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I-69 STUDY TEAM RELEASES
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
AND INVITES PUBLIC COMMENT

Findings move study one step closer to decision this year

EVANSVILLE – J. Bryan Nicol, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Transportation, today announced the completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the I-69 study and released a summary of its findings. The DEIS evaluates the environmental impacts, both human and natural, of the five I-69 alternatives and their options, one of which will be chosen this year as the corridor for the I-69 Evansville to Indianapolis connection.

The DEIS findings released today report on the environmental impacts that the five alternatives and their options would have on such natural and socio-economic factors as forests, farmlands, wetlands, historical and archaeological sites, as well as homes and business relocations, to name a few. The DEIS report provides a comprehensive comparison of the five alternatives.

Four of the five alternatives have multiple options for connecting with Indianapolis on the north end of the project. Consequently, the I-69 study team studied each of the alternatives with their respective connection options and presented data on each of the resulting 12 options. They are identified in the DEIS as Alternatives 1, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B, 4C, 5A, and 5B.

“The study findings are significant in that they provide a uniform comparison of the alternatives under review,” Nicol said. “The findings move us one step closer to a final decision for this important national and international trade corridor.”

The DEIS identifies the alternatives as either “preferred” or “non-preferred.” The preferred alternatives are not fatally flawed from an environmental perspective and generally provide better transportation performance. 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 poor performance in meeting the goals of the project. At this stage, the study does not identify a single preferred alternative.

Alternatives 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B, and 4C are identified in the DEIS as preferred alternatives. Alternatives 1, 2A, 2B and 4A are identified as non-preferred alternatives, primarily because of poor performance in meeting the goals of the project. Alternatives 3A, 5A and 5B have been identified as non-preferred alternatives, primarily for environmental reasons.

The DEIS is available for download at the study Web site at www.i69indyevn.org and can be found at libraries in the 26 affected counties. The entire DEIS, including the Appendix and Environmental Atlas containing a series of maps showing the various human and natural environmental elements along the five alternatives and their options, is available on CD-ROM and may be requested by calling the project hotline.

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“Unprecedented public participation in the study process has significantly helped the study team,” Nicol said. “The public’s involvement has been and will continue to be vital to this project’s success.”

During the upcoming public comment period, individuals may comment on the DEIS on the Internet by visiting the project Web site or by calling the toll-free hotline. INDOT has scheduled three public hearings to give the public a detailed explanation of key points in the DEIS early in the public comment period and to accept comments during these hearings.”

The dates and locations for the public hearings on the DEIS findings are:

- Monday, Aug. 19: Terre Haute South High School, 3737 S. Seventh St., Terre Haute
- Tuesday, Aug. 20: Bloomington North High School, 3901 Kinser Pike, Bloomington
- Wednesday, Aug. 21: Evansville Harrison High School, 211 Fielding Road, Evansville

The doors will open at 5 p.m. for public viewing of displays and an informal discussion with project experts and members of the study team. A presentation of the DEIS will begin at 6 p.m. Public comments will be accepted from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

People who want to submit comments on the DEIS but cannot attend the formal public hearings can:

- call the 24-hour toll-free project hotline, 877-INDY-EVN or 877-463-9386
- visit the project Web site, www.i69indyevn.org, and send an e-mail
- write to: Mike Grovak
Project Manager
Bernardin, Lochmueller & Associates, Inc.
6200 Vogel Road
Evansville, IN 47715

“INDOT is aware that some interested parties feel the 45-day comment period required by federal law is inadequate,” Nicol said. “The study staff recommended lengthening this comment period to 60 days. However, I have directed the study team to double the time for the comment period to 90 days.”

The 90-day period for commenting on the DEIS will end on Thursday, November 7, 2002.

Once the DEIS public comment period ends, the study team will review the comments. The comments will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which will also identify a single preferred alternative. The study process will conclude with a Record of Decision (ROD) issued by the Federal Highway Administration. It is expected that the ROD will be issued early next year.

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CONTACT: INDOT Office of Communications, (317) 232-5533, ext. 0.