



Figure 6-6 Karst Features



Disadvantages:

- High unavoidable impacts to High Quality Natural Communities (e.g. Tincher Special Area, Blue Springs Cavern) (See Figure 6-6, Environmentally Sensitive Areas)
- Proximity to Blue Springs Cavern Natural Area, nominated for National Natural Landmark status
- Unavoidable impacts to Section 4(f) resources (Martin State Forest) (See Figure 6-6, Section 4(f) Lands, Parks, Recreation Areas, Refuges)
- Highest potential impacts to karst features (e.g. caves, sinkholes, sinking stream basins; 675 acres)
- High forest impacts (1,265 - 1,365 acres) including high core forest impacts (544 acres)
- Highest construction costs (\$1.67-\$1.85 billion)
- High potential for residential relocations (377-503)
- High potential for business relocations (72-96)
- Potential increased construction cost due to mitigative measures for karst

Given the impacts crossing the Tincher Special Area, Martin State Forest and associated High Quality Natural Communities, Alternative 5B is not among the preferred alternatives.

No-Build Alternative

Advantages:

- No adverse environmental impacts
- No construction costs or increase in operation and maintenance costs

Disadvantages:

- *No travel time savings between Indianapolis and Evansville (core goal)*
- *No improvement in personal accessibility (core goal)*
- *No improvement in Interstate and international improvement in freight (core goal)*
- No reduction in traffic crashes or congestion
- No improvement in business accessibility
- No improvement in long-term economic growth
- No economic improvements to Southwest Indiana residents
- No improvement in connections to intermodal facilities

6.2 Preferred Alternatives

At this stage, a single preferred alternative has not been identified. However, some important preliminary conclusions have been reached. Table 6-2 groups the alternatives into two categories. The top row identifies “preferred alternatives”. The bottom row identifies those alternatives that are not preferred.

The non-preferred alternatives fall into two groups: (1) alternatives that are not preferred for environmental reasons; and (2) alternatives that are not preferred because of their inability to satisfy the goals of the project as defined in Chapter 2, *Purpose and Need*.

Alternatives 3A, 5A, and 5B are not preferred for environmental reasons, even though they are among the better performers in terms of achieving the project’s goals. These three alternatives have such serious impacts on critical, high quality natural areas that they present virtually



Table 6-2: Preferred versus Non-Preferred Alternatives

Preferred Alternatives	2C, 3B, 3C, 4B, 4C
Non-Preferred Alternatives	1, 2A, 2B, 3A, 4A, 5A, 5B

insurmountable obstacles to selection as a preferred alternative, particularly in light of the availability of other alternatives with similar or better performance that avoid these highly sensitive resources. Alternative 3A would traverse the Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve, a very high quality natural area northwest of Bloomington. Alternatives 5A and 5B would bisect the Tincher Special Area of the Hoosier National Forest west of Bedford. Tincher is a unique ecosystem with a high likelihood of being designated a habitat of “global significance.” Moreover, Alternatives 5A and 5B would pass over Blue Springs Cavern, a privately owned cave that is a unique karst resource. In the process of coordinating with federal and state resource agencies, Tincher Special Area and Beanblossom Bottoms were identified as particularly important among the ecosystems in the state. Accordingly, FHWA and INDOT have identified Alternatives 3A, 5A, and 5B as non-preferred alternatives.

While Alternative 1 would have relatively low impacts on the natural environment, it performs much more poorly than any other alternative in terms of satisfying the goals of the project. Alternative 1 is the only alternative with low performance on all project goals, including the three core goals. This poor performance can be explained in terms of the factors most frequently associated with high performing alternatives. These factors are: (1) service to Bloomington, (2) service to the SR 37 corridor, (3) short Evansville to Indianapolis mileage, and (4) service to Western Morgan County. While few alternatives have all these characteristics associated with high performance, Alternative 1 does not provide any.

Moreover, while Alternative 1 would have comparatively low impacts on the natural environment, it would result in the largest number of business building relocations.

Alternatives 2A, 2B, and 4A are also not preferred due to poor overall performance in terms of meeting the project’s Purpose and Need. These three alternatives are unable to provide any “high” performance ratings for the nine project goals. 2A and 4A each have five “medium” ratings and four “low” ratings, while 2B has six “medium” ratings and three “low”. These three alternatives each provide a “medium” level of performance for two of three core goals and “low” performance for the third.

Alternatives 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B and 4C are among the preferred alternatives. These alternatives are generally high performers that are not fatally flawed from an environmental perspective. Alternatives 2C, 3B, 3C and 4C have “high” performance ratings on at least 6 out of 9 project goals. Alternative 3B scores “high” on all nine project goals, while Alternative 3C scores “high” on eight of the nine.

Unlike 3A, it was possible to shift the working alignment of Alternatives 3B to avoid Beanblossom Bottoms. This was not an issue for Alternative 3C, since it joins SR 37 on the south side of



Bloomington. Adjustments were also made in the working alignment of Alternative 3 (A, B, and C) to avoid an important hibernacula for the Indiana Bat. All of the preferred alternatives that make use of SR 37 (2C, 3B, 3C, and 4C) also benefited from a shift in the working alignment that avoids major housing developments near the northern terminus of the project.

Alternative 4B is also a reasonably strong performer. It is second only to 3B in travel time savings between Indianapolis and Evansville (one of the core goals). It also scores highly on improved access to intermodal facilities due to its proximity to the Indianapolis International Airport and it scores in the “medium” range on four other goals.

For all these reasons, Alternates 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B, and 4C are preferred Alternatives, and Alternatives 1, 2A, 2B, 3A, 5A, and 5B are the non-preferred Alternatives.



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