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**Hold for release: 2 p.m.**

Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2003

## ***Kernan announces planning grant program for communities along I-69 extension***

Gov. Joe Kernan today announced a major initiative that will make the I-69 extension from Indianapolis to Evansville an even more powerful economic development tool for Indiana.

The \$2 million I-69 Community Planning Program is the first of its kind in the state. Through the Indiana Department of Transportation, grants of up to \$50,000 will be available for each of the approximately 30 cities, towns and counties along the 140-mile selected corridor.

“This is about building up our communities in Indiana,” said Kernan. “As a former mayor, I know how much planning and early decision making can assist local officials get ready for their future. These grants will help pave the way for job growth in Southwest Indiana.”

A number of communities along the corridor have expressed interest in developing new comprehensive land plans, in light of the I-69 extension, or want to update existing plans that are older than the interstate system itself. The eligible communities will be able to use these grants to prepare for this future transportation corridor.

“We want to maximize the potential of I-69 to bring long-term benefits to the communities along the corridor,” said Bryan Nicol, commissioner of INDOT. “By taking advantage of these grants, communities can better map out their development and increase the potential for economic expansion in Southwest Indiana.”

The I-69 Community Planning Program will be a two-phase effort. Phase I will be an estimated \$500,000 regional planning assessment for the entire I-69 corridor area. Working with and through community planners and leaders, phase I will include training workshops, planning assessments and regional planning.

In addition, phase I will involve the establishment of partnerships with the Indiana Department of Commerce, Indiana Land Resources Council, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indiana Department of Environmental Management and communities along the corridor.

In phase II, cities, towns and counties along the corridor will have to apply for grants and meet specific criteria to receive the funding. The grants will be used to prepare or update transportation land use plans, zoning and subdivision ordinances, and special highway corridor “overlay zones” to guide development.

The cities and towns eligible for grants are: Bedford, Bloomington, Ellettsville, Evansville, Greenwood, Indianapolis, Linton, Loogootee, Martinsville, Mooresville, Oakland City, Petersburg, Princeton, Spencer, Vincennes and Washington. Counties eligible for grants are: Daviess, Dubois, Gibson, Greene, Johnson, Knox, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Morgan, Owen, Pike, Vanderburgh and Warrick.

“I applaud Gov. Kernan for recognizing the need for cities, towns and counties to appropriately plan for the future I-69,” said Tom Baumert, mayor of Washington. “These grants will ensure communities such as Washington can wisely plan for needed job growth while protecting farmland and other natural resources.”

“Monroe County has been known for its excellent work in planning to ensure a high quality of life for our citizens,” said Joyce Poling, president of the Monroe County Commissioners. “I appreciate the state of Indiana assisting our responsible and appropriate efforts to address issues associated with our future and the future of I-69.”

Roughly 80 percent of the \$2 million in funding for this program will come from the federal government through the High Priority Projects Program. The remaining 20 percent will be a state match by INDOT.

Today’s announcement is another milestone in the process that will culminate with construction of the interstate. The late Gov. Frank O’Bannon announced the preferred corridor for the route from Indianapolis to Evansville in January 2003.

If every step proceeds as expected, the highway will be completed in eight to 14 years. It will serve as an economic development engine for Southwest Indiana and generate \$3.2 billion in personal income growth in its first 20 years. It also will prevent nearly 40,000 serious injuries and reduce travel time between Indianapolis and Evansville by 26 minutes, saving Hoosiers \$1.38 billion in driver time and vehicle operating costs during the first 20 years on trips between Indianapolis and Evansville alone.

I-69 is estimated to cost \$1.7 billion to build, 80 percent of which will be paid with federal funds.

The I-69 Study Team continues to work on completing the Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement, which includes coordinating with the appropriate state and federal agencies to develop plans for environmental mitigation. Once that work is completed later this year, the Federal Highway Administration will issue a record of decision on the FEIS early next year. INDOT and its study team will then immediately begin Tier 2 work, which will determine the specific alignment for the highway within the selected corridor. The Tier 2 final alignment work will be followed by final design, land acquisition and construction.

Complete information on the I-69 Study is available at <http://www.i69indyevn.org/>

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