

I-70 Polk-Quincy Viaduct Project Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 2014

What is the I-70 Polk-Quincy Viaduct Project area?

The initial focus of the project was the I-70 Polk-Quincy Viaduct which spans from Polk Street on the west to Quincy Street on the east. The project has been expanded to analyze the conditions and alignment of I-70, the traffic flow characteristics, and the access opportunities from the MacVicar Avenue interchange east to the Adams Street/Branner Traffic Way interchange.

Why is this project needed?

The I-70 Polk-Quincy Viaduct was designed and built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Over 50 years, the condition of the bridge has deteriorated, traffic volumes have increased, design criteria have changed and the area around the viaduct has undergone new development and redevelopment. It is time to improve the viaduct to current standards, examine current and future traffic demands, and construct improvements to support safe and efficient movement along I-70 and between the highway and local streets, including the potential riverfront development area.

The study completed during Phase I of the project was needed to examine the future configuration of the viaduct and consider feasible alternatives to improve traffic flow and safety. Phase II, the design phase, is now underway and is the next step in preparing the project for construction when funding becomes available.

How will the community's interests be addressed?

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the City of Topeka, and the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization are committed to an active public involvement program and will take into account the needs and concerns of the community including nearby property owners, area businesses, and travelers through the area.

A significant public and stakeholder outreach effort has been a key part of this project. During Phase I, the study phase, outreach efforts included stakeholder interviews, public meetings, a website, focus group meetings, presentations to stakeholder groups, and media releases. Guidance for the study was provided by two groups, the Core Team and the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The Core Team included members from KDOT, the City of Topeka, the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization, and the Federal Highway Administration. The PAC was an informed group of stakeholders representing a wide range of community organizations which was established to provide input and feedback during the concept design study.

Phase II, the design phase, will be guided by a Key Stakeholder Group and three to four Stakeholder Subcommittees that will focus on specific issues of access, aesthetics and maintenance of traffic. Members of the PAC from Phase I have been offered an opportunity to continue with the project and the Core Team will continue its efforts. Phase II will also include continued updating of the project website, presentations to stakeholder groups, public meetings, and media releases.

What issues have been identified by the stakeholders?

- The following are the primary issues identified through the interviews and public meetings.
 - Maintenance of the bridge is difficult.
 - The shoulders on the viaduct are too narrow.
 - The 3rd Street curve is too sharp.
 - The acceleration lanes are too short.
 - The 8th Street exit on westbound I-70 is hidden.
 - The weave length between 8th Street and 4th Street on westbound I-70 is too short.
 - The ramp connections at Madison and Monroe are too close to 8th and 4th streets.
 - There are too few lanes.
 - The ramps are too close together.
 - There is no direct access to Kansas Avenue or Topeka Boulevard.

What improvement options have been explored?

During Phase I, the project study team identified 17 potential alternatives for improvements to the Polk-Quincy Viaduct ranging from a continued maintenance program to reconstruction on the existing alignment with minimal improvements, to realigning I-70 and improving it to current design criteria. Based upon the evaluation criteria established by the Project Advisory Committee in conjunction with the study team, three alternatives were selected for further review.

After an extensive public involvement process including the public, local stakeholders and community officials, a final preferred alternative was selected to move forward into final design.

What is the preferred alternative that is being carried in final design?

The Preferred Alternative creates an access system with two “split diamond” interchanges, one serving the north side of the downtown area and one serving the east side.

On the **north side**, the existing 1st Street ramps are relocated to connect directly with Topeka Boulevard. These ramps serve traffic traveling to and from the west on I-70. A complementary set of ramps connect to Kansas Avenue and serve traffic traveling to and from the east on I-70. These ramps are joined by a pair of one-way connector roads to form a system that will provide access to downtown from the north, the proposed Riverfront redevelopment area, and North Topeka.

A similar system of ramps and connector roads will serve the **east side** of the downtown area and East Topeka. The existing 3rd Street ramps will be relocated to 4th Street and will serve traffic traveling to and from the west on I-70. The existing 10th Avenue ramps will remain and be widened and new 6th Avenue ramps will be constructed to serve traffic traveling to and from the east on I-70. The 4th Street, 6th Avenue, and 10th Avenue ramps will be connected by the one-way, connector road pair of Madison and Monroe Streets. Other ramps between 10th Avenue and 4th Street will be removed.

While the City of Topeka supported improvements to I-70, they also requested that a modification be considered as the project moves into preliminary design. KDOT will analyze the requested modification that would eliminate a proposed eastbound I-70 entrance ramp from 6th Avenue and instead provide an eastbound I-70 exit that would connect to Monroe Street north of 10th Avenue. Other ramps connecting I-70 to local streets would remain as described in the Preferred Alternative.

What is the next step after the design is completed?

At this time, no funding for right of way acquisition or construction has been identified and a schedule for construction of the improvements has not been determined.

When will construction actually begin?

Presently, funding for construction has not been identified and a schedule for construction of the improvements has not been determined.

Who is leading this project?

KDOT, the City of Topeka, and the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization are partners in this project.

How can I keep informed or get involved with the project?

KDOT, the City of Topeka and the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization are committed to an active public involvement program as is described above. In addition, updated information will be posted on a study specific Web site: <http://i70polkquincy.ksdot.org>