



KENTUCKY  
RECOMMENDED  
SIX-YEAR HIGHWAY PLAN  
FY 2005 -2010

**APPENDIX B**  
**“MEGA-PROJECT” STATUS**

*“Providing Kentuckians with a safe  
and reliable Highway System...”*

# APPENDIX B

## Kentucky's "Mega-Projects"

As the 2004 edition of the Recommended FY 2005-2010 Six-Year Highway Plan was developed, strong consideration was given to the funding needs associated with four "Mega-Projects" located in Kentucky. As the attached map shows, these projects are (1) the Louisville Bridges project, (2) the Interstate 71/75 Brent Spence Bridge congestion relief project in northern Kentucky, (3) Proposed Interstate 66 in southeastern Kentucky, and (4) Proposed interstate 69 in far western Kentucky. Each of these projects would be an expensive, but welcome, addition to Kentucky's highway system.

The term "Mega-Project" is a reference to the fact that each project will cost near, or in excess of, \$1 billion. As we contemplate the fiscal realities associated with such extreme costs, there is a key factor common to each "Mega-Project" that must be reconciled before tremendous amounts of Kentucky's regular federal-aid and state fund revenues can be applied to any of them. That key factor is the amount of special federal funding that can be earmarked for each project during the reauthorization of federal transportation programs over the months ahead. Given the extremely tight fiscal status of Kentucky's Road Fund, we cannot plan for huge investments in any of the "Mega-Projects" until the true extent of federal support for each project can be gauged.

Each of the four "Mega-Projects" is underway, with varying levels of progress achieved. The remainder of Appendix B provides a description, an approximate total cost, and a brief report on the progress to-date for each project. **With a combined price tag of almost \$9 billion and the realization that this cost is equivalent to two Six-Year Highway Plans, it is obvious that regular state and federal-aid financing of these jobs will significantly affect Kentucky's ability to buy other needed highway improvements over the next 20 years.** Accordingly, we are being very prudent about making commitments until more of the funding factors are known.

### **The Louisville Bridges**

The Louisville Bridges project is located in the Louisville metropolitan area and involves a two-part approach to resolving traffic congestion problems in the region. The existing highway network features a myriad of interstate highway facilities (Interstates 64, 65, and 71) that all meet in a tangled maze of ramps known locally as "Spaghetti Junction" in downtown Louisville. Immediately associated with Spaghetti Junction is the Interstate 65 Kennedy Bridge, which links downtown Louisville with Jeffersonville, Indiana. Since there are no true outer beltways linking the Kentucky and Indiana portions of the Greater Louisville Area, virtually all north-south and east-west traffic is forced through Spaghetti Junction. This creates traffic delays of major proportions during peak morning and afternoon rush hours.

While Spaghetti Junction and the Kennedy Bridge certainly need to be modernized, transportation professionals understand that a major culprit in downtown Louisville traffic congestion is the absence of a "relief valve." To truly accommodate future traffic in the Louisville area, it is essential to connect together the dangling ends of

Interstate 265 east of Louisville. This can be accomplished by building a new bridge over the Ohio River in the vicinity of Prospect, Kentucky, and Utica, Indiana. This new “East End Bridge” would provide an alternative route to Spaghetti Junction and would work in concert with the “Downtown Bridge” to move traffic efficiently through the region.

Much work has been done over the past few years to complete an Environmental Impact Statement for the Louisville Bridges project. Recognizing the dependence of each bridge on the other, a careful balance has been crafted to pursue both new bridges in a harmonious manner. Within the next 18 months, costs and project development schedules will begin to firm up, as will the extent of dedicated federal funding that federal reauthorization and appropriations processes will deliver. The costs for this project over the multi-year project life are expected to approach **\$2.5 billion**.

### **The Interstate 71/75 Brent Spence Bridge**

The Interstate 71/75 Brent Spence Bridge is the focal point for some of the heaviest traffic volumes in Kentucky as these two major north-south interstates cross the Ohio River between Covington, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio. This bridge not only serves traffic between two major urban centers, but it also connects the downtown areas with one of the world’s busiest airports, the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Airport located in Boone County, Kentucky. In recent years, the existing double-deck bridge has been “re-striped” to carry additional lanes of traffic and, although the bridge is still structurally strong as indicated by its sufficiency rating of 64.0 out of a possible 100 points, it is functionally outdated.

Recognizing the old bridge’s inability to meet today’s traffic demands, and knowing that the situation will only worsen in the years ahead, metropolitan transportation planners are working with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to craft a reasonable solution. A feasibility study is currently underway to narrow the corridor options for a new Ohio River bridge, from which further project development work can determine the most desirable approach to solving the traffic problem at this location. There are environmental issues, downtown redevelopment concerns, and physical alignment constraints that work together to make this a very challenging project. Accordingly, one of the most challenging considerations will be the project cost, which is estimated at **\$750 million**, but could grow significantly depending upon the ultimate improvement option recommended.

### **Proposed Interstate 66**

The Proposed Interstate 66 (Transamerica) corridor in southeastern Kentucky extends from Interstate 65 near Bowling Green along the Cumberland Parkway to west of Somerset, from which it departs and extends north and east around Somerset, then along KY 80 and south to Interstate 75 south of London. From Interstate 75, the corridor extends eastward along the Hal Rogers Parkway to Hazard before heading east to US 23 south of Pikeville. From US 23 south of Pikeville, Proposed Interstate 66 would extend across the rugged mountainous terrain of Pike County to existing US 52 (Proposed Interstate 74 Corridor) near Matewan, West Virginia. Along this course,

Proposed Interstate 66 would pass through some of the most severely economically distressed counties in Appalachia.

At the present time, there are three independent segments of Proposed Interstate 66 that are involved in some degree of highway project development. The first of these segments is the north bypass of Somerset, which will serve to provide a high-speed connection from the Cumberland Parkway to KY 80 east of Somerset. Preliminary engineering and environmental studies have been underway, with a corridor location decision expected by this summer. The north bypass of Somerset is expected to cost approximately **\$250 million**.

The second active Proposed Interstate 66 project in southeastern Kentucky is the connector between KY 80 east of Somerset and Interstate 75 south of London. Preliminary engineering and environmental work are also underway for this section, with an approved corridor location expected by the summer of 2006. There are many environmental issues associated with this project including involvement with the Daniel Boone National Forest, a wild and scenic stretch of the Rockcastle River, and numerous cliffline, cave, and cultural/historic concerns. There has been, and will continue to be, considerable public involvement and coordination with resource agencies to minimize the environmental effects of this project. The total estimated cost of the Somerset to London section of Proposed Interstate 66 is **\$1.5 billion**.

The third section of Proposed Interstate 66 that is being developed is the portion of the route between US 23 south of Pikeville and US 52 (Proposed Interstate 74) in West Virginia. An Environmental Impact Statement for this segment of Interstate 66 was completed in October 2003. While environmental issues have proven to be minimal in the Pike County area, the rugged terrain makes this one of the most expensive sections of Proposed Interstate 66 to build. It is expected that it will cost more than **\$2 billion** to complete this connection between US 23 and US 52.

### **Proposed Interstate 69**

Proposed Interstate 69 is being pursued in some manner by every state it traverses, from south Texas to the Michigan border with Canada. The impetus for Interstate 69 is Latin American trade, and the overland transportation need to link Latin America with Canada and the northeastern United States. The states involved in this project are Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan. An Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared for the entire route, with the "purpose and need" of the project focused squarely on freight movement.

In Kentucky, Interstate 69 will follow the existing Purchase Parkway from the Tennessee State Line to Interstate 24, then Interstate 24 to the Western Kentucky Parkway, then the Western Kentucky Parkway to the Pennyriple Parkway, then the Pennyriple Parkway north to Henderson. At Henderson, a new route (including a new Ohio River bridge) will be required to connect to Interstate 64 in southern Indiana. Both Tennessee and Indiana are actively engaged in pursuing their own segments of Interstate 69, and each state has cooperated in studies to assess connections at the state lines.

For Interstate 69 to become fully functional in Kentucky, it is expected that the existing parkway system will have to be upgraded. The Purchase, Western Kentucky, and Pennyrite Parkways are all limited access, four-lane divided highways, but there are spot locations where access control would have to be tightened and shoulder widths, clear zones, and bridge dimensions addressed before interstate highway design standards are achieved in full. It is expected that such upgrades will cost **\$700 million** or more to accomplish. At Henderson, the new route and its new Ohio River bridge will likely cost an additional **\$800 million** to complete. At this time, KYTC is involved in a study of the parkway upgrade needs from Interstate 24 to Henderson, and is on the verge of wrapping up the preliminary engineering and environmental work for the new Ohio River crossing at Henderson. Continuing work on Interstate 69 in Kentucky will depend upon the financial support that can be garnered for the project through the federal reauthorization and appropriations processes.

# *Kentucky's "Mega-Projects"*

