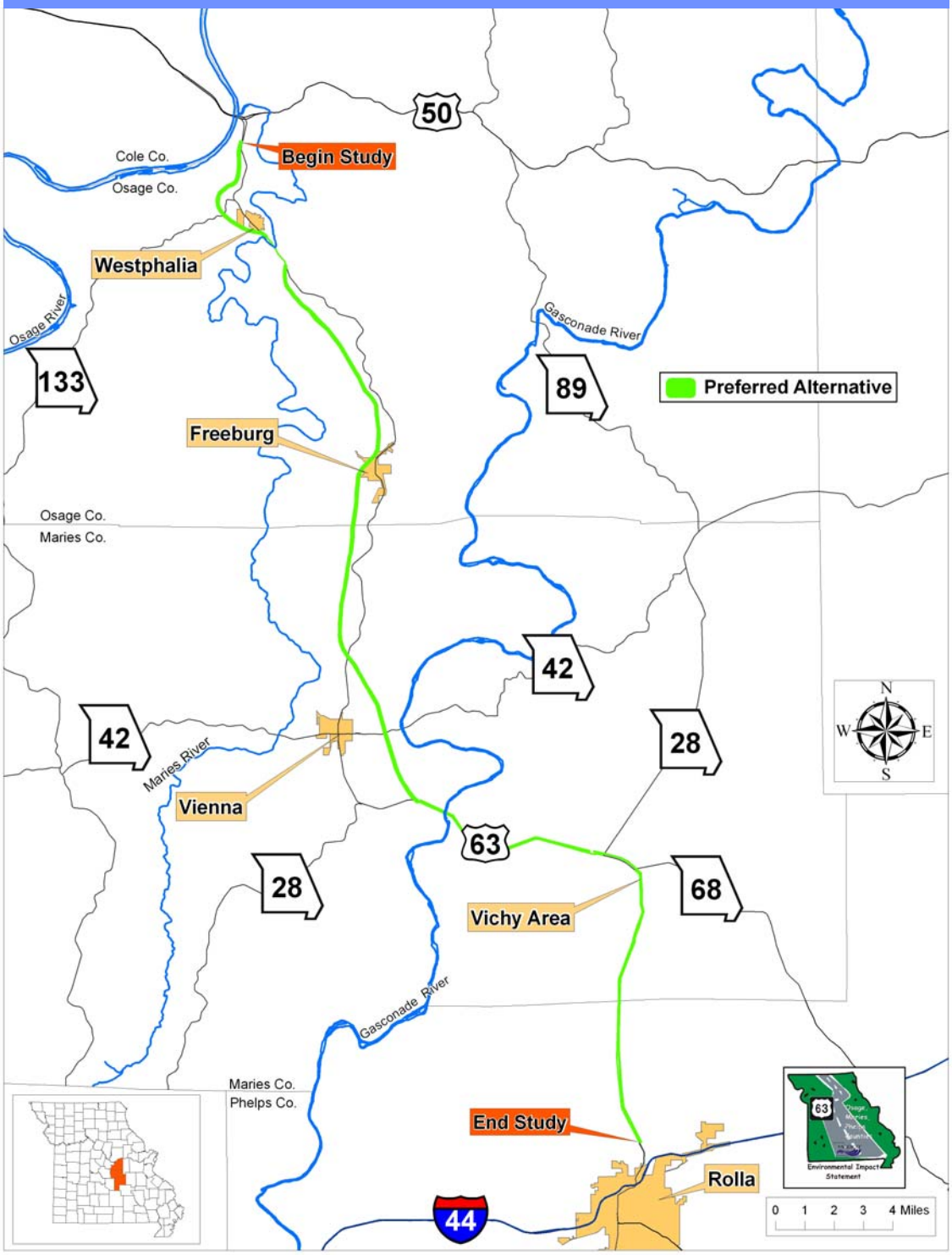
Figure 22. Preferred Alternative



What were some of the general comments from the study team regarding the selection of the Preferred Alternative?

The Preferred Alternative in the Westphalia Section routes traffic around the town of Westphalia without adversely impacting businesses in and around the community. This alternative meets the Purpose and Need of the study better than the other alternatives. The Westphalia section also uses as much of the existing upgraded alignment as possible, adding only one additional bridge over the Maries River.

The South of Westphalia Section avoids impacting businesses along the existing route, shortens the length and travel time, and has less curvature in the alignment than the other alternatives.

The Freeburg Section is a straight section with good alignment and minimal access points. The Freeburg Section routes traffic around Freeburg and allows for uninterrupted traffic flow to and from the county roads leading to public and private Gasconade River access facilities, as well as farms and homes east of the existing highway.

The Vienna Section routes traffic around the community of Vienna and allows for the use of existing Route 63 as a business route for lake traffic and a connector to Route 28. The Preferred Alternative is shorter than the near-east alternative resulting in less travel time and costs.

The Vichy Section uses the recently upgraded segment through Vichy. The existing alignment through Vichy is relatively flat and can be widened to the west for a five-lane section, making this segment less costly. From the Maries/Phelps County line, the existing alignment and roadway can be used and expanded to the west within existing right of way with no additional impacts.

As part of the analysis of the Preferred Alternative, additional engineering, environmental, and cultural resource studies were conducted. The engineering focused on adding more design details to alternatives to determine the feasibility of minimizing impacts at various locations.

Figure 23. Modifications

The buffer shown in Figure 23 was decreased from 750 feet to 500 feet to avoid two potential historic properties, one containing a chicken hatchery and the other a barn. The hatchery and barn are circled in red in Figure 23. This alternative is located west of existing Route 63 in Westphalia.

To avoid two Section 4(f) properties through Vichy, the study team conducted an analysis and determined the existing highway should be widened to the west. To avoid a county-owned park, the new alignment can be adjusted within existing right of way.

Section 4(f)

This section of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 states that a transportation project requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or a historic site may be approved only if:

1. There is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land, and
2. The program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use. (Additional data can be found in Appendix G.)

How and where will motorists have access to the new highway?

Highways serve dual purposes of providing both efficient movement of traffic and access to adjacent property. A higher level of access management is necessary on major roads so that traffic can move safely and efficiently with minimal interruptions from entering and exiting traffic. Decisions regarding the spacing and design of public road intersections and driveways must reflect a balance of access to homes and businesses with sound traffic engineering principles.

An informal analysis using traffic volumes and level of service was completed and used (Table 1), along with general design guidance, to determine the location and type of corridor access for a four-lane divided highway at locations along the proposed Route 63. Access types selected are various types of at-grade intersections. An at-grade intersection is an area where two or more roadways join or cross at the same elevation. It also includes the roadside facilities for traffic movement within the area. Each intersection involves through or cross-traffic movements on one or more roadways and may involve turning movements between these roadways. The main objective of the intersection is to facilitate the convenience, ease, and comfort of people traversing the intersection while enhancing the safe and efficient movement of motor vehicles. To accomplish this task, the intersection must have the capacity to handle the volume of traffic flowing through it.

There are five basic elements to be considered in the design and operation of an intersection

- Human factors - comfort, convenience and ease of the driver to manuever through an intersection
- Traffic and safety considerations – sight distance, crossroad traffic volumes
- Physical elements - hills, curves, environmental surroundings
- Economic factors - construction and right of way costs
- Functional intersection area - amount of area available for the type of intersection

Based upon an analysis of future traffic projections, traffic volumes were not high enough to require a full interchange at any location where access points were chosen.

Although most of the access points chosen were located at state routes or county roads, additional access points were placed at locations where traffic along existing Route 63 could gain direct access to the new highway by way of an at-grade intersection. Property owners that do not have access to a county road will likely be given an entrance to the new highway. Private entrances will be limited to right-in/right-out access.

Recommendations

The final alternative as identified in this document and as shown in Figure 22 is the Preferred Alternative. The final selection of an alternative, however, will not be made until after consideration of impacts, agency comments, and a location public hearing, following approval of the final EIS. The Preferred Alternative would ultimately be a four-lane divided highway that is located on the west side of Westphalia and reconnects to existing Route 63 just north of the Maries River. At that point a new bridge would be required over the Maries River, with the Preferred Alternative following a path that adds two lanes to the existing facility for approximately one mile. At that juncture, near County Road 611, the Preferred Alternative would veer west of existing Route 63 on new location. This section would also be a four-lane divided roadway that would stay west of Freeburg and would eventually connect with existing Route 63 at a point approximately 1.5 to 2.0 miles north of Vienna.

The Preferred Alternative would then be a four-lane divided roadway east of Vienna and connect with existing Route 63 near County Road 325, in Maries County. At that point the Preferred Alternative follows existing Route 63 by adding two additional lanes on the west side of the road. The Preferred Alternative would be a five-lane undivided facility through the town of Vichy. South of Vichy the Preferred Alternative would follow existing Route 63 with two additional lanes added to the west side, to the end of the study area. Part of the area on the west side of Route 63, south of Vichy, is existing MoDOT right of way that was purchased in association with a previous project.

What would happen to the existing highway once construction of the new highway is complete?
After construction, the undisturbed sections of Route 63 would be used as business routes through each town as connectors to the new Route 63 alignment and would be retained by the state; or, if agreements can be reached, would be transferred to the corresponding county authorities. A few sections may be obliterated if they are no longer needed for access.