

## CHAPTER 5 – PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Throughout the course of the I-66 Corridor Planning Study, local citizens, public officials and representatives from government resource agencies were given the opportunity to provide input on the proposed corridors and issues of relevance to the study. This chapter describes the public and agency involvement activities that occurred throughout the study process and describes the comments and input received as a result of these efforts. In addition to the information presented in this chapter, material related to the public and agency involvement process is included in **Appendix G**. This material includes public meeting notices, meeting minutes, questionnaires, meeting summaries and agency letters.

This chapter along with Appendix G includes materials from the general public, public interest groups and local, state and federal agencies, including the Cumberland Valley Area Development District, the Lake Cumberland Area Development District, U.S. Forest Service, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and KYTC.

### A. PUBLIC MEETINGS

As part of the public involvement segment of this study, two sets of public meetings were held in London and Somerset. Information related to these meetings is provided below and in Appendix G.

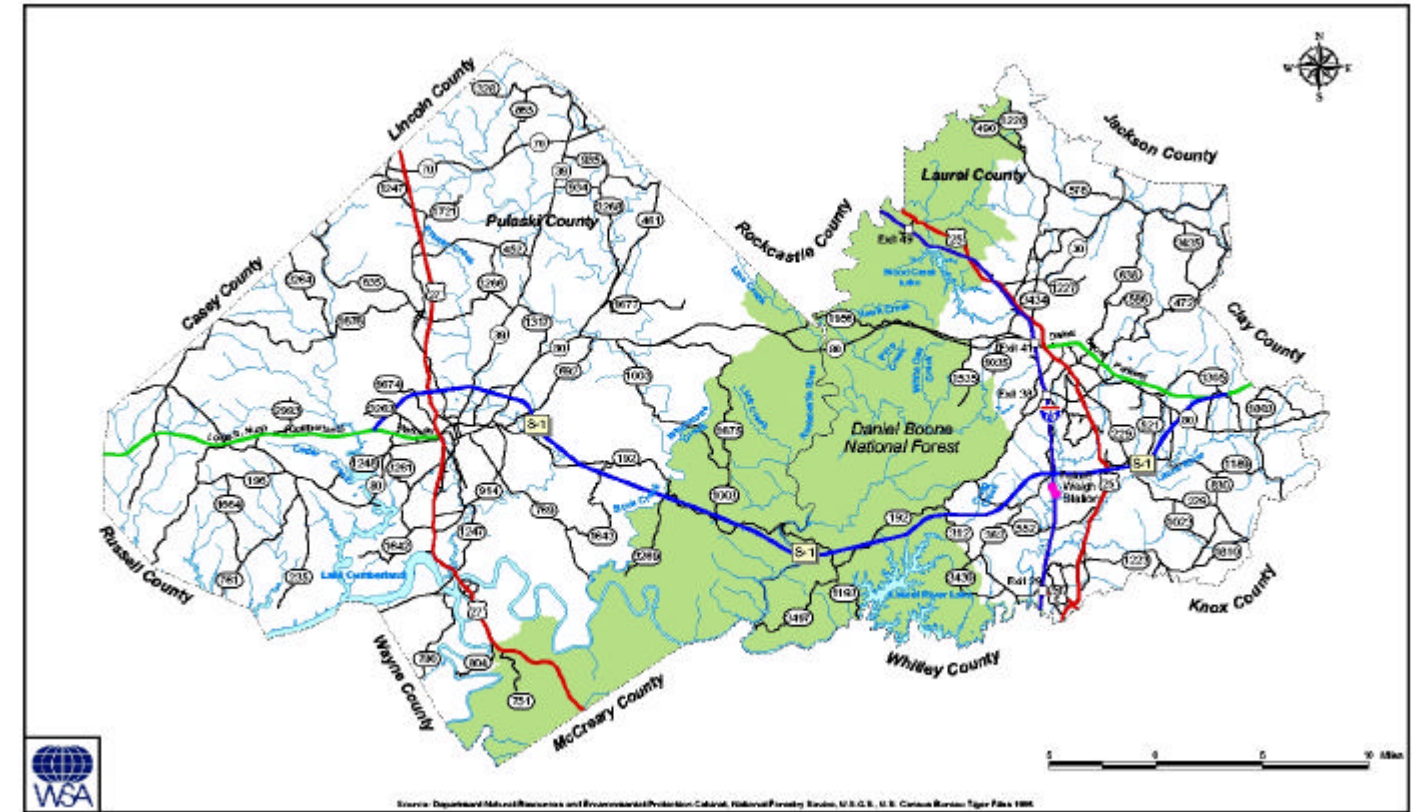
#### 1. Summer 1999 Public Meetings

An initial set of public meetings was held for this study on June 15, 1999 in Somerset and on June 17, 1999 in London. At these meetings, the KYTC presented an initially preferred corridor for I-66 between Somerset and London. The preferred corridor, illustrated in **Exhibit 5.1**, generally followed the KY 192 corridor through southern Pulaski and Laurel counties. While many meeting attendees expressed support for the I-66 project and for the preferred corridor, many others expressed strong concerns and opposition to these same items.

Comment sheets were distributed to attendees, who were encouraged to express their views on the project and the corridors evaluated, including the preferred corridor. Attendees were also encouraged to publicly ask questions and express their opinions about the I-66 corridor. Generally, those in favor of the project cited economic improvements, travel benefits and safety enhancements for the region. Many citizens in favor of the preferred corridor expressed concerns about less than desirable highway conditions along KY 192 and needs for improved accessibility to the area.

Many of the comments publicly voiced throughout the meetings were in opposition to I-66 and to the preferred corridor. The opposition focused on the potential damage the corridor may pose to a broad range of environmental issues. These issues included impacts to the Daniel Boone National Forest, the Cane Creek Wildlife Management Area, the Wild River portion of the Rockcastle River, Laurel River Lake, other area rivers and streams, threatened and endangered species, and other wildlife within the corridor. Many questions were asked about the possibility of utilizing the existing KY 80 corridor as an alternate.

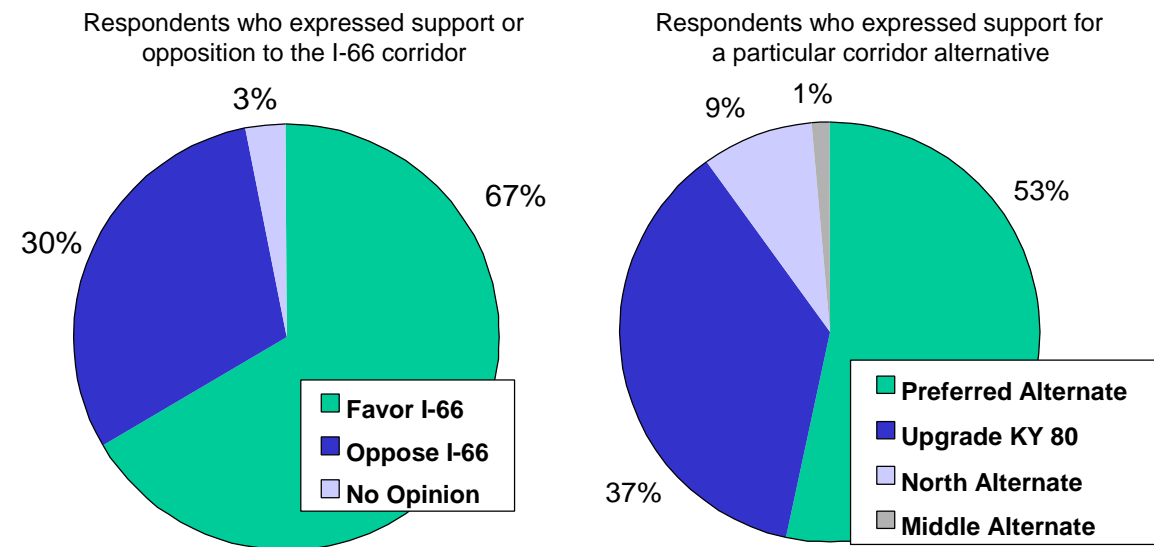
In meetings with the public, interest groups, and resource agencies, it was emphasized that this study and its related activities were a pre-NEPA planning effort and that future NEPA work will follow.



**Exhibit 5.1. Initially Preferred Corridor (as presented in June, 1999)**

A number of written comments were received during and following the public meetings, using public input questionnaires to solicit input on the preferred corridor at that time. A total of 292 responses were received, the results of which are summarized in **Exhibit 5.2**. Of these responses, approximately 67 percent favored the I-66 project and 30 percent opposed the project. Approximately four percent of respondents had no opinion on a proposed I-66 corridor. Among the 216 respondents who expressed support for a particular corridor alternative, as shown in Exhibit 5.2, approximately 53 percent supported the preferred alternate, 37 percent supported an alternate to upgrade KY 80, nine percent supported a north alternate and the remaining one percent supported the middle alternate. Conversely, approximately 74 respondents indicated that they were directly opposed to the preferred alternate corridor. Reasons cited for this opposition include several environmental concerns and the lack of time to review the documents and exhibits that were discussed at the public meetings.

KYTC determined that further study on a KY 80 corridor alternative should be performed. This conclusion was largely in consideration of the environmental concerns raised throughout the first series of public meetings, including concerns voiced by the U.S. Forest Service. The KYTC advised meeting attendees that they would instruct their consultant to review the analysis of all the corridor alternatives and to expand their analysis to consider options to potentially utilize KY 80 as a corridor alternate for I-66.



## Exhibit 5.2. Summer 1999 Public Input Questionnaire Summaries

### 2. Spring 2000 Public Meetings

Because of general concern for the recommended alternate corridor presented in the initial meetings, the alternatives considered for I-66 were expanded to ten corridors. Included in these corridor alternates was an option for using KY 80. Data and analysis results were assembled on each of the corridor alternatives that described traffic benefits and socioeconomic factors, potential environmental impacts, and issues related to engineering and construction costs. A second set of public meetings was held for this study on March 21, 2000 in Somerset and March 23, 2000 in London. Registered attendance at these meetings included 335 individuals in Somerset and 200 individuals in London. The purpose of these meetings was to present the data on the alternative corridors and to allow attendees to comment on the corridor alternatives and analysis results.

In order to maximize attendance, legal advertisements were run in local newspapers, flyers were posted at locations around the communities, and notices placed on television cable access channels. Cabinet officials also spoke with reporters from newspaper, radio and television prior to the meetings. Information packets, maps and public input questionnaires were made available prior to the public meeting at the Area Development District office in London, the Highway District Office in Somerset, and on the Cabinet's Internet web site.

Meeting attendees were encouraged to ask questions and provide comments. Cabinet officials and representatives of the consultant were present to answer questions regarding the alternate corridors prior to, during and after the meetings. At both meetings, a wide range of oral comments were received, both opposed to and supporting the project. At the Somerset meeting respondents opposed to the project cited a lack of justification for the project, needs for road improvements in other areas of the region, an absence of qualitative environmental data, a lack of public input and information, adverse social and community impacts from interstate highways, air and water pollution, and wildlife impacts as general reasons for their opposition. Respondents in

favor of the project cited jobs, economic development and good transportation as reasons for their support. Additional comments raised issues related to continued consideration of options for KY 80, evaluation of other north alternatives, the time-frame for starting property acquisition, as well as the accuracy and sources of the data used in the analysis.

In London, many of the same comments raised in the Somerset meeting were once again expressed both in opposition to and support of the I-66 corridors. Additional concerns were raised related to sinkholes and the potential pollution effect upon them, potential impacts to Native American burial areas along the south corridor alternatives, a lack of quality growth initiatives to preserve land, impacts to the Cane Creek Wildlife Management Area, and a lack of funding for existing highway projects. Supporters expressed comments in favor of the continued development of I-66 across the Commonwealth, the need to relieve traffic bottlenecks in the area, and concerns regarding safety and accident issues along KY 192. Many comments at the London meeting were directed at specific groups of corridor alternatives under consideration. Many individuals were particularly opposed to the south corridor alternatives due to perceived greater impacts on the environment and the Daniel Boone National Forest. Still, some individuals voiced support for the south corridor alternatives, while others offered support for the north and KY 80 options.

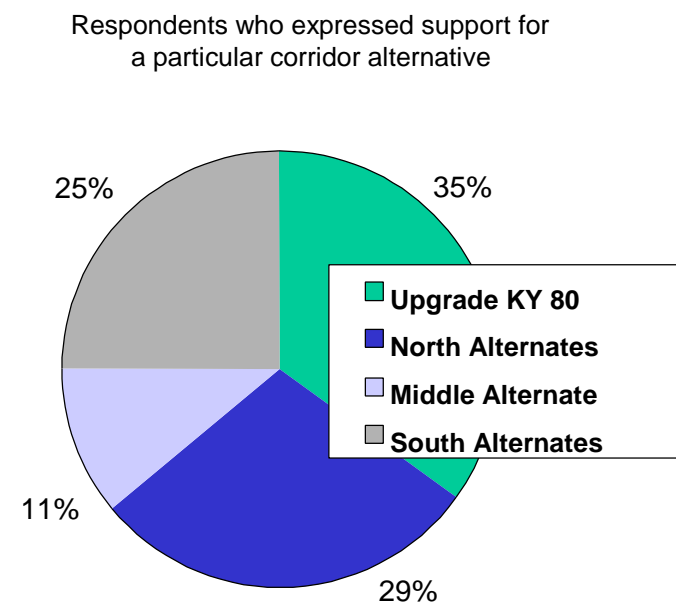
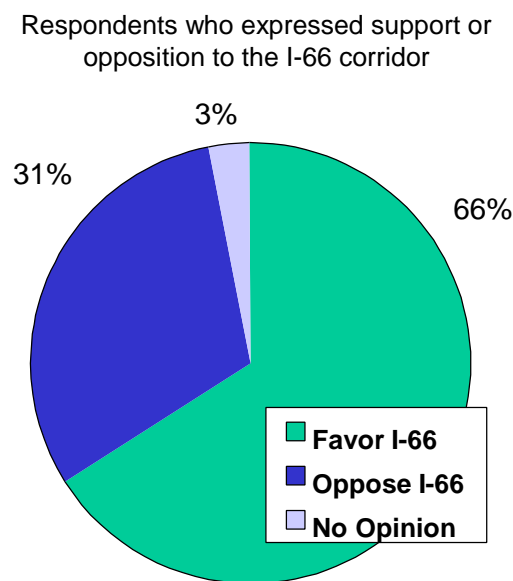
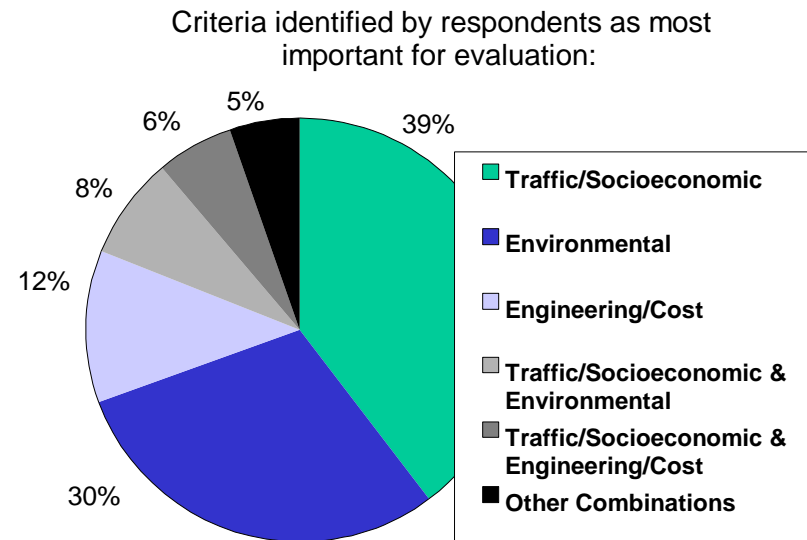
Following the meetings, questionnaires were posted on the Cabinet's web site along with the presentation slides used at the public meetings. The aerial photograph composite showing the corridor alternatives was provided at both the Somerset and Manchester District Offices for the public to view. Citizens who could not attend the public meetings were also able to mail or e-mail their questionnaire directly to the KYTC for inclusion into the meeting results.

A total of 234 questionnaires were collected during and after the second round of public meetings in Somerset and London or received by mail at the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. Three basic questions were addressed on the questionnaire form. General summaries of the responses provided through the questionnaires are illustrated in **Exhibit 5.3**. The first question asked which corridor evaluation issues were most important to the respondents. A total of 207 persons responded to the first question. Traffic and socioeconomic issues were cited by approximately 39 percent of the responses, 30 percent felt environmental issues were most important, and twelve percent indicated engineering and costs to be the most significant issue. Lesser percentages of respondents identified combinations of the issues cited above.

The second question asked if the respondent was in favor of the construction of the I-66 corridor. Of the 227 individuals who answered this question, approximately two-thirds of respondents were in favor of the construction of I-66. These persons generally cited economic growth, improved access and congestion relief as reasons for supporting the corridor. In contrast, respondents who were generally opposed to the corridor expressed feelings that the route was not justified or may cause negative environmental impacts.

The third question looked at the respondents' preferred route(s) and a total of 217 respondents provided answers. Of these, 152 respondents ranked a single corridor as the most preferable. Approximately 35 percent of these respondents identified KY 80 as the most preferable corridor, 29 percent preferred the north corridor alternates, 25 percent preferred the south corridor alternates, and eleven percent preferred the middle alternate.





**Exhibit 5.3. Spring 2000 Public Input Questionnaire Summaries**

In addition to questionnaires received by mail, several packages of materials and letters were received from citizens and public interest groups. A summary of responses received from these groups is detailed in the following section.

**B. OTHER PUBLIC INPUT**

Throughout the course of the study, local planning agencies, several public interest groups and other citizens were provided with information or submitted inquiries, commentaries and information related to the I-66 Corridor Planning Study. On numerous occasions, the KYTC and its consultants met or corresponded with these groups and individuals to discuss the project, the study process and to receive input. KYTC explained to each group that the Transportation Cabinet is proactively seeking input early from various groups with an interest in the project and this was breaking new ground for the Transportation Cabinet. The following describes the public input activities that occurred with these various groups and additional information is provided in Appendix G.

**1. Area Development Districts**

Two of the first organizations to be afforded an opportunity to hear about the I-66 Corridor Planning Study and to offer public input to the process were the two Area Development Districts (ADDs) with jurisdiction over portions of the study area. Fifteen Area Development Districts exist throughout Kentucky and serve as regional planning and coordination agencies for a variety of services, including transportation planning activities. Standing committees on transportation planning exist within each ADD. For Pulaski County, the Lake Cumberland ADD has jurisdictional responsibilities. For Laurel County, the Cumberland Valley ADD has jurisdictional responsibilities. The KYTC and its consultants met with the transportation planning committees for each of these ADDs to discuss the I-66 corridor study and the analysis of alternative corridors. These meetings were conducted during the Summer of 1999 and the Spring of 2000. Representatives from the ADDs were also included in other related project meetings through the course of the study and offered input on recommendations for the study. The following sections summarize the recommendations expressed by ADD representatives relative to the evaluation of corridor alternatives.

- *Lake Cumberland Area Development District* – Representatives noted that from their perspective, there was general consensus on the need for and importance of the corridor. It was felt that, due to environmental concerns, the south and middle alternatives would be difficult. As a result, the north and KY 80 alternatives would likely offer the best opportunities. The north alternative N-1 was identified as being the best corridor alternative and the importance of going south of the London area to facilitate accessibility and improved highway connections was noted, particularly a better connection to the Corbin area.
- *Cumberland Valley Area Development District* – Representatives advised that their committee had not formally endorsed a particular corridor alternative but generally preferred an alignment that would pass between London and Corbin in order to provide service to both of these communities. Concern was expressed with respect to the KY 80 alternative relative to local traffic service and access issues. It was noted that the north portion of the study area was already served by a high-quality four-lane roadway, but the south portion was not. Therefore, there was a need to provide a similar facility to provide better access for the south portion of the study area.

**2. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth**

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFC), based in London, Kentucky, is a grassroots organization of approximately 3,000 members with chapters statewide that is involved in areas of

social, economic and environmental concerns. KYTC representatives and consultants for the I-66 corridor study met with members of the organization on March 10, 2000 to discuss the current planning effort and to receive input from members of KFC. Meeting attendees were provided with a preview of the information and data proposed for presentation at the upcoming public meetings. Members of KFC expressed concern over the south corridors cutting through unique and fragile areas of the Daniel Boone National Forest. In opposing the south corridors, KFC identified issues such as damage to the wildlife and the scenic nature of the area; disruption to families, homes and communities; impacts on endangered species; and adverse effects on Laurel River Lake and the associated tourism industry of the area. KYTC and consultant staff described the approach and data being used to evaluate the corridor alternatives. At this meeting, a flyer completely opposing I-66 was given to KYTC with cited reasons.

At the public meeting in London in June 2000, KFC distributed a revised statement expressly opposing the south corridor alternatives because these alternatives would be:

- Cutting through a unique and fragile natural area that is home to endangered species, underground caves, and scenic sites that will be permanently damaged;
- Unnecessarily disrupting families, homes and communities;
- Providing fewer opportunities for local business and industry along the route because so much of the land is owned by the national forest;
- Not utilizing the existing KY 80 corridor;
- Changing the character of rural areas;
- Adversely impacting the tourism industry of Laurel River Lake that is already at 100 percent of capacity; and,
- Destroying the character of many Laurel County attractions that will also hurt tourism.

### 3. KICK 66

KICK 66 was formed in response to the KYTC planning efforts for the I-66 corridor throughout the Commonwealth and is a coalition of groups, businesses and concerned citizens who are opposed to I-66. The organization maintained an internet web site to provide information related to their position on the project and actively solicited input and support from interested groups. On March 14, 2000 a meeting was held between the KYTC, its consultants, and members of KICK 66. During this meeting, KICK 66 was provided with an overview of the current planning study for the I-66 corridor between Somerset and London and a preview of the analysis results to be presented at the second round of public meetings. Following presentations by the KYTC and the consultants, KICK 66 members were afforded the opportunity to provide comments and ask questions. Topics raised by members of the organization included:

- Overriding concerns of the organization about the I-66 project on both a national and state level and that the organization would be working to stop the project;
- Need for further review time to consider the information being presented and developed for the study;
- General concerns over adverse impacts from the development of the interstate highway system and related cultural problems;

- Feelings that research studies have been done which suggest that the construction of interstate highways have little economic impact on rural areas;
- Need for considering a “no-build” alternative as part of the analysis options;
- Drainage impacts to cave and karst features and the use and interpretation of data regarding these issues; and,
- Numerous issues related to impacts upon natural areas, wildlife, recreational facilities, and potential Native American burial areas.

Many members of KICK 66 were present at the public meetings for the I-66 corridor. Following the second round of public meetings, the group presented a package of material stating their position on the project. Their position as stated in a two-page executive summary is as follows:

- They opposed the creation of any new highway corridors through the south and middle portions of the study area;
- They find it unnecessary to create any new highway corridor, instead preferring the KY 80 corridor to be upgraded to an interstate facility; and,
- They find it unnecessary to construct any interstate corridor through the study area or State of Kentucky.

In addition to the executive summary, numerous materials were included in their submittal including the following: expert opinions; local comments, statewide comments and considerations; cave and karst information; species and environmental data and reports; letters of endorsement and supporting organizations; and a petition opposing the I-66 corridor as proposed. The KICK 66 group in their document summary found the corridor alternates to be deficient for the following reasons:

- Alignments cut through undeveloped land;
- Routes cross the Rockcastle River (registered as a state Wild River);
- Alternatives do not use existing road grades;
- Area is highly sensitive to environmental change;
- All alignments cross areas of karst topography; and
- Routes will not relieve traffic congestion into Lake Cumberland region from KY 461.

The KICK 66 organization also provided petition signatures from what it identified as 1500 individuals and letters of endorsement from 30 state and national organizations that it also identified as supporting their position.

### 4. Other Groups and Citizens

Many other citizens, organizations, and interest groups wrote or otherwise contacted the KYTC to express input related to the I-66 project and the proposed corridor alternates. Many citizens wrote to express opposition to the corridor as a whole or to cite specific concerns related to possible impacts to features along the corridors. Areas of citizen concerns principally identified impacts to the forest; however, other concerns related to effects upon caves and karst features,

wildlife, and wasting tax dollars. Other citizens wrote to express support for the project, encourage the KYTC to consider certain needs in the development of the route, or express their feelings that environmental groups were making misleading statements. Corridor needs expressed by citizens in support of the project included interchange locations, access requirements, and preferences for various routing options.

The National Speleological Society (NSS) is an organization founded for advancing the study, conservation, exploration and knowledge of caves. The NSS protested the handling of the I-66 decision-making process, including citing what it believed to be NEPA violations and poorly organized public information meetings. The organization expressed its opposition to any further development of the interstate project. Still, NSS representatives offered very useful material and information on karst geology and caves, with specific reference to areas within Pulaski County that could be affected by the corridor alternatives.

The Kentucky Heartwood organization, an advocacy group for preserving public forest areas within Kentucky, wrote to express concerns related to the inadequacy of public involvement, project scope and study process. Members of the organization stated that none of the current corridors were acceptable, full analysis of the need and justification of the I-66 corridor was lacking, and feasibility studies should be redone to account for environmental, social and cultural factors.

The Sierra Club Cumberland Chapter were pleased to see that consideration was being given to the KY 80 alternate but stated that the need had not been demonstrated for an interstate level of service between the Louie B. Nunn (Cumberland) and Daniel Boone Parkways. The chapter presented several reasons for not supporting the project, most notably "sprawl" development and the lack of need for an interstate facility. The Sierra Club expressed its support for "smart growth" and "sustainable development".

### C. RESOURCE AGENCY INPUT

Many local, state and federal resource agencies, with diverse areas of public responsibility, were included in the process of evaluating the corridor alternatives for I-66. Because all of the proposed corridors crossed portions of the Daniel Boone National Forest, input from representatives of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF), were solicited at various junctures throughout the project. Additional input from other resource agencies was solicited through meetings with these agencies or through written requests for input. The following sections describe the input received from these organizations.

#### 1. U.S. Forest Service, Daniel Boone National Forest

Correspondence and meetings between USFS representatives, the KYTC and the I-66 consultants occurred throughout the planning study and members of the USFS were present at all resource agency and public meetings. The USFS was initially contacted in May of 1998 to advise them of the scope of the study and representatives from the agency provided the consultant with a map of potential corridor options. On June 8, 1999, the USFS submitted a letter to the KYTC to provide the Cabinet with several comments and observations related to the study and the project. The USFS noted their understanding of the need for the project but emphasized their desire that the recommended corridor be developed so that the forest resources were impacted as little as possible. The USFS suggested that the KY 80 corridor be provided with further consideration as

an alternative and that the USFS be afforded additional opportunity for input to the project. A number of areas of concerns were presented by the USFS, and these included the following:

- Need for greater consideration of sensitive aquatic and terrestrial species;
- Negative impacts from increased activity on Laurel River Lake;
- Land use concerns related to the unique character and features of the forest;
- Problems related to geotechnical and geologic features for the area;
- Issues pertaining to noise and water quality; and,
- Disagreement with the rating system and procedure used to arrive at an initially preferred alternative.

In their letter, the USFS concluded by requesting further and more involved coordination between themselves and the KYTC throughout future project development efforts and offered their resources in forthcoming environmental and design activities.

In a meeting with the USFS on February 16, 2000, KYTC representatives briefed the organization on the revised evaluation of the corridor alternatives, including the KY 80 corridor and the planned program of public involvement activities. The USFS noted that the additional planning efforts were more beneficial in affording an analysis of corridors and suggested that the public should be better able to understand the impacts and effects of the alternatives.

In its letter to the KYTC dated March 21, 2000, the USFS offered several comments relative to the project's purpose and need. Specific concerns were noted in reference to a continued emphasis upon improving access to tourism and recreational facilities. Members of the USFS felt that increased traffic to Laurel River Lake would be a significant detriment to this facility. The USFS provided a survey of lake users that indicated a general feeling that recreational use of the lake was already over-capacity. With respect to environmental issues, the USFS suggested separate consideration of those issues pertaining to only national forest land and to the evaluation of more qualitative impacts upon the environment and recreational facilities.

The USFS did provide a comprehensive review of all the corridor alternatives and data related to park property boundaries, cliff lines and habitat areas for threatened and endangered species. The south corridor alternatives were of particular concern due to their proximity to many forest service facilities, potentially greater impacts to plant and animal species, potential effects upon karst areas and cliff lines, and effects upon lakes and recreational facilities. The middle corridor alternate was considered to be problematic due to its impacts upon the Rockcastle River Wild River corridor. Related Wild River statute documentation is located in Appendix G. The north corridor alternates had fewer impacts to the Wild River area, but individual north corridors crossed recreational trails or crossed watersheds and streams that are associated with threatened and endangered or sensitive species habitats.

Considering the existing impacts to national forest service property and the potential number of acres taken from their property, USFS representatives identified the KY 80 corridor as posing the least adverse impacts, followed by alternatives N-2, N-1, N-4 and N-3. The M-1 corridor and all of the south corridors were considered to have the greatest degree of potentially adverse impacts to the forest and associated environmental features.

## 2. Resource Agency Meetings

Two group meetings were held through the course of study to allow representatives from state and federal resource agencies to have an opportunity to hear about the study, evaluate data and analysis results, and to provide input to the study process. Resource agencies who sent representatives to attend the meetings included the following:

- U.S. Forest Service, Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF)
- Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife (KDFWR)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Kentucky Workforce Development Cabinet (KWDC)
- Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development (KCED)
- Kentucky Heritage Council (KHC)
- Kentucky Tourism Development Cabinet (KTDC)
- Local Emergency Management Services (EMS)
- West Virginia Division of Highways, Planning Division (WVDOH); and
- Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC)

The first of two agency meetings was held December 14, 1999. In this meeting, elements of the I-66 project were presented to agency representatives, including the scoping study between Somerset and London, detailing the evaluation process, corridors considered, project challenges and areas of study focus. Project specific and generalized comments and questions were addressed following the presentations. Comments included during the meeting included:

- Questions regarding the relationship of the current study to subsequent NEPA documentation;
- Consideration of economic impacts to distressed counties;
- Concerns regarding impacts to crossroads within the corridor;
- Opportunities to share data among project sponsors and resource agencies; and,
- Coordination with on-going studies in West Virginia.

The second agency meeting took place on March 14, 2000 and looked specifically at the I-66 Southern Kentucky Corridor Study from Somerset to London. Attendees included representatives from the U.S. Forest Service DBNF, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, FHWA and the KYTC. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the current evaluation of the ten corridor alternatives. One important point addressed the further evaluation of the KY 80 corridor and re-evaluating other corridor alternatives. Questions were raised about several environmental areas including wetlands, threatened and endangered species, historic structures and the lakes. In regard to the Laurel River Lake area, it was noted that negative impacts may result from the interstate's close proximity to the lake. According to user surveys collected by the U.S. Forest Service, the lake is already over-used and providing better access to the lake would only

aggravate the problem. Further items addressed include a potential interchange location with I-75, Native American input, and KY 80 cost estimating. It was noted that this study is an early planning document that would require further studies. In addition, no recommended corridor was presented at the meeting and it was suggested that more than one corridor could become the recommendation of the scoping study.

## 3. Other Resource Agency Input

In addition to the meetings with USFS officials and the two resource agency meetings, a number of letters were received by the KYTC from a number of local agencies. Comments received are briefly summarized by agency below:

- *United States Department of Agriculture* – Karst topography, steep slopes, and threatened and endangered species in the study area must be considered. The economic benefits of building a new road versus the expansion of an existing road should be weighed.
- *Russell County Judge-Executive* – The project would enhance local tourism and economic/industrial development.
- *Office of State Archaeology* – Much of the study area has not been surveyed for sites and nearby surveys have indicated the presence of sites. Archaeological investigations in the study area should be completed to determine local impacts.
- *Cincinnati Department of Environmental Health* – Recent decisions by the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress indicate a national priority to preserve forested areas. Any new corridor between Somerset and London should be opposed for environmental reasons.
- *Kentucky State Police* – Comments expressed concerns with the future interchange at I-66 and I-75. If the interchange is placed within or close to London, the local system could not withstand the traffic increases and provide the necessary facilities. It was suggested that the interchange be located north or south of London to avoid presently congested areas.
- *Somerset/Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce* – The Chamber's Board of Directors supports the construction of I-66 and endorses the construction of a north corridor.

## D. KYTC INTRADEPARTMENTAL INPUT

Although the Southern Kentucky (I-66) Corridor Planning Study was conducted under the direction of the KYTC's Division of Planning, staff members throughout many areas of the Transportation Cabinet were involved in the study process and provided input regarding the evaluation of alternatives and the development of study recommendations.

### 1. Comments from Local District Offices

Local district offices of the KYTC's Department of Highways included District 8 in Somerset, which has jurisdiction in Pulaski County, and District 11 in Manchester, which has jurisdiction in Laurel County. Representatives from these districts participated in project and public meetings and provided insight in regard to various project issues and future project development activities.

Comments offered by District 8 staff advised that the S-3 alternative passing south of Somerset would not be viable due to the need for providing a large number of bridge crossings

and also due to the environmental concerns inherent in all of the south and middle corridor alternatives. Concern was expressed relative to access and traffic issues associated with the KY 80 alternative. Specifically, it was noted that KY 80 currently provides for some local traffic functions that could not be easily provided with an interstate-type facility. The district did not think that building I-66 directly over KY 80 was an acceptable option due to difficulties that would be encountered throughout the construction process and that existing KY 80 served a local highway need that would not be fulfilled with an interstate highway. The District 8 staff also noted that the current corridor assumed north of Somerset might require adjustments northward during subsequent design phases in order to minimize impacts to homes and new development in the area.

Comments offered by District 11 staff expressed concerns about the environmental challenges posed by the south and middle corridor alternatives. The district also added that the proposed interchange with I-75 and the corridors passing north of London (N-2, N-3) would be particularly challenging due to the need to cross the Interstate, US 25 and the CSX railroad as part of that single interchange configuration. District 11 representatives were also involved in speaking with local citizens and community groups regarding the project and noted that, through their discussions, the general sentiment has been in favor of an alignment south of London, although some individuals have supported a north alignment.

## **2. Interdisciplinary Team Meeting**

On April 26, 2000, an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) meeting was held with representatives from throughout the Transportation Cabinet. Minutes of this meeting are included in Appendix G. Included in the meeting were representatives from Office of the Secretary, Office of the State Highway Engineer, Districts 8 and 11, Program Management, Design, Bridges, Construction, Environmental, Materials/ Geotechnical, Operations and Right-of-Way/Utilities. Also included in the meeting were representatives from the Cumberland River and Cumberland Valley Area Development Districts and the Federal Highway Administration. The meeting included a review of the background of the study and prior project activities, a review of project goals, a presentation of alternative corridors, discussion of advantages and disadvantages within each alternative corridor, the analysis methodology, a summary of public input and the development of study recommendations.

An extensive amount of comments and discussion were offered on the study and the analyses. Based upon all of the concerns expressed, meeting participants were able to proceed through the corridor alternatives and thereby arrive at a consensus recommendation for the project. Meeting participants concurred that, due to serious environmental concerns, input from the U.S. Forest Service, public opposition and low traffic service levels, the south and middle alternatives would not be preferred. The N-2 alternative provided an option to crossing at the existing KY 80 bridge, but created low traffic service levels and adverse travel by the circuitous alignment of this corridor alternative between Somerset and London/Corbin. It was determined that Kentucky's Wild River Statutes permitted the construction of a bridge in the vicinity of KY 80, south of the N-2 corridor. Also, input from environmental resource agencies suggested that expanding or replacing the existing KY 80 bridge would potentially have less adverse environmental impacts than constructing a new bridge within the N-2 corridor. The N-2 corridor also passed within close proximity to Wood Creek Lake, which provides approximately 50 percent of the drinking water for the City of London. Therefore, it was concluded that there would not be

any net environmental benefits gained by the N-2 corridor while there would be a significant loss in traffic and operational efficiency, making the elimination of this alternate advisable.

Meeting attendees noted that an opportunity likely existed for using sections of KY 80, but use of the entire corridor would likely be prohibitive due to right-of-way costs, socioeconomic impacts and major construction challenges. It was noted that construction challenges for an I-66 alternative north of London, traffic service levels, transportation system connectivity, and local preferences generally supported a corridor that would pass south of London and provide access to both London and Corbin. Therefore, it was concluded that the N-3 alternative should be eliminated.

Relative to the N-1 and N-4 corridor alternatives, the major difference identified between the two was that N-1 was situated closer to London. It was generally concluded that interchange challenges with I-66 and I-75 would exist for both of these options, but more flexibility was afforded to Corridor Alternative N-4. Additionally, N-1 could have more significant impacts to subdivisions and business between I-75 and US 25. The N-1 alternative would also be in close proximity to the Levi Jackson State Park, passing between the park and the City of London, and input from local officials and the State Police encouraged consideration of routes farther south of London. Therefore, consensus was reached among meeting attendees on the recommendation of a corridor alternative that would be largely representative of the N-4 alternate. It was suggested, however, that the study recommendations permit future consideration of alignment options along or in close proximity to KY 80, where further design and environmental studies showed such options to be feasible. Further corridor adjustments should be permitted whenever future environmental and design studies would warrant such adjustments.