



OHIO RIVER CROSSING

Frequently Asked Questions

General Overview

What is the I-69 Ohio River Crossing Project?

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) are committed to providing a critical link between the two states' I-69 corridors and constructing an improved Ohio River Crossing (I-69 ORX) between Evansville and Henderson. The states have reinitiated a study of the corridor to complete a required federal environmental review.

Why is this happening now?

In June 2016, Governors Bevin and Pence signed a memorandum of understanding directing both states to begin studying the environmental and economic impacts of an I-69 Ohio River Crossing. Thanks to the diligence of previous and current administrations, Indiana and Kentucky are now well on their way to completing I-69 in their respective states, and the Ohio River Crossing is one of the last remaining pieces.

What is the proposed purpose and need of the project?

The proposed purpose and need of the project is to complete the I-69 connection between Indiana and Kentucky, improve long-term cross-river mobility, reduce congestion and delay, and improve safety.

What's the timeline for the project?

A preferred alternative is expected to be identified by fall of 2018 and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be published. Public hearings will be held on both sides of the river to solicit feedback on the DEIS. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) are expected by fall of 2019.

Is there a tentative schedule for construction?

Based on the assumptions made in the Screening Report Supplement, Central Corridor 1 could be open to traffic in 2025, while either West Corridor 1 or West Corridor 2 could be open in 2027, assuming that funding is identified and scheduled soon after the FEIS and ROD.

What's the expected cost of the project?

Costs are preliminary and included in the Screening Report Supplement. Preliminary estimated costs range from \$1.42 to \$1.49 billion for the three alternatives.

How will the project be funded?

Each preliminary alternative is expected to require a combination of toll-backed financing, traditional funds and grant opportunities to move to construction.

How is the preferred alternative selected?

It is a multi-step process that includes leadership in both states, the community, and state and federal agencies. After preliminary studies are complete for the Draft Environment Impact Statement (DEIS), the two states will consider the identified benefits, impacts, costs and community input and will propose a preferred alternative in the DEIS.

Public hearings will follow in both states and include a formal public and agency comment period. After addressing all comments, the states will confirm the preferred alternative in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Final approval of the preferred alternative will come from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) through the issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD).

Hasn't this process been completed before?

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was completed in 2004, with a preferred alternative identified for a new I-69 Ohio River Crossing just east of Henderson. With no funding source identified, a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) were never issued. Information from the previous DEIS, as well as other studies completed by the states, will be is being considered by the Project Team. Logical termini of the I-69 in Kentucky and Indiana have also changed, eliminating some previously considered alternatives. Innovative financing and funding solutions that weren't previously considered or available will be are being explored under the current studies as well.

Preliminary Alternatives

What are the preliminary alternatives for a new I-69 Ohio River Crossing?

The I-69 ORX Project Team developed preliminary alternatives for each of the three corridors being considered for a new I-69 bridge and interstate connections. Based on further engineering analyses and after completing the Screening Report Supplement, West Alternative 1, West Alternative 2 and Central Alternative 1 have been identified as providing the best opportunity to be financially feasible and address the purpose and need of the project. A No Build Alternative is also carried forward for comparison.

West Alternative 1

West Alternative 1 includes a four-lane I-69 bridge and retains one US 41 bridge for local traffic. West Alternative 1 keeps traffic in the US 41 corridor while maintaining businesses in the area. It includes a reconstructed US 60 interchange and new interchanges at Watson Lane and US 41/Veterans Memorial Parkway (north end).

West Alternative 2

West Alternative 2 includes a six-lane I-69 bridge and removes both US 41 bridges from service. This alternative keeps traffic on the US 41 corridor, but businesses along the west side of US 41 would be impacted. It includes a reconstructed US 60 interchange and new interchanges at Watson Lane, Wolf Hills/Stratman Road, Nugent Drive and US 41/Veterans Memorial Parkway (north end).

Central Alternative 1

Central Alternative 1 bypasses the US 41 corridor and includes a four-lane I-69 bridge and retains one US 41 bridge for local traffic. It includes new interchanges at US 41 (south end), US 60 and Veterans Memorial Parkway.

What happens next?

Refinement and evaluation of the preliminary alternatives is continuing. Traffic modeling, field work and engineering analyses are part of the process. A preferred alternative is expected to be identified by fall 2018.

When could right of way acquisition begin?

Right now, neither state plans to purchase land until the environmental review is completed and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) publishes a Record of Decision, which is expected in late 2019.

NEPA

What is NEPA?

NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act, requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to assess environmental effects before making decisions concerning the construction of highways and other publicly-owned facilities.

The NEPA process includes:

- Assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts of a proposed project
- Analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, based on project's defined purpose and need
- Consideration of measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential impacts
- Interagency coordination and consultation
- Public involvement, including opportunities to participate and comment
- Documentation and disclosure
- A Record of Decision from FHWA, which identifies the final preferred alternative

What are the steps involved in the environmental study?

- Step 1 – COMPLETE – Determine the project's purpose and need and identify conceptual alternatives that address those needs
- Step 2 – COMPLETE – Collect preliminary environmental and engineering data, reviewing results with the Project Team, resource agencies and the public
- Step 3 – IN PROGRESS – Develop a short list of potential corridors and begin detailed engineering, field investigations, agency coordination, public involvement and financial analysis
- Step 4 – Identify a preliminary preferred alternative and present the DEIS for public review and comment
- Step 5 – Address public comments on the preferred alternative, publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement and receive a Record of Decision from FHWA

What factors will be studied?

A long list of potential impacts are being studied, some of which include impacts to property, cost, traffic, property access, low-income and minority communities, water resources, noise, air quality, wildlife and historical resources. These impacts will be weighed with project performance measures to identify a preferred alternative.

Is there a way to expedite preliminary design and the environmental review?

The NEPA timeline approved by Indiana and Kentucky is aggressive, but realistic. The NEPA process includes robust surveys and data collection, as well as agency coordination. The team will accelerate the schedule whenever possible, and expects to publish the Draft Environmental Impact Statement by fall 2018 and the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision is expected by fall 2019.

Will Kentucky and Indiana have equal influence over which alternative is selected?

This is a bi-state project, and Kentucky and Indiana will collaborate throughout the decision-making process.

What happens when the environmental process is over?

If construction of the project is recommended, the FHWA decision allows Indiana and Kentucky to prioritize and program the project.

Financing and Funding

How will Indiana and Kentucky split the project costs?

Indiana and Kentucky are evenly splitting costs for preliminary design and the environmental review. Construction funding will be reviewed when a preferred alternative is selected and a detailed estimate is developed.

How much is project construction expected to cost?

The estimated project cost will be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Current estimates range from \$1.42 to \$1.49 billion.

Must both states commit to the estimates before the project can move to design or construction?

A federally approved financial plan that includes funding and financing commitments from both states is a requirement to move forward with construction.

What types of financing and funding will the two states consider?

It's expected to require a combination of toll-backed financing, traditional funds and grant opportunities to move to construction.

What procurement process might be used? Will this project be built as a public-private partnership or design-build project?

As the states develop the project further through preliminary design and the environmental review, Indiana and Kentucky will consider the project's suitability for different procurement methods and select a solution that works best for both states.

Is tolling an option?

Yes. I-69 bridge will be tolled. With West Alternative 1 and Central Alternative 1, tolling US 41 may also be necessary.

When will a decision be made on tolling rates and who makes that decision?

A bi-state body to establish the financing parameters for the project will be created prior to construction. These parameters will include a toll policy, the business rules of what facilities are tolled and what the toll rates are. The environmental process currently underway will evaluate the potential consequences of tolling scenarios to advise the bi-state body as a financing plan is developed.

Why is tolling being considered?

Across America, traditional funding sources, such as gas taxes, are increasingly inadequate to pay for major infrastructure improvements.

Public Involvement

How are local officials, stakeholder groups and the public involved?

Both Indiana and Kentucky are implementing a robust public involvement plan throughout the NEPA study process. Information is shared via e-newsletters, focus groups with local officials and key stakeholders, social media and media relations. Residents may provide feedback any time via the project website (www.I69OhioRiverCrossing.com), email (info@I69OhioRiverCrossing.com), phone (888-515-9756), or at the project offices in Henderson and Evansville. The Project Team also hosts public open houses so residents can ask questions and provide feedback during the NEPA process.

The Project Team meets often with key stakeholder groups to solicit feedback throughout the NEPA process. These groups include elected officials, the River Cities Advisory Committee, the Interagency Advisory Committee, the Section 106 Consulting Parties and an Environmental Justice Subcommittee.

When can the public review and comment on the study?

INDOT and KYTC are committed to updating the public about the study process often. Updates are shared on the project website and public open houses at key decision points and project milestones. The public is also encouraged to review project materials posted to the website and to provide comments or ask questions via email or by stopping into one of the project offices. All input received over the course of the project is being considered in the decision-making process.

When the DEIS is published, notices will be placed in local newspapers, on the project website and social media channels, and sent to all affected property owners. Copies of the DEIS will be available for review on the project website, in public locations such as local libraries or government buildings, and in the project offices.

Public hearings and the formal, 45-day comment period will be promoted broadly to allow interested residents and stakeholders ample time to review and provide feedback on the document.

How can the public stay informed?

Frequent updates are shared on the project website (I69OhioRiverCrossing.com), email updates, text messaging, news media, Facebook (I-69 Ohio River Crossing) and Twitter (I69ORX). Project offices are located at 320 Eagle Crest Drive, Suite C in Evansville and 1970 Barrett Court, Suite 100 in Henderson. Public open houses are also held on both sides of the river, and publicized in advance.

US 41 Twin Bridges

Why is the future of the US 41 bridges being discussed as part of this project?

Improving long-term cross-river mobility between Evansville and Henderson must include a discussion of the US 41 bridges. One bridge is more than 80 years old and the other is more than 50 years old, and maintenance costs are high. Indiana and Kentucky have spent more than \$50 million on maintenance costs on the US 41 bridges since 2005. A report on the US 41 bridges finds it would cost an estimated \$242 million to maintain the two bridges through 2062.

Under West Alternative 1 and Central Alternative 1, which US 41 bridge would remain in service?

If the preferred/selected alternative would remove one of the existing bridges from service, the evaluation of which bridge is to be removed will consider information from the Section 106 process as well as engineering, safety and other considerations.

How many vehicles cross the US 41 bridges each day?

The US 41 Twin Bridges carry approximately 40,000 vehicles across the Ohio River each day.

How old are the current US 41 bridges?

What is currently the northbound bridge opened in 1932. The second structure, which carries southbound traffic, was constructed in 1965.

Would the states consider making the old bridges bicycle or pedestrian facilities?

The DEIS will include an analysis of how the I-69 ORX project affects the Evansville Metropolitan Planning Organization's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the region.

Aren't the current US 41 bridges under construction?

Indiana and Kentucky are partnering on another project, Fix For 41, which started in summer 2017. The \$25 million Fix For 41 project includes 3.8 miles of US 41 and seven bridges. Information about the project is available [here](#).