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3.14 VISUAL IMPACTS

3.14.1 Introduction and Background

Highway construction has both temporary and permanent visual impacts. Temporary visual impacts include the presence of construction equipment and traffic congestion where alternatives intersect or overlap other roads. Permanent impacts include increased light from vehicles and roadway lighting, the presence of the roadway, the presence of highway traffic and conversion of various landscapes, such as forests, wetlands, farmland and urban/suburban, to a highway. Construction in environmentally sensitive areas requires care to preserve existing visual resources.

Common terrain types in the project area include open farmland, forested areas and residences. Farmland and residential areas tend to be flat to slightly hilly. A motorist typically can see for several miles across open spaces. Forested areas are more common on rolling hills. That combination of vegetation and landscape reduces the viewshed.

3.14.2 Methodology

Viewsheds for each route were evaluated using Street View and Ground-Level View in Google Earth Pro. Analysis of visual impacts of each alternative addresses both the “View of the Road” and the “View from the Road.” Both perspectives discuss visual impacts using groupings, referred to as “Families”, of alternatives in the three project Sections. Section 1 is common to all alternatives. There are two general routes in Section 2. Section 3 has three route families. Each alternative is labeled by its letter and the sections are color coded in Figure 3.14-1. This figure also shows local improvements to existing state highways which are part of each alternative.

3.14.3 Analysis

Reviews of visual impacts begin at the southern end of Section 1 at the intersection of SR 66 and US 231. These continue north along US 231 to Section 2. Section 2 begins for all alternatives at the southern border of Dubois County, about 0.7 miles northeast of the intersection of I-64 and US 231. Section 3 of each route begins at the southern bank of the White River, except Route B, which begins at SR 56.

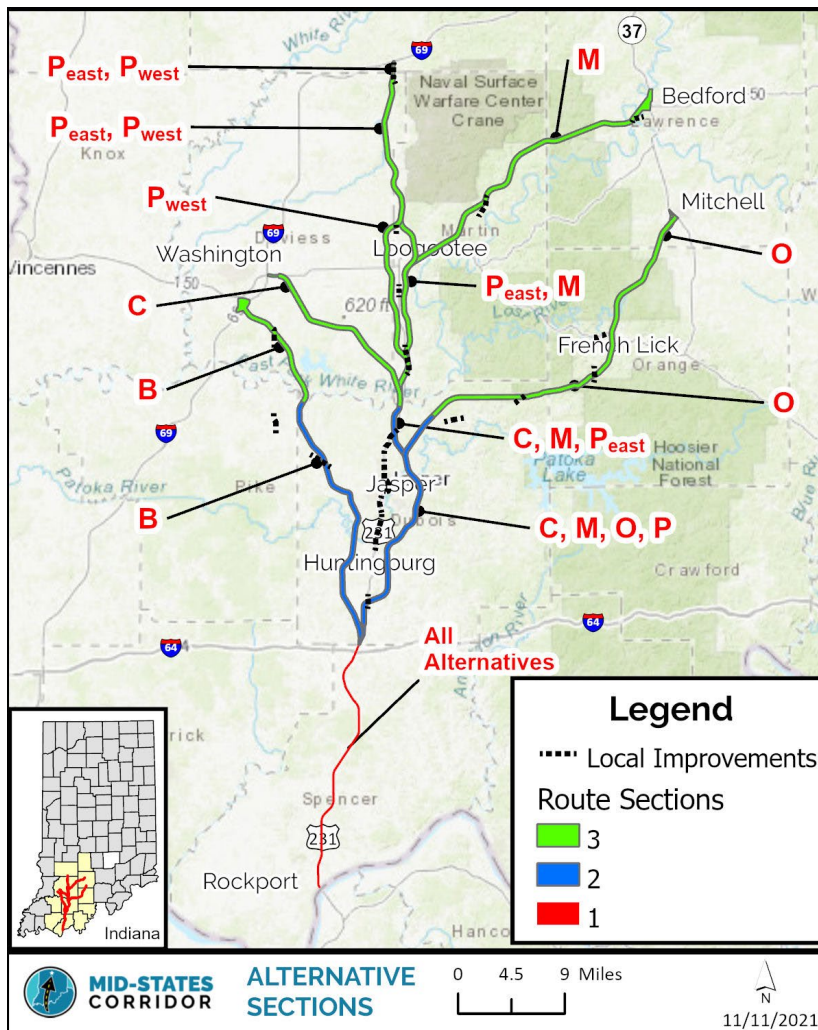


Figure 3.14-1: Route Sections



Section 3 extends from the end of Section 2 to a connection at I-69, either directly or via SR 37.

Section 3.14-4 and **Section 3.14-5** describe the landforms and terrain in different parts of the Study Area. **Figure 3.14-3** through **Figure 3.14-8** provide a “before” and “after” view of the effects of a roadway in the Study Area.

A series of local improvements to existing state-jurisdictional highways is a part of each alternative. Their temporary visual impacts would be similar to those described below. These local improvements would have minimal permanent visual impacts, since they would result in minor widening or modification of existing roads.

3.14.4 View of the Road

Visual impacts occur near each route. Those with nearby homes or workplaces will have both temporary and permanent visual impacts. Common visual resources that may be lost include open, cultivated land and forested areas. Figure 3.14-2 illustrates a roadway where pavement, utility poles and other roadside objects replace views of farmland and forested areas.

Section 1 uses existing US 231, which is lined by open farmland with isolated forested areas and residences. The Super-2 and expressway routes in Section 1 will not change the view of the road.

Both routes in Section 2 cross through open cultivated areas and forested areas near Huntingburg and Jasper. Towns and cities whose residents may experience visual impacts from construction of Route B include Johnsburg, Holland, Huntingburg, Jasper and Ireland. Construction, construction equipment, roadway lighting and loss of vegetation would be visible to town and city residents. Towns and cities whose residents may experience visual impacts from construction of Routes C, P, M and O include Johnsburg, Huntingburg, Maltersville and Jasper.

Section 3 includes open cultivated land, forested areas and residences. In Section 3, Routes B and C in the Northwest Family use mostly flat farmland with isolated forested areas and few residences. Construction, roadway lighting and loss of vegetation would be visible from rural residences along these routes. Residents of Hudsonville, Glendale, Alfordsville, Corning and Black Oak may experience both temporary and permanent visual impacts. Figure 3.14-3 portrays visual impacts of a road running through Northwest portions of Section 3.



Figure 3.14-2: Typical Rural Roadway



**Figure 3.14-3: Typical Terrain – Section 3
(Northwest Family)**



**Figure 3.14-4: Typical Terrain – Section 3
(North Central Family)**



**Figure 3.14-5: Typical Terrain – Section 3
(Northeast Family)**



**Figure 3.14-6: Potential visual impacts — Section 3
(Northwest Family)**



**Figure 3.14-7: Potential visual impacts—Section 3 (North
Central Family)**

Resources that would be impacted by construction in Section 3 of Route P in the North Central Family include open cultivated areas and woodlands with some housing. Most land in this area is slightly hilly, with some forested areas on rolling hills. Nearby residents, as well as those who use the planned trail north of Loogootee, would experience typical temporary and permanent visual impacts from road construction. Temporary visual impacts could include sighting of construction equipment, staged construction material, temporary lighting, loss of vegetation and tree removal. Permanent visual impacts could include conversion of forests, farmland, and rural landscapes to an interstate highway, permanent lighting, traffic, and landscape changes that would range from leveling land in some areas to elevating the highway in others, which would cause an obstruction of view in flat, open landscapes. Residents of Whitfield, Loogootee, Scenic Hill, Bramble, Farlen and Scotland may experience visual impacts. Figure 3.14-4 shows landforms typical of the North Central area in Section 3.

In Section 3, Routes M and O in the Northeast Family generally would use rolling hills through woodlands with some hilly farmland and residences. Alternatives in this family cross the boundary of the Hoosier National Forest, Martin State Forest and three associated hiking trails. People who use these resources for recreation would experience temporary and permanent visual impacts associated with road construction. Temporary visual impacts could include



sighting of construction equipment, staged construction material, temporary lighting, loss of vegetation and tree removal. Permanent visual impacts could include conversion of forests, farmland, and rural landscapes to an interstate highway, permanent lighting, traffic, and landscape changes that would range from leveling land in some areas to elevating the highway in others, which would cause an obstruction of view in flat, open landscapes. Residents of Whitfield, Loogootee, Scenic Hill, Dover Hill, Cale, Bedford, Oolitic, Patton Hill, Avoca, Needmore, Judah, Harrodsburg, Clear Creek, Hillham, French Lick, West Baden Springs, Orangeville, Mitchell, Tarry Park and Englewood may experience temporary and permanent visual impacts. Figure 3.14-5 shows landforms typical of the Northeast area in Section 3.



**Figure 3.14-8: Potential visual impacts — Section 3
(Northeast Family)**

Routes M and O use SR 37 to reach I-69 at Bloomington. The Super-2 and expressway facility types considered for these routes will not change the view of the road in this portion of Section 3.

The No Build Alternative has no visual impacts.

3.14.5 View from the Road

View from the Road affects those who use the routes. Typical landscape along the routes includes flat to gently rolling cultivated land, flat to hilly forests and residential areas.

There will be no change of the view from the road in Section 1, where there will be no modifications to existing US 231.

Section 2 crosses through flat to shallowly-hilled to rolling hills to the north. Views generally include open cultivated spaces with isolated wooded areas and housing. Woodlands are more common further north. The Buffalo Pond Nature Preserve is near Routes C, P, M and O in Section 2.

On routes in the Northwest Family of Section 3, views include flat cultivated land with small woodlands. Viewsheds in some areas change due to crops seasonally restricting views.

Routes in the North Central Family of Section 3 travel over slightly hilly farmland with occasional rolling hills and forested areas. Hills and patches of woodlands in some areas reduce viewsheds.

Much of the Northeast Family of Section 3 crosses forests and rolling hills, with some farms and residences. Viewsheds are limited by the hilly, wooded landscape. Parts of the Northeast Family of Section 3 will traverse Hoosier National Forest, which is primarily composed of dense, uninterrupted forest with rolling topography, that would provide scenic views. Figure 3.14-6 depicts a typical view entering a wooded area.

The No Build Alternative has no visual impacts.

3.14.6 Mitigation

Mitigation will be site-specific and determined during Tier 2 studies. Potential mitigation includes traffic control measures to minimize visual impacts on nearby residences, quick revegetation of areas cleared during construction



and appropriate highway lighting.

3.14.7 Summary

All alternatives have both temporary and permanent visual impacts. Common temporary visual impacts include siting of construction equipment and traffic congestion. Permanent visual impacts include loss of farmland and forested areas, light from the presence of traffic and expressway lighting and grading work. Clearing of vegetation can result in either temporary or permanent impacts. Revegetation efforts may not occur in the same locations and/or with the same type of vegetation as that which is impacted.

The No Build Alternative has no visual impacts.