

2.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Trunk Highway (TH) 14 West Public and Agency Involvement Process is to ensure the affected governmental agencies and the public have ample opportunity to participate in supporting the decision-making process in the TH 14 West Interregional Corridor. The corridor communities have been actively involved in an open, collaborative process during the development and evaluation of alternatives for sound roadway decisions. The approach has been to:

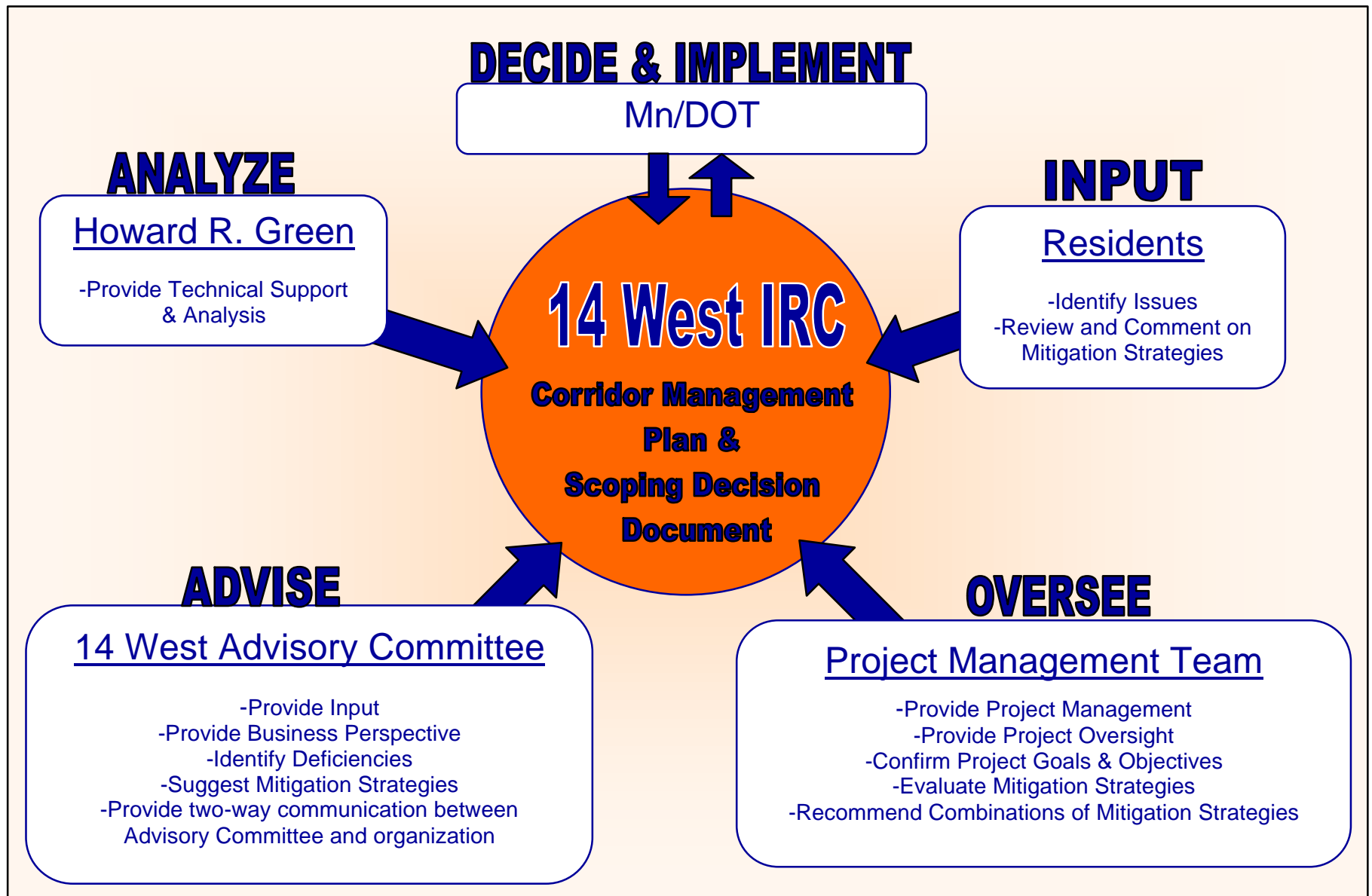
- Communicate with and involve local residents and elected officials in identifying the needs and evaluating the proposed alternatives.
- Communicate with the public, communities, and agencies on the importance of the interrelationship of transportation and land use planning, and the impacts and opportunities of each of the alternatives for their community.
- Involve local residents in identifying deficiencies and provide opportunities for input into the decision-making process.
- Gain insights into issues of greatest concern or interest to the public and municipalities in the TH 14 West Corridor and incorporate them into decision-making factors.

The TH 14 West Public and Agency Involvement Program included an Advisory Committee, Project Management Team, public outreach, public information open house, and Scoping Hearings. The communications program in support of this program included newsletters, press releases, and information for placement on the Mn/DOT District 7 web site. **Figure 2.2-1** outlines the Roles and Responsibilities of the stakeholders in the TH 14 West Corridor.

2.2 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The TH 14 West Advisory Committee was comprised of elected officials and planning and engineering staff representing the cities, townships, counties, and state agencies along the TH 14 West Corridor between New Ulm and North Mankato. Their role was to provide input on policy issues and guidance on technical decisions affecting their agencies or governmental unit. A critical role for the Advisory Committee was to provide two-way communication between the Project Management Team and their agency/municipality and the community. **Figure 2.2-2** illustrates the members of the Advisory Committee representing the communities along the TH 14 West Corridor.

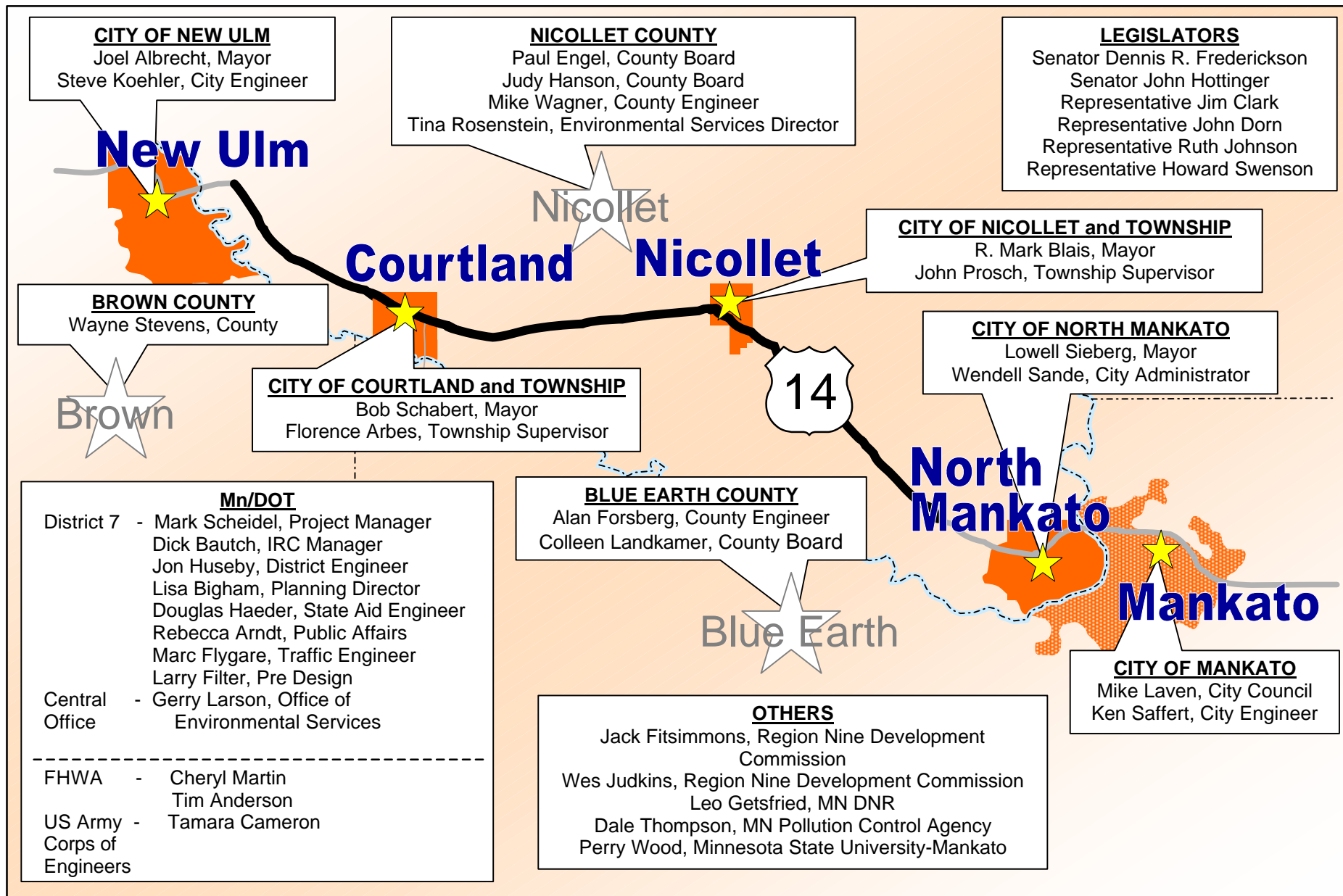
Table 2.2-1 lists the members of the Advisory Committee. Minutes of the meetings are in **Appendix A**.



**Figure 2.2-1
Roles and Responsibilities**

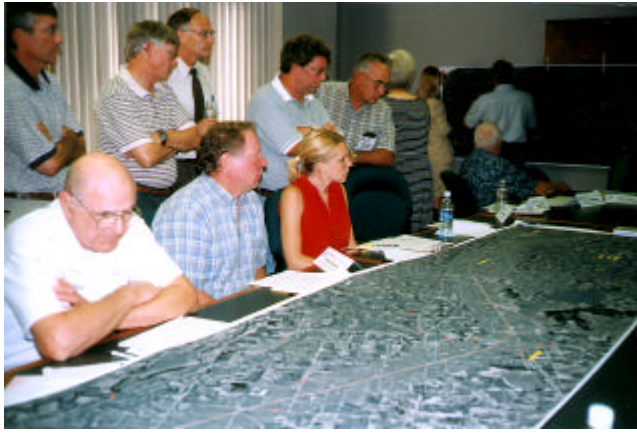


14 West IRC



**Table 2.2-1
TH 14 West Advisory Committee**

<i>COUNTIES</i>	
Nicollet	Paul Engel, County Board (Began as of 1/03) Judy Hanson, County Board (participated through 12/02, continues as interested party) Mike Wagner, County Engineer Tina Rosenstein, Environmental Services Director
Brown	Wayne Stevens, County Engineer Charles Guggisberg, County Commissioner
Blue Earth	Colleen Landkamer, County Board Alan Forsberg, County Engineer
<i>CITIES</i>	
Courtland	Bob Schabert, Mayor Dan Wietecha, City Administrator
Nicollet	R. Mark Blais, Mayor (Mayor through 12/02, continues to represent Nicollet) Dan Wietecha, City Administrator
North Mankato	Nancy Knutson, Mayor (participated through 12/02) Lowell Sieberg, Mayor (began as of 1/03) Wendell Sande, City Administrator
New Ulm	Joel Albrecht, Mayor (as of 1/03) (Council Member through 2002) Steve Koehler, City Engineer
Mankato	Mike Laven, City Council Ken Saffert, City Engineer
<i>TOWNSHIPS</i>	
Courtland	Florence Arbes, Supervisor
Nicollet	John Prosch, Supervisor
<i>OTHER</i>	
Reg. 9 Dev. Comm.	Jack Fitsimmons, TAC Chair Wes Judkins, Planning Director
Minnesota DNR	Victoria Poage, Environmental Assessment Ecologist (participated through 12/02) Leo Getsfried, Hydrologist (began as of 1/03)
MSU-Mankato	Perry Wood, Professor/Physical Planner
Minnesota PCA	Jim Seaberg, Transportation Planning



Advisory Committee members have identified issues, goals, and objectives, and potential alternatives. Here they are reviewing alternatives to determine which ones best meet the needs in the corridor.



Courtland Mayor Bob Schabert discusses Courtland bypass options that best meet the needs of the community.

2.3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Unique to this project, the Project Management Team (PMT) includes key staff responsible for reviewing and approving the Corridor Management Plan and the Scoping Decision Document. The PMT is comprised of key reviewing staff from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Mn/DOT's Office of Environmental Services, Project Liaison Office, and the Interregional Corridor Manager, as well as Mn/DOT District 7 planning and engineering staff and the consultant, the Howard R. Green Company. The purpose of this technique is to include the full spectrum of people with review and approval responsibilities in the early and continuing education about the project and to get input from them as the project develops. This step should expedite the review process for the Corridor Management Plan and the Scoping Decision Document.

The role of the PMT is to provide oversight and project management, identify deficiencies and opportunities, confirm project goals and objectives, review potential alternatives, evaluate mitigation strategies, and recommend a combination of short-term and long-term strategies for the TH 14 West Interregional Corridor. **Table 2.3-1** lists the members of the PMT.

**Table 2.3-1
TH 14 West Project Management Team**

<i>Mn/DOT District 7</i>	Mark Scheidel, Project Manager James Swanson, District Engineer Lisa Bigham, Planning Director Larry Filter, Pre Design Marc Flygare, Traffic Engineer Rebecca Arndt, Public Affairs Douglas Haeder, State Aid Engineer
<i>Mn/DOT</i>	Dick Bautch, IRC Manager Gerry Larson, Office of Environmental Services
<i>FHWA</i>	Cheryl Martin, Environmental Engineering Tim Anderson, Highway Engineer
<i>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>	Tamara Cameron, NEPA
<i>Howard R. Green Company</i>	Howard Preston, Project Director Biz Colburn, Project Manager Lynn Kiesow, Traffic Engineer Scott Reed, Project Scientist

2.4 PUBLIC INFORMATION OPEN HOUSE

Public Information Open House - May 21, 2002

Over 100 people attended the Public Information Open House held on May 21, 2002 at the Courtland Community Center. This interactive format brought forth many comments and discussion on the approach to take in developing a safer TH 14 between New Ulm and North Mankato. The information displayed helped to educate the public on the deficiencies in the corridor. Input from the public was received by written comment and by noting issues on aerial mapping of the corridor.

There were 22 written comments received at the Public Meeting each addressing multiple issues, as follows:

- Bypasses of Courtland and Nicollet were suggested by half of the people, with preference for a south bypass of Nicollet and north bypass of Courtland.
- A four-lane roadway is preferred for mobility and safety reasons.
- Additional passing zones were requested to address safety and mobility issues.
- Increased truck traffic along the roadway raises concerns about safety because the trucks travel too fast and it is difficult to cross the highway.
- Fix the intersection of TH 14/TH 15 was mentioned by a number of people.
- Intersections that need safety improvements include:
 - CSAH 37,
 - CR 41, and
 - TH 111
- Many wondered when something would be done. There is a sense of urgency to move forward with the TH 14 West project.

There were many suggestions drawn on the map indicating possible locations for bypass alternatives of Courtland and Nicollet. These were taken into consideration when laying out the potential alternatives.

2.5 PUBLIC OUTREACH

In order to get additional input on the alternatives, the Mn/DOT Project Manager met with the technical staff and elected officials from the cities, townships, counties, and agencies a number of times to discuss issues and potential alignments.

City of Nicollet Coordination Meeting July 9, 2002 – Nicollet City Hall

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss with the Nicollet City officials and staff, and Nicollet County staff bypass locations of Nicollet that had been suggested by the public at the Public Information Open House in May 2002 and at the Project Management Team meetings. The participants agreed that although the 1986 Nicollet Land Use Plan does not identify a bypass location, the City now supports a bypass of Nicollet. The meeting summary is in **Appendix A**.

West-End TH 14 Counties, Cities, Township, and Agency Coordination Meeting – February 4, 2003 – Courtland City Hall

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss with Brown and Nicollet Counties, Cities of Courtland and New Ulm, Courtland Township, and the MnDNR staff and officials the universe of alternatives in the western portion of the TH 14 corridor. The participants agreed that there are an appropriate number of alternatives in this area that address the deficiencies identified in the safety analysis and the origin-destination study. The meeting summary is in **Appendix A**.

On October 25, 2002, the Cities of Nicollet and Courtland submitted formal written comments on the universe of alternatives presented at the September 5, 2002 Advisory Committee meeting. These were taken into consideration, as the conceptual alignments were refined. The written comments are in **Appendix A**.

2.6 SCOPING HEARING

A unique aspect of this project is the development of a Scoping Decision Document (SDD) as the culmination of the evaluation of alternatives included in the CMP. This technique is used to streamline the project development process. The CMP documents the process used in the development of alternatives, which includes early and continuing input from corridor stakeholders. The Scoping process further gives affected agency and corridor stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the alternatives and environmental issues that will be addressed in future environmental documents in preparation for project implementation.

The Scoping Document/Draft SDD was circulated to the required federal and state distribution lists and made available to the public for review and comment. A 30-day comment period began on March 31, 2003 and closed on Friday, May 2, 2003.

Two Scoping Hearings, an Interagency Hearing (2:00 to 3:30 PM) and a Public Hearing (4:30 to 7:00 PM), were held on Wednesday, April 23, 2003 at the Courtland Community Center, 200 Railroad Street, Courtland, Minnesota to provide an opportunity for involved agencies and the public to comment on the alternatives and environmental issues to be carried forward in an environmental document. An Open House ran continuously during the Hearings. The TH 14 West Project Team explained the environmental review process, described the alternatives being considered, the benefits and impacts being evaluated during the process, presented the public involvement program and schedule, and asked for ideas and comments from the audience on the scope of the project.



Advisory Committee members Courtland Mayor Bob Schabert and Township Supervisor Florence Arbes answer residents' questions about the development of alternatives, including bypasses of Courtland and Nicollet.



Mn/DOT Project Manager Mark Scheidel discusses the proposed alternatives with residents at the TH 14 Public Scoping Hearing held April 23, 2003 at the Courtland Community Center. Over 100 people attended.

Over 100 people attended the Hearings, including representatives from Nicollet County; Brown County; the Cities of New Ulm, Courtland, Nicollet, and North Mankato; Courtland Township; the Region 9 Development Commission; and residents and businesses in the project corridor. The main issue of concern discussed at the Hearings was to minimize farmland impacts by following property and parcel lines so as not to sever or triangulate farmsteads. In

general, residents favored the closer to town bypasses: Nicollet South Bypass #1 and Courtland North Bypass #1.

Following the close of the comment period, Mn/DOT prepared a Scoping Decision Document to complete the Scoping process. It documents which alternatives were selected for evaluation in the future EIS as well as the



Mn/DOT Design Engineer Peter Harff talks with local residents about the impacts of the different potential alternatives along the TH 14 Corridor.

social, economic, and environmental impacts that will need in-depth study.

Table 2.6-1 lists the Public and Agency Participation Meetings.

**Table 2.6-1
Public and Agency Participation Meetings**

Date	Meeting	Time	Place
November 27, 2001	Project Management Team	10:00 AM to 12:00	Mn/DOT CO
February 11, 2002	Project Management Team	10:00 AM to 12:00	Courtland Community Center
February 11, 2002	Advisory Committee	2:00 to 4:00 PM	Courtland Community Center
April 23, 2002	Project Management Team	1:30 to 3:30 PM	Mn/DOT CO
May 22, 2002	Public Information Open House	4:30 to 7:00 PM	Courtland Community Center
June 5, 2002	Project Management Team	10:00AM to 12:30PM	Mn/DOT D-7
July 9, 2002	Coordination with City of Nicollet	4:00 to 5:00 PM	Nicollet City Hall
July 18, 2002	Project Management Team	9:30 to 11:30 AM	Mn/DOT CO
September 5, 2002	Project Management Team	10:00 AM to 12:30PM	Mn/DOT D-7
September 5, 2002	Advisory Committee	1:30 to 4:30 PM	Nicollet County Service Building
January 6, 2003	Project Management Team	1:30 to 4:30 PM	Mn/DOT D-7
February 4, 2003	Coordination with west end counties, cities, township, and agencies	3:00 to 4:30 PM	Courtland City Hall
February 10, 2003	Advisory Committee	3:00 to 5:00 PM	Nicollet County Service Building
March 10, 2003	Advisory Committee	2:00 to 4:00 PM	Nicollet County Service Building
April 23, 2003	Scoping Hearings	2:00-3:30 PM-Agency 4:30-7:00 PM-Public	Courtland Community Center

2.7 COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications tools used for the TH 14 West Interregional Corridor included newsletters, fact sheets, press releases, information for the Mn/DOT District 6 Web Site, and information for the press. Examples of these communications pieces are in **Appendix A**.

2.7.1 Newsletters

A newsletter was developed announcing the Public Information Open Houses and distributed to the Advisory Committee members for their use in notifying their constituencies.

2.7.2 Fact Sheet

A Fact Sheet was developed describing key facts about the TH 14 West IRC. The Fact Sheet describes the TH 14 West IRC project, the role of TH 14 in the regional roadway system, especially as a part of the Interregional Corridor system adopted by Mn/DOT in January 2000; and the process of developing a Corridor Management Plan and the Scoping Decision Document.

2.7.3 Website

Information was submitted for the Mn/DOT District 7 web site that included: study area map, existing and future traffic volumes, fact sheet, schedule, the Advisory Committee and PMT members, newsletter, press releases, public meeting announcements, and the contact person for more information.

The following documents have been placed on the Mn/DOT District 7 website; Scoping Document, Scoping Decision Document with Appendices, and this Corridor Management Plan.

2.7.4 Press Releases

Press releases were developed announcing the Public Information Open Houses and Scoping Hearings and circulated to newspapers in the area.

2.7.5 Newspaper Articles

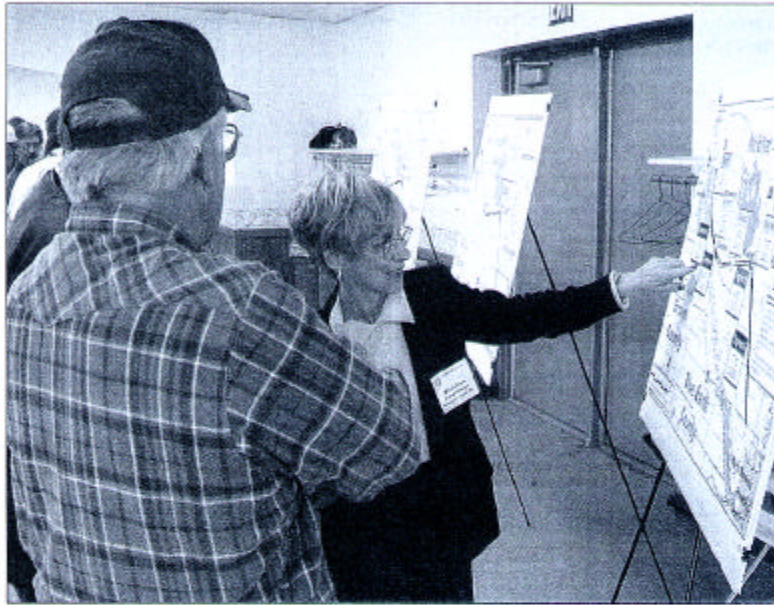
Information has been provided to reporters in response to their requests. In addition, reporters have attended the Public Meetings to learn more about the development of the project. As a result, newspaper articles about the TH 14 West IRC have been in the New Ulm Journal. The project has also been covered in the Lafayette-Nicollet Ledger.



The Journal

nesota

Wednesday, May 22, 2002



Staff photo by Kurt Nesbitt

Elizabeth Colburn, project manager with Howard R. Green Company of St. Paul, explains one of several project illustrations of the ongoing U.S. Highway 14 project at an informational meeting in Courtland Tuesday night. The open house was hosted by the Minnesota Department of Transportation as part of its scoping study. While several local landowners came with questions and suggestions on what kind of road Highway 14 should be and where it should go, officials were quick to remind them that construction — when and if it happens — is still about 10 years away.

Courtland wonders about Highway 14

Residents eager to learn if highway will bypass town and where

By KURT NESBITT
Journal Staff Writer

COURTLAND — Local officials and Minnesota Department of Transportation representatives tried to answer questions and address concerns about the future of Highway 14 at the Courtland Rec Center Tuesday night.

The debate centered around

where to put U.S. Highway 14. It puzzled Rebecca Arndt, communications director for MnDOT's Mankato office.

"I'm sure we have people here wondering where the road is going to go, but it just isn't at that point yet."

That point — when and if it happens at all — is about 10 years away, according to the estimates from MnDOT officials.

The Mankato-to-New Ulm section of the federal trunk highway is still very much in the planning stages, Arndt said.

Tuesday's gathering in Courtland served as part of the environmental impact study, which will largely determine whether the expanded version

of U.S. 14 will be two or four lanes.

"After that, we'll know where to go,"

the open public meeting. Another scheduled for

entire scoping project to end

By the time

DOT expects several issues including the

for Nicollet intersection of U.S. 14

way 15, which New Ulm,

Peter Huff

manager, said

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top comments and concerns that Courtlanders shared.

In addition to oral comments, they also submitted their ideas on comment sheets and even marked out their visions for the road on a jumbo-sized sheet of paper showing aerial photos of the proposed route.

MnDOT had set up several visual display boards that detailed several aspects of Highway 14. The displays showed the planned project, identified existing and future conditions as well as deficiencies in the current road and development of alternatives.

One board showed the section of the route that had the most deficiencies in service and safety; it was the section between Courtland and New Ulm. Another board showed that crash rates are at a critical level at State Highway

15, Brown County Highway 37 and State Highway 111 — which are all in between Courtland and New Ulm.

Another display board described an original destination study, in which MnDOT plans to collect travel information using digital cameras that will track license plates along the route. The study will match the plates between stations to determine traffic and travel times. The information can be used to figure out if Courtland and Nicollet need highway bypasses and to assess travel patterns through New Ulm.

An estimated 75-100 people attended the open house.

"Lots of them were asking when the road's going to come through," she said. "Overall, the funding is not in place. That's 10-plus years out."