

TRANSPORTATION

Springfield transportation planners allocate \$1M for study of 60/65 interchange

Stakeholders along Route 60 are optimistic that the study signals potential adjustments to MoDOT's plans for the corridor



by Jack McGee
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A drone captures a photo of Route 60 near the intersection of Farm Road 189. (Photo by Bruce Stidham)

IN-DEPTH

In the wake of recent pushback against plans to eliminate all at-grade crossings along Route 60 between Routes 65 and J/NN, the Ozarks Transportation Organization is preparing to conduct an access and operational study of the road network near and including the 60/65 interchange.

At its Nov. 20 meeting, the OTO's Board of Directors approved several measures related to the study, including an intergovernmental cooperative agreement with the Missouri Department of Transportation, the city of Springfield, City Utilities and Greene County.

In total, the five entities are pooling \$1 million for the study, with \$800,000 in federal funds. MoDOT and the city are each providing \$300,000, OTO is putting up \$200,000 and CU and Greene County are each providing \$100,000. Sara Fields, executive director of the OTO, said the final cost of the study could vary.

"This could very well come in at \$500,000, it could come in more," Fields said at the meeting. "That's our best guess, so we'll deal with that as it comes. We'll know more after we select the consultant, we will go into a fee and scope negotiation, and then we'll have a determined price."

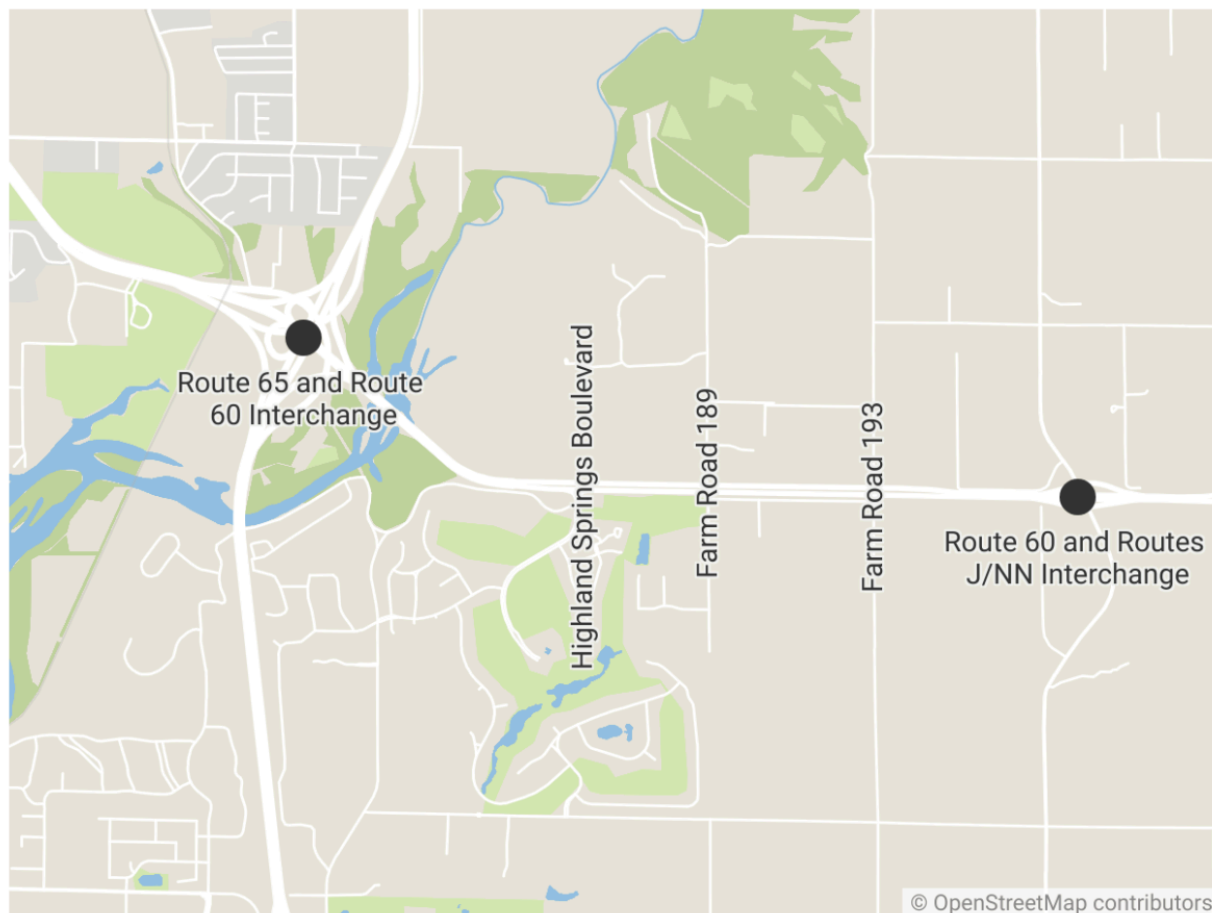
Project proposes to limit access from interchange at J/NN

Although the agreement is still awaiting approval by the other organizations involved, OTO has already issued a request for qualifications, with hopes to begin the study in the first quarter of 2026 and have it completed by October or November of next year.

While the study is intended to encompass portions of both 60 and 65, stakeholders are particularly focused on the stretch of 60 between 65 and J/NN, which MoDOT plans to convert to a freeway. Through Springfield, Route 60 is known as James River Freeway. The freeway status effectively terminates just east of 65.

The eastward extension of the freeway is intended to improve both the operation and safety of the corridor, which is currently over-volume and has extremely high crash rates, according to Fields.

With the project, MoDOT plans to remove all at-grade driveways and intersections along 60 between 65 and J/NN and build two outer roads that would run parallel to 60 and intersect with the existing driveways and crossroads, including Highland Springs Boulevard, Farm Road 189 and Farm Road 193. The only access to and from 60 would be at the interchange at J/NN, which would connect with the outer roads.



Map: Jack McGee • Created with Datawrapper

The Missouri Department of Transportation is planning to convert Route 60 between Route 65 and Routes J/NN to a freeway status. As part of the project, MoDOT is proposing to eliminate all at-grade crossings on the stretch of road, including the access points at Highland Springs Boulevard, Farm Road 189 and Farm Road 193.

MoDOT is also planning to improve vertical and horizontal curves along the same stretch of 60.

While a letting date has yet to be set, MoDOT anticipates construction to begin in summer of 2029, and may extend to the summer of 2031, depending on final plans and the work involved. The project is fully funded in fiscal year 2029 of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

However, the study could prompt changes to the project, potentially including an additional interchange between 65 and J/NN. While it remains unclear where that interchange might be located, area stakeholders have advocated for access at Highland Springs Boulevard and Farm Road 189.

Attorney for Highland Springs cites 1988 direct access agreement

In recent months, MoDOT has received considerable feedback on the project from nearby residents, property owners and other stakeholders concerned with the proposed access changes, including Atrium Hospitality, which owns the Highland Springs Country Club and unsold lots within the Highland Springs subdivision.

In March, Spencer Fane attorney Richard Walters, representing Atrium, advised MoDOT that removing the Highland Springs access would violate a 1988 direct access agreement between the late John Q. Hammons, who developed Highland Springs, and the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission, which governs MoDOT.

Walter wrote that Atrium “has a real property interest in the existing access point” and that its removal would require MoDOT to “pay substantial takings damages to Atrium and, likely, other property owners in the Highland Springs development.”

“Given the proposed takings and violation of the direct access agreement, and the substantial damages that would result to Atrium and other Highland Springs property owners as a result thereof, Atrium feels that it is in the best interests of all that MoDOT pursue alternative designs that maintain the Highland Springs development’s direct access to the highway,” the letter reads, in part.

More recently, in August, the Highland Springs Community Association and a group of property owners, business leaders and other stakeholders along the Route 60 corridor sent two new letters of opposition, both of which were provided to the Daily Citizen by Tyler Padgitt, lead pastor at The Courageous Church, which has a satellite campus off of 60 on Farm Road 189.

The Highland Springs Community Association’s letter, accompanied by a petition with more than 250 signatures, encourages MoDOT to engage with the neighborhood “to evaluate alternative solutions that balance traffic and safety needs without disproportionately harming local property owners and businesses.”

The other letter, which names 11 stakeholders, including Padgitt, calls on decision-makers to “reject or significantly revise” the proposed access changes “and instead pursue an alternative that protects both public safety and economic health.”

“Limiting access solely to Highway J will not make our community safer – instead, it will undermine the economic vitality of Rogersville and Springfield,” the letter reads, in part. “The remedy is not restricting access, but rather providing a better-designed exit and improved access points that serve both safety and commerce.”

Outspoken critic excited by study: ‘A ton of good progress has been made’

Padgitt has been particularly outspoken in his opposition to the project as it is currently proposed, detailing his concerns on a webpage titled “**Do Better MoDOT!**” However, Padgitt said he is “very excited” about the study planned for the 60/65 interchange, which he hopes will yield changes to the freeway project.

“I feel like a ton of good progress has been made, and I’m looking forward to seeing what comes of it,” Padgitt told the Springfield Daily Citizen. “I think they’ve seen the potential and they’ve seen the reality of the need for the city to have a way to expand and to have a future in southeast Springfield.”

While supportive of safety improvements along 60, including the closure of some at-grade crossings, Padgitt has advocated for MoDOT to add another interchange between 65 and J/NN, either at Farm Road 189 or Highland Springs Boulevard.



The Highland Springs Country Club is located at 5400 S. Highland Springs Boulevard in Springfield. (Photo by Ellie Frysztak)

“I’m all for the frontage roads they want to do and I think that’s probably a good idea, but cutting off the exit potential from that whole area all the way down to Highway J is a bad idea, and I think they’ve realized that,” Padgitt said.

Removing direct access to 60 between 65 and J/NN would not only increase travel time for residents and patrons of local businesses, Padgitt said, but would also restrict access to more than 1,500 acres of undeveloped land surrounding the 60/65 interchange, which is widely regarded as key to Springfield’s future growth.

“I mean, it’s the easiest thing for them to do, but once the decision-making got out of the hands of traffic engineers into the hands of people that had both a fiscal and safety responsibility, and then it got in the hands of people who have a responsibility and vision for our city, it’s proving that I’m right,” Padgitt said.

Banker highlights development potential of surrounding acreage

Part of that vision is laid out in the **Lake Springfield Plan**, a major redevelopment initiative for the 1,000-acre land package surrounding Lake Springfield, which is owned by City Utilities. City Utilities owns an additional 300-plus acres surrounding the 60/65 interchange, and the Childress Family LP owns nearly 600 acres north of 60.

Brian VanFossen, president of the Citizens Bank of Rogersville, which also has a location at 60 and Farm Road 189, said he was “cautiously confident” that the study could yield a “much better workable solution” than what is currently proposed.

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by [Ryan Collins](#) April 29, 2025

“I think there’s a lot of good conversation going around, and I think there’s momentum in coming up with an alternative that will much better meet the needs of the local surrounding businesses and the people who live in that community in that area,” said VanFossen, who also signed the petition from area businesses and property owners.

Like Padgitt, VanFossen said he is fine with limited access as long as another interchange is built between 65 and J/NN, while also highlighting the development potential of the property northwest of 60 and 189.

“I think MoDOT and everyone involved needs to be cognizant of this land and its potential, and we need to make sure that we give it every opportunity to develop and prosper, and the citizens of Greene County benefit from that,” VanFossen said.

Study will help reevaluate future phases of 60/65 interchange

Fields, with OTO, said the study was prompted by several factors, including the concerns around MoDOT’s plan to eliminate access along 60 and the development potential of the surrounding property, including the Lake Springfield area. The study is also intended to determine next steps for the 60/65 interchange, of which only the first phase was ever completed.

“The idea of a study has not been planned for a long time, but as we pulled all of the partners together, it became obvious that there’s a lot going on out here, and it would be best to coordinate and make sure everything worked together, rather than approach them all independently,” Fields told the Daily Citizen.

While MoDOT has future phases of improvements planned for the 60/65 interchange, Fields said additional study was warranted in light of changing conditions in and around the critical junction.



The Route 60 and Route 65 interchange in southeast Springfield, as seen from the air. (Photo by Bruce Stidham)

“Really, it needs to be reevaluated with the impacts of the widening and any future widening needed to make sure that everything can be accommodated,” Fields said. “So I think that we really view the future phases as probably not appropriate, given the changes.”

In addition to examining a potential interchange on 60 between 65 and J/NN, the study will also explore the possibility of two new interchanges on 65: one between 60 and Battlefield Road and another south of 60 that would connect to a proposed east-west arterial stretching from Route FF in Battlefield.

“It’s important to the continued function of our network to add new roads to move east and west to the north and south (of Highway 60) as time goes on,” Fields said. “So that does assist in providing access to all the development at Lake Springfield, and that’s going to be an important piece, and we do anticipate it’s not going to be easy or cheap.”

OTO board members emphasize importance of public engagement

While MoDOT and the OTO will likely take on some of the recommendations of the study, Fields indicated that a new interchange between 65 and J/NN would likely be “developer-driven,” with some sort of cost-share agreement.

Kelly Turner, vice president of customer operations at City Utilities, suggested that the study would also help developers interested in the Lake Springfield Plan get a sense of what the future transportation network will look like, and what parts of it they might be responsible for building.

“The question we are getting all the time is ‘What’s the transportation infrastructure look like through this?’” Turner said at the Nov. 20 meeting. “And we don’t have an answer until the whole picture has been looked at. So I think this would give some clarity to us and to a

potential future developer, as well as all the other interested parties, saying, ‘This is what it might look like, and this might be your responsibility if you came in to develop it.’”



Greene County Commissioner John C. Russell hears from Budget Officer Jeff Scott on the county's recommended budget for 2024 at a meeting in the Greene County Historic Courthouse in Springfield on Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023 in Springfield, MO. (Photo by Jym Wilson)

Greene County Commissioner John Russell, who chairs the OTO, said the study will provide an “avenue” for interested parties, including those concerned about future access along 60, to offer input on the project.

“I think that’ll be a very large part of this study, is that public input period,” Russell said at the meeting.

Springfield City Councilmember Brandon Jenson, who is also a member of the OTO board, stressed the importance of the public engagement aspect of the study.

“The community outreach is going to be really important as you move from the universe of alternatives to reasonable alternatives and communicating how and why certain options aren’t actually viable,” Jenson said.

Proximity of Highland Springs Boulevard to 65 may hinder potential interchange

While emphasizing that the location of a potential interchange between 65 and J/NN has yet to be determined, Greg Chapman, assistant district engineer of MoDOT’s Southwest District, indicated that Highland Springs Boulevard may be too close to 65 to be feasible, and that Farm Road 189 might be a more viable option.

As to whether an interchange at 189 would resolve the concerns of the residents and property owners in Highland Springs, particularly as it related to the 1988 direct access agreement, Chapman said he would “hate to get out in front of the study.”

“I would probably just lean back on the study,” Chapman told the Daily Citizen. “From an operational and safety standpoint, where could a potential interchange go, I know that’s kind of one of the things that that study is going to look at.”

While the freeway project in question only extends to J/NN, MoDOT intends to continue to bring additional portions of 60 east of 65 up to freeway standards as funding allows, Chapman said, pointing to recently completed projects in Rogersville, Seymour and Diggins.

“As 60 continues to grow, you know, the volumes out there continue to grow, we’re going to continue to focus on the safety of that corridor and the operations of it, and just continue to make it as safe as possible,” Chapman said.



Jack McGee

Jack McGee is the government affairs reporter at the Springfield Daily Citizen. He previously covered politics and business for the Daily Citizen. He’s an MSU graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism and a minor political science. Reach him at jmcgee@sgfcitizen.org or (417) 837-3663. **More by Jack McGee**

