



MEETING MINUTES

Date: April 12, 2017

Time: 9:00 AM CT

Meeting: I-69 ORX IAC Meeting #1

Location: Old National Events Plaza, Ballroom Locust BCEF, 715 Locust Street, Evansville, IN 47708

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ITEM	TOPIC/DISCUSSION
1.	<p>Project Overview/History – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan provided an overview/history of the I-69 corridor through the U.S. and activities associated with the 2004 DEIS for the I-69 SIU#4 through the Evansville-Henderson region.
2.	<p>Reinitiating the Project (where we’re starting from) – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan provided an overview of the current I-69 Ohio River Crossing (ORX) project, showing revised termini for I-69 in Evansville and Henderson.
3.	<p>Anticipated Milestone Schedule – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan shared a high-level project schedule through the I-69 ORX project FEIS/ROD.
4a.	<p>Role of the Agencies – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan shared the anticipated role of the environmental agencies for the I-69 ORX project. • Touchpoints (IAC meetings) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jason Randolph (IDEM) questioned the schedule for publishing the DEIS in Spring of 2018? Why wait 1.5 years to review comments? Dan explained that the schedule reflects publication of the DEIS. Document preparation starts in 2017. The project intent is to come back to the agencies in the Fall of 2019 to respond to DEIS comments and present proposed mitigation for the Preferred Alternative. - Ken Westlake (USEPA) commented that he appreciates that the team is contemplating a streamlined effort. Ken questioned whether the team is considering the possibility of a formal NEPA/CWA Section 404 merger on this project. It was discussed that INDOT has not used this process for any Indiana projects yet. Dan Prevost responded that the project team has discussed this option, but based on prior experience with agencies, the team is not currently planning on pursuing the formal process. Coordination milestones allow agencies to have input at key points. Michelle Allen (FHWA) responded that she is open to having the conversation with USACE about their use of FHWA documents. Neither Indiana or Kentucky currently have a formal NEPA/404 merger process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked whether the project team plans on holding a citizens’ advisory committee meeting? Dan Prevost responded that yes, there are a number of representatives from local organizations, the community at large, and local government that will be represented in the River Cities Advisory Committee (RCAC), the first meeting of which is being held tomorrow, April 13 in Evansville. The project is performing a tiered, broad public outreach program following the open house model. The project team has been in communication with FHWA regarding EJ populations in the project area and will set up a subcommittee of the RCAC (invitations to be extended to about a dozen organizations that specifically serve potential EJ communities in the area). This subcommittee will provide an additional forum to discuss pertinent issues within a smaller format. Part of the goal of this team is to take the project to these communities where possible. Michelle Allen (FHWA) added that the EJ coordination component is included in the project’s Public Involvement Plan which is Appendix B of the Coordination Plan.

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4b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews (review periods) <p>Jason Randolph (IDEM) asked what kind of format is required/desired for submittal of comments? Dan Prevost responded that comments via phone, e-mail and/or written letter will all suffice. Michelle Allen (FHWA) added that formal comments on the DEIS should be provided on agency letterhead, otherwise sending interim comments via e-mail is fine. Michelle requested that she and Janelle Lemon (INDOT) be copied on all e-mails.</p>
5.	<p>Purpose and Need/Revised Project Termini – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The question was raised as to why the segments of I-69 in Indiana have high crash rates. Brian Aldridge (Stantec) responded that it likely involves several factors, but may be due in part to the speed differential during off-peak hours. Many are single vehicle accidents involving the driver going off the road. Dan Prevost added that as part of this project the team will be looking at design elements that may be contributing factors to crash rates and assess whether anything can be fixed. Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked if the project team will be prioritizing/weighting any of the P&N performance measures. Dan Prevost responded that the team has not yet discussed weighting screening criteria but added that the first criterion (completing this segment of I-69) is assumed to be a requirement for the project.
6.	<p>Range of Alternatives – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dan shared a map depicting the range of alternative alignments currently being screened, and requested input from agencies on these alignments. One participant asked for confirmation of the \$25 million maintenance cost for existing bridges. Dan Prevost responded that the FixFor41 is a 3-year project that includes rehabilitation of several of the approach spans, minor repairs to the Ohio River spans, and a deck overlay for the southbound bridge. The question was asked: How many years will this maintenance extend the service life? Dan responded that it is intended for 20-25 yrs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The question was asked whether the bridges are listed/eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Dan Prevost indicated that the northbound bridge, built in 1932, was previously determined eligible for listing. The southbound bridge, built in 1965, was not evaluated as part of the 2004 DEIS, because it was not yet 50 years old at that time. It will be evaluated as part of this project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ken Westlake (USEPA) asked about the difference between West Corridor No. 2 and Alternative 7 from the Feasibility Study. Dan Prevost responded that both have similar footprints but West Corridor 2 would be at-grade with service roads on one or both sides. Feasibility Study Alternative 7 had an elevated viaduct structure with service roads underneath.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The question was raised regarding possible inclusion of pedestrian and bike crossing components with the possible bridge replacements. Dan Prevost responded that no decision has been made on that yet but these features will be considered. The team will talk with local and regional planners to gauge the demand and interest.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One participant asked whether the conceptual range of alternatives are defined enough at this point to know whether any involve Section 4(f)/6(f) impacts. Dan responded that the team is currently looking at wide study corridors and will assess the presence of 4(f)/6(f) properties in the Level 1 and 2 screenings. There are a number of 4(f) properties in the region and the team will be looking to avoid them where possible.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked about commuter traffic and congestion and whether the project will perform a commuter traffic analysis. Brian Aldridge (Stantec) responded that the current traffic volume estimates are based on the Evansville MPO model and the project is currently in the process of updating the model from a 2015 base year to a 2045 design year. The team is working to understand the origin and destination of trips and incorporate that information into the models. This information is also needed for vehicle capture and tolling rates. The project has purchased Origin-Destination data from StreetLight which will be used for the model update. The team is hopeful that this data will help clarify commuter traffic movement.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One participant asked if there is bus service crossing the bridge. Seyed Shokouhzadeh (EMPO) responded that there is not; however, there are currently discussions about providing that service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seyed Shokouhzadeh (EMPO) asked if the project team is going to gauge the interest and/or is the team looking at additional alternatives for bike and pedestrian traffic. Dan Prevost responded that it is the team's intent to consider that as part of this project. The question was asked whether incorporation of consideration of these assets into the project alternatives is a requirement of FHWA. Michelle Allen (FHWA) indicated that it is not a requirement, but will be a consideration and a conversation between the MPO and the public. Seyed responded that the EMPO is doing transportation planning and considers all forms of transportation. Michelle said that the project team will look at all the different plans in the area and consider how this project will affect each of them. The project will look at pedestrian/bike access in detail during Level 2 screening.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ntale Kajumba (USEPA) asked whether the bike path facility was a component of the 2004 DEIS Preferred Alternative. Dan Prevost responded that it was not.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding the 2004 Preferred Alternative, Dave Williams (Kentucky Geological Survey, asked whether that alternative was the one that was being promoted by the Henderson business community. Dan responded that BridgeLink had been promoting Alternative 1 from the Feasibility Study, which is similar to Central Corridor 1. Dave Williams also asked if our project is planning on using narrow shoulders and other cost-saving measures that BridgeLink has promoted. Dan responded that we would be considering ways to save money, but that no decisions have been made to date regarding specific design elements.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked if the project builds a new river crossing and doesn't include bike access, can we use the existing US 41 crossing as a bike/pedestrian crossing. Dan responded that the team has talked about that concept internally and agreed that the existing bridges may provide an opportunity to convert one of the existing bridges to a bike and pedestrian facility. In addition, if the decision is made to remove heavy traffic from one of the bridges, it may have a longer life span for this type of use.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One participant asked whether the existing US 41 bridges meet existing Coast Guard requirements. Coast Guard representatives responded that yes they do.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gary Valentine (KYTC) stated that the project team will evaluate everything including long range plans. He emphasized the need for financial feasibility of the alternatives, and the need to set expectations early on in the project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked whether Indiana and Kentucky have money for the project. Janelle Lemon (INDOT) responded that for now, all that has been allocated for the project is \$17 million for NEPA studies. When the project team looks at the Preferred Alternative, we will look at options for the states to fund. Virginia asked whether the project may run into the same financial issues this time as it did with the project in the 2004 DEIS. Janelle indicated that the cost was over \$1 billion last time and there were a lot of ongoing competing projects at the time. The states have just finished the Louisville bridges project and they expect that now is the time to present the I-69 ORX project. This time there are additional funding sources being considered, including tolling. Gary (KYTC) added that the states have invested over \$2.2 billion in the I-69 corridor, and the governors want a financial solution to connect the I-69 segments. He expects that the commitment for funding will be there this time, given these prior investments and current I-69 infrastructure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EMPO added that when the I-69 project was added to the Transportation Improvement Plan, funding was mentioned but specific numbers were not included.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia asked whether I-69 in Indiana (formerly I-164) was built to Interstate standards. Janelle Lemon (INDOT) responded “yes.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One participant asked if the west corridors would both be built at-grade through Henderson. Dan responded “yes, that is anticipated.”
7.	<p>Environmental Issues – Dan Prevost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan provided a high-level summary of the environmental issues that will be considered. • Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked if archaeological surveys were performed during the earlier studies. Dan Prevost responded that the states performed archaeological surveys on the Preferred Alternative in 2004 (currently Central Corridor 2). These data will provide a head start for the current project. The 2004 studies only went through Phase 1 cultural studies. There were a number of areas where additional testing was specified but were not performed at that time due to the project being suspended.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked if the SHPOs and tribes are OK with this based on those studies. Dan Prevost responded that he did not know at this time. These are questions that will be posed to the agencies for consideration. Dan Prevost added that the DEIS will include full literature searches with both SHPO offices.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was asked what would occur if the project identified something “huge” along the Preferred Alternative. Michelle Allen (FHWA) responded that if there is something that is discovered between the DEIS and the FEIS, then the team will have to go back out and do additional Public Involvement and review at that point. One participant asked if there is allowance for possible mitigation. Michelle responded that it depends on the resource. Dan Prevost added that one of the benefits of identifying a Preferred Alternative during the DEIS is to allow agencies to comment ahead of time.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kim Penrod (Delaware Nation) commented that they are not comfortable with doing only a Phase I cultural resources study, and asked for a copy of the previous study. Michelle Allen (FHWA) responded that in 2004 the states performed archaeological studies on the Preferred Alternative, but didn’t do any Phase 2 studies because the project stalled. For the I-69 ORX project, there will be additional studies that occur for the Preferred Alternative, and the Delaware Nation will be part of the Section 106 process as well as the IAC. Dan Prevost added that there will be several meetings of the Section 106 consulting parties to review the process, survey results, and any proposed mitigation activities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wade Tharp (IDNR-DHPA) stated that they were reviewing cultural resources report submissions from 2004. One of the responses involved a concern over vibrations and the need for monitoring. The SHPO requests that the team look at former response letters from the SHPO before moving ahead for additional project studies. Dan Prevost responded that that is the project team’s intent.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked Michelle Allen (FHWA) when the MOA will be done. Michelle responded that that is still down the road in the future. We need to do Section 106 coordination, look at resources, etc. If we do have an MOA, it will be conducted prior to the FEIS/ROD (in response to impacts). It was asked what information the team plans to include in the DEIS for resources that were identified so far. Dan Prevost responded that it will be based on previous investigations, historic properties/eligibility determination, etc. It was asked if the team will perform the same level of study for each alternative? Dan responded “yes”. But for archaeology, we may have more inform on Central Corridor 2 which was the Preferred Alternative in 2004. Michelle Allen (FHWA) responded that our goal is to have the Preferred identified in the DEIS. Our intent is to have as much information in there as possible, including cultural resources effects.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was asked if a combined FEIS/ROD will be prepared and include agency comments. Michelle Allen (FHWA) indicated that a combined FEIS/ROD will be prepared and that the team will include responses to DEIS comments in the FEIS/ROD. Responses to the agency comments will be provided before they get the FEIS/ROD. The project will convene a separate group to determine how we will go through comments. Dan Prevost added that the purpose of IAC meeting #4 is to go through comments.

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8.	<p>Proposed Methodologies – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan provided a high-level overview of the I-69 ORX project’s proposed methodologies. • Virginia Laszewski (USEPA) asked that the team give her an advanced 2-week notice for request for comments on project documents so that she can incorporate the review into her schedule. She also asked the team to send a CD and hard copy of the document. IDNR-DHPA also requested paper copies of documents and CDs. Dan Prevost responded that we will follow any agency practice.
9.	<p>Next Steps – Dan Prevost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan touched upon the next steps anticipated on the part of the agencies at this time for the I-69 ORX project. • Dan indicated that the project team requests agency comments on project handouts by May 12, 2017.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next IAC meeting will be sometime this summer. At the meeting, the team will present the results of the Level 1 screening for each of the study corridors which we will want to advance into the DEIS.
10.	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michelle Allen (FHWA) asked all agencies to identify their central point of contact and/or Division Lead and provide those names to the project team.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seyed Shokouhzadeh (EMPO) asked if there are any changes in the proposed project approach, given the change of administration in Washington. Dan Prevost responded that he can’t speculate on what might be coming; but he anticipates that addressing climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) considerations will no longer be required. President Trump recently rescinded the Executive Order that requires projects to consider GHG emissions on climate change, and effects of climate change on projects.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deb Snyder (Army Corps) asked if the team plans on conducting full blown wetland delineations on all alternatives. Dan Miller responded “tentatively yes”, but the project team will have additional discussions with the agencies. Another participant asked if the project team will be performing mussel surveys. Dan responded that yes, we expect to perform surveys, but the details of those surveys will be dependent on coordination with relevant state and federal agencies, and will only be performed on the DEIS corridors. We will nail down protocols and locations with agencies further down the road.