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Mike Grovak
Project Manager
Bernardin, Lochmueller and Associates, Inc.
6200 Vogel Rd
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Dear Mr. Grovak,

I am writing today to express my support for the construction of Interstate 69 between Indianapolis and Evansville, and specifically a route that provides reasonable and direct access to the cities of Bloomington, Martinsville and Washington and the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center in southwestern Indiana. While I do not recommend a specific route south of Bloomington, I do believe the S.R. 37 corridor north of Bloomington requires relief, either through the construction of a parallel freeway facility for I-69 or an upgrade of S.R. 37 to Interstate highway standards.

Some opponents of highway construction have argued that a direct route is a waste of money and a threat to the natural environment. While it is true that upgrading U.S. 41 to Interstate highway standards would be less costly than a "new terrain" route, it would not be a *cost-effective* use of resources. The marginal benefits derived from improving U.S. 41 to Interstate highway standards are minimal and could easily be achieved at much less cost to Indiana's taxpayers by completing the S.R. 641 Terre Haute southeast bypass, which is already in the state's transportation plan, and raising Indiana's rural expressway speed limit. And while the effects on the natural environment of highway construction should not be ignored, the reality is that a U.S. 41 upgrade would impose much greater human costs than a "new terrain" route and would disproportionately affect the more economically productive farmland in the Wabash Valley.

Furthermore, improving U.S. 41 does nothing to improve access between Evansville and Bloomington. While some advocates of a U.S. 41 routing of I-69 have suggested they would eventually support four-lane upgrades of S.R. 57 and other routes, or a direct non-Interstate link, the arguments made by environmentalists against a "new terrain" I-69 would apply equally to any other transportation improvement in the region, even a direct two-lane highway from Washington to Bloomington, much less a four-lane highway. Realistically, Congress and the state legislature are unlikely to authorize spending on a direct Bloomington-Evansville corridor in addition to a U.S. 41 upgrade; even if they did, the

costs of constructing both I-69 along U.S. 41 and this new, shorter route would likely be similar to the costs associated with a “new terrain” route for I-69.

Nor does improving U.S. 41 help access between Bloomington and Indianapolis. While some Bloomington officials may believe that increasing the congestion of the S.R. 37 corridor will protect their community from “sprawl” induced by commuters headed to the north, in reality Bloomington is already sprawling outside its city limits and into surrounding communities where those officials hold little sway. I realize that taking on the role of an unconstructed 1960s radical has great cachet for many Bloomington’s city council members, but pretending that their community’s problems managing growth have anything to do with the I-69 project is dangerously naive. Bloomington has already become a community of big-box retailers and Starbucks without I-69 (at least if you don’t live in the state of denial resulting from hanging out in the town square), so it is quite unrealistic to claim that not solving the community’s current and visible transportation problems will keep “sprawl” away from Bloomington when it is already there.

Any transportation project of the magnitude of I-69 will result in disruptions to the human and natural environment. Those disruptions are unavoidable, no matter how much right-of-way is taken or which route is selected. It is unfortunate that some people will have lose property (even if they are compensated for it), and the people who live near the selected route will have to deal with the hassles of construction. That disruption can be due to the state wasting a billion dollars on improving a highway that does not need any improvements, or it can be due to constructing the modern transportation facility that provides most of the major communities of southwestern Indiana with direct access to each other and Indianapolis. Ultimately I trust that the State of Indiana will make the right decision.

Sincerely,

Chris Lawrence