocations, acres of right away impacted, and those types of impacts. All of the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts have to be assessed as we are going through the project process.

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

We are looking at a variety of different impacts associated with the different alternatives. We have to gauge all of these. We have to take into account the stakeholders who are out there – the property owners who are out there right now, the cultural and historic locations that might be in the area, and even the acres of prime farmland that's out there – so that's all part of the evaluation process.

*QUESTION: Specifically for the exit at SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street... can we get an exit at SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street for northbound trucks to go around LeClaire?*

**SAM SHEA, Iowa Department of Transportation:**

The answer is no. There isn't enough space between the current interchange at US 67 and the next interchange to the west at Middle Road according to requirements for an interstate system today. I know you may notice that some interchanges are somewhat closer together in other places, but those were constructed before we knew what we know now about interstates. Now we need a little bit more distance between interchanges for safety. So, it is highly unlikely that we would approve an interchange at SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street.

*QUESTION: Does the Army Corps (of Engineers) have certain requirements going forward as we go through the process?*

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

Yes, the Army Corps of Engineers does have requirements that we're going to have to fulfill with whatever structure we construct. We are and will continue to work with them to define what those requirements are as we move forward on the project.

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

Additionally, as part of the project presentation, we noted the existing bridge pier layout does not

meet modern standards for the Corps (and U.S. Coast Guard). So, that is an additional component we consider as we evaluate bridge replacement alternatives. But as we do with many of our partner agencies, we have ongoing dialogue with them as we're looking at various alternatives.

**QUESTION:** *What about the design? Does the design plan include a wider center span for the river traffic down below?*

**BOB MAGLIOLA, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Our coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard and US Army Corps of Engineers is ongoing. On a new alignment, the U.S. Coast Guard and Corps of Engineers have expressed that they would want to have a greater distance between piers for the navigation spans, so there will be more room across the river for river traffic. In other words, there would be a longer span. They have expressed that desire.

Now that conversation is still in the early stages because we're focusing on the alignment. Is it going to be north of the existing bridge, south of the existing bridge, how far up or downstream, and how close to the existing bridge? The Corps requirements for the span length of the bridge is not really driving the decision of the alignment. The evaluation of the alignments is more related to what impacts there are going to be – as they mentioned earlier in the conversation – to residents, farmland, wetlands.

**QUESTION:** *Will the design of the redesigned bridge include the wider span for river traffic?*

**BOB MAGLIOLA, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Yes, we still need to get a firm ruling from the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as far as what span they want for traffic, but they have expressed they want a wider span. So yes, they have expressed that desire, but it is still in discussion.

**QUESTION:** *What are the price tags for the various alternatives?*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

During this preliminary evaluation and in our initial efforts to potentially narrow the number of alternatives, we're not using the cost as a factor. During the next stage of development of these alternatives, we will start to estimate construction costs, right of way costs, etc, for the alternatives that are carried forward.

So to close this issue, at this point, we can't compare one alternative's costs to the other. We have not developed that information, so that's not part of our factor. That's not part of our decision making at this point.

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

So I was just going to add that within the DOTs we've had conversations with the Federal Highway Administration. Not only are they providing a substantial amount of the funding, but the Federal Highway Administration is the organization that essentially leads us through the NEPA process.

We have talked to them about the process and how to evaluate alternatives moving forward. And they have made it clear that our first missive is to evaluate the environmental impacts. So, just to support what Tony was relating, first and foremost, we evaluate those environmental impacts, and then once we've evaluated those, and determined how we're moving forward from that point, then doing a cost analysis will become an element as well.

**QUESTION:** *Regarding the I-74 Bridge as it relates to this project. What did you learn from I-74 Bridge that will help this project?*

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

I'm happy to contribute to that and then we'll pass it to Sam and let him speak as well, since Iowa was the lead agency for that project. But I had the privilege to be involved with that project for the better part of 15 years. So, I have learned quite a bit from it. One of the things that we did as a team for that project was evaluate creative ways to not only save money but save inconvenience and to expedite construction. I think one thing that is great about this project is that Iowa and Illinois and our staffs have worked together for those types of projects in the past, not only I-74 project, but also the Savannah Sabula Project, which, by the way, Parsons was our consultant for that project, as well. So, as a full team, we have a lot of experience with these Mississippi River Bridges.

Looking at those creative ways to manage problems is really important when you're looking at a project of this magnitude. And additionally, I mentioned before about mussels. For those who don't know, we relocated a huge number of mussels for the I-74 project and while we don't necessarily expect to run in to that exact same situation on this project, it has given us an opportunity to develop a relationship with those partner agencies. And that's a very valuable thing to have. So, Sam, did you want to add anything?

**SAM SHEA, Iowa Department of Transportation:**

I think you hit on really good points Becky. Like you, I was involved in the I-74 project for about the last 13 years – not quite as long as you were. It was definitely a learning experience and coordination with agencies was probably the greatest benefit that I've taken away from that – both with the Illinois DOT, with Federal Highway Administration, Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard, the DNR, the railroads. We really had to get lots of coordination.

The next greatest lesson I took away from that project was the public coordination. With the help of Images – Tracy was part of that team as well on I-74. We've coordinated really well with the public and addressed problems with traffic control and those sorts of things as they came up. I would expect that we will take that same sort of approach to this project as well.

**QUESTION:** *What would the impacts to businesses be if there were detours, much like other projects were during construction?*

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

When we evaluate traffic control methods, we look at a range of issues. Certainly, when you're evaluating traffic control on an interstate – I think we all know that I-80 is a major thoroughfare, a cross country thoroughfare – there are those issues that need to be considered.

Folks might be recalling the I-74 project, and yes, we did end up making a decision. (It was) a well informed decision that was very well researched and evaluated by the public that we did put a detour in place for a period of time. It is far too early to assess whether that would happen in this case. Given the amount of truck traffic on this route, that's a really important thing to consider.

One thing in the Quad Cities that is to our benefit is that there are multiple routes. But of course, with every alternative route, detoured route, there's extra mileage that has to be driven. So we understand that and as we move forward, as we evaluate alternatives and look at how we're going to manage that traffic, all of those things will be taken into consideration.

But we are certainly conscious and try to be conscientious as well of potential impact to businesses and also just folks who need to get across the river because they might live on one side and work on the other. That was the big issue on I-74 that we had to find creative ways to manage. As we move forward, depending on the alternatives that are selected, that will lead us to those solutions.

**MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

You've talked about the mainline being detoured. With the interchange construction at 84 & 67 I

think there is a lot of interest in making sure the ramps are all maintained during construction, so that requires a little extra staging. But I think typically they wouldn't close any ramps down for an extended period of time. I think for the most part, they would still, no matter what alternative is selected, do what they can to maintain ramp traffic to some of the state routes and keep the interchanges open.

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

Just to add as Becky has noted...this is I-80, this is a long haul road. We're going to try and minimize duration of impacts and either reduce duration and reduce impacts as we're going through this to make sure that there aren't too long delays or detours on anything that we do. As Mark noted, we'll try and make every attempt to minimize the ramp impacts as well. But again, we're in the early stages. One thing that Mark discussed during the presentation was the alternatives evaluation matrix that has shown our preliminary evaluation of constructability and maintenance of traffic.

*QUESTION: In regards to generated power on the Bridge itself, is there an opportunity to place hydro, electric on the bridge to generate power for our area year-round?*

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

Now, as part of our mission, we're based on the transportation structure itself and the transportation facility. So that's really not within our purview. That being said, if there is a public entity that wishes to try and work that type of situation in with us on this project, we can certainly attempt to work with them on that and see what can be done.

*QUESTION: Can you explain why there is not a multi-use path proposed for the new bridge. With bike paths on both sides of the river it makes sense to have one.*

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

Being that this is an interstate project, typically, we don't see a lot of bicycle facilities along an interstate. Now, we fully recognize on the Illinois side we have the Great River Trail. We've also spoken with the Bi-State Regional Commission about any future plans on US 67, and they've noted that they have interest in doing a multi-use path along the 67 Corridor. We're certainly willing to get input on the potential of putting some sort of bicycle facility along the bridge. But, again, we need public input on that issue, and local agency input on the desire to do that, so we can proceed with such a request.

*QUESTION: With Alternative 1, where the current bridge is closed for four years, as you mentioned... Can I-280 and I-74 handle all the detour traffic?*

**MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Typically, what happens is a traffic management plan is developed. And we would look at the volumes of traffic on I-80 to determine where traffic would divert and whether those alternate routes could handle the additional traffic. So, the traffic management plan is a document that includes this traffic analysis and an evaluation of alternatives to determine how acceptable they are to serve as a as a long-term detour for I-80. So, this is another detailed study that occurs before one of those detour alternatives would be selected.

*QUESTION: When is that (traffic analysis & detour study) in the process?*

**MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Typically, that would be when a preferred alternatives is evaluated. So this question is focused on Alternative 1, and we've got six other alternatives. And some of those don't require the demolition of the bridge prior a new bridge being operation, so the existing bridge can continue to function to take existing traffic. Under those alternatives, we wouldn't have to look at long term detour,



although we might still look at just area-wide traffic under some of the alternatives, just to make sure we know if their traffic might be rerouted. With Alternatives 4 and 5, where you have traffic shifted over, you could consider possible scenarios there as well, because there would be construction in the immediate vicinity. I don't want to speculate on which alternatives would be ultimately selected, but the TMP - the traffic management plan - would be done for the preferred alternative.

**QUESTION:** *Specifically, to the four year detour for Alternative 1... Is there a cost consideration for road users in this process?*

**MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

I don't want to take away from the DOT here... But I've been involved with projects that do look at the additional time required for the detour and then also look at the associated cumulative road user costs. So, that could be a factor in that traffic management plan as well and determination of a detour. I'll leave further discussion over to Mike, if he wants to jump in.

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

I do get involved on all the traffic management analysis and management plans, and yes, we do include adverse travel. If we're going to do a detour, we would look at the adverse travel about what each vehicle would pay for the additional time and distance associated with the detour. So, yes, that is put into a cost analysis once we're looking at that portion.

**QUESTION:** *Can prospective economic activity be a consideration?*

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

NEPA expressly does not allow for consideration of potential economic development – that is not a component of the analysis. The analysis is based on the human environment and other elements of the environment. So that is not an element of the environmental documentation for a transportation project under NEPA. Tony, Sam, is there anything you want to add?

**SAM SHEA, Iowa Department of Transportation:**

I think you're on it. We're tasked with designing a transportation facility that meets the purpose and need as defined in the NEPA document. So, the potential financial gains are not in the Purpose and Need for this this project.

**QUESTION:** *Do the elevated ramps in (interchange) Alternative D work well in Midwest snow and ice conditions?*

**MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

There is consideration of that as well. Some of the ramp curvature and super elevation would be a concern. That's the banking of the curves that could be a concern, but we would design the curves so that would not be steeply banked.

I think we've all heard from traffic reports that bridges and ramps freeze first. There is consideration for that as well. We're not talking about high speeds across these ramps. This interchange would provide direct ramp movement, but these are not like expressway speeds or anything like that. So, hopefully, people drive them like that. And there would be shoulders and they can do a lot with anti-skid surfacing and things like that to address any problems with loss of tire friction, or anything like that. So, Mike, is there anything else you would add?

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

No, you've pretty well hit it on the head. The big thing we've been looking at with this I-80 and I-88 interchange is, again, we've got an existing cloverleaf interchange out there. The curves don't necessarily meet all of today's policies, like they would have when it was originally built. So, we



need to at least get it up to up to current standards. That's why some of the options just show expanding the existing cloverleaf.

We've also recognized looking at the crash data the eastbound 80 to eastbound 88 loop is seeing a higher rate of crashes. So, we're investigating options to try and alleviate that situation as well. That's why we have a variety of options here, to address those issues, bring this up to current policies, and try and alleviate potential issues on it.

**QUESTION:** *Can you explain the Purpose & Need is for the project?*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

The purpose of the project was developed based on the identification of the needs or the deficiencies we found in the project area, and then ultimately, we're looking at alternatives to address those needs. The needs that we identified were first along the existing Mississippi River Bridge. That bridge has some substandard design elements associated with it, it has shoulders that are five feet on the outside and five inches on the inside where current design standards call for wider shoulders than that.

Additionally, that type of bridge is considered a structure that has a framing system that's non redundant, and considered fracture critical, which means the bridge doesn't include these extra structural members or support. And so, those types of bridges require more frequent inspections and maintenance.

Then, if you look away from the bridge, there are various design features which are considered substandard in many cases along the existing curves, where I think Sam Shea mentioned earlier that the facility was probably designed to meet those design standards that were in place 50 years ago. But over time, and based on analysis, we're always finding better ways to design the roadways. These curves, generally speaking, might be tighter and flatter than what they would be if they were designed today.

And as part of that, we're seeing crashes in these deficient locations. Mike Kuehn just mentioned eastbound to eastbound ramp at I-88, and then a couple other places that are the highest crash locations are across the bridge itself, as well as along I 80, between the Illinois 84 interchange and the Mississippi Rapids Rest Area. Those needs, the deficiencies with the bridge and the roadway design, are creating the safety issues. And so ultimately, the purpose of the project is to provide a better bridge, improve safety through correction of some of these roadway design deficiencies that you're seeing out there.

**QUESTION:** *In regards to sound mitigations – are there considerations that are being looked at? Structures or sound walls?*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

We won't conduct a noise study for the project until we've identified a preferred alternative. At that time, we'll look at the proposed roadway facility and the traffic and the speeds that are going to operate on it and then determine where there are going to be noise impacts, if mitigation is warranted, and if reasonable and feasible noise mitigation could be identified. That is going to be later down the road. You wouldn't be seeing that type of information until we get into the NEPA phase – into 2023, I would say.

**SAM SHEA, Iowa Department of Transportation:**

There will be a noise study done, just not at the phase we're at now. And that's what Tony was trying to get to.

**QUESTION:** *What will be done to manage site-seers on Canal Shore Drive in Iowa during construction?*

**SAM SHEA, Iowa Department of Transportation:**

Well, that's a good question. I don't think we're at that point in this study that we're doing right now. I don't think we're at the phase of determining how the project will impact Canal Shore Drive. There are residences along there and those folks will have to be allowed to have access to their property. But aside from that, I would expect we'd do similar things to what we did on I-74. If we need to restrict pedestrian access for cyclists at some point in time, we will. And at other points, we probably won't if we don't need to. But I think, we're a long way from their nailing down that part.

*QUESTION: Is a double-decker bridge option ever considered?*

**BOB MAGLIOLA, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

At the point we're at right now, there isn't really any bridge concept that's eliminated, and we haven't even started looking at different types of bridges. Our current efforts are more focused on where the roadway will go. But there is a bridge study phase that will look at bridge solutions for wherever the selected alignment ends up being. We will then look for bridge solutions on that alignment and consider constructability, maintainability, cost. All those factors will figure into what type of bridge is selected.

*QUESTION: In regards to the bridge alignments, will the bridge pier alignments be the same as the existing bridge in terms of a horizontal span width?*

**BOB MAGLIOLA, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

That is also a topic that we have raised with the US Coast Guard, to ask them their preferences on that issue. When we get to that point where we're starting to evaluate bridge solutions to be put into place on the alignment which gets selected based on the impacts to the environment, we'll have to have that nailed down by the US Coast Guard and that would be coordinated with them. So, it's not really our decision to make; it has to be coordinated with the Coast Guard.

*QUESTION: To questions in regards to the materials that we have been receiving...*

**TRACY MORSE, Project Consultant Team / Images, Inc.**

Including this presentation and everything you're seeing on the screen, the video, and we do have a newsletter that also was compiled – all of those materials will be on the website by tomorrow afternoon, including the recording of this virtual public meeting.

*QUESTION: The question is in regards to the age of the current bridge. The question is: is the structure that bad?*

**BOB MAGLIOLA, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

The existing bridge is in a safe condition. But it's just like everything else, there becomes a point in which you have an old car, do you want to keep maintaining it, pouring more money into the car, or does it make more financial sense to purchase a new car?

So structurally, we're at the point where this bridge is becoming increasingly more costly to maintain. And so it makes financial sense to replace the bridge with a new structure.

Now, that's just the structural aspects. There are other aspects, geometrics, which Mark Petersen spoke about, which has to do about the lane widths and the shoulder widths, and how the bridge really isn't wide enough anymore. And the bridge is of a type of construction that widening the bridge is not very practical because of the type of construction it is.

*QUESTION: In regards to the study area: did the study area change? If so, why? Didn't it previously extend further west than 35<sup>th</sup> Street?*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Yes, that's a good question. Somebody's obviously paying attention. Initially when we started the study the western terminus in Iowa did extend to near Middle Road. However, Iowa has a separate I-80 project going on in Scott County and through further coordination between the State Departments of Transportation and the state Federal Highway Administration Divisions, it was decided that our project would terminate on the west end at SW 35th Street and the Iowa DOT I-80 Scott County Project will terminate on the east end at SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street. So yes, the limits did get shifted a little to the east to that location.

***QUESTION:** In regards to the waterway... Has the project been evaluated by the barge industry to evaluate the bridge's potential impact of safe navigation for each alternative? Explain how our coordination process will work as we go through alternatives.*

**BOB MAGLIOLA, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

So, the US Coast Guard works in coordination with an agency called the River Industry Action Committee, RIAC, and that's a group or association of shipping entities that ship along the Mississippi River, and, of course, they're very interested in maintaining navigation on the river. When we have the alignment selected and we start laying out the bridge on that alignment - on whatever alignment gets selected –then the US Coast Guard will be running that past RIAC, the River Industry Action Committee, to make sure that they do not have concerns about navigation.

***QUESTION:** Would the alignment in option 6 provide sufficient safety and traffic flow improvement, versus option 2 that retains most of the current curves?*

**MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Yes, the current curves under Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 – even though they are closer to the existing bridge, the curves would need to be reconstructed on the existing roadway because some of them are actually deficient. So, while Alternative 6 may simplify that because it's on a tangent across the river, we would still address the deficiencies under Alternatives 2 and 3, which have closer alignment.

So those deficiencies would still be addressed. And Alternative 6 did have some additional complexity because it goes across the river at a skew. So, it doesn't necessarily remove all the complexities. I think ultimately, Alternatives 2 and 3 and 6 would all be designed to the same policy standards to address all the deficiencies. There wouldn't be any loss of the higher design types with any of the alternatives.

***QUESTION:** Going back to Economic development – this is a little bit different than what we answered before ... Does improving access to the business corridors and economic development factor into the purpose and need generally. If so, why were these factors not included in the project's purpose and need?... (we) touched on this but let's clarify about how economic development can be a factor in purpose and need?*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Economic development can be included in the purpose and need if that need is identified when we are looking at those existing conditions and what the deficiencies are in the project area and whether or not this transportation project could address that. So based on the evaluation conducted here, those needs were not identified, and economic development is not included in the purpose and need for this project.

***QUESTION:** Is it feasible to construct a bridge either upstream or downstream of the existing bridge? If so, won't it make sense to consider the possibility of using the existing bridge for a national bison park and save the expense of demolishing?*

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

As you can see from our alternatives, we do have four alternatives where the existing bridge isn't immediately impacted by the proposed bridge structure. You can also see from the alternatives that the further we shift off the existing alignment, the greater the impacts. That's shown in the alternatives impacts that Tony had presented.

So, yes, there are alternatives out there that would leave the existing bridge structure not impacted by the proposed bridge. Again, as you start getting away from the existing alignment, it starts impacting more properties, more homes, and more businesses.

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

The only thing I would add is it goes back to what we talked about previously about the process of evaluating the environmental impacts, and certainly relocations that would be required for property owners is a significant component of that. So, as we assess those impacts for the various alternatives, it will help make clear what the preferred alternative will be.

Obviously public input that we're getting from you today is a component of that as well. We're going to continue to move through that path as required by NEPA, and as we move forward those additional assessments can be made as to whether there is a potential option for the reuse of the bridge.

*QUESTION: There are two different questions, but I'll bundle them together. One of the questions was about the evaluation criteria. How will they (alternatives) continue to be evaluated using the criteria, and how is that determined? So, we showed red, yellow, green (for impacts) but how, how is that and who determines the next layer of alternatives that will be eliminated? And then, the second part to that, somewhat the same vein is who makes the recommendations, and ultimately the final decision of the alignment that is chosen?*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Starting with the evaluation criteria, the first item there was Purpose and Need, and that is standard as part of any of these NEPA projects that we're going to evaluate whether the alternative meets Purpose and Need. Then in terms of the environmental factors, we basically use all the environmental factors that we can at this stage based on the information that's available to us to compare alternatives in terms of their potential effects. And then similarly, with the engineering factors that are used at this stage, we're trying to identify, again, we're at a preliminary level of engineering development, and we identify those factors that could potentially be a differentiator at this stage of the study.

Now, as we move forward and we get greater engineering detail developed for those alternatives that are carried forward, we're going to reassess the alternatives, refine the environmental impacts consistent with how they'll be evaluated in our NEPA document, we'll add any appropriate engineering factors that could be differentiators, to ultimately select a preferred alternative. We mentioned that costs will certainly factor in as we move forward, and there could be others depending on which alternatives get carried forward and where those differentiators may lie.

In terms of decision making, ultimately, the decision comes from the state departments of transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. Throughout the process there are numerous points where we're going to request feedback from the public on the alternatives in our evaluation process, and all that will ultimately factor in, in terms of the recommendations that are made. I know I've got a little bit into that decision making with the DOTs, so I don't know if Becky or Sam want to follow up on what I've stated?

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

Yes, thanks Tony, that was an excellent answer, very thorough. You're absolutely right; those

decisions are ultimately made by Federal Highway. Depending on the level of processing for the particular project... so there's three main, different levels of environmental documents that vary in complexity depending on the magnitude of impacts associated with a project.

And the degree of Federal oversight varies with those as well. But in all cases, we are coordinating with Federal Highway because they are administering NEPA, and they need to have approval of whatever the project team is bringing forth.

Additionally, there's multiple touchpoints through the project process where we meet, not only with FHWA, but also with other partner agencies, some that we've talked about earlier today – the Corps of Engineers, IDNR, and other agencies that are very important to a project of this nature. We gain input and approval points or comments from those agencies as we go through, just as we are doing with the public today. All of that data is compiled as a part of that decision making process. Sam, is there anything you wanted to add?

**SAM SHEA, Iowa Department of Transportation:**

I think you both did a good job of covering it. I might offer an example of how we use that agency coordination. And this is going to be an extremely simplified example, but just to help folks understand how we get to these alignment alternatives...

If we coordinated with, say, the US Coast Guard, which we will throughout this process, and the Coast Guard said: absolutely not to a particular alignment. Pick one, whatever alignment you choose... and they said, we will not approve that alignment. Well then, we're going to eliminate that from our alternatives for consideration. Now, that's an extreme and oversimplified view of it, but that's kind of the idea, so as we coordinate with these agencies, we're going to learn more about which alternatives are going to be OK to carry forward, and which ones aren't. And ultimately, the DOT and the Federal Highway Administration will have to make those calls when we get that information.

*QUESTION: I'm going back to add cost. Would there be taxpayer savings for not demo-ing the existing bridge, and does that work into the NEPA process?*

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

OK, so I guess I'll open this up to the remainder of the team too if anybody else wants to contribute, but I'll start with just restating that our initial process here is to evaluate environmental impacts.

As Tony related to an earlier question, at this point costs are not the focus. It doesn't mean that cost won't be assessed. Costs are definitely a consideration for engineering practices, and it's our job to be good stewards of taxpayer funds. That's a really important part of our job. But NEPA says that we have to, first and foremost, evaluate those environmental impacts. If it should happen that an alternative is selected, or a range of alternatives is selected, that would potentially allow the existing bridge to remain in place and we were at the point of assessing cost then, sure, that could be a consideration.

Our current estimate for demolition of the structure is about \$3 million. That's based on our experience, on consultation with agency experts. So that's approximately what we currently anticipate would be that cost. But I think it's important to note that our current assessment is not focused on that element specifically as to the costs, savings, or appreciation from that particular facet of the project potentially.

I guess I will also say, typically within a DOT project, if an existing facility isn't going to continue to be used for a transportation purpose, the DOT is going to look at what are the issues with continuing to maintain that structure? And I recognize, probably that, the basis of this question is

related to the Bison Bridge concept, and there might be some interest in privatizing something. But at this moment, we have to go through that environmental evaluation process and consider what those impacts might be. Does anybody else want to speak to that?

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

I think you covered it, but just to add: no one is saying we're not going to look at costs as part of the project. We certainly will; we're just not at that stage now. We don't have the engineering detail, to give you a robust cost estimate on the proposed improvements. And then if you're looking at a demolition cost that's in the \$3 million range, that's such a small percentage of what's the overall program for the project. It's really hard to get you a meaningful number at this stage. And so, again, that will be coming, and that's why, again, what we're focusing on now are alternatives to be carried forward for detailed evaluation. And part of that detailed evaluation is more engineering, additional environmental surveys in the field so we can refine those environmental impacts, and additional evaluation of potential engineering factors, including potential construction cost.

*QUESTION: Looking at the snapshot of the schedule. We still have a few other key milestones, right? You had mentioned Public Meeting number 3... so how does that align with the schedule.*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Public meeting number 3, which would be our next meeting, should be occurring later in the summer. That's to come back with the alternatives we're recommending to be carried forward. Then, from there, we progress that detailed evaluation that we use and roll into that decision, to make a recommendation on preferred alternative. And that public meeting (Public meeting number 4) is scheduled for early 2023, based on where we stand now.

*QUESTION: Going back to the Bison project, I'll just put this question out there. I think it's probably more intended for the organization that spearheading the concept but... Will the Bison project be purchasing the old I-80 bridge and fully maintain it without any taxpayer money? What would happen if the Bison project runs out of money to properly maintain the old bridge?*

**BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

As we've talked about previously, our project is NEPA guided and focused on the purpose and need, which relates to transportation elements. So, we are not directly involved with the Bison Bridge concept, or the Bison Bridge Foundation.

I certainly know that they have plans and a lot of support. So I do think, to some degree, that's intended for them specifically. But with regard to sale of the bridge or something of that nature, if we get to the point where alternatives would lead to that, then there is an extensive amount of coordination that would need to occur to make sure that the agencies are coordinating that process.

And it would potentially be a unique thing where there's a private entity taking over a public facility and any requirements associated with that, as well as the agencies that are in charge of the river, such as the Corps of Engineers, and the Coast Guard, etc.

In short, the Bison Bridge is not a part of our purpose and need, but we are definitely aware of it, and as we move forward in the evaluation of the alternatives if they lead to options there, I'm sure there will be future opportunities for discussion. So, Mike or Sam, is there anything you wanted to add to that?

**MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:**

Exactly what you said. Right now, where we're at right now, we cannot say definitively that the bridge is available for a future use or not. And, again, today's meeting is to present the alternatives



that we have at this point. Our next meeting will go over preferred alternatives, and there will be further discussion at that point. But at this point we're not there yet to be able to say the bridge is available, and what the next steps would be after that.

We're at step one of a potentially very long process and I'm sure they would have quite a few steps to go to proceed with what they would love to do. But, again, we're looking at this as a transportation project, which it is, to get a crossing of I80 over the Mississippi River.

**SAM SHEA, Iowa Department of Transportation:**

I would agree with what you both have said. It's a transportation project and we're trying to nail down the best alignment alternative for this transportation project that meets the purpose and need. If we should end up having selected an alternative that allows the I-80 bridge to stay in place, I think at that point, the question that was asked probably needs to be asked of whoever potentially could take that bridge over. The bridge probably won't still be a DOT structure at that point in time since it won't be a transportation facility. But that's if we get to that point.

***QUESTION:** Going back to the cost factors, this is a two part question. When you get to the cost factors, do you consider the tourist revenue, as well as the savings for the demo of the current bridge – which you already talked about. But what about the tourist revenue specifically?*

**TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:**

Tourist revenue wouldn't be anything we would factor in. We wouldn't have any way to estimate that and it's not associated with the transportation project we're developing and evaluating.