

# A Superior I-69 Alternative

## INDOT's Study Bolsters Chances For U.S. 41/I-70

The latest news is good from the Indiana Department of Transportation concerning its process for choosing a route for the proposed Interstate 69 from Evansville to Indianapolis.

A route using U.S. 41 from Evansville to Terre Haute, then Interstate 70 from Terre Haute to Indianapolis, is one of five still in contention. INDOT says it will pare those options to one by the end of next year. While the route through southwestern and west-central Indiana fits the state's needs and has widespread support, it's far from a sure thing. Whether the U.S. 41/I-70 route is eventually chosen will more likely depend on political factors than on environmental, transportation or financial considerations.

One must remember that Governor Frank O'Bannon has been clear in his support of a new-terrain highway through southwestern Indiana. He wants to give Evansville its direct link to Indianapolis, and he wants to carve a concrete corridor through several rural countries in the process.

INDOT has not necessarily followed a script that would deliver the route O'Bannon clearly prefers. But those who see U.S. 41/70 as the most feasible route cannot ignore the politics of this high-stakes selection process.

The U.S. 41/I-70 route is, of course, favored by business and government leaders in Terre Haute and around the Wabash Valley. Having a high volume of traffic that now travels local thoroughfares re-routed to a new-terrain highway miles away would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the area.

The Terre Haute alternative has many attractive features. It's the least expensive route, would use existing roadways exclusively, preserve farmland and conserve the environment.

In fact, it's unfortunate that INDOT doesn't just call off its selection process and begin building the new I-69 through Terre Haute right away.

But politics demands other scenarios be explored. It may even demand that another choice be made, regardless of the facts. But, even if this route is not chosen, INDOT's study has shown everyone in Indiana what the people of west-central Indiana have known all along.

The U.S. 41/I-70 alternative is clearly the best.

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