



# MID-STATES CORRIDOR

## TIER 2

This document provides Mid-States Corridor Project Information regarding claims/statements included in a resolution proposed to multiple Dubois County local governments by the Property Rights Alliance. The information is provided for awareness of facts related to the project evaluation.

The Property Rights Alliance Resolution claims/statements are included in **blue text** followed by project information related to the claims/statements.

**WHEREAS, since the 1980's, five different studies prior to the current Lochmueller Study have determined building a new-terrain highway and/or bypass through Dubois County, including the Donohue Study, Rust Study, Earth Tech Study, Cambridge Study and I-67 Study were not economically and/or environmentally feasible.**

The description of the previous studies is not well defined. However, these citations appear to reference multiple studies that were evaluated as a part of the Mid-States Corridor Tier 1 study and other precursor documents. **None of them made a finding that the Mid-States Corridor, or any similar new-terrain highway project, was "not economically and/or environmentally feasible." Most of these studies recommended further study or development of new terrain highway projects in Dubois County.**

Having a succession of predecessor studies is typical of the process to develop a major highway corridor. The Cambridge Systematics I-67 study describes this by stating it is the "typical progression of highway corridor projects."

- The Donohue Study was published in February 1990. Its analysis used a forecast year of 2010. This study considered a range of facilities between 135 miles and 148 miles. All extended from Indianapolis to the Ohio River. It recommended further evaluation of several projects, three of which have since been constructed. These included:
  - **The upgrade of SR 37 to a freeway between Indianapolis and Bloomington (p. 13.1).** This was completed with the completion of I-69 from Bloomington to Indianapolis in 2024.
  - **The upgrade of SR 37 from I-64 to SR-145 (p.13.3).** This was completed in 2007.
  - **The upgrade of US 231 between Rockport and I-64 (p 13.5).** This recommendation was contingent upon the completion of the new US 231 Ohio River Bridge at Rockport. This upgrade project was completed in 2011.
  - **It also recommended further evaluation of a Jasper-Huntingburg bypass of US 231 (p 13.5).** Two statements in this recommendation are "In considering the future volume of through traffic on this roadway, which is projected to approach 9,000 vehicles per day to the north of I-64, a bypass of Huntingburg



6200 Vogel Road  
Evansville, Indiana 47715

PHONE: 812.479.6200 • TOLL FREE: 800.423.7411

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and Jasper would significantly enhance the flow of through traffic in this area. ... For these reasons, the merits of a bypass of US 231 in the Jasper/Huntingburg area should be investigated.”

Elsewhere the report also identified that a freeway connecting Indianapolis and Evansville had potential for further study (p. 15.2). This freeway was completed as I-69.

As is typical of major corridor projects, this study recommended further study of projects which require decades to complete. The current Mid-States Corridor Project does have association with the Donahue Study’s **recommendation of further study for a Jasper-Huntingburg bypass.**

- The Rust Study refers to the 1996 US 231 Corridor Study. It was completed as a result of the recommendation of the Donohue Study noted previously. The study had two primary phases: identify feasible alternatives around Huntingburg and Jasper (Bypass Analysis) and examine Transportation System Management (TSM) alternatives as a means of improving traffic service and capacity on US 231 (TSM Analysis). The study found that no TSM alternatives in either city could accommodate the future traffic demands. It did suggest that Huntingburg and Jasper develop the TSM recommendation as a local initiative. Since those TSM options could not solve the primary project purpose, **the construction of a bypass alternative (Alternative F) was the primary recommendation of the study.** Multiple reasons for this recommendation were provided in the study.
- The Earth Tech study refers to the 2004 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) led by Earth Tech. It considered 28 highway alignments (pp. 3-17 to 3-27), in addition to a transit alternative and Transportation System Management alternative. The DEIS analyzed two highway alternatives (Alternative 27 and Alternative 28, pp. 3-27 to 3-30) in detail. Alternative 27 was to the east of Jasper and Huntingburg, and Alternative 28 was to the west of Jasper or Huntingburg. A Supplemental DEIS was issued in January 2011. This SDEIS updated the previous purpose and need analysis based upon more recent traffic forecasts and other technical studies. **Neither the 2004 DEIS nor the 2011 SDEIS made determination that the project was not economically or environmentally feasible.**
- The Cambridge Systematics I-67 Study was published in October, 2012. It studied the benefits of a connection from Bowling Green, Kentucky to Washington, Indiana. It used existing roads, with some upgrades, between Bowling Green and Huntingburg. A new terrain alignment west of Jasper and Huntingburg continued to Washington. (p. ES-1). It forecasted that this road over a 20-year period would provide \$3.2 billion in transportation benefits and an additional \$1.3 billion increase in economic output. **It recommended more detailed studies to analyze funding options (p. 6-1).** It characterized these recommendations as "**typical progression of highway corridor projects.**" While the resolution references both a "Cambridge Study and I-67 Study", this

is the only study that we are aware of that references I-67 in the Mid-States Corridor Study Area.

- The Resolution list does not address the report of Governor Pence's Blue Ribbon Panel, which recommended the Mid-States Corridor for further development subsequent to the referenced studies. On July 9, 2014, the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Transportation Infrastructure recommended to Indiana Governor Michael Pence a set of priority projects for the short term and provided a vision of transportation in Indiana for the long term. Based on a detailed technical analysis of costs and benefits, it identified priority projects to enhance Indiana's transportation system across all modes of transportation for both freight and passengers. It evaluated and prioritized highway, rail, port, and air projects. The report identified four projects as Tier 2 statewide priorities (p. 63). These included:
  - I-69 (north) added travel lanes. This project consists of widening of I-69 between Indianapolis and Muncie.
  - Southwest Indiana Port connections. This project consists of construction of a four-lane connection between I-69 and the Port of Mount Vernon, Indiana.
  - Mid-States Corridor. The project consists of a new four-lane connector between the Ohio River near Rockport and I-69.
  - US 30 Fort Wayne to Valparaiso. Convert US 30 to a fully access-controlled freeway between Valparaiso and Fort Wayne.

This report by the Governor's office identified the Mid-States Corridor as a major statewide priority, based on its anticipated economic and transportation benefits.

***In summary, none of the studies cited made a representation that the project was infeasible. Rather, having a series of studies over time is typical of the development of a major highway project.***

**WHEREAS, in June 2021, Governor Holcomb announced \$475M in infrastructure projects that included \$75M to make major improvements to existing US 231 through Dubois and Martin counties.**

Funding for \$75 million in improvements on existing US 231 would address only minor and site-specific safety and operational issues. The Mid-States Corridor Tier 1 EIS studied the costs and impacts of improving US 231 to attempt to address the needs identified by that study. This upgrade was evaluated as Alternative R in the Tier 1 FEIS and failed to meet the identified needs.

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The Tier 1 FEIS identified that such an upgrade to US 231 would cost \$559 million estimated in 2019 dollars. The \$75 million in US 231 improvements announced in 2021 would address only a small fraction of this total cost for the US 231 improvement which was still insufficient in addressing project goals. The US 231 improvement would require 418 relocations, vs. 114-156 for the selected alternative known as RPA P. Its benefits would be a small fraction of Alternative RPA P. A US 231 upgrade is neither a low-cost nor a low-impact alternative, which offers minimal benefits. See Tier 1 FEIS, **Table 5-1**.

**WHEREAS, in April 2022, after the release of the Tier 1 DEIS, INDOT held public comment meetings with hundreds of residents in attendance opposed, over 95% of the verbal comments opposed, and received more than 1,000 written comments opposed to the Mid-States Corridor project. Some of the reasons provided included the displacement of over 100 homeowners, over 1,800 acres of farmland taken, 870 acres of forest cut down, over 60+acres of wetlands, the negative impact on the environment and natural habitat, significant losses to the tax base, a loss of agriculture income over \$1million annually, and the lack of true proven benefits at a cost of well over \$1 billion at 2020 costs.**

As this comment notes, over 1,000 written comments were received on the Tier 1 DEIS and all were addressed in the Tier 1 FEIS. No designation of these comments as favoring or opposing the project has been made. Many individual commentors and families submitted multiple comments.

Careful consideration of public input was a foundation of the Mid-States Corridor Tier 1 and ongoing Tier 2 studies. During the Tier 1 study, six public information meetings were held with about 1,700 in attendance. In addition, two public hearings on the DEIS were held with over 700 in attendance. In addition, during the Tier 1 project there were nearly 1,500 other public contacts (telephone inquiries, emails, letters, social media posts and comment forms). There were 119 visits to the project office. Each item of public input was carefully considered in preparing the Tier 1 FEIS. The project team is soliciting similar levels of public input in this Tier 2 study, focusing on residents and stakeholders in Dubois County.

The impacts cited are significant. However, they are consistent with the impacts of major infrastructure projects.

**WHEREAS, due to the process of establishing an appointed Regional Development Authority (RDA) and not giving the residents, environmental, and other groups a voice in the initial start of this project or allowed to vote, over 10,000 signatures were gathered and submitted petitioning their opposition to the Mid-States Corridor project.**

The Regional Development Authority was formed by the elected representatives of Dubois and Spencer counties. The City of Jasper, City of Huntingburg, Dubois County and Spencer County all passed ordinances to form the RDA. The appropriate legislative bodies of these entities likewise

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appointed RDA Board members. These actions were undertaken by the people's elected representatives, acting on their behalf.

The Mid-States Corridor Project Record includes submitted petitions that totaled 2,784 received in 2021 from individuals primarily in Dubois County and an additional 175 signatures in 2022 all outside of Dubois County for a total of 2,959 signatures provided to the project.

**WHEREAS, opposition to this proposed project continues to grow publicly as noted by the Facebook group "STOP THE MID-STATES CORRIDOR PROJECT" with over 5,400 followers, a reach of almost 50,000 and an engagement of over 28,000. Residents have displayed over 500 "STOP THE MID-STATES CORRIDOR" yard signs, hundreds have attended several town hall and other meetings in opposition, numerous letters to the editor, and media interviews both locally and regionally.**

INDOT welcomes vigorous public participation in this project. That participation will be critical to addressing community needs and minimizing impacts. See the previous response regarding the high level of public outreach which is a hallmark of this project. It should be noted that "following" or "engaging" in a specific social media channel is an indication of interest of the subject matter discussed, not necessarily an indication of support or opposition to the material presented.

**WHEREAS, proponents of the proposed Mid-States Corridor continue to falsely promote the economic development opportunity and growth without out any factual data to back-up their projections and assumptions.**

The Tier 1 FEIS showed that **Alternative RPA P** will provide \$314 - \$451 million in increased business sales to the region over a 20-year period. It also shows \$96 - \$136 million in increased personal income during the same period. See [Appendix B - Economic Performance Measures](#), Table 1. The TREDIS tool used to forecast these economic benefits is used by FHWA to forecast the economic impacts of freight and railroad improvements nationally. It is used by 30 state DOTs for the same purpose.

Highway user benefits (travel time savings and crash reductions) are in addition to these savings. These benefits will be reassessed in this Tier 2 study to reflect current conditions.

**WHEREAS, in our opinion the existing road network along with improvements on the existing US 231 will adequately connect the region and avoid massive destruction of our rural landscape and communities; that the State funds can be better spent maintaining and repairing existing roads; and that taxpayers, county, and societal costs of the proposed far outweigh any potential local benefits. These reasons, and others, in our judgement indicate a lack of need for this project.**

This is an understandable viewpoint for those who may be negatively impacted by the project. We would differ that the project will lead to "massive destruction." Every effort is being made to

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avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts, especially to residents and their businesses. As noted in an earlier response, upgrading US 231 to attempt to address the identified transportation need would cause more than three times the number of relocations as the current project. Further, INDOT takes seriously the responsibility to maintain and repair existing roads. Information provided by the Purdue University Joint Transportation Research Program on FHWA data for the Year 2020 determined that 75 percent of INDOT's budget is used to operate and maintain the existing transportation system. Capital expenditures for added highway capacity require 20 percent of INDOT's budget, with the remaining five percent used for administrative expenses. INDOT is constantly assessing needs to both maintain the existing system as well as provide for needed system expansion.