

3.0 PROJECT PLANNING PROCESS

This chapter supplements and updates the information presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the planning process used to develop project alternatives and environmental documentation. The alternative evaluation process is reviewed in Section 3.3 of this FEIS.

3.1 Project Background

The role that the Interagency Coordination Committee (ICC) played in the development of alternatives and general project oversight was very important. Representatives of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), Wayne County, Macomb County, the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), the city of Detroit, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) comprise the ICC.

This group served as the steering committee responsible for providing study oversight. The breadth of the ICC also allowed it to reconcile the objectives and goals of the various planning efforts that involve the study area. The ICC was the group that established the four goals for the I-94 project:

- Mobility;
- Access and Development;
- Environment; and
- Cost-Effectiveness.

The MDOT team presented alternatives and proposals to the ICC and refined the alternatives in response to the ICC's comments. Every attempt was made to include the ICC in the important steps of the project development process.

3.1.1 Interagency Coordination Committee and SEMCOG Goals

The DEIS listed four goals and their objectives established by the Interagency Coordination Committee (ICC) for I-94. The ICC goals and objectives match closely with those in SEMCOG's *2025 Regional Transportation Plan for Southeast Michigan* (June 2000). Table 3-1 compares the goals of the ICC and SEMCOG:

Table 3-1: ICC and SEMCOG Goals

ICC	SEMCOG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing accessibility and mobility for all people and goods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing strategically in the transportation infrastructure to enhance the vitality of the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and enhancing the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-Effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting a safe and secure transportation system

3.1.2 Objectives Shared by the ICC and SEMCOG

These are some of the common objectives shared by the ICC and SEMCOG:

- Reduce travel time.
- Reduce the number of crashes.
- Increase occupancy in motor vehicles.
- Provide a transportation system that encourages employment growth, economic productivity, and the region's international competitiveness.
- Increase the safety and security of the transportation system, its users, and others it serves.
- Develop transportation services that are consistent with regional and local land-use plans as well as other development.
- Improve the aesthetic qualities of the project area.
- Minimize noise and air quality impacts.
- Reduce potential negative effects on households and neighborhoods.
- Develop a financial plan that best allocates limited available resources.

Due to this commonality, meeting the project-level goals and objectives also will meet regional transportation goals and objectives. Further discussion of the Recommended Alternative's achievement of project and regional goals and objectives is in Chapter 4.

3.2 Public Participation Program

In addition to ICC direction and guidance, public participation has been a crucial and ongoing element in the evaluation of alternatives and in the development of this FEIS. The public participation program was designed to solicit ideas and input about the project from community groups, other key stakeholders, and the general public. The feedback provided by the public has evolved over the last ten years to create the Recommended Alternative. The public participation program's primary goals were to:

- Ensure that decisions made during the study considered the challenges and opportunities in the project area;
- Keep the public informed about project development and how their concerns are being addressed.

The public participation program included:

- Open-forum-style public hearings
- Citizens Advisory Committee meetings
- Press conference to initiate the project
- Press releases
- Radio and television public service announcements
- Project Office
- Radio and television interviews
- Project informational video
- Public information meetings
- ICC meetings
- Newsletters
- Project Hotline (313-963-4655)
- Internet Web site (<http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/> under Projects and Programs)
- Project brochures
- Context Sensitive Solutions workshops

As part of the public coordination process since the DEIS was circulated, public concerns about the project and comments on the DEIS have been addressed. Seven-hundred and thirty-four (734) comments were received during a formal comment process which included two public hearings held on March 5–6, 2001, at different locations and times within the project corridor and a 45-day comment period ending March 27, 2001 (see Chapter 8 of this FEIS for further detail). Individuals and organizations were invited to submit comments on the DEIS at the public hearings by making verbal statements to a court reporter or submitting a comment form, and during the DEIS comment period by submitting comments through mail, fax, and e-mail.

A detailed summary of the issues raised in the DEIS comments, with corresponding responses, is presented in Chapter 8. Chapter 8 contains:

- Ten comment letters received from government agencies or individuals;
- Written responses to the comments received from government agencies or individuals; and
- General summaries and corresponding responses to comments received on the DEIS.

3.3 Process for Selecting Alternatives for Further Evaluation

Section 3.3 of the DEIS describes the process used for selecting the alternatives described in the DEIS.

After circulation of the DEIS, three modifications to the DEIS Build Alternative were developed to respond to public and agency comments. Additional analysis of the DEIS alternatives also resulted from the coordination process. Further analysis of the three alternatives described in the DEIS, together with the three modifications, resulted in the selection of the Recommended Alternative for final evaluation in this FEIS. This process is described in more detail in Chapter 4 of this FEIS.

3.4 Other Projects

In 2003, a new “Preserve First/Fix it First” program emphasizing preservation of the existing system rather than expanding it, was announced. The goal of the program is to have 90 percent of state roads and bridges in good condition and sustained by 2007 - 2008. In 2003 alone, \$180 million in preservation work was advanced to construction in addition to the \$500 million already scheduled for the year. A number of expansion projects will be deferred until the 90-percent good condition goal is reached and sustained. Some exceptions to the expansion delay can be granted based on safety and other considerations. The I-94 Rehabilitation Project is an expansion improvement project as well as a rehabilitation effort, that is affected (delayed) by the “Preserve First/Fix it First” program.

The I-94 Rehabilitation Project is one of a series of projects to improve the Interstate system in the Detroit metropolitan area, subject to funding availability. A partial list (updated since the DEIS) of projects currently underway or recently completed is included in Section 2.2 of this FEIS. A complete list of transportation projects scheduled for construction in the Detroit metropolitan area from 2003 to 2005 can be obtained from SEMCOG.

3.5 Consistency with Regional Planning

The I-94 Rehabilitation Project has been developed to be consistent with regional and local land use and transportation plans. The 2015, 2020, and 2025 Regional Transportation Plans (RTP) for southeast Michigan prepared by SEMOG, the organization responsible for regional planning, identify the need to widen I-94 within the project area from six to eight lanes. This project would satisfy this need, as the Recommended Alternative would include construction of an additional lane in each direction.

The I-94 Rehabilitation Project is included in the SEMCOG *2025 Regional Transportation Plan* and *Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)* as a study. The SEMCOG 2030 RTP for the Detroit metropolitan received final approval on November 4, 2004.

In making this approval, the General Assembly verifies that sufficient revenues are anticipated to be available and the projects in the plan conform with the air quality requirements. The MDOT will submit the approved SEMCOG 2030 RTP and conformity determination to the FHWA. The FHWA will review the document and in consultation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will make a Federal air quality conformity finding. The FHWA is expected to notify the MDOT regarding its finding in January 2005. This finding will satisfy the air quality and 23 USC 134 planning prerequisites for Federal approval of this FEIS and the Record of Decision (ROD).