



# I-69 Update

Official Newsletter of the I-69 Indianapolis-to-Evansville Study

Volume 1, August 2000



Old Courthouse, Evansville. Photo: Tina Ford

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## Comprehensive New Study Examines All Ramifications of Connecting Indianapolis and Evansville

In November 1998, the Indiana Department of Transportation expanded the scope of the Southwest Indiana Highway Corridor Bloomington-to-Evansville project to study a full range of alternatives for linking Evansville and Indianapolis. While previous studies were technically sound, they studied only limited aspects of the situation. INDOT believes this expanded study – examining the environmental, social, economic, land use, air quality, noise, historical, and visual ramifications of construction – will provide a much clearer picture of how each alternative would affect southwestern Indiana as well as the entire state.

The study will outline the costs and consequences of all reasonable alternative routes between Indianapolis and Evansville, a vast area that reaches into 26 Indiana counties. The study will also consider public transportation, freight rail and the possibility of doing nothing at all.

The first step of the investigation will be to identify all the questions the study should address and establish the factors that will be used to evaluate the alternative corridors. Using these findings, the researchers will narrow the list of possible corridors to a manageable number (probably three to five), then conduct in-depth environmental screening to understand how building the corridors could impact the surrounding areas.

INDOT recognizes that citizens, who will be most affected by the decision to build or not to build, should play an important role in the planning process. Project managers are soliciting public feedback every step of the way. (See back cover for how you can voice your opinion.)

While the results of this investigation will dramatically affect Hoosiers, the decision's impact will be felt across the nation as well. Congress has provided partial funding for the I-69 extension as a "federal high priority project," intending for it to be one segment of the interstate connecting Detroit to the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. By carefully examining all the possible effects of building a new transportation corridor, this study promises to deliver the best answer for Indiana and our nation.



Indianapolis skyline. Photo: Banayote Photography

## Public meetings

### Jasper

Monday, August 28, 2000 — 6-9:30 p.m.  
Jasper High School  
1600 St. Charles Street

### Vincennes

Tuesday, August 29, 2000 — 6-9:30 p.m.  
Lincoln High School  
1545 South Hart Street

### Indianapolis

Wednesday, August 30, 2000 — 6-9:30 p.m.  
Decatur Middle School  
5108 South High School Road

## Project timeline

Discussion paper and technical reports on the Purpose and Need Statement complete, August 2000

Final Purpose and Need Statement complete, spring 2001

Reduce alternatives to five or fewer, summer 2001

Environmental screening underway, winter 2002

Draft Environmental Impact Statement complete, spring 2002

Final Environmental Impact Statement complete, late autumn 2002

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## August Public Meetings Focus on Purpose and Need

To invite thorough public input on every phase of the I-69 study, each round of public meetings hosted by the Indiana Department of Transportation focuses on a particular aspect of the project. The next round of public meetings, to be held in Jasper, Vincennes and Indianapolis the week of August 28 (see schedule at left), will provide an update on the development of the Purpose and Need Statement for the I-69 Evansville-to-Indianapolis study.

A Purpose and Need Statement is the first step in preparing an environmental impact statement. It defines the basic goals of the project and evaluates the needs the project is intended to address. It also provides a consistent set of factors for evaluating existing conditions and for measuring the ability of each alternative to achieve the project's objectives. In a sense, the Purpose and Need Statement is the first major building block – the foundation – of the study.

The Purpose and Need Statement for this study is being released for public review in two stages to maximize opportunities for public input. The documents being released at this stage define the project's overall goals and establish the criteria that will be used to evaluate existing conditions and measure the performance of various alternatives. These documents – which include a general overview and more detailed technical reports – will be available on the project Web site ([www.I69indyevn.org](http://www.I69indyevn.org)) or can be mailed to individuals; request a copy by calling 877-INDY-EVN (877-463-9386). These documents will be the primary focus of the upcoming round of public meetings.

Later this year, the study team will release an in-depth analysis of existing and future transportation needs and economic conditions in the 26-county Southwest Indiana region. The study team is hard at work on this needs assessment now. When the needs assessment is completed, an updated draft of the Purpose and Need Statement – including the needs data – will be released for public review. At that point, an additional round of public meetings will be held to provide another opportunity for public input before the Purpose and Need Statement is finalized.

People attending the August round of public meetings can expect the following:

- First, at 6 p.m., members of the study team will give a brief overview of the discussion paper and technical reports addressing purpose and need.
- Second, individuals can address the assembly to offer suggestions regarding the Purpose and Need Statement. Because 200 to 700 people have attended past meetings, each speaker is limited to two minutes. Also, the order in which people speak is assigned randomly using a lottery system; it is not “first-come, first-served.”
- Third, at 7:30 p.m., members of the study team will be available for one-on-one discussions for those who have additional comments to make or who prefer not to speak to the entire group. Public comments may continue during this period if necessary.

Members of the media will be present at these meetings and may approach attendees and speakers with questions.

People who have ideas to share but cannot attend the public meetings are encouraged to present their comments via one of the ways noted in the “Voice your opinion” column on the back cover of this newsletter.

## Issue Involvement Team Represents You

To ensure that everyone with an interest in an Evansville-to-Indianapolis route has a say as the study proceeds, the Indiana Department of Transportation and the project consultants created the Issue Involvement Team. It serves as a conduit between stakeholder groups and citizens concerned about the route and the people charged with conducting the impartial study of all the ways Indianapolis and Evansville might be connected.

The new study will look at all alternatives, including building new-terrain routes, upgrading U.S. 41 and Interstate 70, and even a “no-build” option. It will also consider public transportation and freight rail connectors. This broad range of options invites a variety of opinions on how – or whether – the highway should be built. For the study to be truly thorough, all those opinions need a forum where they can be expressed and heard.

Opinions are being solicited in several ways, and meetings of the Issue Involvement Team are another way to gather input. Members of the team voice the interests and viewpoints of their individual organizational members.

Several groups that spoke out during previous studies of an I-69 extension were asked to join the Issue Involvement Team as a steering committee. These groups include:

- Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads
- Hoosier Environmental Council
- Indiana Farm Bureau
- Indiana State Chamber of Commerce
- Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce
- Metropolitan Evansville Chamber of Commerce
- Sunshine Garden Neighborhood Association

## Speaking out



*“I want to impress upon you, this is the Wabash Valley’s single most important issue related to future jobs growth and economic vitality.”*

*Roderick Henry, Executive Director, Greater Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce*



*“I-69 is the greatest economic asset for Indiana today and tomorrow. It promises economic development, improved highway safety, linkage and environmental improvement.”*

*John C. Schwartz, Executive Director, The Voices for I-69*

- Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce
- The Voices for I-69

This steering committee met in June and July to identify additional organizations that should be invited to join the Issue Involvement Team, and to provide input on the agenda and format for the next round of public meetings.



*“Bloomington doesn’t need this highway, Indiana doesn’t need it, and planet Earth sure doesn’t need it.”*

*Andy Ruff, Bloomington City Councilperson*



*“I-69 is extremely important to Daviess County’s long-term growth and survival. Whatever route is selected, we will support that decision. Just do it!”*

*David Cox, Executive Director, Daviess County Growth Council*

Also at those meetings, the groups presented questions and issues to be researched by Indiana Department of Transportation and Bernardin Lochmueller & Associates, Inc. The questions will be answered at future meetings.

## Voice your opinion, stay informed

The Indiana Department of Transportation is striving to make public participation in the new study as easy as possible. You can stay informed and voice your opinions, comments and concerns in several ways:

- Subscribe to receive this *I-69 Update* newsletter via e-mail or U.S. Mail. Call 877-INDY-EVN (877-463-9386).
- Visit the Web site: [www.I69indyevn.org](http://www.I69indyevn.org).
- Call the 24-hour toll-free hotline: 877-INDY-EVN (877-463-9386).
- Join the Issue Involvement Team or become a member of a group represented on the team.
- Write a letter to INDOT: Lyle Sadler, project manager, Indiana Department of Transportation, 100 N. Senate Ave., Room N855, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2218.
- Meet in person with INDOT project officials, either by attending public meetings or contacting INDOT to request a speaker for your organization's function.



*Klika (facing camera) talks with an INDOT worker. Photo: INDOT*

### Cristine Klika Leads Study

Cristine M. Klika, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Transportation, is the right person to lead INDOT as it considers options for linking Evansville and Indianapolis. Because she worked her way up through the ranks, Klika knows how to improve transportation in an environmentally responsible way.

"When weighing alternatives in any transportation project, especially the I-69 project, the detailed view is critical to understanding the big picture," Klika says. "I am fortunate that my career path has allowed me access to all those details."

After earning her civil engineering degree at Purdue University, Klika began her career in public service as the Monroe County engineer. Working at the local level gave Klika an intimate understanding of community needs, something she has not lost sight of even as her job responsibilities continued to grow.

By 1997, Klika was INDOT's deputy commissioner heading the Office of Planning and Intermodal Transportation, meaning that she helped determine how the State of Indiana invested more than \$500 million a year in road projects. Governor Frank O'Bannon appointed Klika commissioner in May 1999.



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