

NEWS RELEASE

September 4, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Maggie Thompson, KDOT 785-296-5613
Elaine Justus, MoDOT 816-387-2353

Record of Decision Signed on the Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge Study

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued and signed a Record of Decision on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge Study. The Record of Decision allows the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) to move forward with final design plans for the new four-lane bridge to replace the existing Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge. KDOT and MoDOT will now acquire the needed right-of-way for the new bridge.

“The signed Record of Decision marks a major milestone that brings us one step closer to being able to start construction on the new bridge in 2009,” said Kris Norton, KDOT Project Manager. In the upcoming months KDOT will meet with the Bridge Advisory Committee to discuss the bridge type and options for aesthetic features. The bridge design team will continue to work on final design plans for the new four-lane bridge.

Construction of the new four-lane bridge is anticipated to take two years. During that time the existing Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge will remain open to traffic. It will continue to be maintained and inspected yearly until the new four-lane bridge is completed, which is anticipated for the spring of 2011.

In June of 2006, KDOT and MoDOT recommended constructing a new four-lane bridge as the preferred alternative for the US-59 Bridge over the Missouri River. The existing two-lane bridge will be removed once the new four-lane bridge is completed. The preferred alternative was selected based upon a number of evaluation factors, which included traffic operations, current design criteria, hydraulics, utility relocation, ease of construction, land use, impacts to homes and businesses, farmland impacts, natural resources, safety, historic properties on or eligible for the National Register (which includes the existing Amelia Earhart Bridge), and estimated costs.

The Federal Highway Administration and KDOT have been meeting with the Consulting Parties as part of the Section 106 process to address the adverse effects of the project (removal of the existing bridge). A draft Memorandum of Agreement negotiated with the Consulting Parties is included in the Final EIS and the signed copy is included in the Record of Decision.

The Memorandum of Agreement includes information on how the existing bridge will be documented so that the historical nature of the bridge can still be acknowledged by the community. KDOT has agreed to the following measures:

- KDOT will prepare documentation of the existing bridge through photographs, original design plans and historical reports. Additionally, KDOT will conduct oral interviews with individuals who have personal knowledge of the history of the bridge including its construction and opening. All information will be donated to historical societies, libraries and museums for public use.
- KDOT has also agreed to set aside funding for Atchison's Historic Preservation Fund with the express purpose to foster and support preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and interpretation of historic resources. The Kansas State Historical Preservation Officer will administer the funding.
- Prior to the demolition of the Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge, KDOT will make the bridge available, either in its entirety or in sections, in order for it to be reused at an offsite location. KDOT will also offer funding (up to the cost of demolition) to help with the moving/relocation of the bridge.

- KDOT will continue to keep the Consulting Parties informed throughout the process by providing design plans and information on bridge type.

KDOT and MoDOT, along with the study team members from MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri, and HNTB, Overland Park, Kansas, are working closely with the communities throughout the project. For more information, or to be added to the project mailing list, please call the toll-free hotline: 1-877-701-7996 or e-mail aebridge@hntb.com.

###

This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request. For information about obtaining an alternative format, contact the Bureau of Transportation Information, 700 SW Harrison St., Second Floor West, Topeka, KS 66603-3754 or phone 785-296-3585 (Voice) (TTY).