

The Ozark Mountain Highroad: A Highway Planning Model for the Future

A multi-agency partnership program based on the open sharing of information, coupled with an effective public participation program, are key to expediting project planning.

JERRY A. MUGG

In today's fast-paced world, nothing seems immune from being fast-tracked. The engineering community has developed many turn-key type services but they are targeted primarily only for privately funded projects. Transportation planning services have remained relatively unscathed by society's need to hurry up.

Customarily not known for its swiftness, the highway planning process, which must follow federal environmental review policies, has long been viewed as inefficient but necessary. Due to multi-agency coordination and public review requirements, highway planning pro-

jects have traditionally taken years to conduct. Upon completion, the highway agency then has authorization to begin the design phase, typically requiring an additional two to three years depending on the size and funding of the project.

The Ozark Mountain Highroad Project has changed that process. The Highroad, a planned 18-mile (29-kilometer), four-lane controlled-access highway on a new alignment, was conceived in June 1992. In January 1993, the Record of Decision was signed — after only eight months had elapsed. What many said could not be accomplished was completed — and in record time. By fast-tracking the highway planning process, the Highroad has shown that a highway project can be planned in an efficient and timely manner with complete regard to environmental considerations and public opinion requirements. The Highroad has become a model for the planning process for future transportation projects.

Project Setting

Branson, Missouri (population 7,700), is possibly the hottest entertainment center in the

country. Many nationally-known celebrities have established country music theaters along a four and one-half mile stretch (seven kilometers) of three-lane highway that winds along ridgetops in the Ozark Mountains of southwest Missouri. It is reported there are now more theater seats in Branson than there are on Broadway in New York City and on the famous strip in Las Vegas. In addition to the numerous entertainment attractions, the Branson area also offers recreational opportunities for both boating and fishing enthusiasts. With these natural and manmade amenities, the tourism industry in the area has experienced rapid growth over the past several years — overtaking an infrastructure originally intended to serve a small rural community.

Because the region is rugged and mountainous, visitors to the area must rely on various forms of surface transportation and a limited highway system (see Figure 1). During the peak of the tourism season, 30,000 cars are jammed onto Country Music Boulevard (Route 76) each day. This congestion often results in average speeds of 10 mph (16 kph) for much of the day and intolerable delays. The current yearly delay is estimated to be over one million vehicle-hours and approximately 2.4 to 3.0 million person-hours. These delays translate into additional costs not only for the tourists, but also for the local and statewide economies.

Unique Solutions

In early June 1992, the governor of Missouri declared the traffic congestion in the Branson area an economic emergency that required immediate attention. The challenge presented by the governor to the Missouri Highway and Transportation Department (MHTD) was to plan a totally new transportation facility in six months without compromising safety (design parameters) or the integrity of the environmental review/approval process.

Planners for the Ozark Mountain Highroad devised a unique approach for accomplishing in a couple of years what normally requires five to seven years. The enormous need for a fast response to the transportation needs of the area was met with an unparalleled partnering effort by agencies and consultants. This cooperation made it possible to compress the planning

schedule to 30 percent of the time typically required for a project of this magnitude. Developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and implemented by the MHTD and its planning consultant team, this unique approach to the Ozark Mountain Highroad highway planning process employed concurrent review procedures for the environmental documentation and other fast-track techniques not normally used in a conventional highway planning process.

However, time was not the only challenge. The difficult physical terrain of the project area and its physical restrictions required that planners be innovative in developing and evaluating alternatives. The difficult environmental terrain of the Branson area further constrained the planning effort since it necessitated that special studies be conducted to identify potential environmental impacts. Environmental issues surrounding the project were further heightened by increasing signs of stress created by the phenomenal growth of the area. Similarly, the unique nature of the project setting created an equally unique need for active public participation in the planning process. Consequently, a community involvement program was coupled with the Highroad planning effort to avoid confusion within the community concerning the fast-track approach and to augment the sharing of information.

Even with this multi-agency partnering approach, additional special techniques and practices had to be utilized by the Highroad planning team in order to bring concept to reality. These procedures complemented the partnering approach to maintain a commitment to the open process philosophy. Despite the special nature of the Ozark Mountain Highroad project itself, the tools, techniques and planning procedures employed can be applied to other projects that address transportation-related problems. The Highroad is an outstanding example of what can be done when a rapid response to a critical transportation issue is urgently needed.

Multi-Agency Partnering

The challenges of the governor's call to action — to fast-track the design process for the Ozark Mountain Highroad — were so great that a

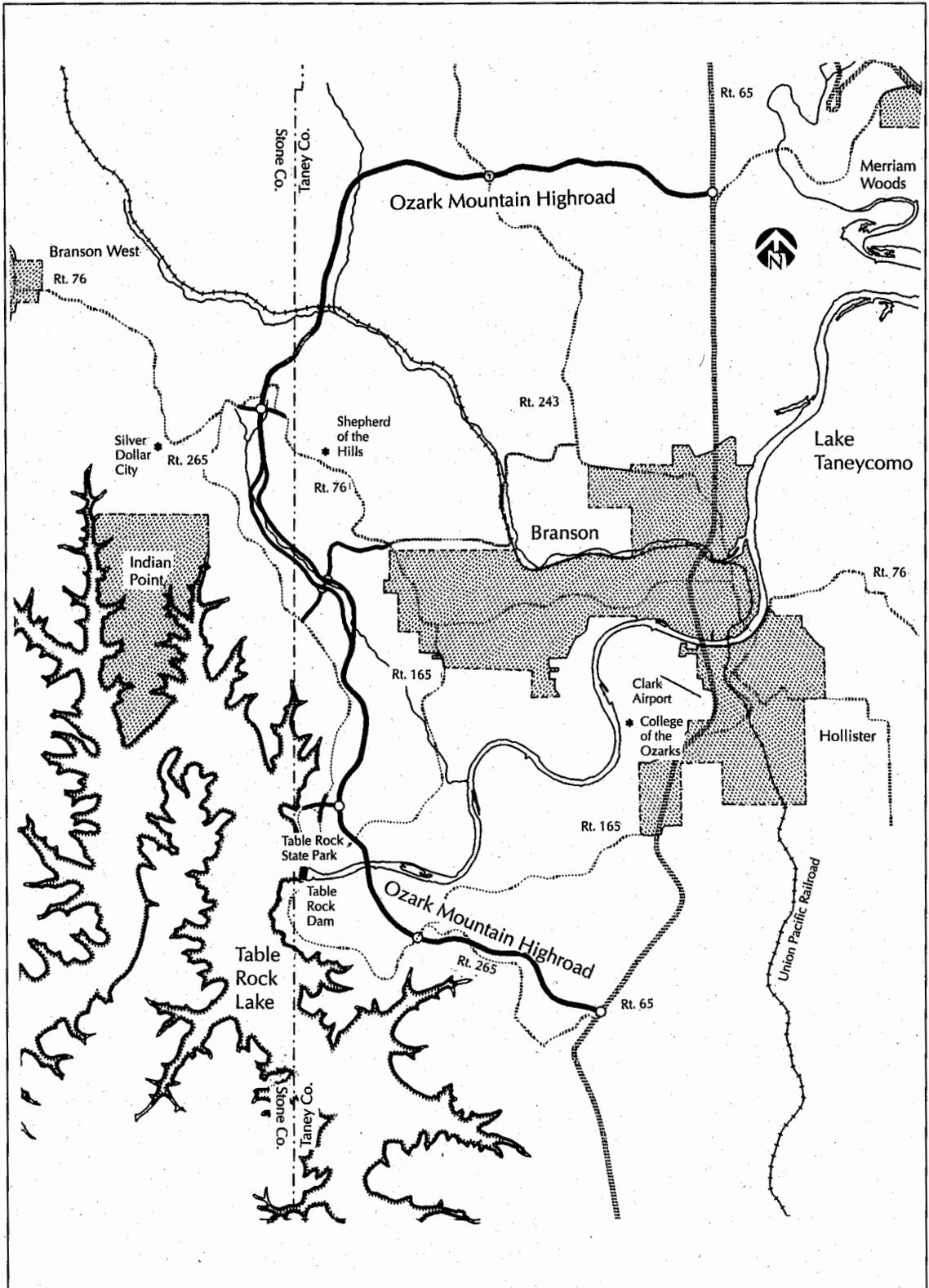


FIGURE 1. Branson, Missouri, is located in the heart of Ozark Mountain country.

typical, standard approach to the planning effort would have been inadequate. The demands and characteristics of the project setting required that a progressive approach to the planning and design process be taken. Realizing this, the Kansas City, Missouri, Division, and the Jefferson City, Missouri, District of the FHWA, in coordination with the Washington, D.C., office, developed a model program to advance the Highroad project in the most efficient and timely manner possible while maintaining compliance with the letter and intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The cornerstone of this model approach was its open-process philosophy and call for multi-agency cooperation. The goal of the model program was to demonstrate that a highway project could be advanced in an efficient and timely manner while, at the same time, assuring that the best decisions were being made regarding not only the project itself but also the environment as a whole. To facilitate this goal, the open-process philosophy was developed to promote and encourage full consideration of all ideas and opinions, no matter how diverse, and to openly examine competing project needs.

After the philosophical cornerstone of the model program had been identified, efforts then shifted to how to establish and sustain the open-process methodology. To accomplish this, a partnering concept was developed and encouraged among the sponsoring agencies, the consultant team and the resource agencies. This partnership concept was based on pro-active scoping, open dialog and requests for active participation. A call for the active involvement of top level management also helped ensure a commitment to the program.

Shared ownership of the project by the multi-agency team was fostered by the acknowledgement of the individual and specific needs of each resource group. Through this process, a shared vision within the multi-agency partnership seemed to evolve, not only for the project itself but also to demonstrate that the whole process could move along efficiently. As the project progressed, the open-process philosophy seemed to feed on itself and keep the project planning process continually moving toward completion.

TABLE 1.
Planning Timeline

Days From Notice-to-Proceed	Product Delivered
18	First Public Involvement Meeting (Scope Meeting)
84	Preliminary Draft EIS Circulation
90-95	Public Open House Meetings
114	Draft EIS Circulation
135	Design/Location Public Hearing
190	Final EIS Circulation
234	Record of Decision

Procedures for a Model Environmental Project

To help guide these ideas into becoming a reality, a timetable for project development — termed “Procedures for a Model Environmental Project” — was developed. This timetable outlined the time constraints and lead agency responsibilities for the timely handling of tasks that would fulfill NEPA requirements. Time considerations for transportation and environmental enhancement components also were detailed. The timeline included the most crucial steps of the NEPA process from project inception to beyond the signing of the Record of Decision (ROD).

Key steps that required expeditious processing included:

- The notice of intent;
- The designation of agency coordinators;
- Requests for cooperating agency participation;
- Early notification to resource agencies concerning the project emphasis;
- The scoping meeting; and,
- The required steps of the environmental documentation preparation.

These steps included such activities as:

- Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) circulation;
- Draft EIS circulation;
- A public hearing;
- Final EIS circulation; and,
- The signing of the ROD.

The timetable for the environmental documentation preparation, including the corresponding notices of availability and public announcements, was established based on the minimum review time requirements prescribed by NEPA (see Table 1).

Therefore, little slack time was available for responding to official agency EIS comments. These conditions called for extraordinary cooperation from the multi-agency team. The model procedures called for a two-week turnaround for the review of the preliminary Draft EIS — typically not a prescribed step of the NEPA process. Similarly, requests for the expeditious review of the Draft EIS and the Final EIS, in the spirit of the open-process philosophy, were also submitted.

Consistent with the partnering concept upon which the fast-track procedures were founded, the planning consultant's responsibilities for the project were expanded to include establishing liaisons within the multi-agency team members. Information that was necessary for key decisions and other prescribed data circulation items were distributed by the planning consultant for the various agencies to review and respond simultaneously. This arrangement significantly improved the time needed to make collective decisions by the FHWA and the MHTD.

Breaking the Traditional Mold

Typically, highway planners strive to efficiently and safely transport users from one point to another. Roadway grades, alignments and configurations are designed to maximize system efficiency for the benefit of the user. The overlying principle is to provide a means of safe transportation with a design that is as cost-effective as possible. Physical, natural and environmental constraints sometimes dictate that there be some adjustment in the planners' logic, but for the most part a lack of regard is given to the highway's relationship with the natural

surroundings. These factors are typically avoided — not due to an unwillingness on the part of the highway planner, but rather due to not being an objective at the outset of the planning effort. For the Highroad, this was not the case. At the outset, the Highroad project team identified the need to break the traditional mold.

Thinking of the typical motorist in the Branson area (a tourist drawn by the natural beauty of the Ozarks), an identity for the Highroad was envisioned at the outset of the project. The Highroad would be the gateway to the Branson area and would likely be the primary means for many to experience the Ozarks. The multi-disciplinary planning team decided to incorporate the Highroad into the physical terrain and to create opportunities for the public to experience the distinct Ozark surroundings in the Branson area. These opportunities included providing scenic overlooks, bicycle and hiking trails, and historical interpretive centers.

The planning of the roadway was unique in its attempt to blend the roadway grades with the physical features of the Ozark Mountain countryside. A parkway-type facility with a median that continually varied in width from seven to over 700 feet (2.1 to 213 meters) was developed. Split alignment grades were proposed for the opposing travel lanes so that opposing traffic cannot be seen as the opposing directions weave in and out of the rugged terrain. With the cooperation of the MHTD, these "relaxed" design standards (in comparison to a normal four-lane, access-controlled state highway) were used in order to achieve a very different type of highway (see Figure 2).

Billboard control provided another means of integrating the Highroad into the natural Ozark terrain. The Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission designated the Highroad as a "Scenic Byway," which, as part of the primary state highway system, allows for the regulation of all outdoor advertising that is visible from the highway right-of-way. This designation permits state control over the proliferation of outdoor signs along the roadway that might interfere with Highroad users' enjoyment of the natural beauty of the surroundings. This control is being accomplished with the purchase of scenic easements that run par-

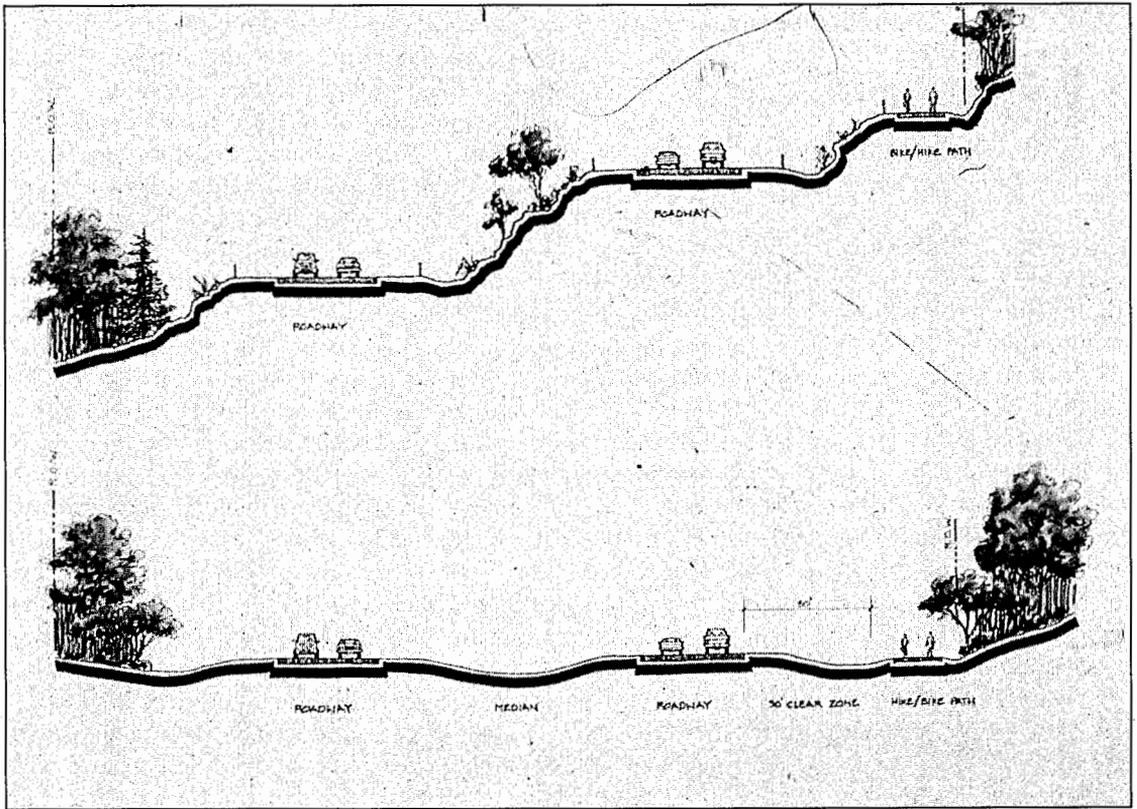


FIGURE 2. The Highroad blends into the rugged landscape using split horizontal and vertical alignments.

allel to, and 660 feet outside, the Highroad's right-of-way line.

Up-Front Commitment to Enhancement

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 put into action a national policy that sought to blend transportation facilities into communities and the natural environment. Transportation programs today must be compatible with national environmental goals. ISTEA has strengthened the environmental aspects that must be considered during the decision-making process and encourages the preservation and/or enhancement of the affected environment. These enhancements take many forms. From guidelines to help preserve wetlands preservation to scenic byways and pull-offs, ISTEA recommends the incorporation of many features to support the environment into the design of new transportation facilities.

In the case of the Ozark Mountain Highroad, a commitment to a complete and full investigation of the enhancement opportunities available through ISTEA was established at the outset of the planning effort. This commitment, and its implementation, reassured the various resource agencies of the planning team's intention to provide the best possible transportation facility in response to the needs of the Branson area and that this facility would take full advantage of the features that can enhance and promote the natural environment.

At the outset of the project, the planning team recognized that the cultural significance of the area represented an enormous opportunity. The Branson hills are rich with historical treasures waiting to be uncovered. With a traditional planning schedule, the typical approach would have been to investigate specific route alignments for items of cultural and historic significance. These sites, if deemed significant, would most likely have been avoided by

the proposed action with only minimal (if any) expenditure for mitigation.

In the case of the Highroad, time would not permit this approach. As soon as the project began, archeological teams were scouring the ridgetops and hillsides within a 4,000-foot (1.2-kilometer) wide corridor where the Highroad was most likely to be located in search of historical or archeological remains. An agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer was signed that committed the planning team to conduct an investigation of the entire corridor in accordance with prescribed procedures and documentation requirements.

As the project progressed, significant sites and findings were shared with the planning team so that adjustments could be made to the alternative routes under consideration. Meetings were held with the appropriate agencies to discuss subsequent data recovery, mitigation and possible preservation efforts. A willingness to pursue the possibility of cultural interpretation facilities in conjunction with the Highroad was articulated and specified in the Final EIS. With this up-front cultural commitment, potential delays in the project were avoided and the objectives of the Highroad were able to merge with the goals of the historic preservation program.

Other commitments made during the beginning of the planning process also helped move the project forward. During the wetlands coordination phase conducted in concert with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a willingness to consider employing methods to enhance and preserve wetlands was expressed even if such efforts were not required. Indeed, a commitment was made in the Final EIS to pursue the creation of special aquatic sites (wetlands) within the Highroad right-of-way as part of final design even though these efforts were not required to mitigate any expected negative impacts.

Similarly, a commitment to the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats throughout the right-of-way was made. A comprehensive landscaping and wildlife habitat master plan was drawn up. The extra-wide median areas designed for the Highroad not only provided a unique visual aspect to the Highroad, but also provided planners with the opportu-

nity to integrate wildlife habitat management features into the highway's construction. A commitment to work with the resource agencies in further pursuit of these goals was made in the Final EIS. The multi-agency partnering concept will go on through the final design process.

Progressive Resource Scoping

One of the elements of the NEPA compliance process is the sharing and gathering of information to identify problems and constraints associated with the proposed action. This process, called *scoping*, has long been a normal component of the EIS preparation process.

The goal of scoping is to provide the opportunity for public and private agencies to share their views on various social and environmental issues that are considered to be affected by the proposed action. These ideas can then be evaluated by the transportation planner to shape the proposed action. Scoping should be initiated in the early stages of the planning effort so that all critical issues are known as soon as possible, thereby allowing the planner ample time to evaluate all the issues. Early scoping also helps ensure that time is not wasted on pursuing issues of low significance.

The NEPA regulations encourage innovation with regard to project scoping since the specific requirements of the regulations that cover scoping are limited. However, the regulations do specify that an open scoping process with public notice should be provided. The scoping process should:

- Include the identification of both significant and insignificant issues;
- Identify the related analysis requirements; and,
- Present a schedule for the EIS preparation.

On June 26, 1992, at the MHTD offices in Springfield, Missouri, a formal scoping meeting for the Ozark Mountain Highroad was held. This meeting was announced publicly and was attended by federal, state and local agencies and conservation groups. Information packets with personal invitations to the resource agencies had been mailed prior to the

scoping meeting. A brief overview of the project and descriptions of the alternatives being considered were provided. Other items discussed included the "Procedures for a Model Environmental Project" and the project's environmental considerations. All of these discussions were preceded by an invitation by the MHTD District Engineer, during his opening remarks, for cooperation and openness among all of the attending agencies.

However, the scoping meeting did not mark the date when the scoping process for the Highroad actually began. Prior to the formal meeting, hundreds of hours had already been spent in the field or on the phone talking and meeting with the various resource agencies in an effort to gather information and identify needs. When the official notice-to-proceed was received on June 8, 1992, the consultant team — consisting of transportation planners, foresters, geologists, environmental scientists, archaeologists and engineers — hit the ground running. Time could not be wasted waiting for the environmental scoping issues to arise at the formal scoping meeting. A progressive approach to the scoping process was needed.

For the multi-agency partnering relationship to work, the scoping process for the Highroad project had to promote and complement the open-process philosophy. Individual meetings with the resource agencies were held to encourage the open sharing of information.

Field reconnaissance meetings with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) were held to gather relevant data. The Corps, a cooperating agency for the Highroad EIS process, designated a project contact person within the agency specifically for the Highroad project. Several meetings with the Corps were scheduled in the field to delineate the location of, and assess how the highway would affect, the wetlands within the project area. As is the responsibility of the Corps in the administration of the Clean Water Act, Section 404, it provided guidance on the regulatory requirements and their implications on the proposed action. This input was received early enough in the process so that the planners had ample opportunity to make adjustment for these conditions.

The tight environmental constraints that were imposed on the project corridor in the vicinity of the Lake Taneycomo crossing required early scoping with the MDC. The MDC, in a lease agreement with the Corps, owns and operates the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery located along the north bank of Lake Taneycomo immediately downstream of the Table Rock Lake Dam. Since it was located within the Highroad study corridor, planners determined that avoiding the Hatchery site (a Section 4(f) resource) was not feasible or prudent (see Figure 3).

Consequently, members of the consultant team met with the Hatchery manager and naturalist to ascertain what impacts on the Hatchery site would be acceptable. Areas of unacceptable consequences were pointed out so that some of the alternative alignments could be eliminated from further study.

The MDC scoping also provided valuable input as to what ancillary features the Highroad should offer as it passed through the Hatchery area. For example, a closed drainage system with spill containment ponds for the Lake Taneycomo bridge decks was planned in response to MDC concerns.

Also, input was received on the desired style and aesthetic features of the lake bridge. Using this progressive approach to scoping, planners were able to adequately address the Hatchery concerns in the EIS documentation and Section 4(f) Statement so that the reviewers of the document were satisfied.

The planning team met with many other individuals or groups including:

- Staff from the Ruth and Paul Henning State Forest;
- The NEPA coordinator and wildlife specialist from the U.S. Forest Service;
- Table Rock State Park staff;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff; and,
- Taney County and Stone County planners.

These meetings provided invaluable data concerning such issues as impacts on wildlife, habitat fragmentation, threatened and endangered species, and land use concerns. As a result, before the scoping meeting was even held,

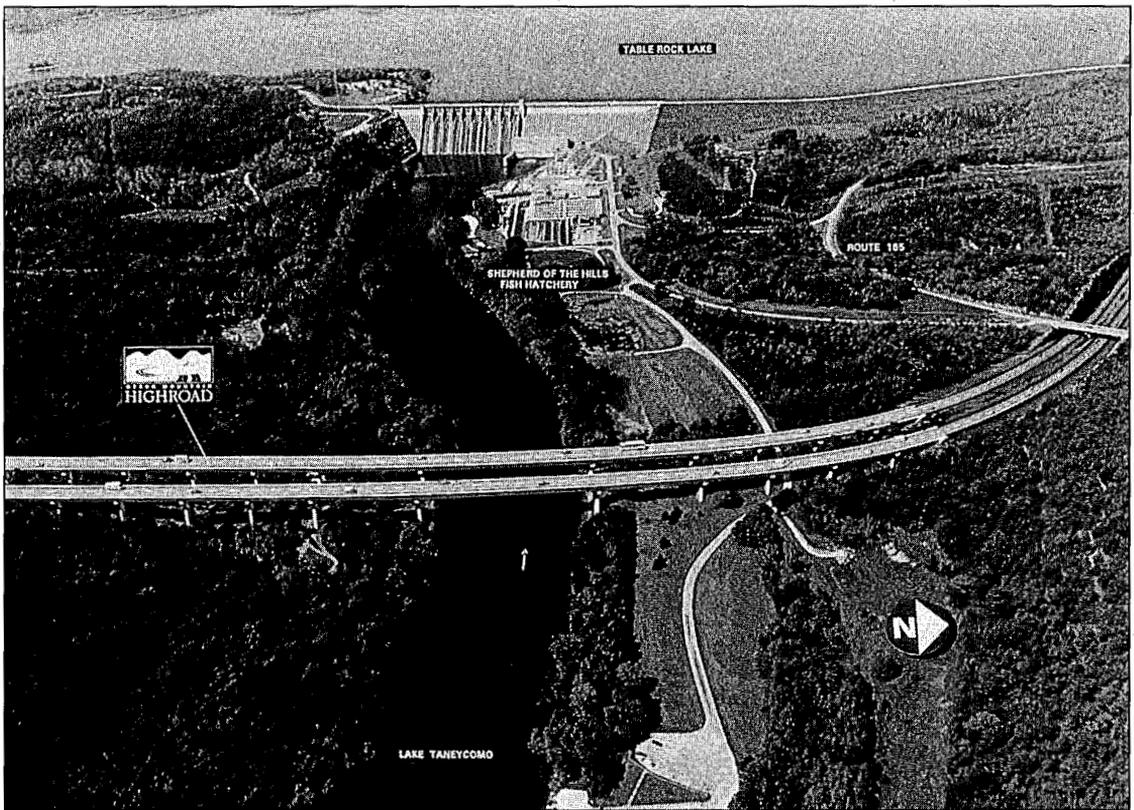


FIGURE 3. Through progressive scoping, an acceptable alignment, with appropriate mitigation measures, was identified for the Highroad near the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery.

an action plan to resolve the identified environmental concerns was in place and moving forward.

In response to concerns about impacts to the water quality of Marvel Cave (a designated critical habitat for the gray bat, which is on the federal government's endangered species list), an expert on hydrogeology was brought on board to determine if the Highroad corridor lay within the Marvel Cave recharge area. Similarly, a biologist with expertise in cave life was hired to assist the team by investigating the caves that were discovered within the corridor by the geologic reconnaissance team. These actions allowed the planning team to show at the formal scoping meeting how these issues and problems were already being tackled.

Community Involvement Program

One of the key elements of the Highroad project that greatly facilitated and complemented the multi-agency partnering approach was its ac-

tive community involvement program. At the outset of the project, the need for a progressive approach to public involvement was recognized. The fast-track schedule for the project and the difficult public relations setting of the Branson area created an enormous challenge for the community involvement program. Since the project was receiving high-profile status in the local media, a program was needed to reassure the public that their needs and concerns were being addressed. Similarly, with the governor's charge to plan the highway as quickly as possible, the public needed assurances that important steps were not being omitted. The community involvement program was designed to address these issues.

There were essentially six elements to the Highroad community involvement program:

- Project identity;
- Public opinion research;
- Media relations;

- Public affairs;
- Public information; and,
- Location/design public hearing.

In order to develop and structure a communications plan for the Highroad project, researchers worked to determine the range of questions and concerns held by the people affected by the Highroad. Their research was conducted utilizing three focus groups that were composed of local residents and small business owners in the Branson area. The goals of the communications program included sharing information with the public about the ongoing studies and investigations being performed for the Highroad as well as educating the public about the planning process.

The Highroad community involvement program also consisted of an active public affairs effort. Routine, periodic news releases about the Highroad studies were provided to local news publications. A full-time community involvement coordinator was hired to provide on-site public information services from the outset of the project until the public hearing process had finished. Other activities included establishing a telephone message center at the project office to handle the public's questions about the project.

A public information campaign helped disseminate project information as it became available. A fact book about the project, prepared in a question-and-answer format, was distributed to the public. Numerous "advertorials" addressing issues related to the project were published in local newspapers. In addition, a multi-color, six-fold brochure wrapped up the public information program for the planning phase.

One of the aspects of the public information program created specifically for the Highroad was a series of open house meetings conducted by the MHTD and the consultant team. These meetings were held after the publication of the preliminary Draft EIS and before the formal Draft EIS. Since the fast-track schedule required simultaneous planning and design efforts, public input was needed at an early stage so that the design of the alternative most likely to be selected as the preferred alternative could be initiated while the planning efforts contin-

ued. These open houses provided the team with this bridge of public information prior to the official public hearing so that work on preliminary designs could commence. As a result of the open house meetings, critical decisions about the location of the Highroad were made by the planning team.

The final element of the community involvement program involved the public hearing for the Highroad. Because the preliminary design of the preferred alignment was being developed simultaneously with the planning effort, the public hearing covered two issues — corridor location and right-of-way design.

Also, in lieu of the traditional format of the standard public hearing process typically employed by the MHTD, it was decided to use a new public hearing format for the Highroad. Given the tremendous wealth of information the team had compiled, it was decided that an open-house format for the public hearing would be most appropriate. The open-house format promotes public participation and eliminates the traditional presentation and subsequent question-and-answer session.

On October 21, 1992 (135 days following the consultant's notice-to-proceed), the combined location and design public hearing for the Highroad was held. Based on the public's responses, the open-house format was well-received and the project benefitted by the open sharing of information. A total of 327 comments were received during the public hearing process.

Proactive Team Management

Managing any project with the intricacies and multi-discipline coordination requirements of the Highroad can be demanding. Add fast-track scheduling and the demands become extraordinary. With fast-track scheduling, little time is available for those needed adjustments in the management plan that always arise. Under these circumstances, keeping focused on the overall objective and maintaining work toward that objective are crucial. Such was the case with the Highroad.

One of the key ingredients to the success of the Highroad planning effort was the forward thinking of the management team. Using the "Procedures for a Model Environmental Pro-

ject" as a road map for the timing of key events, team management identified key intermediate milestones for decisions or for beginning certain tasks. One example of this foresight was the series of team decisions leading up to the ultimate selection of the preferred roadway alignment alternative. Initial screenings, preliminary screenings and final evaluations were timed to provide the decisions needed to move the project forward. For each decision, necessary information concerning environmental effects was provided so that the decision-makers were in a position to make wise and careful judgements.

This decision-positioning management style was also employed in the project progress meetings. Bi-weekly project progress meetings were scheduled throughout the duration of the project. An overall schedule of these meetings was developed so that the goals and objectives of each meeting were mapped in advance. This method allowed the team adequate time to prepare for each meeting's agenda and to ensure that needed decisions were being properly handled.

Other key factors contributing to the planning effort's success included the identification of a sound and well conceived purpose and need statement for the proposed action. A strategy for the process of selecting the preferred alternative from the multitude of alternatives was developed based on the statement of purpose and need. The fulfillment of this statement then became the litmus paper for the selection or rejection of an alternative. The statement of purpose and need became the foundation for the environmental documentation upon which the study was built.

Common project management practices and tools — such as task arrow diagramming, manpower projections, cost controls, and progress reports — were also utilized. Progress reports and action reports that contained graphical presentations charting actual progress versus planned progress were prepared on a bi-weekly basis. The action report summarized activities of the planning team in the past weeks and outlined activities to be completed in the following weeks. Both of these reports were helpful management tools throughout the duration of the project.

A Highway Planning Model for the Future

Every transportation project is unique in one way or another. Project surroundings and circumstances that precipitate the action combine to create the unique aspects of any project. Unique problems call for unique innovative solutions. This maxim is especially true in the case of the Highroad. Urgent needs and heightened public awareness called for fast action and the Highroad planners were up to the challenge.

But can the special techniques and approach employed by the Highroad planners be used again? Can planning processes conducted under the context of NEPA be expedited on other projects? The answer is yes. Under the proper circumstances and setting, what the Highroad accomplished can be duplicated. Whether as a whole or in distinct pieces, the planning approach of the Highroad can be applied to new problems and new challenges. The Highroad has become a model for other planners to follow.

For the Highroad project, the binding element that created and sustained the multi-agency partnering and open dialog was the urgent need for action. Public announcements gave credence to the process and enforced the shared vision of the participants. Priorities shifted in upper management and unparalleled commitments were made to the project. The urgency of the action affected all aspects of the planning process and gave purpose to the fast-track procedures.

Regardless of the degree of urgency, the "Procedures for a Model Environmental Project" and partnering concept can be used on other projects. The degree of fast-track success may vary depending on the urgency of the specific proposed action and the details of the timeline should be tailored to the circumstances surrounding the project.

All problems are different and what was accomplished on the Highroad may be too much to expect for every project. But the Highroad has shown that by utilizing a partnering approach, a highway project can be planned in an efficient and timely manner with complete regard to environmental considerations and

opinions. The traditional planning approach can be expedited. The planning and preliminary design efforts for a highway project can be successfully joined into a process that can speed up the traditional progression of concept to construction.

Utilizing management tools such as non-traditional design concepts, progressive resource scoping, a community involvement program, proactive management techniques and up-front enhancement commitments, other projects can also accomplish in two years what used to take five to seven years.

Finally, the procedures and openness created by the Highroad planning effort must go on. Environmental obligations do not end with the signing of the ROD. As the Highroad now moves into the final design phase, the open dialog and coordination with the various resource groups, both public and private, continues. The unique approach successfully devel-

oped for the planning of the Highroad must not be abandoned as the Highroad moves on a fast-track pace to reality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT — *HNTB Corp. headed MHTD's consultant team that developed and implemented the fast-track planning process.*



JERRY A. MUGG is a Project Manager in HNTB's Transportation Planning section. For the Ozark Mountain Highroad project he was Project Coordinator for the EIS and preliminary design, as well as for the final design and additional environmental tasks. He also served as Project Manager for the Kansas Turnpike 1994 Long-Term Needs Study and as Project Coordinator for the Route 13 Corridor Study in Lafayette, Johnson and Henry counties in Missouri. He received a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Missouri at Rolla in 1986.