



**MID-STATES  
CORRIDOR**

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OUTREACH PLAN

## Mid-States Corridor Tier 1 Environmental Impact Study

Prepared for

Indiana Department of Transportation  
Mid-States Regional Development Authority

JUNE 30, 2020

Prepared by

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## Environmental Justice (EJ)

“Environmental justice” is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, national origin, or educational level with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. For the purpose of this strategy, fair treatment means that no population, due to policy or economic disempowerment, is forced to bear a disproportionate burden of the negative human health and environmental impacts, including social and economic effects, resulting from transportation decisions, programs and policies made, implemented and enforced at the Federal, State, local or tribal level.

Environmental Justice (EJ) is important because it helps to ensure full and fair participation by potentially affected communities in every phase of the transportation decision-making process. When this is accomplished, the development, construction, operation and maintenance of transportation projects should reflect an equitable distribution of benefits and burdens. EJ is not a new concept. In 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, directing federal agencies, to the greatest extent practicable, to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. In 1997, the Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) issued an Order to address EJ in minority populations and low-income populations to summarize and expand upon the requirements of Executive Order 12898 on EJ. The FHWA issued its own EJ Order in 1998 (Order 6640.23). U.S. DOT, FHWA, and other modal administrations have since updated the respective orders and continually seek to enhance their efforts to address EJ effects of their programs, policies, and activities.

Public engagement and participation in decision-making is a fundamental principle of EJ and is critical to achieving outcomes that reflect the needs of all affected stakeholders to the greatest extent feasible. Minority and low-income communities have historically borne disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of transportation infrastructure projects. Active and meaningful participation of all affected communities will help ensure that transportation plans and projects avoid, and when avoidance is not possible, minimize, or mitigate these impacts on minority and low-income populations. For this reason, DOT is committed to using public engagement to encourage and empower EJ populations to engage meaningfully in the planning and implementation of DOT programs, policies, and activities.

## Mid-States Corridor Outreach Approach

The public outreach program to be implemented for this project includes specific efforts to engage potentially affected environmental justice communities in this tiered-environmental study. The Tier 1 activities involve a two-phase approach. During Phase 1 Pre-Screening of Alternatives, engagement activities focused on reaching a broader range of individuals while Phase 2 Post-Screening of Alternatives, engagement activities are more focused on meetings with potential environmental justice communities after the number of potential alternatives is screened to a lesser level. This approach allows better opportunities for detailed discussions while still gathering input from these communities within each geographic region of the project.



## Phase 1: Pre-Screening of Alternatives

The first round of PIMs provided an opportunity for the public to contribute in identifying potential preliminary alternatives as well as providing input on the Draft Purpose and Need.

Additionally, a “meeting in a box” was developed and hosted at seventeen public libraries throughout the project study area, with an emphasis on those closer to potential preliminary alternatives. These “meetings” included all PIM materials along with directions on how to provide general comments or comments on potential preliminary alternatives. It also allowed for submitting additional alternatives (line(s) on a map) for consideration. Comments and potential preliminary alternatives were collected from each library thirty days after distribution and incorporated into the project database which informs the decision-making process.

A similar process of utilizing “meetings in a box” was followed to coincide with the second round of PIMs. This round concentrated on gathering input on the Screening of Alternatives document.

## Phase 2: Post-Screening of Alternatives

Targeted meetings will be held after the preliminary alternatives have been screened to a reduced number of reasonable alternatives that will be carried forward for detailed analysis. Project team members utilizing resources and input from local officials, churches and social service organizations will arrange for up to ten (10) meetings proximate to areas with identified potential environmental justice communities.

Although not specifically identified communities, special efforts will be made to engage members of the Amish communities within the project study area as well.

The project team will identify meeting locations that are accessible to all stakeholders including those with physical disabilities, minorities, low-income, elderly, and transit dependent. Using resources available through INDOT’s Office Public Involvement/Communications, accommodations for Limited English Proficiency individuals will be made as well.

## Uncertainties from COVID – 19 Crisis

During the midst of the project development process for the Mid-States Corridor Project, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit the United States.

Of particular interest with the Mid-States Corridor Project is how to proceed with meetings both small and large. Telecommuting for small group meetings has become the norm and for those instances where large group meetings are warranted or required, creative approaches are being considered and/or implemented. Most creative ways rely heavily on the use of new technologies that allow people to participate “virtually” or at least view and/or listen in through computers or mobile devices.

These alternative meeting solutions are good, however, they have their limitations too. Questions about access to the needed equipment and understanding of how to use them remain unanswered. Further, access to reliable internet access brings an additional challenge as large pockets of southern Indiana lack adequate broadband connectivity.



The very heart of the environmental justice process relies on reaching out to communities that often face barriers to engaging in transportation decision-making due to mobility limitations, technological challenges, and isolation. As such, additional efforts are necessary to bring the process to these communities.

This plan proposes a number of future meetings with potential environmental justice communities. It is reasonable to assume that most will be small to medium in size (less than 20 people). The Project Team will follow all guidelines as prescribed by respective County Health Departments along with guidance from INDOT/FHWA and/or the State of Indiana.

The proposed timing of meetings is to be considered tentative as there is too much uncertainty of when meetings can resume and what limitations will be in place, i.e. number of allowed attendees, required spacing, etc. If at all possible, in person meetings will also be accessible remotely via teleconference or WebEx. The Project Team will attempt to identify host locations with Wi-Fi access to support necessary tools to accommodate remote access. Further, we will also look to identify locations with free public Wi-Fi where persons can go to join remotely via smart phone or laptop. We will proceed in implementing this plan in good faith acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead.

## Targeted Communities

### Minority and/or Low-Income Population Concentrations

Note: A map of the potential environmental justice communities is included at the end of this plan.

#### Grandview/Rockport Area

There are three census block groups in this area that touch the existing US 231 corridor. US 231 is a limited access expressway facility from the Natcher Bridge at SR 66 near Rockport to I-64 near Dale.

- Census tract 9531, block group #1: potential low income EJ community
- Census tract 9528, block group #2: potential minority EJ community
- Census tract 9528, block group #3: potential low income and minority EJ community

Access to and across US 231 will only change in the vicinity of these potential EJ communities if the decision is made to upgrade to a fully access-controlled freeway facility. Population concentrations are far-removed from the US 231 corridor so disproportionate relocations to low-income and minority populations is not likely. Additionally, changes to access within close proximity of any concentrations of potential EJ communities is not likely. SR 66 is already an interchange and SR 70 would also retain access to US 231. However, a freeway alternative is still possible so a meeting is proposed for this region.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the Spencer County Library Grandview Branch (403 Main Street, Grandview) between May and July. The team will



coordinate with the Spencer County Division of Family Resources in Rockport, along with representatives from the City of Rockport and Town of Grandview to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers will be placed in their respective offices and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.

## **Dale Area**

There are two census block groups in this area that touch the existing US 231 corridor.

- Census tract 9527, block groups #3 & 4: potential low income EJ communities

These census tracts encompass the entire Town of Dale. There is no concern with displacing or relocating disproportionate concentrations of low-income families regardless of the route or facility type decision. However, there are currently three access points from US 231 to Dale and this would change considerably if the decision is made to upgrade to a freeway facility.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the Dale Community Center (103 N. Wallace Street) between May and July. The team will coordinate with the North Spencer County Community Action Center in Dale, as well as the Spencer County Family Resources Center in Rockport to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers will be placed at their respective offices and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and representatives.

## **Huntingburg Area**

There is one census block group in this area that the two-mile study band of the proposed eastern alternative corridors, Routes P, M, C and O touch. The location is southeast of Huntingburg.

- Census tract 9538, block group #4: potential low income EJ community

The potential for displacing or relocating disproportionate concentrations of low-income families in this area is low, even if an eastern alternative corridor is identified. There is potential for access changes that may impact traffic patterns, especially for work commutes.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at Southridge Jr. /Sr. High School (1112 S. Main St., Huntingburg) between May and July. The team will coordinate with the Dubois County Office of Family Resources in Jasper to assist in notifying community members about the meeting and if English as a Second Language accommodations are needed. Meeting fliers will be placed at Huntingburg government centers and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.

## **French Lick / West Baden Area**



There are five census block groups that touch the Route O alternative corridor two-mile study band. Route O is only proposed as an expressway and this alternative passes through the census block groups as it traverses southeast of French Lick and West Baden.

- Census tract 9516, block group #1: potential low income EJ community
- Census tract 9515, block groups #1, 2, & 3: potential low income EJ community
- Census tract 9514, block group #4: potential minority EJ community

The current proposed location south and east of the French Lick / West Baden area is outside of the higher concentration of housing in the area. Accessibility to employment opportunities within the respective towns is important. Further, the challenging terrain that exists in the area has led to limited roadway facilities so maintaining access onto and/or across any new facility is important. It is important to note that one of the initial rounds of Public Information Meetings was held at the Springs Valley Junior-Senior High School.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the Springs Valley Junior-Senior High School or Springs Valley Elementary School (498 S. Larry Bird Blvd., French Lick) between May and July. The local schools are a common local gathering place and easily accessible by most community residents. The team will coordinate with the Orange County Family Social Services office in Paoli to assist in notifying community members about the meeting and if English as a Second Language accommodations are needed. Meeting fliers will be distributed to key locations and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.

## **Mitchell Area**

There are two census block groups that touch the Route O alternative corridor two-mile study band as it passes through Mitchell. Route O is only proposed as an expressway along existing SR 37 in this area.

- Census tract 9513, block group #4: potential low income EJ community
- Census tract 9512, block groups #2: potential low income EJ community

The proposed Route O connects with SR 37 at SR 60 west of the SR 60/SR 37 intersection. SR 37 is currently an expressway and no significant access change is anticipated should this alternative be selected. A meeting will be held to provide ample opportunities for these communities to engage in the decision-making process.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the Mitchell High School (1000 Bishop Blvd, Mitchell) between May and July. The local schools are a common local gathering place and easily accessible by most community residents. The team will coordinate with the Lawrence County Division of Family Resources office in Bedford to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers will be posted at local government buildings and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and social services representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.



## Bedford/Oolitic Area

There are six census block groups that touch the two-mile study bands of the Route O and M alternative corridors. Route O is only proposed as an expressway through this area. SR 37 is already an expressway through the extent of the Bedford area. Route M is considering all three facility types super-2, expressway, and freeway. Should a freeway facility type along Route M be selected, access along existing SR 37 will change considerably.

- Census tract 9508, block group #3: potential minority and low income EJ community
- Census tract 9508, block groups #1: potential minority EJ community
- Census tract 9509, block group #2: potential minority EJ community
- Census tract 9510, block group #4: potential minority EJ community
- Census tract 9506, block group #3: potential low income EJ community
- Census tract 9505, block group #1: potential minority EJ community

The proposed location for Route M comes into Bedford from the southwest connecting to SR 37 northwest of the city. If a freeway alternative is chosen, the larger change in access would occur to the north of Bedford along SR 37. Existing SR 37 has a number of direct access points through the Oolitic area extending to Bloomington. There would be a considerable reduction in access if it was converted to a freeway

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the Oolitic Community Center and Museum (231-237 Hoosier Ave, Oolitic) between May and July. The team will coordinate with the Lawrence County Division of Family Resources office in Bedford to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers will be posted at local government buildings and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and social services representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.

## Loogootee Area

There is only one census block group that touches the Route P alternative corridor two-mile study band. It clips western bypass option and more prominently touches the eastern bypass option.

- Census tract 9502, block group #1: potential low income EJ community

Access to and from work opportunities is important for the residents of Loogootee and Martin County. The facility type decision will determine the amount of access onto and across the highway facility should the decision be made to select one of the Route P alternative corridors. It is important to note that one of the second round of Public Information Meetings was held at the Loogootee Junior-Senior High School.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the Martin County Community building (2668 US 50, Loogootee) between May and July. If this location does not work out the local schools are a common local gathering place and easily accessible by most community residents. The team will coordinate with the Martin County Family Social Services office in Loogootee to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers



will be posted at local government buildings and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and social services representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.

## **Odon Area**

There is only one census block group that touches the Route P alternative corridor two-mile study band. This block group encompasses the area southeast of Odon along SR 58 crossing US 231 (Farlen) to the east.

- Census tract 9543, block group #4: potential minority EJ community

The area where route P is proposed in the vicinity of Odon is sparsely populated. Further the primary access in the area is SR 58 which would maintain access regardless of facility type. A meeting will be held to provide ample opportunities for these communities to engage in the decision-making process.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the North Daviess Jr-Sr High School (5494 E State Rd 58, Elnora) between May and July. The local schools are a common local gathering place and easily accessible by most community residents. The team will coordinate with the Daviess County Division of Family Resources office in Washington to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers will be posted at local government buildings and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and social services representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.

## **Washington Area**

There is only one census block group that clips the Route C alternative corridor two-mile study band and that is contingent on how the access configuration is designed near at or near the US 50/I-69 interchange area.

- Census tract 9543, block group #4: potential minority EJ community

The proximity between this potential EJ community, newly-constructed I-69 and the US 50 connection with this alternative corridor does not represent a unique change beyond what was already identified with the I-69 Project. As such, no future meeting is proposed. It is important to note that one of the first round of Public Information Meetings was held at Washington High School. A meeting will be held to provide ample opportunities for these communities to engage in the decision-making process.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at the Washington Carnegie Library (300 W. Main Street, Washington) between May and July. The public library is easily accessible by most community residents. The team will coordinate with the Daviess County Division of Family Resources office in Washington to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers will be posted at local government buildings and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and social services representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects.



## **Rural Martin (Dover Hill) and Lawrence County (Williams) Area**

There are two census block groups that touch the Route M alternative corridors two-mile study band. Route M is proposed as a Super-2, Expressway, and Freeway facility. The entire area is sparsely populated with only two small communities in the area, Williams (est. 440) and Dover Hill (est. 40).

- Census tract 9501, block group #3: potential minority and low income EJ community
- Census tract 9507, block groups #2: potential minority EJ community

The current proposed location of Route M, regardless of facility type is south of Dover Hill and north of Williams. The terrain in the area has created limited access for residents and flooding associated with the East Fork of the White River can create access challenges in the area. Access onto and across a new highway in this area is important to the ability of residents to get to and from work opportunities and essential amenities provided by larger communities such as Loogootee to the southwest and Bedford to the northeast. There are no proposed meetings in either of these census tracts.

**Proposed Meeting:** The Project Team proposes to host a meeting at one of the churches located along SR 450 in or near to Dover Hill or Williams between May and July. There are multiple options, including Dover Hill, Trinity Springs, Mt. Olive, and Williams. The team will coordinate with the Martin County Family Social Services office in Loogootee and the Lawrence County Division of Family Resources office in Bedford to assist in notifying community members about the meeting. Meeting fliers will be posted at local community buildings and churches and phone contacts will be made with appropriate community members and social services representatives. Fliers will include information about submitting input and comments on the projects. It may be difficult to locate a host facility with Wi-Fi access and it is likely there will be no locations proximate to Dover Hill or Williams with free public Wi-Fi. The team will attempt to utilize multiple hot spots so persons can join “remotely” from the host location parking lot.

## **Amish Communities**

The State of Indiana has the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Amish population in the United States, with multiple Amish communities spread throughout the state. There are two concentrations of Amish populations which could be impacted by this project if any of the three alternatives associated with route O or P are selected. The project team has taken a proactive approach to engaging these Amish communities for the following reasons:

- Potential for right-of-way impacts
- Mobility challenges posed by access limitations and/or transportation facility types
- Mobility challenges that impact their ability to attend public meetings not proximate to their homes
- Religious and daily practices limiting and/or prohibiting the use of electronic devices to retrieve project information



The following summarizes measures taken to this point and plans for subsequent contacts and communications.

## **Orange/Lawrence County Area Communities**

On Saturday, March 7 Mid-States Corridor Project Team Project Manager, Jason DuPont met with multiple members of the Amish community in the Orange and Lawrence County area to provide information on the project and to coordinate a larger meeting to be held at a local gathering place. Jason met with individuals at four different locations. His final meeting involved a local committee member. A committee member is an elder leader within their community. The committee member shared that he felt route O would be impactful to their community. He also shared the members of their community have residences and property from Orangeville to the south and west to east of SR 37 and north to nearly SR 60.

The larger meeting was held on Thursday, March 12 at 6:00 eastern at the schoolhouse on Fleenor Road in northern Orange County. Nick Jahn, Alex Daugherty, and Kyanna Moon facilitated the meeting providing a brief project background, update, and were able to answer questions for all in attendance. Approximately 20 members of their community were in attendance (there was some reluctance for most to sign in but rather leaving it to the committee members in attendance). At least one non-Amish neighbor was in attendance. Primary elements of discussion included:

- Physically dividing the community with a major highway
- Restricting access across the facility and increasing travel distance and time
- Concerns about potential impacts to the Hoosier National Forest, karst features, family cemeteries, etc.
- Use existing roads with upgrades instead of new terrain
- Participants helped the project team identify on a map where many of the community families lived

Attendees were provided copies of the handouts and questionnaire that were utilized during the Screening of Alternatives Public Information Meetings held in February. Several additional copies were provided to the committee members for others within the community to complete and mail to the project team.

Future Coordination: A Point of Contact (POC) for the community was established in order to maintain a line of communication for subsequent meetings (as needed) and to communicate information about the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement slated for the fall of 2020. It is reasonable to assume that additional group meetings would be warranted if the recommended preferred alternative is route O.

## **Daviess/Martin County Area Communities**



On Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup> Jason DuPont met with multiple members of the Amish community in the Daviess and Martin County area to provide information on the project and to coordinate a larger meeting to be held at a local gathering place. At the first of two meetings, a community member agreed to coordinate the larger meeting. The representative at the second meeting noted that he and others from the community had attended the public meeting in Loogootee and that they had been spreading the word about the project.

The larger meeting was held on Wednesday, March 18 at 6:30 eastern at the residence and workshop of one of the local community members just off US 231 in Martin County. Jason DuPont, David Goffinet, and Kyanna Moon facilitated the meeting providing a brief project background, update, and were able to answer questions for all in attendance. Approximately 30 members of their community were in attendance. A sign in sheet was available and a number of the attendees did sign in. Primary elements of discussion included:

- For the most part, existing US 231 is the eastern boundary of their community, would it be viable to look at alternatives east of US 231 near the Crane property lines
- Physically dividing the community with a major highway, including concerns with impacts to some of the primary east/west and north/south county roads
- Restricting access across the facility and increasing travel distance and time – identified the primary east/west and north/south roads utilized by their communities
- Safety of their travelers, especially as it relates to noise that distracts and alarms horses
- Concerns with steep grades should there be overpasses
- Participants noted that most families within their community live between I-69 to the west, US 50 to the south, US 231 to the east and SR 58 to the north

Attendees were provided copies of the handouts and questionnaire that were utilized during the Screening of Alternatives Public Information Meetings held in February. Several additional copies were provided to the committee members for others within the community to complete and mail to the project team.

Future Coordination: A Point of Contact (POC) for the community was established in order to maintain a line of communication for subsequent meetings (as needed) and to communicate information about the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement slated for the fall of 2020. It is reasonable to assume that additional group meetings would be warranted if the recommended preferred alternative is route P.