



**City of Bloomington  
Office of the Common Council**

The Honorable Governor Frank O'Bannon  
State House – Room 206  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2797

Dear Governor O'Bannon,

We, the undersigned majority of the Bloomington Common Council, respectfully submit to you and INDOT this statement concerning the proposed I-69 highway routes described in the current Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

In December of 1999, the Bloomington Common Council passed a Declaration opposing any routing of I-69 through our City. A copy of the Declaration is attached. A majority of the current City Council supports that Declaration and has further concerns regarding the routes identified as "preferred alternatives" in the DEIS.

The 1999 Declaration summarizes why we believe that routing I-69 through Bloomington will harm our community. The new DEIS provides details of negative impacts that the City Council did not know in 1999. Examples include the widening of the corridor to 8 lanes in our city to accommodate very large traffic increases, and the taking of numerous homes, churches, and local businesses like the Oliver Winery, which the DEIS notes, "...would be very difficult to find a replacement site for..."

For decades Bloomington has experienced population and economic growth above the state average and above that of other similar-sized Indiana cities like Marion, Anderson, Muncie, and Terre Haute – all located on interstate highways. Indiana ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation in miles of non-urban interstate highway per square mile, yet for many years has experienced among the lowest personal income growth and highest job loss rates of any state. Lack of interstate miles does not appear to be the problem, nor will construction of additional miles be the solution.

Even transportation dependent businesses are successful in Bloomington. The existing road network provides Bloomington with the competitive transportation costs and reliability of service that we need in order to prosper. Rather than a major interstate highway, Bloomington needs better management of the State Road 37 corridor. We ask that INDOT continue with intersection improvements on SR 37, and that new road cuts directly onto SR 37 be prohibited. Frontage access roads are needed to preserve SR 37 as a safe, efficient connection to Indianapolis. Appropriate, fiscally responsible improvements to SR 37 and other area highways will help the region more than a major interstate highway.

Bloomington thrives because people want to live, work, raise families, and build businesses here. As the Declaration explains, Bloomington offers a high, special quality of life that I-69 threatens to diminish.

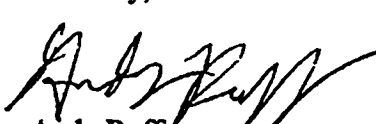
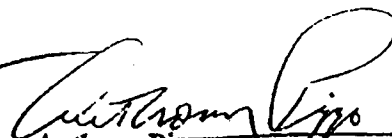




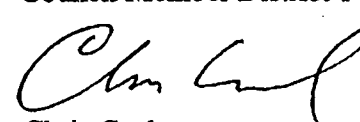
INDOT Commissioner J. Bryan Nicol said the state will choose an I-69 route that is "...best for the State of Indiana as a whole." Since I-69 will be built primarily with Indiana's annual allocation of federal gas tax revenues, not with special federal funds, we agree it is vitally important for the I-69 decision to reflect what is best for all of Indiana.

Each dollar spent on I-69 is a dollar that would otherwise go to another needed project in Indiana, including other important projects in Southwest Indiana. The two Bloomington routes identified in the DEIS as preferred (3B and 3C) are the most expensive alternatives, with cost estimates nearly 90% (800 million) more than the least expensive route, Alternative 1, which is identified as "non-preferred." With the Crossroads 2000 program ending and further transportation cuts likely, there will be hundreds of millions of dollars less for Indiana highway projects even given the recent state gasoline tax increase. Therefore, it is critical that a fiscally responsible route be selected for the route for I-69.

Finally, the DEIS and the Federal Highway Administration estimate that construction of any route other than Alternative 1 would divert 30-40 percent of traffic from existing US 41, doing significant harm to the economies of Terre Haute and other Hoosier communities on that route. The US 41 counties already have many more unemployed people, more people in poverty, and equal or worse general economic conditions than the counties between Bloomington and Evansville on INDOT's "preferred" routes. We share the concern of our sister cities on US 41 that by diminishing their existing economies, the "preferred" I-69 routes harm communities that are already suffering.

According to the DEIS, in addition to being the least costly, Alternative 1 is the least destructive to Indiana's environment. We urge you to use your leadership and your office to select the route for I-69 that is fiscally responsible, conserves thousands of acres of farmland, forests, and wetlands, and thereby preserves those values that are close to all Hoosiers' hearts.

Sincerely,

 Andy Ruff Council Member At-Large	 Anthony Pizzo Council Member At-Large	 Tim Mayer Council Member At-Large
 S. Patricia Cole Council Member District 1	 Jeffrey Willsey Council Member District 4	 Mike Diekhoff Council Member District 3
 Chris Gaal Council Member District 6		

cc: J. Bryan Nicol – Commissioner, Indiana Department of Transportation  
Michael Grovak – Bernardin, Lochmueller, & Associates, Inc.