

II. EARLY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As part of the planning study for I-69 from Eddyville to Henderson, a series of meetings with local officials and the public was conducted at the outset of the project. As discussed in Chapter I, a legal notice was issued prior to these meetings to notify the public that the study had begun and that input would be sought from the public, governmental resource agencies, and other interests.

The meetings with local officials and the general public were intended to gain initial public input on the issues and concerns related to a potential I-69 Corridor. Input was also actively sought from environmental resource agencies that may have involvement in future project development activities.

In order to provide general project information and background for discussion at the early coordination meetings, preliminary project materials were developed. An eight-page project brochure was assembled, providing information on previous I-69 corridor studies and on relevant features of the proposed I-69 corridor between Eddyville and Henderson under consideration in this study. Data collection, analysis and mapping efforts also provided existing traffic, projected future traffic, vehicle crash locations, and existing conditions on the Ford and Breathitt Parkways. Preliminary research related to minimum and maximum design guidelines was assembled. A slide presentation was developed to assist in the discussion of previous, current and future I-69 activities.

The preliminary project materials were designed and arranged in various formats for the early coordination meetings, depending on the audience. Materials presented to local officials, stakeholders, the general public, and various resource agency groups are described in the following sections, along with the subsequent preliminary feedback.

Detailed summaries of local and public comment surveys, minutes of local meetings, and resource agency letters are included for reference in **Appendices B, C, and D**.

A. Local Officials and Stakeholders Meetings (July 16-18, 2002)

A round of meetings with local officials and stakeholders in the project corridor began the process of coordination for the I-69 study between Eddyville and Henderson. These local meetings were held July 16, 17, and 18, 2002 at four locations along the proposed corridor: Eddyville, Princeton, Madisonville, and Henderson, Kentucky. The purpose of the meetings was to introduce the project, discuss potential project issues, and solicit input from the local area leaders. Minutes from the local officials and stakeholders meetings and a summary of questionnaire responses are provided in **Appendix B**.

To introduce the National I-69 Corridor project, attendees were shown a video tape presentation entitled *The New I-69 Corridor*, distributed by the Federal Highway Administration, which gives the I-69 national project perspective and explains how the Eddyville to Henderson portion and other SIUs fit into the larger plan. Also provided were a slide presentation and a summary brochure, each describing tasks involved with study of the Eddyville to Henderson section of I-69, as well as a project study area map.

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A number of exhibit boards were developed for discussion at the local meetings, as shown in **Appendix B**. These included:

- The I-69 Project Study Area;
- Three Alternatives for the Henderson to Evansville I-69 Segment (which lies north of the current study's focus area);
- Typical Section Renderings for the Existing Parkways, plus Minimum and Maximum Interstate Scenarios;
- Sample Analysis to be Completed as part of this Study (Vertical Bridge Clearances);
- Year 2002 Traffic and Level of Service;
- Year 2030 Traffic and Level of Service without the I-66 and I-69 Corridors;
- Year 2030 Traffic and Level of Service with the I-66 and I-69 Corridors; and
- Vehicle Crash Analysis showing High Crash Locations.



Local Meeting in Eddyville
July 16, 2002



Local Meeting in Princeton
July 17, 2002



Local Meeting in Madisonville
July 17, 2002



Local Meeting in Henderson
July 18, 2002

A total of 49 local officials and stakeholders attended the four project meetings held in July of 2002. Thirty-eight (38) attendees completed a written survey questionnaire provided at the meetings (see **Appendix B**) and an additional five (5) survey forms were mailed in after the meetings. The survey results indicate the following:

- 98% (42 of 43 respondents) of the attendees think the I-69 project would be beneficial to the region.
- Public perception of the main issues along the existing Parkways includes traffic congestion, high speeds, large trucks, poor sight distance, substandard curves, narrow lanes, narrow shoulders, and stopped vehicles.
- Survey respondents indicated that additional access is needed near the Princeton Industrial Park, 4 Star Industrial Park, KY 862, US 41, US 62 and KY 935. Improved access is suggested on the Ford Parkway at Exit 4, Exit 13 and Dawson Springs. Improved access is suggested on the Breathitt Parkway at Nortonville, Exit 37, Exit 40, Madisonville, Sebree and Exit 68.
- Local officials also recommended that the main areas to be avoided by future improvements include natural areas or habitats and historic or cultural sites, followed by businesses, commercial properties, and hazardous sites.

Additional comments received through the meetings with local officials and stakeholders are included in the minutes in **Appendix B** and are summarized below:

- There is likely to be a lot of local interest and participation in this project.
- Local citizens are not likely to be opposed to reconstruction of the existing Parkway system.
- More than one design (some minimum and some maximum) should be considered where possible along the future corridor.
- The urban areas and interchanges along the existing Parkways should be given first priority for improvement.
- New interchanges would be beneficial at the 4 Star Industrial Park and the Tyson complex.
- Connecting the County Seats of Livingston, Crittenden, and Lyon Counties would be ideal for any future I-69 Corridor.
- Morganfield and Marion should also be connected to the I-69 Corridor.

B. Public Meetings (September 23 - October 1, 2002)

The project's public coordination efforts continued with a series of four public meetings held between September 23 and October 1, 2002 in Eddyville, Princeton, Madisonville and Henderson. Each public open house was arranged with several project information stations, with KYTC staff and consultants available to answer questions and discuss issues.

At the sign-in station, attendees were given a survey questionnaire, project brochure and information regarding KYTC roadway projects. After signing in, attendees were invited to watch *The New I-69 Corridor* video and a slide presentation that included

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information on: the study area; preliminary project goals; traffic, design and environmental considerations; public involvement opportunities; and contact information.

A number of exhibit boards were arranged in a semi-circle for discussion at the public meetings, as shown in **Appendix C**. These included the following titles:

- Study Area
- Where else will I-69 go?
- How many cars and trucks are on the Parkways today?
- How many cars and trucks will be on the Parkways in 30 years?
- Where are the most crashes occurring?
- Parkway Conditions and Options for I-69
- Examples of Highway Design Issues
- Examples of Traffic and Access Issues
- Examples of Environmental Issues
- Environmental Issues Need Special Consideration



Public Involvement Meetings, Fall 2002

A total of 211 local citizens attended the four public involvement sessions held in the Fall of 2002. Eighty-three (83) completed survey questionnaires were returned at the public involvement sessions or were mailed in following the meetings. The survey results indicate the following:

- 92% (76 of 83) indicated that the I-69 project would be beneficial to the region.
- Public perception of the main issues identified along the existing Parkways includes narrow shoulders, large trucks, too much traffic, high speeds, surface repair, and signs and markings.
- Respondents identified safety issues along the existing Parkways, including interchanges and ramps, standing water, narrow or raised medians, narrow or soft shoulders, and large truck traffic.
- The public recommended improvements to a number of existing interchanges along the Parkways. Along the Ford Parkway, these include Exit 1 and Exit 24. Along the Breathitt Parkway, these include Exit 37, exits near Madisonville, and Exit 63.
- Additional access points to the Parkways were also recommended. Along the Ford Parkway, these include: near the Princeton Industrial Park, at KY 93, east of KY 293, and in Lyon County near the Riverport Authority and Mineral Mound State Park. Along the Breathitt Parkway, these include: near Nortonville, at KY 814, at KY 416, and between Madisonville and Henderson.
- Survey respondents recommended that the main areas to be avoided by future improvements include historic or cultural sites, followed by personal properties or homes.

During the public meetings, some local officials and other citizens expressed support for implementing future I-69 signage along the Parkways. The previous (2002) and current editions (2004) of the *Kentucky Official State Highway Map* identify the study sections of the Breathitt and Ford Parkways as Future I-69. Currently, there are no physical route designation signs along the Parkways or directional signs in the vicinity of the Parkway that are labeled as “Corridor 69.” Public meeting discussions included concern about having the route labeled on the map, but having no signs along the Parkways, since this may confuse motorists.



Future Interstate Corridor 69 signs are posted along portions of the proposed I-69 corridor in other states.

Future Interstate Corridor 69 signs are currently being posted along sections of the proposed route in other states. Similar signing also exists for other proposed interstate highway corridors and FHWA has adopted guidelines for the design and placement of these signs. Within the State of Texas, over two dozen signs currently exist along the proposed route through the state denoting the “Future Interstate Corridor” for I-69. Local citizens have expressed support for erecting signs on the Ford and Breathitt Parkways to represent their designation as “Corridor 69” or “Future Interstate Corridor 69.”

Additional comments received through the public meetings are included in the minutes in **Appendix C** and are summarized below:

- Completion of the I-69 Corridor may assist the local economy.
- The existing Parkways should be upgraded before considering a new interstate through the area. This would be less expensive.
- Interchanges along the Parkways should be upgraded as part of the future improvements.
- There are other roadways in the area that need improvement more than the Parkways. Highway funds and tax dollars should be spent elsewhere.
- Planned improvements to US 641 should be considered when final decisions are made regarding I-69.
- The I-24 interchange should be reconstructed, avoiding the surrounding lakes and natural areas.
- The existing interchange between the Ford Parkway and the Breathitt Parkway should be improved.
- The existing Parkways do not provide for adequate run-off, resulting in standing water and frequent hydroplaning.
- Using the existing Parkways for the I-69 corridor will not serve the community of Hopkinsville.
- Right-of-way needs along any I-69 corridor should be minimized wherever possible.
- Property owners should be involved in discussions of right-of-way needs and fair property values.
- Any guardrails or barriers added to the existing Parkways should include breaks for access by emergency vehicles.

C. Resource Agency Coordination

Many local, state and federal resource agencies, with diverse areas of public responsibility, were included in this planning process. Input was solicited through written requests by letter, and each agency was provided with a project information packet, including the following items:

- Existing and Future Traffic Conditions;
- Vehicle Crash Data and High Crash Locations;
- Preliminary Environmental Footprint;
- Existing Parkway Conditions; and
- Maximum and Minimum Options for a Future I-69 Corridor.

A mailing list of the agencies and copies of the written responses are included in **Appendix D**.

1. Local Agency Comments

The following local agencies offered comments or concerns regarding the project:

- The City of Mortons Gap – The city is in support of the project coming through the Hopkins County area.
- Coalfield Comments – Following the existing Parkway system will provide savings in land acquisition and potential environmental impacts. Realignment of the route (a map is provided) to provide a more direct connection from Madisonville to Dawson Springs could save up to nine miles of final length. Surface and underground mining activity areas should be avoided.
- Economic Development Corporation of Madisonville-Hopkins County – The most critical need is for signage along the current Parkway routes to show designation as future interstates and maintain consistency with the Kentucky Highway Map. Priority should be given to improving high crash locations along the existing Parkways. Bridge clearances, entrance and exit ramp lengths and median widths should meet acceptable interstate standards.
- Henderson County Riverport Authority – The project will have a positive impact on the Henderson County Riverport and the entire county. The project will be beneficial to the existing Industrial Park, creating improved accessibility and providing increased safety.
- Henderson Economic Development Council – One of the most important issues regarding the project is the need for easy north/south access to I-69 for the industries located in Henderson’s Industrial Park. The Industrial Park’s development plans provide for an entrance into the park where KY 2097 intersects US 41. A full I-69 interchange at KY 2097 would allow easy access into the park shortly after exiting the interstate. Henderson is currently a finalist for site selection of a large distribution company who has expressed concerns about the existing connectivity to the Natcher Parkway and US 41. The proposed interchange would benefit this company as well as others considering locating in the Industrial Park.
- Henderson-Henderson County Chamber of Commerce – The Breathitt and Ford Parkways are recommended for use as I-69. This route serves the largest population base and provides cost savings as compared to construction of a new route. It is anticipated that an eastern route for the Ohio River crossing will be forthcoming, allowing for easy access from that segment of the Breathitt Parkway.
- Hopkins County Joint Planning Commission – Local improvement needs include: reconstruction of the KY 109 interchange with the Ford Parkway; construction of a new Ford Parkway interchange with US 41 near Southside Elementary School; and reconstruction of KY 335 from the Breathitt Parkway to KY 481. Issues to consider along the existing Parkways include mined areas, animal feeding operations and wildlife refuges.
- Madisonville Community College – The potential for future economic development in the area will likely increase as a result of I-69. Being so near an interstate connecting Canada and Mexico will certainly benefit both Hopkins

County and Kentucky. Concerns were expressed about travel delay for the many students traveling the Parkways during construction times as well as the existing high crash segment near Madisonville that is noted on a handout distributed to the resource agencies.

2. State Agency Comments

The following state agencies offered comments or concerns regarding the project:

- Kentucky Geological Survey – The project is located within two physiographic regions. Part 1 includes Lyon County and Caldwell County up to the East Fork. This region includes karst features, minimal landslide hazards, gas wells, some suitable aggregate for road construction, the potential for faults or earthquake ground motion, and potential conflicts related to mineral rights. Part 2 includes the remainder of Caldwell County as well as Hopkins, Webster and Henderson Counties. This region has minimal karst features, moderate landslide hazards, potential subsidence or resource conflicts from underground coal mines, no suitable aggregate for road construction, numerous faulted areas and potential earthquake ground motion.
- KYTC Division of Aeronautics – The Division does not have any concerns about the project at this time.
- KYTC Division of Materials – A geotechnical overview was provided for the project study area. Recommendations were made relative to rock formations and appropriate uses; vertical displacement faults; previous and active coal mining locations; oil and gas extraction wells; wetland areas and blueline streams; erosion control methods; karst drainage systems and sinkholes; soil qualities; cut slopes and embankment benches; and earthquake activity. A geologic map of the study area was also included.
- KYTC Division of Multimodal Programs – The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Henderson and the Madisonville Small Urban Area (SUA) fall within the study area. Coordination efforts should include the MPO and previous studies conducted for the SUA. The proposed corridor intersects one designated bicycle route: the TransAmerica Trail east of Sebree in Webster County. Changes to the Sebree interchange should incorporate bicycle facilities to maintain the TransAmerica Trail.
- KYTC Division of Operations – Reconstruction of the Breathitt and Ford Parkways is preferred in lieu of the construction of a parallel route.
- KYTC Division of Traffic, Permits Branch – The proposed route will be part of the National Highway System (NHS). The Permits Branch should be provided early notification of final line and grade for the route to allow for monitoring of outdoor advertising. Full access control should be in accordance with spacing requirements and 603 KAR 5:120.

3. Federal Agency Comments

The following federal agencies offered comments or concerns regarding the project:

- Federal Aviation Administration – There are four public airports in the vicinity of the proposed project. The Federal Aviation Administration should be notified via FAA Form 7460-1, “Notice of Proposed Construction,” if the proposed I-69 should come within 3 miles of any of the four airports. The FAA provided Form 7460-1 along with a map highlighting the locations of the airports within the study area.
- United States Coast Guard – Because this project does not cross waterways over which the Coast Guard exercises jurisdiction for bridge administration purposes, a Coast Guard bridge permit is not required.
- United States Department of Agriculture, Daniel Boone National Forest – The project area falls outside the Daniel Boone National Forest and is not located upstream from any watersheds that drain into or through the National Forest.
- United States Department of Health and Human Services – The following areas of public health concern should be considered during the NEPA process for this project: air quality; water quality/quantity; wetlands and floodplains; hazardous materials/wastes; non-hazardous solid waste; noise; occupational health and safety; land use and housing; and environmental justice.
- United States Environmental Protection Agency – A Scoping and Streamlining Coordination Package for Interstate 69 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Documentation was provided for reference in future phases of this project. Maps were also provided, detailing Potential Environmental Justice Areas, Sensitive Environmental Areas and General Landcover Types.