

December 12, 2025

Dubois County Council
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Dubois County Board of Commissioners
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Nick Hostettler, Commissioner
Serice Stenftenagel, Commissioner

Courthouse Annex
1 Courthouse Square
Jasper, IN 47546

Re: County Withdrawal from the Mid-States Corridor Regional Development Authority

Council Members and Commissioners,

We begin by expressing our appreciation for your service to Dubois County and for the steady, deliberative leadership you have shown. The prosperity and stability that our communities enjoy today are the result of decisions made by leaders like you over past decades, often in challenging circumstances and without the certainty that hindsight provides. The choice to join the Mid-States Corridor Regional Development Authority (RDA) in 2017 was one of those decisions. In a moment of uncertainty about the Mid-States Corridor project and the need for local participation in the Tier 1 environmental study, forming and joining the RDA was a reasonable step grounded in best intentions and the desire to protect Dubois County's interests.

We offer this letter in the same spirit of cooperation and trust. Our aim is not to revisit past choices or cast doubt on the judgment of those who made them. Instead, we hope to support you in making the best possible decision for Dubois County today, with the information now available and with the clear priorities of your constituents in mind. The function the RDA was created to support has been fulfilled. Tier 1 is complete, and the State now carries full responsibility for Tier 2. **What remains is a regional development authority with unusually broad statutory powers but no defined project, no current mandate, and a record of inconsistent public accountability.**

The primary concern before you is not about transportation. It is about governance, fiscal responsibility, and the long-term well-being of Dubois County. Indiana Code 36-7.6 grants expansive powers to regional development authorities. These include the ability to finance and assist in the study of regional transportation and economic development initiatives, to acquire, hold, and convey interests in real and personal property, and to lease or purchase facilities connected to those initiatives. The statute also authorizes regional development authorities to issue

bonds, make loans and grants to units of government, and enter joint agreements with public and private entities. With approval from the appropriate legislative body, a regional development authority may also exercise eminent domain. These are far-reaching tools appropriate only for a highly active, transparent, and accountable public authority with a clear mandate and strong public confidence.

The Mid-States Corridor RDA no longer has such a mandate. Over the years, residents have struggled to find timely minutes, complete reports, or clear public explanations of the RDA's work. Statutes require regional development authorities to maintain a strategic development plan with detailed budgets, project timelines, projected subsidies, estimated returns, and anticipated matching funds. In practice, these obligations have not been met in a way that gives the public a clear understanding of the RDA's direction or intentions. Minutes have often been delayed or unavailable, public information about ongoing plans has been inconsistent, and the RDA has not adequately advised its member governments on the statutory requirements governing renewal or withdrawal at the end of the eight-year membership term. When authority is this broad and oversight is this limited, this RDA could overshadow the control our local governments normally exercise over development.

Dubois County is navigating the same fiscal pressures facing counties across Indiana. Costs for essential services continue to rise. Road maintenance demands reliable annual investment, and local governments must constantly balance limited resources against growing expectations from residents. In this environment, every public entity must contribute clear value, operate with transparency, and justify its continued existence. The RDA no longer meets that standard. It has no active project, no defined role, and no demonstrated need. Maintaining membership in an authority with broad statutory powers but no mandate adds risk at a time when the county's focus must remain on the core responsibilities that directly serve residents.

Against this backdrop, every major fiscal decision is crucial. Maintaining safe and reliable local roads is one of the most visible and essential responsibilities of county government, yet it is also one of the most resource-intensive. Local officials in Jasper have indicated that the city is able to rebuild only about one mile of roadway each year, even though roughly eight miles would be needed to maintain a healthy fifteen-year cycle. While conditions vary from place to place, it is clear that Dubois County faces similar pressures in balancing limited transportation funds with the miles of roadway that require regular attention. These decisions are made in good faith and with the best available information, but the fiscal constraints are real and persistent.

The RDA's purpose has been completed. Keeping it active now only creates risk for Dubois County. Its legal structure reinforces that conclusion. Although Jasper and Huntingburg adopted ordinances acknowledging their participation in the RDA, their membership exists because Dubois County joined. Indiana Code 36-7.6-2-3 provides that when a county becomes a member of a regional development authority, every qualified city in that county automatically becomes a member by operation of statute. Their ordinances reflected this reality but did not create independent membership. Indiana Code 36-7.6-2-5 requires each member to serve a minimum eight-year term, after which it must adopt an ordinance either renewing its membership or withdrawing from the authority. Under that same statute, the cities cannot withdraw unless the

county withdraws, because the statute ties their membership to the county's decision at the end of each term.

The practical effect is unavoidable. If Dubois County does not withdraw, Jasper and Huntingburg remain legally bound to the RDA. At a moment when the authority has no remaining mandate, the public had every right to expect the RDA to make a clear case for its continued existence, to explain the statutory options available to its members, and to actively build public support if it believed renewal was warranted. None of that took place. There was no attempt to secure a new public mandate or to communicate openly about the decisions facing member governments. As a result, residents and local institutions were left without the clarity the statute envisioned. The responsibility now rests with the county to bring the matter to a straightforward conclusion.

We believe it is in the best interest of Dubois County for the Commissioners to bring this chapter to a close and restore full control of regional development decisions to the county's elected leaders. Indiana Code 36-7.6-2-5 provides a clear and direct path for withdrawal. The steps are straightforward:

- Adopt an ordinance stating that the county is withdrawing its membership in the Regional Development Authority.
- Provide formal written notice of the withdrawal to the Regional Development Authority.
- The Regional Development Authority provides notice to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation promptly in writing.

Once these steps are completed, the county's withdrawal is formally established under the statute. Withdrawing now brings clarity, protects local authority, and ensures that development decisions remain in the hands of the officials elected to make them. The voters of Dubois County will recognize leadership that protects local control, guards county finances, and stands with the overwhelming sentiment of the community. We urge you to adopt the necessary ordinance and complete the process of withdrawal without delay.

Sincerely,

Brad Hochgesang	Mary C. Lange	Sue Krampe	Marilyn Betz
Maggie Marystone	Jill Otto	Judy Rohleder	Rhonda Hochgesang
Craig Knies	Kurt Otto	Sheila Wendholt	Tom Bartelt
Nancy Knies	Lori Braun	Paul Wendholt	Mark Nowotarski
Christopher Thyen	Mike Braun	Sue Lange	Carol Nowotarski
Ron Thyen	Kerri Braun	Lacey Vollmer	David Ring
Jeff Siebert	Steven Braun	Brad Wendholt	Roger Pund
Ann Bennett	Clara Mehringer	Rachel Wendholt	Ed McAuliff
Rachel Siebert	George Mehringer	Helen Beyke	Vickie Rountree
Logan Fromme	Bob Schnell	Aaron Beyke	Tony Rountree
Alan Hanselman	Cheryl Schnell	Ryan Verkamp	Sheila Wilson
Ellen Hanselman	Bob Pfister	Renae Verkamp	Randy Wilson
Gary Hanselman	Kathy Pfister	Nathan Verkamp	Cathy Wagner
Donna Hanselman	Aaron Pfister	Charlie Verkamp	Jason Fleck
Gail Hettinger	Kathy Fuhs	Diane Verkamp	Jim Arvin
Doug Hettinger	Greg Hochgesang	Eugene Verkamp	Teresa Kendall
Betty Hanselman	Joe Rohleder	Cindy Verkamp	Jason McCoy