

The New I-64 Economic and Regional Mobility Study

Executive Summary

Annual Report
2008

Jan 2008- Dec 2008



Heartland Market Research

For Missouri Department of
Transportation

Before the Closure							
Please indicate how much time it takes you to make certain trips now compared to how long it took you before the closure.							
	Has not changed at all	Fewer than before	Same as before	More than before	1 to 15 minutes longer	15 to 30 minutes longer	More than 30 minutes
Interstate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
City/County or State Routes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Major Routes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
From St. Louis to St. Charles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through through St. Louis Urban Region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>




Executive Summary

The research team has found the following results on the four key study areas:

Communications

The Western closure in 2008 had a noticeable impact on respondent behavior and travel habits.

- Sizeable minority reported changes in their shopping and driving habits
- Many respondents reported slightly longer daily commutes compared to pre-construction period
- Majority of respondents are satisfied with how they are able to get around St. Louis
- Overwhelming majority of respondents are satisfied with MoDOT's decision to close parts of I-64 for two years instead of taking 6-8 years with lane closures (76.5% in the lowest measurement, 93.8% in the highest)
- Overall, the respondents have high level of satisfaction with how the I-64 closure has been handled (77% to 88%)
- Very satisfied/satisfied is the overwhelming majority responses received when asked about the delivery of accurate and understandable project information (89% to 95%)

Considering the reported changes in respondents' behavior, these are extremely high levels of satisfaction and reflect the public consensus that this project was well planned and is being well managed.

Mobility

Approximately 140,000 to 150,000 vehicles daily used the segment of I-64 between Ballas Road and I-170 before its January 2, 2008, closure. Assessments on how these daily trips were served or reduced in 2008 are listed in the bullets below:

- Traveled along the adjacent roadway network
- Switched to Metrobus and/or MetroLink
- Took advantage of RideShare and/or carpooling opportunities
- Reduced vehicle trips and/or combined several trips into a single trip
- Major companies allowed working from branch or satellite offices not impacted
- A small percentage even moved and/or switched jobs

Based on the traffic information collected, there were increases along I-270, I-44, I-170, I-70 with I-270 and I-44 experiencing the greatest increases (24,000 to 40,000 vehicles or 17 to 21% increase). Parallel arterial routes also experienced significant increases in traffic volume as well as travel time.

East-west arterial corridors, such as Clayton Road and Ladue Road, realized increases of between 10,000 and 20,000 vehicles per day. North-south arterial corridors such as Hanley Road and Lindbergh Boulevard experienced a slight increase in traffic volumes and travel times.

Travel speeds have dropped slightly in conjunction with increases in traffic volumes mentioned above on alternate routes. This has led to increased travel times along some of the region's freeway network. It should be noted that the increase was not as high as some would have expected due to some of the pre-closure capacity improvements. The range of increase travel

times on some segments of alternate designated routes (like I-44, I-70 and I-270) were between 1 to 8 percent. When compared with increase traffic volumes ranging from 4 to 21%, travel times were slightly better than what would be expected.

Transit usage varied significantly from 2007 to 2008 on a month-by-month basis. MetroBus ridership varied from an 8.33% month drop when comparing March 2007 to March 2008 to a 13.1% increase when comparing February 2007 to February 2008. MetroLink ridership varied from a 4.45% drop when comparing August 2007 to August 2008 to a 31.9% increase when comparing July 2007 to July 2008. Overall, MetroBus ridership experienced an increase of 5.52%, while MetroLink ridership experienced a 5.23% increase between 2007 and 2008.

The RideFinders Rideshare program experienced a significant increase through 2008 as it approached the 10,000 membership plateau in November. Carpool and vanpool programs had membership increases near 40 percent and 10 percent respectively over the previous year. Gas prices, regional and national economic impacts, and regional construction activities appear to be the strongest reasons for these increases.

Usage of commuter park-and-ride facilities in Missouri was up 22% in August 2008 to 1913 parking spots used. It was noticed that park-and-ride facilities served by transit were better utilized, showing that the intermodal connection had some impact on how people traveled.

Crash Analysis

The study team evaluated 5-year (2004-2008) of crashes data that occurred on 16 different roadways in the vicinity of the I-64 closure. Using the data set, 1-year (i.e., 2008) post-closure crashes are compared to 4-year (2004-2007) pre-closure crashes in various ways. The major findings from the crash analysis are as follow:

- Comparing year 2007 to year 2008, crash rates on most routes either decrease or remain about same except for six routes that increase slightly as follows: I-70(4%), I-55 (6%), MO 366 (4%), MO100 (8%), MO115 (6%) and MO Route D (3%). However, only I-70's 2008 crash rate was noticeably higher (15%) than the base year 2004 with the remaining five routes having 2008 crash rates that were the same or below the base year 2004 crash rate.
- We have tentatively concluded that the crash increase on I-70 in 2008 was partly due to the record breaking heavy rain in 2008. An increasing trend of the out-of-control crashes was noticed and the study team will be further analyzing it as we review 2009 crash data.
- In cases of MO100 or I-70, the increasing trend started before the I-64 closure (i.e., before 2008). So, it is hard to infer whether the I-64 closure caused the crashes to increase, and we will monitor them as we review 2009 and 2010.
- Although each route shows its own trend, the overall crashes on all three types of highways (i.e., interstate, MO, and US highways) have decreased in 2008.
- The observational inspections conducted in this study leads us to a tentative conclusion that there is no strong evidence proving that I-64 closure contributed to the crash increase on the highways that are potentially influenced by the closure. Continuation of this crash

analysis through 2009 and 2010 will provide additional information that will either confirm the tentative conclusion or provide information that changes this initial conclusion.

Economics

Since the housing and credit crisis emerged, national economic conditions have been in decline as economic activity has been weakening across most industry sectors and metropolitan regions in the US. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell 6.3 percent for the fourth quarter 2008 with exports, housing, and business investment continuing to decline. The residential and commercial real estate markets are deteriorating in conjunction with the construction industry. In addition, lending activity has declined. The weakening conditions have impacted the labor market as unemployment levels rose throughout 2008.

The St. Louis area is following the similar national trend and the challenge in this study is the separation of the impacts: national/regional recession and the I-64 construction project. The evaluation of some indicators (like employment and sales) showed that the economy measurements along the I-64 corridor are fairing better than the non-corridor economy measurements.

Information gathered through two business surveys and continuing dialogue with key business areas along the I-64 corridor confirmed that the national/region recession impacts had a significantly greater impact on the region's overall economy. A very high percentage of very satisfied/satisfied response was received from the business community surveyed when asked on how the project is being delivered and managed.