

# D5

## Central

### Community Gathers to Discuss New Study for Route 63

by Holly Dentner

Frequent travelers between Jefferson City and Rolla are familiar with the curvy, two-lane road that connects the two cities. It's Route 63, and it serves as a major transportation corridor through Osage, Maries and Phelps counties.

Last April, MoDOT and state planning partners evaluated future transportation needs in Missouri and ranked a study of Route 63 as the second highest transportation need statewide.

"Route 63 ranked high because it's the only major north/south corridor through central Missouri," said Nicole Hood, project manager. "It serves as the

connector between I-70 and I-44 and also connects several state universities."

The 47-mile stretch of Rte. 63 between Jefferson City and Rolla carries an average of 6,000 vehicles per day. The Osage and Maries county sections also have a higher crash rate than the state-wide average. The new environmental and location study will determine what actions, if any, are necessary to best address future transportation needs for the corridor.

At public meetings held on Nov. 14 and 16, 244 people came to talk with MoDOT staff about the new study.



Kristin Gerber

Project Manager Nicole Hood talks with a resident at the Route 63 meeting in Westphalia.

Many agreed that it was important and offered suggestions for their own concerns about the roadway.

"This is the first public meeting for the study, so we were there to encourage and gather comments from the public about the corridor," said Hood. "We wanted to hear what they want the future Route 63 to look like so we can incorporate that into the project."

The meetings were held in Westphalia and Vienna. Additional meetings will be scheduled next year, and MoDOT hopes to conclude the study by fall 2009. There is currently no funding for construction or acquisition of right of way for this project.

### Plans Move Forward for Boone County Transportation Issues

Over the last few weeks Boone County residents have gathered to discuss two major transportation improvement projects that could have a significant impact on the area.

On October 25, 176 people attended a public meeting at Oakland Junior High School to learn more about plans for a section of Route 763 in Columbia. The project would widen Route 763 from two lanes to four lanes between Big Bear Boulevard and Route 63.



Kristin Gerber

A crowd gathered at Oakland Junior High School in Columbia to review plans for widening Route 763 to four lanes.

Widening Route 763 will increase capacity and improve safety for motorists using the roadway. The proposed design includes a 14-foot median and two seven-foot shoulders with bike lanes. The city of Columbia and Boone County are contributing funds for the

project, which has an estimated cost of \$30 million. Construction is scheduled to begin in fall 2008.

On November 15, approximately 150 people attended a meeting to discuss a new transportation study for the east side of Columbia. The study will examine how population growth and rapid development will impact transportation in the area generally bounded on the north by Interstate 70, on the south at New Haven Road, on the west by Route 63, and on the east at Route Z. The study is a cooperative effort between MoDOT, Boone County, and the city of Columbia.

The meeting presented a range of possible alternatives to address growth in the area. The study team will analyze the comments received at the meeting to help determine which alternatives will best suit the community's needs.

Additional information about the Route 763 project is available at [www.modot.org/central](http://www.modot.org/central). Information about the East Columbia EIS study is available at [www.eastcolumbiaEIS.com](http://www.eastcolumbiaEIS.com).

### Local Scout Troop Earns Badge at MoDOT Archaeology Dig

by Holly Dentner

MoDOT archaeologists spent last summer excavating a prehistoric village in Osage County in preparation for a construction project that would realign a section of Route C. The team uncovered projectile points, pottery pieces, chip stone tools and organic material that came from the village, which existed between 650 and 900 A.D.

Several local schools brought students to tour the site, but six boy scouts from the Loose Creek Troop 76 went a step further and used the dig as a way to earn their archaeology merit badges. The scouts are the first in their troop to earn the badge, which was presented to them on Nov. 6.

In addition to spending a day at the site, the scouts were required to do extensive research. They had to describe the steps of the archaeological process, gather information on significant digs in the United States and research the history of the Native Americans who lived in the central Missouri area during prehistoric times.

They also learned about



Holly Dentner

Historic Preservation Specialist Ron Mayer talks with students at the Osage Co. dig site.



Kevin Thoenen

Boy Scout Troop 76 members Ryan Muenks, Adam Muenks, Dustin Thoenen, Tyler Luebbert, Connor Luebbert and Andrew Muenks accepted their archaeology merit badges on Nov. 7, 2006.

what it takes to become an archaeologist and why it's important to preserve historic artifacts.

Senior Chemist Kevin Thoenen, whose son is one of the scouts, said they were interested in the dig because it is near property they use to raise corn as a fundraiser for their activities.

"The boys work a three acre sweet corn patch that borders the site," said Thoenen. "During the dig this summer the entire troop got to see it in progress, and I noticed the boys who earned their badges telling the others what they learned on the site."

The badge requirements were developed with guidance from the MoDOT historic preservation staff, and Thoenen says their willingness to help was the determining factor for the troop to earn the badge.

"It is very difficult to find qualified merit badge instructors," said Thoenen. "This was an opportunity Troop 76 could not pass up, and we would like to thank the historic preservation folks in MoDOT for making this happen."

#### for more info

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