

For Immediate Release

DATE: June 14, 2020

Contact: Sue Cutsforth, MAPA Information Officer

Email: scutsforth@mapacog.org, Cell: 402-319-5308

Study underway will examine transportation issues and needs in western Sarpy County

MAPA seeks public comments through August 12

OMAHA, Neb. – *July 14, 2020*– A study being coordinated by the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) will examine the high-growth area of Sarpy County south and west of Nebraska Highway 370 and Nebraska Highway 50 for potential transportation issues and needs. In particular, MAPA, in coordination with Sarpy County and the Cities of Gretna and Papillion, is developing the *Sarpy County I-80 Planning Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study* to answer questions about whether an additional interchange is needed.

The public can get involved by watching the video at mapacog.org/projects/i80pel and providing written comments online at i80PEL.digicate.com through **August 12, 2020**. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, no in-person meetings are scheduled at this time.

The *Sarpy County I-80 Interchange PEL Study* began this summer and will continue through summer 2021. It will evaluate the need for a new interchange in Sarpy County south and west of Nebraska Highway 370 and Nebraska Highway 50. If a new interchange is needed, the study will explore and evaluate locations for it.

This effort will build on the results of previous studies, analyze traffic and land use, develop and evaluate alternatives and engage the public. Once the study is completed, future work may involve preparing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents, an Interchange Justification Report (IJR), design and construction.

Background

The concept of a PEL study is to bring together the planning efforts conducted up to and during this stage and to integrate them into the environmental documentation process, or NEPA, and to help make that transition as smooth as possible. NEPA is a strict process law and requires specific protocols to be followed during project development, alternatives screening and evaluation of impacts. A PEL study offers a little more flexibility in the planning process, yet still requires enough detail to be gathered and considered.

The results of the PEL study can inform, direct, and assist the NEPA process and decision makers when it comes to pursuing specific projects identified during the PEL process. This process is useful particularly when the number and/or types of projects are unknown, the costs or potential resources are unknown and the funding sources or impacts are unknown.

The PEL process can help identify these unknowns, direct decision makers to the appropriate NEPA document, and begin to lay the framework for avoiding impacts and identifying funding sources.

The public may comment online at i80PEL.digicate.com. Follow the project on mapacog.org/projects/i80pel and social media and use our #i80PEL hashtag.

###