

**The New I-64  
Economic and  
Regional Mobility  
Study**

**Annual Report  
2009**

Executive Summary

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**Heartland Market  
Research**

**For  
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Transportation**

## **Executive Summary**

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

### **Communications**

The Eastern closure in 2009 had a noticeable impact on respondent behavior and travel habits.

- A 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 (60 percent)
- 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 (83 percent in the lowest measurement, 96 percent in the highest both up when compared to 2008)
- Overall, the respondents have a high level of satisfaction with how the I-64 closure has been handled (78 percent)
- The overwhelming majority of responses received are very satisfied/satisfied when asked about the delivery of timely, accurate and understandable project information (86 percent)

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 delivered within the "promised" 2 year period.

### **Mobility**

The following our findings from the Eastern closure period in 2009:

- Traffic volumes (2009 compared to 2007) along I-70 decreased west of I-170, but increased east of I-170. Traffic volumes along I-270 south of I-64 increased by 30,000 to 40,000 vehicles per day. I-44 also experienced an increase in traffic volumes, ranging from an increase of 22,000 vehicles per day east of I-270 at Lindbergh Boulevard to an additional 7,000 vehicles per day near Jefferson Avenue. I-170 experienced increases between 7,000 and 15,000 vehicles per day. I-64 west of I-270 experienced increases ranging between 8,000 and 11,000 vehicles per day.
- Travel speeds (2009 compared to 2007) have remained about the same even with the increases in traffic volumes mentioned above. There were slight decreases in travel times along some of the region's freeway network. Improvements in the operation of these adjacent roadways were the result of some of the pre-closure improvements and regional coordination across city/county/state agencies.
- Parallel arterial routes experienced increases in traffic volumes as well as travel time (2009 compared to 2007). East-west arterial corridors, such as Manchester Road, Forest Park Parkway and Olive Street, 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.
- The RideFinders Rideshare program experienced a significant increase through most of 2008 as it approached the 10,000 membership plateau in November. In 2009, rideshare

for both carpool and vanpool users dropped slightly or remained the same from the end of 2008. The increase in 2008 and stability in 2009 most likely means that the change in the Rideshare program could be a combination of gas prices, economic conditions and/or the I-64 project.

- Usage of commuter park-and-ride facilities in Missouri returned to similar levels experienced in 2007 demonstrating that park-n-ride facilities were most likely impacted in 2008 by higher gas prices and the economy, not significantly by the I-64 closure.

Based on the evaluation of regional mobility, the study team concluded the traffic volume increased on alternative routes that caused a slight increase travel times and decreased travel speeds. Regional planning and improvements to alternative routes significantly reduced and minimized travel impacts.

### **Economics**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is projecting the economic recovery will continue at a modest pace during the next few years, and projects that the economy will grow by two percent from the fourth quarter of 2010 through the fourth quarter of 2011.<sup>1</sup> CBO anticipates national unemployment levels will not return to five percent until 2014. The St. Louis area appears to be following this national trend and forecast.

From the analysis of economic conditions, business surveys, and user transportation costs, the following represent the major results:

- The reconstruction of I-64 created more circuitous routes for commuters during closures thus reducing average speeds and increasing vehicle miles traveled;
- During reconstruction 98,000 to 120,000 vehicles were diverted daily and transportation user costs increased by \$101.5 million during entire project. This represents less than 4.4 percent of the total transportation spending in St. Louis during the I-64 closure period (2008 through 2009);
- Alternatively, if I-64 had been reconstructed using a more conventional phased construction period of 6 to 8 years, user costs would have increased from additional traffic delays over the full-closure costs by \$45.6 to \$86.8 million;
- The project demonstrated a significant cost savings – between \$92 and \$187 million – from accelerating the reconstruction project schedule to two years versus a six or eight year staged construction schedule;
- Businesses expected the worst, but the conditions during the western and eastern closures were not as bad as they anticipated. Design-Build delivery and an aggressive project schedule were successful in minimizing the duration of impacts to the region;
- While the economic recession made the assessment difficult to determine the precise impact of the I-64 reconstruction, the analysis found the impacts to the corridor region were no different than economic conditions across Missouri and the nation;
- The evaluation of economic conditions, statistical analysis, business surveys, and transportation analysis of user costs has demonstrated that the impacts of the New I-64

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cbo.gov/doc.cfm?index=11705>

Project on the regional economy were relatively minor compared to an alternative long-term project schedule;

- All three surveys reported high-levels of satisfaction (all above 86 percent) with the I-64 project. The final survey found that 93 percent of responding businesses were satisfied with the project as the sections of I-64 closest to downtown St. Louis were reopening;
- Throughout the project, approximately half of the businesses responding found no change in sales or customers.

Given that I-64 has only been reopened for a short period of time, and that the economy is still recovering from the recession, revisiting this study to evaluate the long-term impacts could provide an indication of future project benefits from this major transportation project.

### **Crash Analysis**

The study team evaluated 6 years (2004-2009) of crash data that occurred on 17 different roadways in the vicinity of the I-64 closure. Using crash data, 2-year (2008 and 2009) closure crashes were compared to 4-year (2004-2007) pre-closure crashes in various ways. The major findings from the crash analysis are as follow:

- Comparing the average number of crashes for the pre-closure period (2004 through 2007) to the closure period (2008 and 2009) found the following results. The number of crashes increased on 5 roadways in 2008 and 4 roadways in 2009. Whereas the crash numbers decreased on 12 roadways in 2008 and 13 roadways in 2009.
- Comparing the average crash rates for the pre-closure period (2004 through 2007) to the closure period (2008 and 2009) found the following results. The crash rates increased on 5 roadways in 2008 and 4 roadways in 2009. Whereas the crash rates decreased on 12 roadways in 2008 and 13 roadways in 2009.
- The 4-year average number of crashes across the pre-closure period was 16,595 compared to 15,111 crashes in 2008 (9 percent reduction) and to 14,155 crashes in 2009 (15 percent reduction).

Based on the evaluation of crash numbers and rates and their associated trends along the 17 major diversionary roadways, the study team concludes that there was no evidence that the closure contributed to any increases in crashes and crash rates.