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## EIS SUMMARY

### ES.1 A Summary of the Statement

The Mid-States Corridor Study is a tiered environmental document consistent with the guidance established by the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and conforming to processes developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). This Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will define the need for the study, the analyses undertaken, alternatives considered and their effects, and identification of a preferred alternative. The Mid-States Corridor Study is a tiered document because it is regional in scale. The intent of the Tier 1 Study is to determine the Purpose and Need for the proposed action and identify a preferred corridor, if a Build Alternative is appropriate. All effects presented are estimates based on the best available resource information. Final resource impacts will be identified in subsequent Tier 2 NEPA studies for the selected alternative. This summary highlights the key processes followed, estimated effects of the alternatives and decision outcomes.

#### ES.1.1 Purpose and Need

The Notice of Intent (NOI) for the study was published in the Federal Register on July 5, 2019. The project is intended to improve the transportation linkage of US 231 between SR 66 and I-69 in Southern Indiana. Regarding the connection to I-69, this could be either a direct connection or via connection through SR 37, which is an existing four-lane expressway north from Mitchell. The Study Area occupies 12 counties: Crawford, Daviess, Dubois, Greene, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange, Perry, Pike, Spencer and Warrick (**Figure ES-1**).

Five previous studies provided support of the need for improved linkage. These include the *Conexus Indiana Southwest Regional Council – A Plan for Growing Southwest Indiana’s Logistic Sector* (2015); *Blue Ribbon Panel on Transportation Infrastructure – Final Report to Governor Pence* (2014); *I-67 Corridor Feasibility Study* (2012); *US 231 Jasper/Huntingburg – 2004 DEIS and 2011 SDEIS* and the *US 231 Corridor Assessment* (2018). After release of the NOI, robust engagement efforts with stakeholders, the public, and resource agencies occurred. Five key themes of need were identified from stakeholder engagement and were as follows:

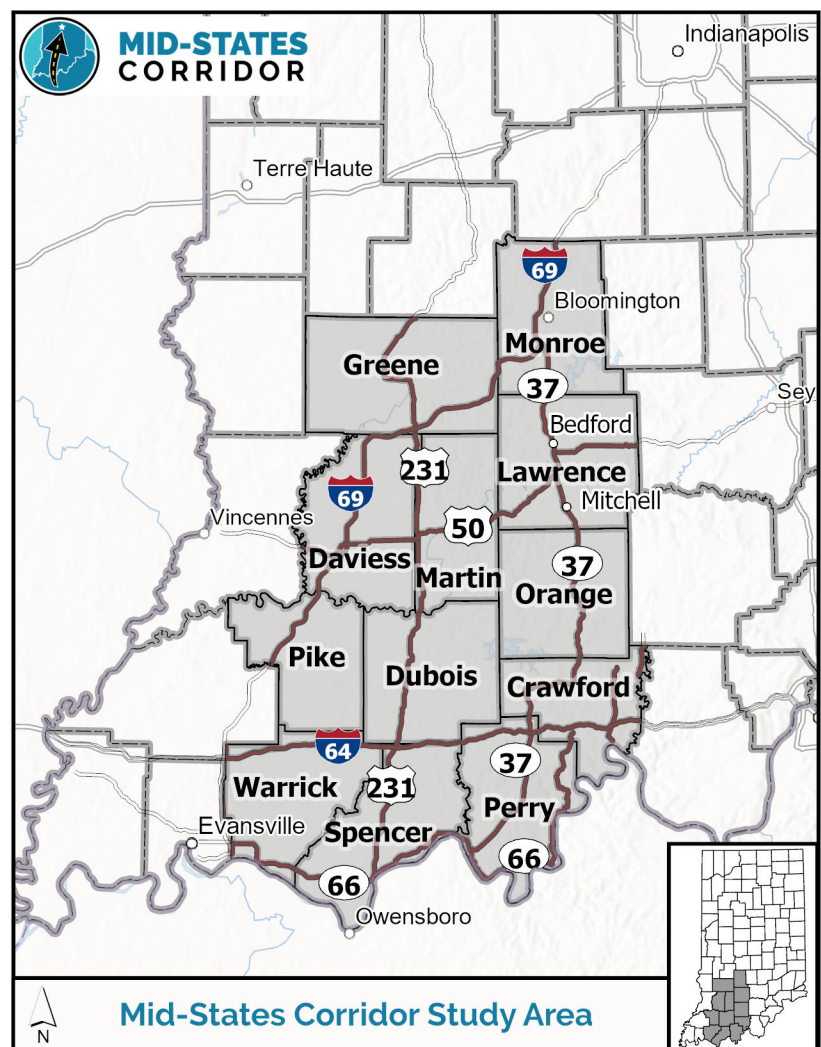


Figure ES-1: Project Study Area



- **Economic Significance of Dubois County.** Dubois County is a major economic center in Southern Indiana. It is home to many large national corporations. Access to northern and southern markets is restricted by the design and capacity of US 231. This inhibits business growth and business attraction, causes unpredictable delivery times, increases freight costs and inhibits access to Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center and its supporting contractors. Access to major intermodal facilities in Indianapolis, Louisville and Chicago is limited.
- **Poor Safety, Unreliability and Inadequacy of US 231.** US 231 is the north/south transportation “spine” for the Study Area. Many of the local stakeholders described it as having poor safety, speed, congestion and travel time predictability. In most parts of the Study Area, it is a two-lane road with narrow shoulders, hilly topography, unrestricted county road access and slow-moving seasonal farm equipment. These factors lead to reduced speeds and unpredictable travel times. This restricts its use for motor freight.
- **Lack of North-South Connectivity throughout 12-county Study Area.** Businesses east of I-69 and west of I-65 generally have inadequate access to northern and southern markets. Many businesses avoid US 231 to/from northern markets, and instead go south to I-64 to go north on I-69 or I-65. This added time and distance can raise freight costs.
- **Importance of Improved Intermodal Access to Business Expansion and Attraction.** Large airports with air freight services, such as FedEx in Indianapolis or UPS in Louisville, provide advantages to businesses. Air freight opportunities are limited by poor connections to intermodal centers. Improved access to rail centers such as Indianapolis and Chicago also would be advantageous to businesses. In addition, there are two major Ohio River ports (Tell City River Port and the Port of Indiana in Jeffersonville). Major businesses in the Study Area both source their business inputs and serve customers throughout many parts of the nation. Access to a range of transportation options is an important part of business operations.
- **Importance of Transportation to Business Attraction.** An important consideration in business location decisions is the presence of high-level, multi-lane roads. Many stated that the combination of poor access/logistics to the north and the competitive labor market discourages business attraction.

Sentiment received from the public in support of the study tended to focus on economic development issues. Specific locations included Jasper, Huntingburg, Washington, French Lick, Mitchell, Bedford and the Naval Support Activity (NSA) center/base in Crane. Support for a broad range of industries, including tourism, was cited.

Analysis of the transportation needs in the Study Area found accessibility limits to Dubois County were present and aligned with the issues expressed by the stakeholders. Forecasting travel times using existing roadway speeds and speeds associated with a higher facility identified the potential to create higher reductions (e.g., up to a potential 10-minute round trip reduction between Jasper and Crane).

To determine whether alternatives created would address the needs identified, seven goals were established as measurement tools. Three of these were classified as core goals and four as secondary goals. Core and secondary goals differ in that a proposed alternative must demonstrate adequate improvements on core goals while secondary goals only represent additional benefits as other desirable outcomes<sup>1</sup> but are not required to be addressed. The seven goals and their performance criteria are as follows:

- 1) **Increase accessibility to major business markets (Core Goal). Alternatives must demonstrate:**
  - a. Reduced travel time from Jasper to Indianapolis, Chicago and Louisville.
  - b. Reduced travel time from NSA Crane to Jasper, Rockport and Louisville.
  - c. Reduced travel time from Bedford to Rockport and Louisville.

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<sup>1</sup> Measurement of adequacy is defined in Chapter 1



- d. Reduced travel time from French Lick to Indianapolis, Louisville and Rockport.
- e. Increased labor force with 30-minute access to Jasper, Crane, Washington, French Lick and Bedford.
- 2) **Provide more efficient truck/freight travel in Southern Indiana (Core Goal). Alternatives must demonstrate:**
  - a. Reduced truck vehicle hours of travel (VHT) in 12-county Study Area for trips to, from or within the Study Area.
- 3) **Reduction in localized congestion in Dubois County (Secondary Goal). Alternatives must demonstrate:**
  - a. Reduced congestion at key locations within Jasper and Huntingburg.
- 4) **Reduce crashes in at key locations in Southern Indiana (Secondary Goal). Alternatives must demonstrate:**
  - a. Reduction in annual crash costs at key locations in Southern Indiana.
- 5) **Increase levels of business activity within Southern Indiana (Secondary Goal). Alternatives must demonstrate:**
  - a. Increased regional gross domestic product within 12-county Study Area.
  - b. Increased total employment within 12-county Study Area.
  - c. Increased employment in high-wage industries in 12-county Study Area.
  - d. Increased employment in high-growth industries in 12-county Study Area.
- 6) **Increase personal economic well-being in Southern Indiana (Secondary Goal). Alternatives must demonstrate:**
  - a. Increased personal income within 12-county Study Area.
- 7) **Increase access to major intermodal centers from Southern Indiana (Core Goal). Alternatives must demonstrate:**
  - a. Reduced travel from Jasper to CSX Avon Yard, Senate Ave. Yard, Tell City River Port, Port of Indiana, Louisville Airport and Indianapolis Airport.
  - b. Reduced travel time from Crane to CSX Avon Yard, Senate Ave. Yard, Tell City River Port, Port of Indiana, Louisville Airport and Indianapolis Airport.

## ES.1.2 Process Overview

NEPA established the framework to consider how federal actions may have an impact on the environment. From this framework, the CEQ created the three levels of environmental reviews, which are an EIS, Environmental Assessments (EA) and Categorical Exclusions (CE). Additionally, the CEQ provided the opportunity for major transportation actions processed as an EIS to be tiered (40 CFR 1508.28: Tiering). Tiering separates the broader issues such as selection of the general location and mode choice in Tier 1 from the more detailed site-specific impacts that can be determined in Tier 2. For large, complex transportation projects tiering is beneficial for both the lead federal agency providing approval and the lead state agency planning the transportation improvement. With a 12-county Study Area, it was determined a tiered approach was appropriate for the Mid-States Corridor Study.

Coordination between FHWA and INDOT resulted in determining the Tier 1 DEIS Build Alternatives should establish a continuous corridor through the entire project area, identify how they will connect to I-69 and propose what their Sections of Independent Utility (SIUs) would be in Tier 2. The SIUs would define their logical termini and prioritization



for Tier 2 staging. Determination of a facility type would be deferred until Tier 2; however, the effects analysis must be based off construction footprints associated with design criteria of a given type of facility. To address this, each alternative would include a range of effects inclusive of a reasonable alignment corridor for a partial access expressway and Super-2 rural arterial. A fully access-controlled interstate freeway was removed from consideration.

If coordination between INDOT and FHWA determined a Build Alternative is the preferred, the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Tier 1 EIS would not provide a roadway alignment, only a defined corridor. The Tier 2 projects would develop an alignment and construction footprint for determining environmental impacts. The anticipated level of environmental documentation, EIS, EA or CE, for each Tier 2 project would be determined later. Resource agencies were engaged during the Tier 1 process, and where appropriate, memoranda of understanding (MOU) for commitments in Tier 2 projects are to be incorporated in the Final EIS. All environmental commitments would also be carried forward from Tier 1 to Tier 2.

The outcome of the study was the identification of a preferred build alternative; however, as will be later described, the process resulted in the inclusion of localized improvements to existing roadways associated with a new corridor. The combination of these localized improvements with the new corridor enhanced the benefits obtained. Each localized improvement associated with the preferred alternative is illustrative, provided its own approximate termini, and will be processed as their own Tier 2 project. Although these localized improvements would be anticipated to be processed as CEs, the level of environmental documentation will be determined later. Other local improvement considerations not associated with the preferred alternative will not be developed as a part of Mid-States Corridor Tier 2 activities, but may be evaluated for further development through INDOT's annual project evaluation process.

## ES.1.3 Preliminary Screening and Alternatives Carried Forward

### ES.1.3.1 Defining the Study Area

The Study Area encompasses 12 counties in Southern Indiana. While proposed Build Alternatives would provide a contiguous route to connect the northern and southern termini, three distinct sections/regions were identified that would influence potential conceptual alternatives. These were divided into Sections 1-3 starting from the southern termini and progressing north. Section 1 occupies between the southern termini SR 66 and I-64. Section 2 occupies from I-64 to north of Jasper, generally represented by the East Fork White River. Section 3 occupies the area between Section 2 and a connection point with I-69, either directly or via SR 37.

Section 1 is represented by the portion of US 231 which has been upgraded to a four-lane expressway within the last 10 years. At the initiation of the study, a fully controlled access freeway facility type had not been removed from consideration. This section would not have considered new alignment, but effects could have resulted from conversion to a freeway. With the removal of freeway as a facility type, potential effects within this section became limited to identification of specific locations of access control, spot improvements and signage. However, no changes to access control or spot improvements were later proposed as part of any alternative.

Section 2 is represented by the portion of the study which would explore improvements to the existing alignment of US 231 through Huntingburg and Jasper or create new corridors to the east or west of these population centers.

Section 3 is represented by a much broader area and as such was further sub-divided into three "families" within which alternatives were assigned. The intent was to categorize those that split off to the northwest to connect to I-69, those that maintain a relatively straight north-south alignment along the existing US 231 corridor, and those that split off to the northeast to connect to SR 37. Each of these families would result in serving communities in the Study Area differently. The Northwest Family more directly links population centers in or near Petersburg and Washington, the North Central Family more directly to Crane NSA and the Northeast Family to Bedford and Mitchell.





### ES.1.3.2 Public and Agency Outreach

Public and resource agencies were engaged throughout each stage of the study and followed the FHWA-Indiana *Division Streamlined Environmental Impact Statement Procedures*, September 2007, which included both a formal Public Involvement Plan (PIP) and Coordination Plan. The engagement strategy for the public involved in-person outreach, virtual connectivity and establishing a community presence. Agency coordination and engagement involved in-person coordination meetings, regular correspondence and workshops.

#### Public Engagement

Outreach included providing correspondence to key public representatives throughout the entire 12-county area at major milestones, in addition to the stakeholder and public meetings. A total of 18 economic development interviews with stakeholders were held during 2019. Four Regional Issues Involvement Teams composed of representative stakeholders from distinct geographic areas of the project were created, and meetings were held with each once in 2019 and once in 2020. Two rounds of public meetings were held, the first during the scoping phase and second to present the alternatives recommended to carry forward for detailed study. Having such a large Study Area, three meetings were held during each round to afford the public multiple opportunities and to provide convenient meetings across the Study Area. The public meetings resulted in more than 1,600 people attending. More than a dozen additional 'ad hoc' meetings were held in 2019 and 2020. These were meetings with individuals or stakeholders requested independently.

A digital footprint was established to provide multiple forms of outreach and maximize engagement opportunities. A dedicated website was created ([www.MidStatesCorridor.com](http://www.MidStatesCorridor.com)) in 2019 and regularly updated with project information and includes the ability to provide feedback and submit comments. This website has also had a Spanish translator made available to visitors. Dedicated Facebook and Twitter accounts were created and have been maintained with up-to-date information. Hundreds of digital comments and questions have been received through these platforms. Traditional media outlets such as newspapers and local television have been used for announcements and notices of public informational material.

A project office was opened in the Jasper Campus of Vincennes University, and except for an extended period of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been staffed by project team members three days a week and by appointment for days the office was not scheduled to be open. More than 80 visitors have been to the project office, though these visits tend to correlate with major milestones such as the public informational meetings.

The combination of these efforts and mediums resulted in considerable public feedback through the development of the purpose and need and preliminary alternatives. This effort will continue through the process of the Draft and Final EIS.

#### Agency Coordination

Early coordination letters were sent to 30 entities: 11 federal agencies, 15 state agencies, three local agencies and one tribal government. A total of 16 entities acted as participating agencies: 10 federal agencies, three state agencies, two local agencies and one tribal government. Only the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) acted as a cooperating agency. Two meeting/workshops were held at the project office on the Jasper Campus of Vincennes University, the first held as a scoping meeting and the second to present the screenings of alternatives. The second meeting also hosted a bus tour of the Study Area to observe the conditions in the vicinity of alternative corridors. USFWS hosted a meeting in 2019 to discuss appropriate Section 7 consultation at both the Tier 1 and 2 levels. Correspondence with agencies occurred throughout 2019 and 2020. Agency coordination will continue through the process of the Draft and Final EIS.



### ES.1.3.3 Screening of Alternatives

The alternatives development process included maintaining the No-Build Alternative, consideration of non-highway alternatives, and a series of Build Alternatives. Any alternative considered was first analyzed for potential fatal flaws. A fatal flaw is present when any element of an alternative would prohibit its implementation. This could be from an established threshold, technological hurdle or a known restriction. In most cases for this study, the fatal flaw related to failing to meet the core goals. Alternatives without fatal flaws were then progressed into a phased assessment where they were evaluated at a high level for impacts, costs and performance against the Purpose and Need criteria to determine which alternatives warranted more detailed evaluation.

#### Non-Highway Alternatives

Consideration of non-highway alternatives yielded 18 potential options which ranged in concept from expanding rail facilities to implementation of autonomous vehicles to a series of financial investments for items such as workforce development and broadband access. Each of the non-highway alternatives failed the fatal flaw analysis due to the inability to meet the core goals of the Purpose and Need.

#### Build Alternatives

Development of Build Alternatives was done through extensive engagement with the public. Initial generation of corridors was accomplished by creating two-mile wide study bands independently in Section 2 and 3 using input from the public and stakeholders. From these suggested corridors, 18 combinations of end-to-end alternatives were established with 10 recommended for screening in the phased assessment. These provided multiple representative alternatives for each of the “families”: Northwest = A, B, C; North Central = G, K, P, R; and Northeast = M, N, O. Except for Alternative R, a reasonable alignment was generated within each of the 10 two-mile wide study bands with generic impact buffers ranging between 400 and 800 feet depending on the terrain. Terrain with more hills generates a wider footprint. Alternative R represented the existing US 231 alignment. A buffer was generated to represent an improved facility, but the alignment was not altered. Impacts to key resources, cost estimates, and preliminary performance for the Purpose and Need goals were calculated to select which routes warranted continued investigation.

The recommended routes to progress forward were Alternatives B and C from the Northwest Family, Alternative P from the North Central Family, and Alternatives M and O from the Northeast Family. The assessment and recommendations were released to the public and agencies for input. Public input tended to focus on localized access concerns depending on the alternative associated with their community; however, resource agencies had requests related to the formation and selection of routes to progress forward. Three of these requests resulted in additional analysis and changes to the formulation of the alternatives. Each of these is described in detail as:

**Eliminate the Northeast Family of alternatives.** Resource agencies expressed concern any alternative in the Northeast Family would generate too many impacts to sensitive resources and requested they be removed from consideration. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) expressed concern neither Alternative M nor O would pass their 404(b)(1) analysis for the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) as required during the permitting stage. The decision was made to retain these alternatives for further analysis to maintain clear documentation of their impacts in comparison to the other alternatives.

**Include an east and west corridor option in Section 2 for alternatives.** Resource agencies requested any alternative with an eastern corridor in Section 2 be considered with an option for a western corridor. The request resulted from the concern the eastern corridor would be more impactful than the western corridor when directly compared. Including both options would have added several additional combinations that would have been undesirable to manage as the project progressed, but the intent of the request to compare the difference was understood. To address this concern, a secondary analysis was conducted to isolate the



two corridors and determine their performance. The result of the analysis identified while neither corridor was substantially more impactful to key resources, the eastern corridor consistently outperformed the western corridor related to the Purpose and Need benefits. The impacts within the corridors were not identical as each impacted resources differently, but they were similar on balance. For example, the eastern corridor impacted more forest while the western corridor impacted more wetlands and streams. The result of the analysis was to retain only the eastern corridor for Alternatives O, P and M and shift Alternative C from a western corridor to an eastern corridor. Only Alternative B retained a western corridor due to its alignment to the west.

**Further explore use of existing roadway corridors for route alignment.** Resources agencies requested investigation of alternatives which used more existing roadway corridor to reduce the impacts to sensitive environmental resources. This area of the state has some of the densest forest resources, and it was desired to reduce further fragmentation from transportation networks. The project team took the opportunity to further evaluate this by developing a modified hybrid corridor between Alternatives P and R. Alternative R represents an upgrade to the existing US 231 corridor. Alternative R was not recommended to be carried forward due to the high volume of impacts resulting to the human environment, particularly related to relocations, cultural resources and potential local access issues.

The hybrid alternative proposed would maintain an eastern corridor in Section 2 then return to the existing US 231 alignment north of the East Fork White River. The eastern corridor facilitated reductions of impacts from Huntingburg and Jasper; however, a full upgrade to either a Super-2 or expressway facility along this section would still generate more relocations along US 231 compared to Alternative P. The exploration for solutions continued and the section of US 231 north of the East Fork White River was reduced to provide targeted sections of US 231 as an upgrade to add passing lanes where they would be most effective and result in the least impacts.

A screening analysis of performance and impacts for this hybrid found the impacts were reduced but placed it in the lowest tier for the performance measures. The hybrid alternative was abandoned; however, the process of investigating combinations of existing facilities upgrades did identify certain benefits that could be produced in terms of localized safety and congestion for the Mid-States Corridor. The study determined localized improvements could be incorporated into the proposed new facility alignments to produce a corridor-wide enhancement. This evolved into a two-pronged approach of matching a series of upgrades to existing roadways in conjunction with each of the routes to produce short- and long-term enhancements to the transportation system. These smaller scale upgrades on existing facilities could also be realized faster than the overall project and provide an important interim performance enhancement as the new route is constructed. The localized improvements would be illustrative but supported by this study and through funding announcements delivered during the study process. Although these localized improvements were individually associated with the new routes, selection of a preferred would not “reject” a separate need for any of the other improvements. Localized improvements not associated with a preferred alternative may be identified as an independent need as part of future project studies. These localized improvements are described in **ES-2**.

The result of the combined screening process, agency and public input and secondary analysis to address the input received was the reduction of 10 recommended Build Alternatives from the scoping phase to five alternatives with a range of facility types, and a corresponding range of impacts. For a selected Build Alternative, Tier 2 studies would finalize the facility type(s) within each SIU.





## No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes the existing highway network, plus added capacity projects which are included in state and local fiscally-constrained transportation plans. It is the point of comparison for evaluating costs, impacts and benefits of each alternative.

## ES.1.4 Identification of Preferred Alternative

After detailed analysis and review of the available alternatives, The western bypass option of Alternative P has been identified as the Preferred Alternative for the Mid-States Corridor for the following reasons:

- 1) It produces the best combination of benefits associated with the defined goals for the project
  - a. Most travel time saved to key destinations (Core Goal 1)
  - b. Third best increase in access to labor force (Core Goal 1)
  - c. Most annual truck hours saved (Core Goal 2)
  - d. Most travel time saved to major multi-modal centers from Crane and Jasper (Core Goal 7)
- 2) Although this alternative does not consistently produce the lowest impacts to environmental resources, it does produce the lowest impacts among Alternatives M, O and P. These three alternatives adequately address the project's Purpose and Need. While Alternatives B and C have lower impacts and costs, they also fail to adequately address the project's Purpose and Need core goals.
- 3) Alternative P produces a comparably low level of impacts for several key resources.
  - a. Wetlands – Has the potential to produce the smallest impacts
  - b. Karst Features – No karst features are present along this corridor

**Figure ES-2** highlights the Preferred Alternative in comparison to the other Build Alternatives within the Study Area. This Tier 1 decision will defer the selection of the facility type to Tier 2 to provide maximum flexibility with future design to balance impacts, costs and benefits. The decision adds the western bypass of Loogootee to the preferred alternative, and INDOT is requesting feedback from the public and reviewing agencies regarding this decision during the comment period.

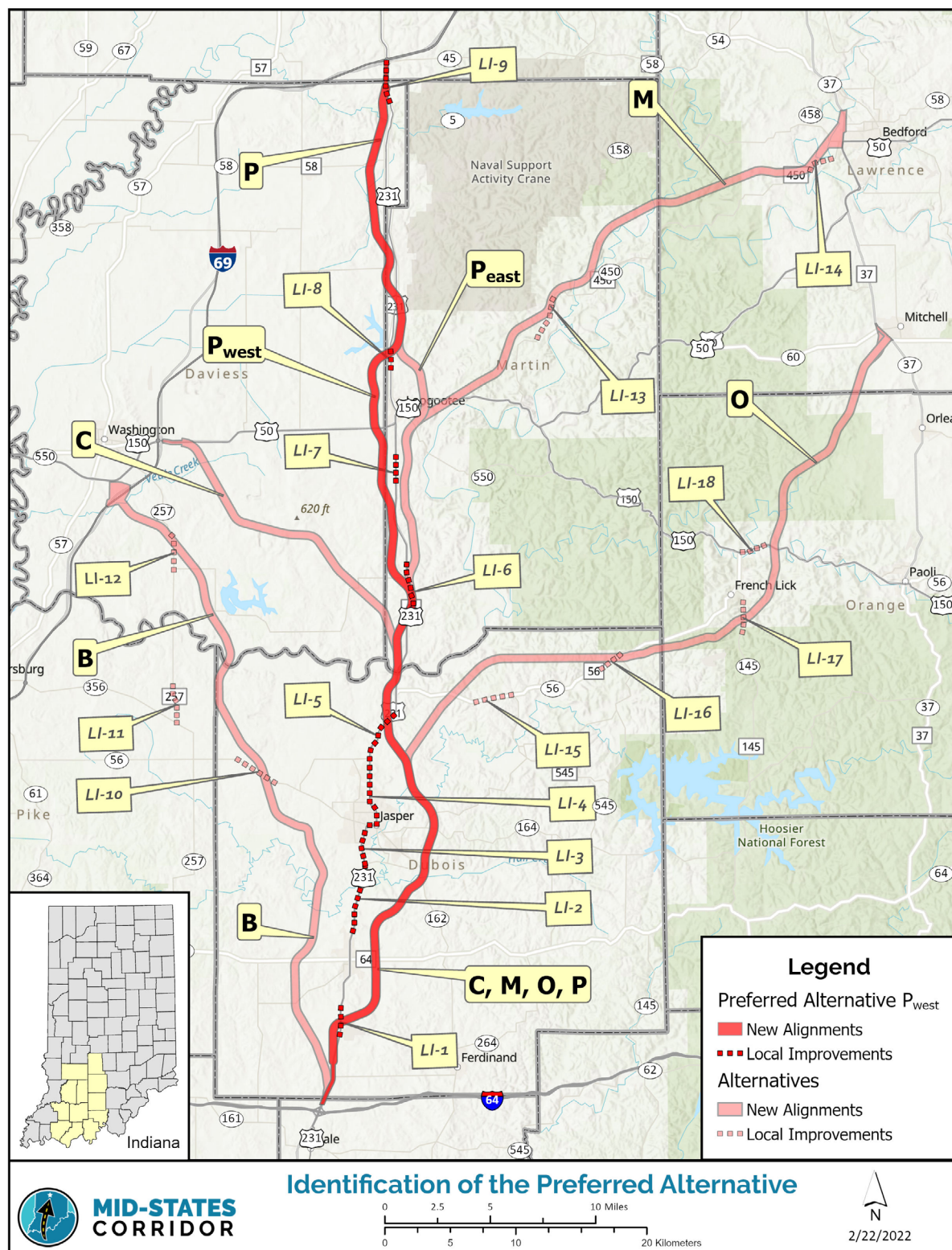


Figure ES-2: Identification of the Preferred Alternative



## ES.1.5 Commitments and Regulatory Actions Associated with the Project

Effort has been made throughout the length of this Tier 1 Study to develop alternatives that maximize the performance benefits while avoiding and minimizing impacts to the human and natural environment. As a Tier 1 Study, the identification of a preferred Build Alternative, Alternative P, does not result directly in the need to initiate permitting actions subsequent to approval of the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD). Commitments made in Tier 1 will be carried forward into Tier 2. All regulatory permits will be obtained in association with each Tier 2 project.

### ES.1.5.1 Permits

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) delegates permitting authority for Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) to the USACE. Although no permits will be issued at the Tier 1 stage, the USACE must review this DEIS and provide notification if the preferred alternative would not satisfy Section 404(b)(1) guidelines. The East Fork White River is federally jurisdictional and Traditional Navigable Water (TNW) for roughly 22 river miles upstream of the confluence with the White River. This section of the river extends to roughly Portersville which is west of the Alternative P corridor. Coordination with the USACE and USCG would be necessary during Tier 2 to ensure the alternative remains outside of these jurisdictional limits. Impacts to bridges over TNW must obtain a Section 9 Bridge Permit, and impacts below the normal high-water level of the waterway require a Section 10 Permit concurrent with the Section 404 Permit.

The following permits may be associated with Tier 2 projects. These include local, state and federal permits. These permits may be required for actions associated with, *but not limited to*, streams, wetlands, lakes, wells or karst. All necessary permits will be obtained prior to initiating any construction activities. The terms and conditions of these permits will be adhered to during the construction and maintenance of this facility.

- USACE Section 404
- USACE Section 10 Permit
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC)
- IDEM Isolated Wetlands Permit
- IDEM National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Section 402 Permit
- IDEM NPDES Rule 5 General Permit
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Construction in a Floodway Permit
- IDNR Navigable Waterways Permit
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Section 9 Bridge Permit
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Class 5 Injection Well Permit
- Local Permits and Ordinances

### ES.1.5.2 Other Key Commitments

The DEIS provides complete documentation of all commitments that will be maintained through the Tier 2 projects. This summary highlights key commitments initiated with other resource agencies as part of this Tier 1 study.

**Cultural Resources.** Tier 2 studies will assess the effects of the Preferred Alternative upon NRHP-listed and NRHP-eligible properties as well as seek ways to avoid and minimize any adverse effects to these resources. A Programmatic Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the Mid-States Corridor will guide Tier 2 studies.



**Protected Species.** Consultation with the USFWS has been initiated for federally listed and candidate bat, fish, mussel and insect species. Consultation will continue throughout the life of the Mid-States Corridor project, but a Tier 1 Biological Assessment will be prepared following release of the DEIS to identify general mitigation measures for protected species within the corridor of the Preferred Alternative. Detailed mitigation for impacts to federally and/or state listed species will occur during Tier 2 projects.

## ES.2 Major Conclusions

### ES.2.1 Decisions Impacting Consideration of Alternatives

The COVID-19 pandemic began near the release of the screening report for this study. As of the release of this DEIS in 2022, the effects of the pandemic are still being felt globally; however, driving patterns are normalizing compared to pre-pandemic levels. Major reduction in vehicular travel occurred in 2020 while the development of the alternatives carried forward for detailed study occurred. Uncertainty related to the extent and duration of these conditions and their impact to motor fuel tax revenue and future capital expenditure for INDOT led to two key decisions: removing consideration of freeways as a facility type and deferring a decision on the selection of facility type, either expressway or Super-2, until Tier 2. The purpose of these decisions was to reduce capital expenditure and afford greater flexibility in Tier 2. This resulted in benefits and impacts being discussed as a range rather than a discreet value.

### ES.2.2 Alternatives Carried Forward for Detailed Study

The alternatives screening process produced five Build Alternatives carried forward for further review. Although the No-Build Alternative does not meet the Purpose and Need, it is carried forward as a basis of comparison and option should the costs and impacts be determined greater than the benefits achieved from a Build Alternative. The five alternatives carried forward are B, C, M, O and P, each with an associated series of localized improvements. Some local improvements are associated with more than one alternative.

**Table ES-1** summarizes the performance criteria, costs and impacts to key environmental resources for the five Build Alternatives. This provides a baseline comparison for identification of a preferred alternative. The No-Build would not result in the expenditure of dollars to construct an alternative nor result in the direct impact to any of the key metrics associated with the natural environment. It would produce no transportation or economic benefits to the 12-county Study Area. It is not included in the table but remains present as an option if the benefits of the preferred Build Alternative do not outweigh the costs and impacts of a Build Alternative. Several of five Build Alternatives satisfy the core measures of the project's Purpose and Need. The No-Build Alternative does not.





	Metrics/Units	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative M	Alternative O	Alternative P
BENEFITS	Sum of time saved from all locations to key destinations/ Minutes ( <i>Core Goal 1</i> )	8-10	16-17	30-35	19-23	25-43
	Increase in Labor Force Access to all destinations/ # Persons ( <i>Core Goal 1</i> )	15,300-17,600	4,500-5,000	10,200-11,000	26,300-26,900	10,400-11,200
	Sum of time saved from Crane & Jasper to major rail & air multi-modal centers/ Minutes ( <i>Core Goal 7</i> )	4-8	3-4	17-22	11-13	24-35
	Annual Truck Hours Saved/ Vehicle Hours Travel ( <i>Core Goal 2</i> )	(-11,400)-150	1,800-34,150	7,800-35,900	(-3,000)-18,250	8,400-36,850
COSTS	Total Miles (SR66 / US231 to I69) / Miles	33	41	62	53	54
	Total Construction Cost + Contingency / \$ Millions	449-576	544-759	1,105-1,395	1,074-1,320	735-1,052
	New Right-of-Way / acres	2,220-2,525	1,900-2,403	4,138-4,900	3,162-3,730	2,497-3,226
KEY IMPACTS	Potential Relocations (agricultural, business, institutions, or residential) / #	90-96	92-116	187-214	141-189	109-149
	Cultural – Above Ground Historic Sites (NRHP Listed or Potentially Eligible)/ #	0	5	2	15	8
	Cultural – Archaeological Sites (NRHP Listed or Potentially Eligible)/ #	23-27	44-57	48-60	35-45	28-50
	Cultural – Cemeteries / #	5	1	3	6	4
	Agricultural – General / acres	1,517-1,763	1,082-1,408	1,465-1,857	1,091-1,381	1,354-1,832
	Agricultural – Prime Farmland / acres	531-602	234-321	571-724	304-378	520-733
	Protected Species – Potential Presence Within 2 miles / # of species (Federal)	6	5	9	10	11
	Protected Species – Indiana Bat Forests within <i>maternity</i> area/ acres	206-223	62-86	1,418-1,603	380-431	228-282
	Protected Species – Indiana Bat Forests within <i>hibernacula</i> area/ acres	0	0	0	493-516	0
	Protected Species – Northern Long-Eared Forests within <i>maternity</i> area/ acres	130-135	9-12	841-954	294-327	161-188
	Protected Species – Northern Long-Eared Forests within <i>hibernacula</i> area/ acres	0	0	651-712	1-2	0
	Managed Lands / acres/miles of trails*	2 / 0.3	7-12 / 0.5	34-48 / 0.6	7-12 / 0.5	12-18 / 1.3
	Special Lands – Section 4(f) & 6(f) / #	0 / 0	0 / 0	2 / 0	0 / 0	1 / 1
	Forests – Total / acres	312-347	424-556	1,994-2,311	1,588-1,756	629-923
	Forests – Core Blocks / #	2	7	18	16	7-10
	Potential Karst Features (caves, springs, and sinkholes) / #	0**	0	87	58	0
	Streams & Rivers (intermittent and perennial only) / miles	7-8	6-7	12-14	11-13	8-11
	Floodplains / acres	394-441	380-470	957-1,092	389-452	419-607
	Potential Wetlands / acres	76-84	46-56	98-111	46-55	39-56
	Potential Noise Impacts / # Receptors	58-60	51-54	72-74	80-82	69-77

\*Includes planned trails

\*\*Alternative B has one known sinkhole present along the corridor, but this sinkhole is not associated with Karst topography

**Table ES-1: Summary of Benefits, Costs, and Impacts**





### ES.2.2.1 Alternative B

Alternative B extends 33 miles from I-64/US 231 to I-69 near Washington. This alternative begins at the I-64/US 231 interchange and travels west of Huntingburg and Jasper, avoiding developed areas near these cities. It then continues northwest on a new route west of Glendale Fish and Wildlife Area and connects to I-69 at a new interchange south of the US 50 interchange. A total of six local improvements are included with the new corridor alternative. These include Local Improvement (LI)-1, -2, -3, -10, -11 and -12.

Key characteristics regarding Alternative B include that its new alignment has the shortest length, 33 miles. It has the least overall construction costs (between approximately 450 and 575 million) and tended to produce the least impacts to many of the environmental resources; however, it produced the second highest anticipated impacts to wetlands at 76 to 84 acres despite being the shortest route. This Build Alternative underperformed on the core goals of the Purpose and Need. Its connection to I-69 the farthest to the west and south had reduced the potential decreasing truck travel time. Its maximum potential benefit on Goal 2 is 150 truck hours saved annually. This is lower than all other alternatives. This was the primary factor for not selecting this alternative. Secondary reasons included its performance on Goal 7, accessibility to major rail and air multi-modal centers, with only 3-8 minutes of time saved. For Goal 1, the sum of travel time saved to the key destinations of Jasper, Crane, Bedford, and French Lick from all destinations is only 8 to 10 minutes.

### ES.2.2.2 Alternative C

Alternative C extends 41 miles from I-64/US 231 to I-69 at the existing US 50 interchange. This alternative begins at the I-64/US 231 interchange and travels east of Huntingburg and Jasper, avoiding developed areas near these cities. It then continues northwest on a new route, east of Glendale Fish and Wildlife Area and connects to I-69 at the existing US 50 interchange, using a portion of US 50 east of the interchange. A total of four local improvements are included with the new alternative. These include LI-1, -2, -3 and -5.

Alternative C has the second shortest route at 41 miles. It has the second lowest construction costs, between \$544 and \$759 million. It has fewer impacts to many of the environmental resources compared to Alternatives M, O or P. Although it performs better than Alternative B on the core goals, this alternative performed the worst on increasing access to labor force to all key destination under Goal 1 by increasing labor force access by only four to five thousand persons. This was the primary factor for not selecting this alternative. The secondary reason included its performance on Goal 7, accessibility to major rail and air multi-modal centers, with only three to four minutes of time saved to all destinations.

### ES.2.2.3 Alternative M

Alternative M extends 62 miles from I-64/US 231 to SR 37 near Bedford. This alternative begins at the I-64/US 231 interchange and travels east of Huntingburg and Jasper, avoiding developed areas near these cities. It then continues north, mostly parallel to the existing US 231 alignment. It bypasses Loogootee to the east and continues northeast either using or paralleling the existing SR 450 alignment. It continues to SR 37 at Bedford. A total of nine local improvements are included with the new corridor alternative. These include LI-1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -6, -7, -13 and -14.

Alternative M is nearly the opposite of Alternative B. It is the longest at 62 miles. It has the highest construction costs at \$1.1 to \$1.4 billion. It tends to have the highest impacts to most environmental resources. It does have consistently high performance. Alternative M is part of the Northeast Family of alternatives. Resource agencies expressed a high level of concern associated with anticipated impacts to the natural environment for alternatives in this family. The results of the analysis found this alternative not only consistently had the highest levels of impacts, but often at disproportionately higher levels to sensitive resources. Impacts to protected species, specifically bats, was connected to both the primary and secondary factors for not selecting this alternative. Impacts to the areas



of known current and historical maternity roosting areas of Indiana bats was selected as the primary factor for not selecting this alternative; impacts to known hibernacula areas of Northern long-eared bats also was an important factor. Roughly 70 percent of the impacted forests contained maternity roosting areas for Indiana bat and 40 percent contained maternity roosting areas for Northern Long-eared bats. This alternative often had more than double the impacts compared to the other alternative families for numerous sensitive resources such as wetlands, floodplains, karst features and core forests. This alternative would likely be unable to satisfy the USACE's 404(b)(1) LEDPA guidelines.

#### ES.2.2.4 Alternative O

Alternative O extends 53 miles from I-64/US 231 to SR 37 near Mitchell. This alternative begins at the I-64/US 231 interchange and travels east of Huntingburg and Jasper, avoiding developed areas near these cities. It then continues northeast parallel to the existing SR 56 alignment to French Lick. It bypasses French Lick and West Baden Springs to the south and then continues northeast, connecting to SR 37 south of Mitchell. A total of nine local improvements are included with the new corridor alternative. These include LI-1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -15, -16, -17 and -18.

Alternative O is also part of the Northeast Family of alternatives. This alternative is the third longest at 53 miles. Its costs are similar to Alternative M at \$1.1 to \$1.3 billion. It also has a higher level of impacts to key resources in comparison to the other alternative families. While this alternative produced the greatest increase to the labor force access as part of Goal 1, it would require an expressway facility to produce any time savings for truck traffic as part of Goal 2. This was the only alternative which impacted both Indiana and Northern long-eared bat hibernacula. The proximity to several Indiana bat hibernacula was a primary factor for not selecting this alternative. This alternative would likely be unable to satisfy the USACE's 404(b)(1) LEDPA guidelines. Similar to Alternative M, the impacts to the key natural resources such as protected species, core forests, and karst features resulted in numerous secondary factors.

#### ES.2.2.5 Alternative P (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative P extends 54 miles from I-64/US 231 to I-69 at the existing US 231 interchange. This alternative begins at the I-64/US 231 interchange and travels east of Huntingburg and Jasper, avoiding developed areas near these cities. This alternative originally contained only an east bypass of Loogootee, but a western option was included during further evaluation from comments following release of the screening report. From north of Haysville the alternative parallels the existing US 231 alignment either to the east or west depending on the direction of the Loogootee bypass. This alternative ends at the existing I-69 interchange at US 231. A total of nine local improvements are included with the new corridor alternative. These include LI-1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -6, -7, -8 and -9.

Alternative P performed highly in several core goal benefits presented. These included the sum of time saved to key destinations at 25 to 43 minutes, the sum of time saved to major multi-modal centers at 23 to 35 minutes and annual truck hours saved at 8,400 to 36,850. This alternative has a moderate level of impacts to key natural resources. For example, it has the highest number of potential protected species within two miles of the corridor at 11, and it does not contain any known hibernacula for Indiana or Northern long-eared bats. Impacts to forests are higher than the Northwest Family but lower than Northeast Family. Although the new alignment is one mile longer than Alternative O at 54 miles, the estimated construction cost is lower at \$735 million to \$1 billion. It also has the potential to have the lowest wetland impacts at 39 to 56 acres.

This alternative included an eastern and western option for bypassing Loogootee. Consideration of a western bypass was added from input received during development of the screening report. Detailed analysis identified no differences were present related to performance measures toward the Purpose and Need, but did identify the western bypass produced less impacts to several key resources including wetlands (7-8 fewer acres), intermittent and perennial streams (~1 fewer miles), forests (107-131 fewer acres), and floodplains (88-101 fewer acres). Additionally,



the western bypass option is estimated to be \$36-69 million dollars less to construct. Including both an eastern and western bypass option for the alternative was due in part to the presence of West Boggs Park located on the northwest side of Loogootee. The park is a 4(f) resource. Refinements made to the working alignment indicate a Tier 2 project will be able to avoid a 4(f) use or be limited to a de minimis impact to the park.

### ES.2.3 Implementation

Identifying a build preferred alternative results in further project development. This Tier 1 DEIS will be published for review and comment. Areas of dispute and issues to be resolved are discussed in ES-3 and -4. Future project activities will include completing a combined FEIS and ROD and initiating Tier 2 project development. The preferred build alternative includes a new alignment corridor with four SIUs and nine illustrative localized enhancements. After the Tier 1 FEIS/ROD, INDOT will implement Tier 2 projects into its programming process. Due to the project scale, the new alignment SIUs are anticipated to be developed sequentially rather than concurrently. It is anticipated the local improvement elements will be scheduled for implementation first. They can undergo Tier 2 studies and be constructed more quickly than the larger new alignment sections. For local improvements, some Tier 2 studies should begin within one year after the Tier 1 FEIS/ROD, with construction activities within 2-3 years.

The four new alignment SIUs each will require a Tier 2 environmental analysis. Securing and programming funding to complete construction of each SIU may take 9-15 years in three distinct phases of 3-5 years. These three phases include Tier 2 NEPA documentation, final design and preparation of construction documents and construction. Tier 2 NEPA documentation for these SIUs is anticipated to be developed sequentially rather than concurrently with respect to the NEPA documentation phase. Preparation of Tier 2 NEPA documents for other SIUs may coincide with final design and construction activities of prior SIUs.

### ES.3 Areas of Disputed Issues Raised by Agencies and the Public

The Mid-States Corridor project is regional in scale and would affect a wide range of communities in the 12-county Study Area. Residential and commercial relocations are typically controversial for any community impacted, and the project would cause relocations for numerous communities along the corridor. The project occurs within a predominantly rural area. None of the proposed alternatives would generate a large concentration of relocations in any single location, but due to the very rural nature of the area, each relocation is relatively impactful to the community. The “ruralness” is a key characteristic of the region. Both local residents and resource agencies view expansion of either urbanization or transportation/utility corridors as detrimental to the region. An identification of the region with remoteness and abundant wildlife habitat is present within the fabric of each community. The process of engagement with the public and agencies resulted in the identification of six major themes regarding the project and are as follows:

- **Wildlife and Natural Areas.** Tourism in the region is a significant economic driver, and protecting the quality of the environment and the integrity of the natural areas was mentioned in most forms of communication. The rural nature of this region was viewed as part of the identity of many of the communities. Winding and narrow road networks in the region were regularly cited as limiting both commercial and tourism growth, but protecting natural areas remained a high priority. Stakeholders, the broader public and agencies each requested existing roadway corridors be used to the extent practical to limit habitat fragmentation and other impacts. The North-east Family would cross the acquisition boundary of the Hoosier National Forest, and any routes in this section were frequently cited as having the potential to impact wildlife and natural areas.
- **Access.** Each alternative would modify the existing highway network. Residential and business owners throughout the Study Area expressed concern over any new alignment and/or facility type resulting in loss of access to either their properties or local roads they use regularly. The agricultural community expressed concern that



movement of farm equipment could be restricted on new roadways. The public and stakeholders throughout the Study Area requested a high level of engagement going forward regarding any changes that resulted in access restrictions.

- **Relocations.** Residents across the Study Area are concerned about potential residential, commercial and industrial relocations. Also, the region has a high number of small family burial plots, making potential relocation of cemeteries a significant issue. Residents in several communities identified limited housing stock as a significant issue. Many noted builders are interested in higher end developments which do not address the need for middle- and lower-income housing. Taking of smaller/older housing stock could create issues with the availability of comparable housing. Amish residents expressed concern in finding replacement housing given the need for homesteads and proximity to maintain community cohesion.
- **Agricultural.** Maintaining access to agricultural properties was consistently expressed as a major concern. Related concerns include impacts to farming operations by separation of farming infrastructure from agricultural fields, loss of multi-generational land, creation of uneconomical remnants and adverse operational travel. Impacts to farmland and farming operations were expressed as a high level of concern at each point of public engagement.
- **Economic Effects.** Workforce shortage was one of the most common themes throughout the meetings with stakeholders, businesses and community leaders. Residents and businesspeople in Huntingburg, Jasper, French Lick, Paoli, Loogootee and Bedford all identified a consistent trend of migration out of the area and issues attracting young families into the area.
- **Consideration of No-Build.** Many public comments opposed the project and preferred the No-Build. The reasons offered for selecting the No-Build could be categorized into the following:
  - A Build Alternative would be an inappropriate use of tax funds.
  - Impacts to the environment are not warranted for proposed improvements.
  - Public would receive a higher benefit through regular maintenance of the existing roads.
  - A Build Alternative would change the rural nature of the region.

## ES.4 Issues to be Resolved

### ES.4.1 Public Hearings

Shortly after publication of this DEIS, two public hearings will be held to present the DEIS findings and receive public input. These hearings will be held in Martin and Dubois counties to provide ease of access for the public in both the northern and southern part of the Study Area. The DEIS will be posted on the Mid-States Corridor website ([www.midstatescorridor.com](http://www.midstatescorridor.com)) and be made available in print at multiple locations in the Study Area.

### ES.4.2 Public and Agency Meetings

Meetings of the Regional Issues Involvement Teams will be held shortly after release of this DEIS. An agency meeting to review the DEIS also will be held after the release of this DEIS.

### ES.4.3 Final EIS and ROD

Following the public hearings and public review period of the DEIS, INDOT will document all comments received to determine if any new information is produced and/or public sentiment is received that would warrant changes to the proposed alternatives. Responses to comments will be prepared and incorporated into the combined Final EIS / ROD.

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Additionally, the following actions will be undertaken. Some of these actions will be undertaken as part of providing a Refined Preferred Alternative in the FEIS/ROD.

- **Biological Assessment/Biological Opinion.** Section 7 consultation will continue with the USFWS. INDOT will prepare a Biological Assessment regarding protected species for the agency to produce a Biological Opinion (BO). A BO documents the agencies opinion as whether the action proposed is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.
- **Section 4(f) Determinations.** For the DEIS, Section 4(f) properties were not formally determined by FHWA, and conservative assumptions were made to properties which may be eligible for 4(f) protection. Prior to release of the FEIS, further investigation and coordination with jurisdictional entities and FHWA will be completed for parklands associated with the Preferred Alternative. These will determine if they qualify for protection under 4(f), and if so the extent of the protected area.
- **Financial Planning.** 23 USC 106(i) requires preparation of financial plans for projects exceeding \$100 million in construction costs. Formal financial plans will be developed during Tier 2 for those projects that exceed the \$100 million threshold. The Mid-States project will be subject to INDOT's normal programming process to incorporate project elements into INDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.