



MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 18, 2018
Time: 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
Meeting: Joint RCAC/EJ Meeting
Location: I-69 ORX Evansville Project Office

Attendees:

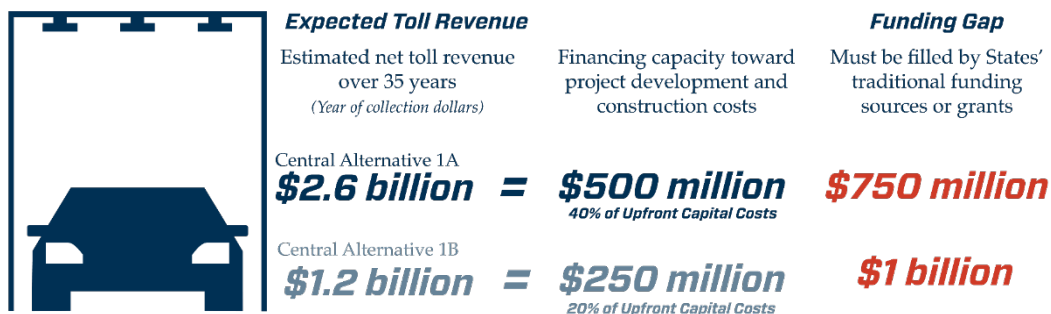
Name	Organization
Gerald Arnold	NAACP
Tara Barney	Southwest Indiana Chamber of Commerce
Gina Boaz	GRADD
Drew Clements	Methodist Hospital
Kimberly France	NAACP
Tim Hobbs	Community Baptist Church
Buzzy Newman	City of Henderson
Ben Payne	Henderson County Schools
Niles Rosenquist	Audubon Society
Mike Schopmeyer	Bridgelink
Syed Shokouhzadeh	Evansville MPO
Catie Taylor	University of Evansville
Jeff Troxel	Business owner
Eric Rothermel	FHWA-KY
Brian Aldridge	Stantec
Ron Bales*	INDOT
Paul Boone	INDOT
Marshall Carrier	KYTC
Tim Foreman*	KYTC
Janelle Lemon	INDOT
Danny Peake*	KYTC
Jim Poturalski*	INDOT
Gary Valentine	KYTC
Mindy Peterson	C2 Strategic
Erin Pipkin	Compass Outreach Solutions
Dan Prevost	Parsons
Steve Nicaise	Parsons

*Individuals participated via phone

- 1) Welcome and introduction – The meeting began at 1:05 p.m. with 13 members and 10 Project Team members in attendance, with an additional four team members on the phone. Each member received a DEIS handout, including an updated map, and an EJ/RCAC questionnaire. Also available were DEIS public hearing fliers and lists of the DEIS review locations.

- 2) Presentation
 - a. Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
 - i. The DEIS summarizes the project’s study process and findings and identifies preferred alternatives.
 - ii. The DEIS was published last Friday, December 14. It identifies two preferred alternatives – Central Alternative 1A and Central Alternative 1B.
 - iii. The Project Team completed the environmental and engineering analyses and selected a preferred route.
 - iv. The DEIS includes a preliminary financial analysis and identifies two preferred alternatives. That allows Project Team to move the project forward, collecting public and agency input on the preferred route and two tolling options while further developing the financial plan.
 - b. Preferred alternatives
 - i. Central Alternative 1 is the preferred route.
 - ii. Central Alternative 1A would toll both the I-69 and US 41 bridges. Central Alternative 1B would toll only the I-69 crossing.
 - iii. Both alternatives include a four-lane I-69 bridge and retain the northbound US 41 bridge for local, two-way traffic. They include 11.2 miles of interstate, three new interchanges and improvements to three existing interchanges. New interchanges would be constructed at existing I-69 in Indiana, US 60 in Kentucky and existing US 41 south of Henderson.
 - iv. Either alternative could open to traffic as soon as 2025.
 - v. Central Alternative was the preferred route because it has the fewest residential relocations (4), no commercial relocations, fewest impacts to many sensitive resources, lowest total cost (\$1.497 billion) and provides cross-river redundancy.
 - c. Financial feasibility

- i. Traffic forecasts indicate that only six lanes of cross-river capacity are needed by 2045. Providing more than six lanes would unnecessarily add approximately \$145 million to long-term operations and maintenance costs.
 - ii. The new I-69 bridge will be wide enough to accommodate six lanes in the future, if needed.
 - iii. The northbound US 41 bridge is being retained because it has historical significance because of how it was constructed and funded. It was constructed in 1932.
 - iv. The southbound bridge, which was constructed in 1965, is only historically significant when it is paired with the northbound bridge.
 - v. Although the northbound bridge is older, because of the way it was constructed, there would be similar costs to rehabilitate and maintain either bridge.
- d. Financing and funding
- i. A preliminary financial plan will be based on the total cost of the project (\$1.497 billion).
 - ii. Net toll revenue will be used to cover debt service for the project, capital costs, operations and maintenance, but tolls will not cover all project costs.
 - iii. Projected revenue for Central Alternative 1A would cover approximately 40% of upfront capital costs and Central Alternative 1B would cover approximately 20% of upfront capital costs.



- iv. The funding gap must be filled by States’ traditional funding sources, but the States are pursuing grant opportunities, refining needs and developing a financial plan.
- v. In 2019, all DEIS comments will be considered, the financial analysis will be published, and the States will decide between Central Alternative 1A or Central Alternative 1B next summer.
- vi. After that, in late 2019, the Final Environmental Impact Statement will be published, followed by the Federal Highway Administration’s Record of Decision.

- e. Tolling information
 - i. Any crossings that are tolled will have all-electronic tolling that does not require traffic to slow or stop.
 - ii. Drivers with prepaid accounts and transponders would pay the lowest toll rates. Those without transponders would receive an invoice at their homes after a photo of their license plate is taken while they cross the bridge.
 - iii. For the financial analysis, toll rates similar to the initial rates on the Ohio River Bridges project in Louisville will be used.
 - iv. If both I-69 and US 41 are tolled, the States have several potential mitigation approaches:
 - (1) Transponders purchased and reloaded via cash for those without access to checking accounts
 - (2) Widespread availability of transponders
 - (3) A frequent-user/commuter card. In Louisville, drivers in passenger vehicles with transponders and prepaid accounts in good standing who cross tolled bridges more than 40 times a month receive an automatic 50% credit to their account. Additional crossings that month are discounted 50%.
 - (4) We also heard at the Community Conversations that people would be interested in a reduced toll rate for crossing the US 41 bridge for verified low-income users.
 - (5) To determine toll policy, a bi-state body will be created before construction begins. That bi-state body, not the Project Team will establish toll rates.
 - (6) The FEIS and ROD will inform the bi-state body of impacts and commitments associated with implementing tolls.
- f. Comments and feedback
 - i. We are hosting two public hearings: Monday, Jan. 7 in Henderson and Tuesday, Jan. 8 in Evansville. Both last from 5 to 8 p.m.
 - (1) Like the open houses, there will be a formal presentation at 6 p.m. One main difference for these hearings is that people will be allowed to sign up and speak in front of the group following the presentation. Each speaker will be given three minutes to speak Responses will be provided in the FEIS, not on site.
 - (2) The public comment period lasts through Feb. 8, 2019.

- ii. We are also hosting Community Conversations in January. We'll be at the Henderson Housing Authority on Wednesday, Jan. 23 and at the Central Library on Thursday, Jan. 24.
 - iii. The DEIS is available for review online at I69OhioRiverCrossing.com/DEIS and at five locations each in Evansville and Henderson.
 - iv. We've extended our office hours to include a third day each week in Henderson. The Evansville office is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday; and the Henderson office is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.
 - v. Comments are accepted at the hearing, via the comment form on the website, email to info@I69OhioRiverCrossing.com, by mail and at the project offices. Facebook and Twitter comments will not be addressed in the FEIS.
- g. Next steps
- i. The public comment period lasts until February 8, 2019.
 - ii. During the spring and summer, the Project Team will consider DEIS comments and advance the financial analysis.
 - iii. The FEIS and ROD should be issued by the end of 2019.

3) Group Discussion and Questions

Louisville has tolled and non-tolled crossing. Isn't that a difference between Louisville and our area?

In Louisville, three bridges are tolled and two are non-tolled. Central Alternative 1B allows for a non-tolled option here. We included both options so we could receive the entire range of feedback.

What about bicycle access on the bridges?

We are often asked whether the southbound US 41 bridge can be turned into a bicycle/pedestrian bridge. The \$145 million cost to maintain and operate that bridge (as a highway bridge) makes it unfeasible to keep that bridge. We reached out to Henderson and Henderson County and asked them if they'd be interested in taking it over. Both declined.

Doesn't the Lewis and Clark Bridge in Louisville have bicycle and pedestrian access?

Yes, but it is an expensive addition to any bridge. The Utica-Prospect connection in the Louisville region was included after years of consultation with communities on both sides of the river and serves a large population. Very few have raised this as a need for I-69 ORX.

What about bikes on the I-69 bridge?

There's a possibility, but it's not likely because it's not in the long-range plan for the area.

Will the transponder be compatible with other cities?

It's expected the system would be E-ZPass-compatible.

Could this project join forces with the tolling body for the Louisville bridges and could toll revenue be combined?

It's unlikely because of bond covenants and financial obligations for the Ohio River Bridges Project.

Indiana raised its gas tax to raise \$1.2 billion for Next Level. Why aren't those funds being used for ORX? Why is INDOT spending \$550 million for I-69 in Morgan and Marion counties.

Indiana's long-range plan has included Sections 5 and 6 of I-69 for a long time and the current and previous governors had committed to completing that connection through the state.

When is Kentucky going to raise revenue to fund infrastructure? Tennessee raised 6 cents/gallon. What can be done to raise funds for this project? Both chambers have supported candidates who support local tax increases for infrastructure.

This is a legislative issue. Governor Bevin supports funding road projects. There are \$8.4 billion in projects in Kentucky in the next six years but they only have funding for \$2.4 billion. Kentucky needs a way to raise that \$6 billion to fill that gap.

Do you have traffic projections for US 41 both with and without tolls?

Yes, those are included in Chapter 4 and Appendix D-1 of the DEIS.

Have you done any hydraulic analysis to determine bridge type on the Indiana side?

It's very preliminary, but some hydraulic analysis has been completed.

For \$2 one way, it's a big deal for families who work on the other side of the bridge. Is there any consideration given to multiple people in a household?

The E-ZPass can be moved from car to car allowing trips to combine on a single account, when possible, to qualify for a possible frequent-user discount (local transponders are stickers that can not be moved). Another option is a discounted toll rate for verified low-income users. That falls under the bi-state tolling body that will be establish business rules.

Have you looked at different rates for the US 41 and I-69 bridges?

Yes, a variety of scenarios have been considered.

Most people support Central Alternative 1, but they're mainly worried about the tolling. There are some people who only use US 41 because it's the through route and so congestion might not be different. One business owner said about 30% of his business is transient traffic. There are some service and restaurant businesses that are concerned.

We're going to work with local planners on how to address this. We want businesses along US 41 to thrive.

There's a belief that tolling will become a burden for that.

Will the availability of Indiana funding be determined before a tolling decision is made?

We must figure out how to pay for this project to get through the environmental process.

We plan to know the tolling decision by this time next year. A lot of that depends on whether we can get some federal grant dollars.

What is the funding split between the states?

60-65% of it will fall to Kentucky.

Are there any outside business groups that are looking at the economics of projects like these? Having bigger conversations may allow the legislators some room to support tax increases.

Not that we are aware of.

Have you considered tolling just one direction?

Most agencies that toll in one direction double toll rates in that direction.

4) Closing – The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

5) RCAC/EJ Subcommittee Member Questionnaire

Members of the RCAC and EJ Subcommittee were encouraged to provide feedback about the preferred alternatives and tolling scenarios. Sixteen members responded to the questionnaire. Below is a summary of their comments:

- Nearly all believe that Central Alternative 1A and Central Alternative 1B are the best choice, but five noted concerns about access to businesses along US 41
- All but three believed tolling both I-69 and US 41 would negatively affect their organization, citing concerns about attracting patrons/customers from across the river, maintaining business along US 41, financial hardship for low-income individuals, and access to educational opportunities between Evansville and Henderson
- All prefer maintaining US 41 as a toll-free crossing (Central Alternative 1B)

- When asked about the potential challenges with the preferred alternatives, half stated there needs to be a plan to help businesses along US 41 continue to attract customers
- For tolling mitigation, members advocated for reduced fees for frequent and low-income travelers, tolling only semi-trucks on US 41 and keeping US 41 toll-free