



# The Connector

January 2006, Issue #1

## What's an EIS?

An Environmental Impact Statement or EIS is an assessment of environmental impacts related to a proposed improvement, in this case a transportation improvement project. An EIS may be conducted for any project, but is required for those that use federal funds or federal permits for construction. An EIS answers the following questions:

- What is the purpose and need for the improvement?
- How would the proposed improvement function?
- How might improvements impact the cultural, social and natural environment?
- Which alternative best meets the purpose and need while minimizing impacts?

The EIS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and helps agencies and the public make well-informed decisions about transportation investments in their community. The Federal Highway Administration oversees the process and approves a selected alternative. Approval is necessary to proceed into design, right of way acquisition and construction.

## New Transportation Corridor Meets Needs of Southeast Des Moines

The Southeast (SE) Connector project will result in a new, efficient, multi-lane roadway that addresses the transportation and mobility needs of Southeast Des Moines. It will create a direct connection from Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway (MLK) at SW 2nd Street to the U.S. 65 bypass. The SE Connector Project consists of two primary phases:

- Phase I consists of roadway improvements between SW 2nd Street to SE 15th Street, including a new bridge over the Des Moines River
- Phase II consists of roadway improvements from SE 15th Street to the new U.S. 65 bypass

Each phase has different stages that will proceed as funding becomes available.

Phase I will be completed in approximately three stages over the next seven years. The project team will continue to solicit public input and study the needs of the area and the people driving through, to ensure that the street improvements meet those needs and will include survey and design; right of way appraisal, negotiations and acquisition; utility relocations and construction.

### Bridge Concepts and EIS – An update on Phase I and Phase II

#### Bridge Concepts – Phase I

The first step in Phase I is to determine a bridge type and in Phase II to develop a Purpose and Need Statement.

A primary feature of the SE Connector is design and construction of a new Des Moines River crossing, which will span 700 feet across the Des Moines River from SW 2nd Street to SE 2nd Street. Several issues need to be addressed during the design process that will determine how the new bridge will look and operate.

The project team is developing the concepts for three bridge types, including:

1. A "Standard" bridge with five or six spans of concrete or steel beams on piers. This type of bridge would be similar in appearance to the new bridge on MLK Parkway over the Raccoon River. The anticipated construction cost is \$6 to \$7 million.
2. An "Enhanced" bridge would follow a standard basic construction, but could incorporate features such as arches, pier styling, railings and "stone" façade appearance matching similar features of bridges located upstream. The anticipated construction cost is \$7 to \$8 million.
3. A "Signature" bridge including a span with a distinctive, dramatic appearance that is unique to the site. The bridge could have a tied arch and features to match the George Washington Carver Bridge on MLK or a cable stayed bridge matching the Center Street Pedestrian Bridge, planned for the Principal Riverwalk. The anticipated construction cost is \$11 to \$12 million or more. *(Continued on page 3)*

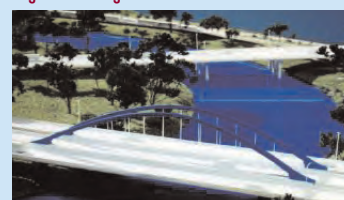
Standard Bridge



Enhanced Bridge



Signature Bridge



## Phase I Timeline

### SW 2nd Street to SE 15th Street

#### 2005

- Re-evaluate the existing EIS
- Complete pre-design studies for:
  - Traffic Forecasts and Analysis
  - Land Use Planning
  - River Hydraulics
  - Storm Drainage
  - Sanitary Sewers

#### 2006

- Finalize concept for the Des Moines River crossing bridge
- Begin bridge design
- Begin street design from SW 2nd Street to SE 6th Street
- Acquire right of way from SW 2nd Street to SE 6th Street
- Relocate utilities from SW 2nd Street to SE 6th Street

#### 2007

- Complete street design from SW 2nd Street to SE 6th Street
- Complete bridge design
- Continue acquiring right of way from SW 2nd Street to SE 6th Street
- Continue relocating utilities
- Begin bridge construction
- Begin street design from SE 6th Street to SE 15th Street

#### 2008

- Continue bridge construction
- Street construction from SW 2nd Street to SE 6th Street
- Continue design SE 6th to SE 15th
- Acquire right of way from SE 6th Street to SE 15th Street
- Relocate utilities from SE 6th Street to SE 15th Street

#### 2009-2012

- Acquire right of way and relocate utilities from SE 6th Street to SE 15th Street
- Complete bridge construction
- Complete street construction SW 2nd to SE 6th
- Begin street construction from SE 6th Street to SE 15th Street

## Phase I – Design and Construction

The EIS has been approved for Phase I and activities are moving into the design phase from SW 2nd to SE 15th Street. The first step is to conduct pre-design studies on:

- traffic forecasts and analysis
- land use planning
- river hydraulics
- storm drainage
- sanitary sewers

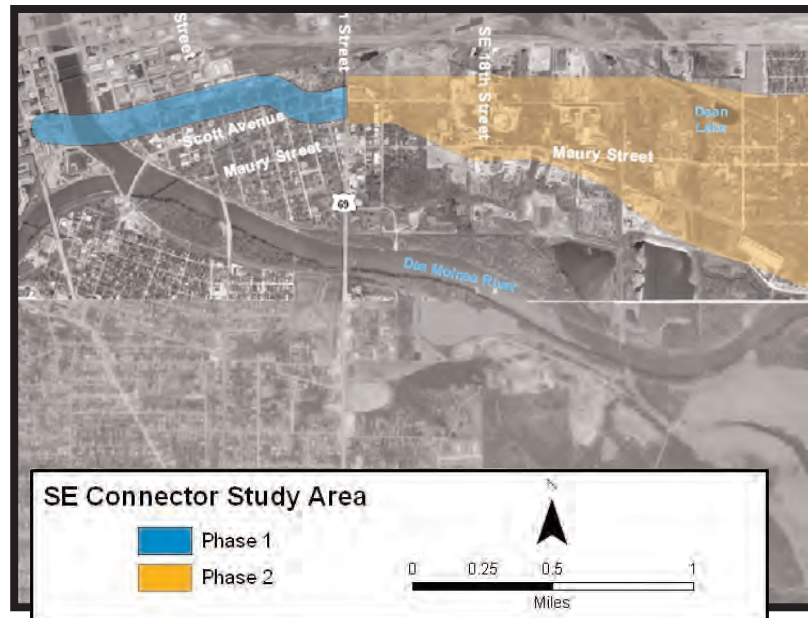
Following the pre-design studies, the project team will develop preliminary designs for the new street, connections to the existing street system and other related improvements. The preliminary design information will be used to determine what changes need to be made to utilities throughout the corridor and what additional property will be needed for

right of way. At this point, the project team will begin formal contacts with affected property owners.

To determine if a particular property will be affected or for those interested in being acquired early in the process, please contact City of Des Moines Real Estate Division at (515) 283-4561.

### ■ Phase I

- Improvements between SW 2nd to SE 15th streets, including:
  - Final design, right of way acquisition and construction of new roadway and river crossing between SW 2nd and SE 6th
  - Final design, right of way acquisition and construction of new roadway between SE 6th to SE 15th



## Why two phases?

The SE Connector improvements are being developed in two phases because they are at different stages of the transportation improvement process. A multi-stage process is used for the planning, development and construction of federally-funded major transportation investments.

The transportation improvement process begins with the long-term regional transportation plan. The City of Des Moines' Year 2020 Street and Highway Plan and the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Year 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan establishes goals and policies for the city and region respectively and identifies corridors in need of improvement.

Identified corridors then proceed to the feasibility phase where studies such as the Southeast Diagonal Corridor Study identifies problems and needs and assesses the feasibility of potential improvements.

The environmental analysis phase (in this case the MLK Parkway EIS and SE Connector EIS) place alternatives through a stringent environmental review and preliminary design process, culminating with the selection and approval of a preferred alternative.

Once the environmental process is complete and funding is available, the City may begin the process of design, right of way acquisition and construction. Extensive public involvement activities are conducted throughout the entire improvement process.

## Phase II – The Future

Phase II will be the future link between SE 15th Street and U.S. Highway 65. The first activity in Phase II is to complete the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is part of the NEPA approval process. The project team will assess the potential benefits and impacts to the community related to any SE Connector improvements between S.E. 15th and U.S. 65. Design, construction and right of way acquisition will not start until the EIS process is complete and funding becomes available.

The project team is currently working on the project's Purpose and Need Statement. This Statement guides the entire decision-making process by defining the issues and needs of the study area, establishing goals and objectives for the project and creating the basis for developing and screening alternatives.



### ■ Phase 2

- Improvements between SE 15th to U.S. 65, including:
- SE Connector EIS – selection of a preferred alternative for improvements
- Preliminary design (*when funding is available*)
- Final design, right of way acquisition and construction (*when funding is available*)

## Bridge Concepts

(Continued from page 1)

The preferred bridge type will be determined considering public input and the amount of funding available for construction. No matter which bridge type is chosen, the constructed bridge will accommodate four or more lanes of traffic, a bicycle and pedestrian multipurpose trail along the south side and a pedestrian sidewalk. The design may also include dedicated on-street bike lanes, and will provide crossings over the recreational trail.

## EIS – Phase II

In Phase II, the project team is working to complete an EIS. The project team is currently developing a Purpose and Need Statement, the first of many tasks within the EIS decision-making process. The Purpose and Need provides a brief history, describes the specific study area and identifies transportation problems that would be addressed by the proposed improvement.

The Purpose and Need guides the entire decision-making process and provides the focus for analysis by:

- Identifying the issues and needs of the corridor
- Establishing goals and objectives
- Establishing screening criteria – the basis for developing and evaluating alternatives

When all concepts are being considered, the criteria (established from the Purpose and Need) will be applied in a general sense. Some concepts will be eliminated and others, more fully developed, will become alternatives. The criteria will be applied increasingly throughout the process until the preferred alternative is selected.

## Phase II Timeline

### SE 15th Street to U.S. 65

#### 2005

- Initiate project with state and local agencies
- Develop study Purpose and Need
- Develop and screen preliminary concepts
- Meet with advisory groups
- Conduct public open house

#### 2006

- Continue preliminary engineering and environmental analysis
- Coordinate with state and local agencies and advisory groups
- Continue gathering public input
- Identify reasonable alternatives
- Present initial screening report
- Begin preliminary engineering and environmental analysis

#### 2007

- Continue preliminary engineering and environmental analysis
- Coordinate with state and local agencies and advisory groups
- Continue public involvement
- Screen reasonable alternatives
- Prepare and distribute draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Conduct public hearing
- Open public comment and review period
- Address public and agency comments

#### 2008

- Prepare and distribute Final EIS
- Receive Record of Decision for selected alternative

#### FUTURE

(dependent on funding)

- Complete preliminary and final design of selected alter-



# Open House Draws Crowd

More than 150 residents, business owners and other area citizens attended the first public meeting for the SE Connector project October 18th at the Chesterfield Community Center in Des Moines.



At the meeting, area stakeholders talked directly with members of the project team and looked at display boards with information on the history of the project, action steps for Phases I and II, timelines, maps of the project site, and cost and construction details.

Project team members said they were pleased with the turn out, the questions and comments offered and the public's interest in the SE Connector.

For those who were unable to attend the meeting, but are interested in

learning more about project public involvement and overall project details, the Web site can be accessed by visiting <http://www.seconnector.com>.

The Web site offers opportunities to subscribe to the project newsletter, and submit comments. Contact us to submit comments or to join our mailing list by calling the project hotline at (800) 797-0565 or by mailing or e-mailing the addresses in the box at the right.

## To reach the project team:

- **Send mail to:**  
SE Connector  
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- **Call:**  
1-800-797-0565
- **Send e-mail to:**  
[info@seconnector.com](mailto:info@seconnector.com)
- **Visit the Web site at:**  
[www.seconnector.com](http://www.seconnector.com)

*Look for announcements in spring 2006 about the next public meeting. The meeting will update residents, business owners and other interested stakeholders on the progress made on Phase I design studies and on the Phase II EIS.*



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