

FAQ **Converting to I-49**

Why switch the focus from the Bella Vista bypass to the Kansas City-to-Joplin segment?

The Missouri Highways & Transportation Commission (MHTC) committed funding in 2005 in anticipation of Arkansas having the funding to move forward with a four-lane Bella Vista bypass. Five years later, that funding remains unused and Arkansas only has enough funding to move forward with a two-lane bypass over the next six years. The commission believes it should capitalize on the opportunity to bring I-49 to Missouri by using part of the funding to upgrade the segment between Kansas City and Joplin, while still matching the progress Arkansas makes on the Bella Vista bypass.

Was the Kansas City-to-Joplin segment Missouri's priority all along?

No. The MHTC initially committed the funding for the Bella Vista bypass. However, after learning of funding shortfalls in Arkansas, in 2008 the commission and MoDOT began preparing for the possibility of utilizing the funding between Kansas City and Joplin if Arkansas was unable to resolve its funding issues. After holding the funding for five years and only after Arkansas announced that it would be able to move forward with only a two-lane Bella Vista bypass over the next six years, the commission decided to shift part of the funding to the Kansas City-to-Joplin segment. If Arkansas had the funding to construct the four-lane Bella Vista bypass, Missouri would be moving forward with that project. The right of way is acquired and the plans are ready.

Why is I-49 being used as the designation instead of I-29 or I-35?

Congress designated the I-49 corridor from Kansas City to Shreveport, La., in federal transportation legislation, and the corridor will connect to existing I-49 between Shreveport and Lafayette in Louisiana. Plus, I-49 fits within the Interstate naming conventions of north/south interstates utilizing odd numbers, with the assigned numbers growing higher as they move from west to east. In Missouri, I-49 falls between existing I-35 in Kansas and Oklahoma and I-55 in eastern Missouri and Illinois.

For More Information

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What needs to be done to upgrade US 71 to I-49 between Kansas City and Joplin?

Remove all remaining at-grade intersections by constructing interchanges, overpasses and outer roads as necessary. Following are the anticipated improvements (overall: seven interchanges, four overpasses, one set of outer roads):

Cass County -- Two overpasses and one interchange

Bates County -- One interchange and one set of outer roads

Vernon County -- Five interchanges and one overpass

Barton County -- One overpass

Will I-49 follow the existing US 71 route? Why isn't MO 249 being incorporated into the I-49 corridor?

The I-49 corridor will follow the existing alignment of US 71 from I-435 at the Grandview Triangle in Kansas City to I-44 at Fidelity in Jasper County. The utilization of the current MO 171/MO 249 corridor as an interstate is not possible due to the presence of stopping conditions (traffic signals) at the ramps of the US 71/MO 171/MO 96 interchange near Carthage. (Keep in mind that the issue is with mainline I-49 traffic flowing through these signals, not with exiting interstate traffic passing through the signals.)

The solution to make the MO 171/MO 249 corridor interstate compatible requires substantial additional funding and a location study consisting of extensive public involvement. Both are likely many years into the future.

Did the four District 7 ARRA projects completed in the Summer/Fall of 2010 contribute toward the I-49 conversion process?

Yes, the four projects--at a combined cost of approximately \$17 million worth of federal stimulus funds--were designed and constructed to fit into the overall I-49 conversion process.

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