Chapter 4: Summary of Comments

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) recognize that a key component in the success of any transportation project depends on many factors, none of which are more essential than the involvement of the local elected and appointed officials, community members and resource agencies. An open line of communication between local officials, the public, and the Project Management Team is a key component in developing a transportation plan that will best address the concerns of the community. The public involvement process begins with the gathering of information from the local officials and community members that will live with the project upon its completion. The process continues by providing information to these same stakeholders and keeping them informed of the project's progress and direction. This exchange of information is a dynamic process that continues throughout the life of the project.

The US 31 Plymouth to South Bend Project includes an extensive Public Involvement Program. Elements of this program consist of a project web site (www.us31study.org), a project toll-free hotline (800.731.8731), a series of public meetings, a Public Hearing, Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, stakeholder meetings, news releases, elected officials briefings, and resource agency coordination.

A Public Hearing to discuss the findings of the DEIS for the US 31 – Plymouth to South Bend Study was held on Thursday, March 18, 2004. INDOT published an official public notice of the public hearing that identified the date, time, location and format of the hearing, as well as the methods and deadline for making a comment. The public hearing was held in order to provide citizens an opportunity to learn about the project and also to offer all interested persons an opportunity to comment on the project. INDOT held two separate sessions as a part of this Public Hearing. Session One of the March 18th Public Hearing was held at the Old Lakeville School Project – Newton Center, located at 601 N. Michigan Street in Lakeville. Doors opened to the public at 1:00pm with the formal presentation beginning at 2:00pm and a public comment session, which extended to 4:30pm. Approximately 450 people were in attendance at Session One. Session Two of the March 18th Public Hearing was held at the LaVille Jr.-Sr. High School, located at 69969 US 31 South, in Lakeville. Doors opened to the public at 6:00pm with the formal presentation beginning at 7:00pm and a public comment session, which extended to 9:30pm. Approximately 550 people were in attendance at Session Two.

Each session of the public hearing featured an "Open House" area, a formal presentation, and a public comment session. The format, information presented, and display materials were identical at each session. Project officials from INDOT and FHWA were on hand to accept comments and discuss concerns. Project area maps, displays, and handouts were available for public inspection during both sessions. Upon arrival, attendees were asked to sign in and were briefed on the meeting format. Attendees were then free to view the exhibits at their own pace and ask questions of study team representatives (including FHWA and INDOT personnel) on a one-on-one basis. Additional information available at the hearing included copies of the DEIS Executive Summary and relocation assistance information. In the presentations, study team members explained the significance of the hearing, reviewed the information presented in the DEIS, and explained how to make an official comment. Meeting participants could comment for the official hearing record either in writing or by participating in a public statement session. Comment forms were available at both hearings. An audio recorder was available to take comments for the official record. In addition to submitting written comments at the hearing, attendees were informed that they could mail written comments, and that the deadline for making a comment was Monday, April 26, 2004. All comments submitted during this comment period will be reviewed, evaluated, and substantive comments addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement to be developed in the future. Copies of the sign-in sheets and comments are included in the official transcript to the public hearing.

The public hearing received extensive coverage in the local newspapers and television stations and attendance at the two sessions totaled approximately 1000 people. The US 31 – Plymouth to South Bend DEIS Public Comment Period ended on Monday, April 26, 2004. INDOT received over 2,300 comment letters during the DEIS Public Comment Period. All comments submitted during this comment period have been reviewed, evaluated, and substantive comments will be addressed in the FEIS. From the DEIS comments and many additional comments received during public meetings and resource agency reviews, a wide range of issues emerged. Many of the comments focused on several common issues that are addressed in this document. These issues are grouped and addressed under the following broad categories:

- Safety and local access to neighborhoods and businesses,
- Modify alternatives to reduce environmental impacts (wetlands, forests and forest fragmentation, threatened and endangered species, etc.),
- Impacts to the natural environment, particularly wetland and forest impacts,
- Visual, noise and aesthetics impacts associated with the proposed elevated roadway between Kern Road and US 20,
- Maximize use of existing US 31 corridor.

The comments contained in the following sections are examples of some of the recurring comments received during the DEIS Public Comment Period. There were many comments from different individuals that were very similar in their content. A representative comment has been selected and utilized in this document to provide an example of some of the common issues that emerged during the comment period.

4.1 Safety and Local Access to Neighborhoods and Businesses

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comment 1A: Comment from Mr. Carl Littrell, City of South Bend Engineer, at the March 18, 2004, Public Hearing:

> "We're very concerned on E shifted that there's no connectivity between the Gilmer Park neighborhood and Jewel Wood neighborhood to reestablish the connection northward into Ireland Road. As I understand the interchange being considered from the shifted alignment, the frontage road would not connect to Ireland so people in Gilmer Park or Jewel Wood would have to go to either Miami, Linden or Locust to intersect then with Ireland Road and north into the City of South Bend."

Comment 1B: Comment from Mayor Steve Luecke, City of South Bend, in April 6, 2004 comment:

> "We also have concerns about the frontage roads for Es. We believe that a twenty-one foot width is too narrow for the traffic they should handle. Furthermore, they do not appear to provide access from either Ireland Road or Michigan Street. Therefore, the elevated road effectively isolates commercial and residential areas on both sides of its alignment. Our public safety response would be hindered. Other city services and day-to-day commuting would also become a significant challenge. How would an ambulance quickly get from our station on Ireland to a traffic accident on Main Street, south of US 20? How would a

resident of Gilmer Park get to the movies on Chippewa? The circuitous routes that would be required would not only inconvenience residents, they could also be life threatening because of delayed emergency response time."

Response 1: There were several meetings, continued coordination between INDOT and local agencies, including emergency service personnel, as well as a substantial amount of engineering and traffic analysis involved in addressing local access issues from Kern Road to US 20. Local access, especially for emergency service needs, will be provided across the Preferred Alternative G-Es and across US 20. Mitigation measures aimed at providing for north-south connectivity across US 20 include the extension of Fellows Street (east of US 31) southward over existing US 20 to Jackson Road and the extension of Scott Street (west of US 20) northward over existing US 20. Mitigation measures aimed at providing for the improved east-west connectivity across US 31 include overpasses at Johnson and Jackson Roads. An overpass at Jackson Road will also provide local east-west connectivity between the Fellows Street and Scott Street extensions. In addition, Main Street will be extended southward to connect to existing US 31 just north of Kern Road.

Comment 2: In a comment dated April 15, 2004, from the Marshall County Commissioners, an alternative proposal for access in Marshall County was presented that identified interchanges at US 6 and at 7A Road, as well as overpasses at several locations.

Response 2: A meeting was held on Thursday, July 1, 2004, with officials representing INDOT, FHWA, Marshall County and the City of Plymouth present. Discussions focused on alternative access locations (overpass/underpass locations, interchange locations, etc.) as proposed in their comment letter on the DEIS. The meeting ended with all parties present in agreement on a revised access plan for Marshall County as shown in **Appendix A**. Of particular interest is the relocation of the DEIS proposed interchange location at West 5A Road to 7th Road. There currently is no intersection at 7th Road and US 31; however, the Marshall County Comprehensive Plan identifies a future roadway at this location. INDOT agreed to identify the 7th Road location as an interchange in this study with Marshall County committing in writing that they will construct 7th Road prior to or in conjunction with the US 31 construction project. This commitment would include the new 7th Road alignment from Michigan Road, approximately 1.5 miles to the east to the western limits of the new interchange location and from the eastern limits of the new interchange location approximately 0.25 miles to the east to Linden Road. In making this commitment to construct the new portion of 7th Road, Marshall County must also agree to complete all preliminary engineering, required environmental studies, all land acquisition activities and any other items that are required as related to this new roadway.

Comment 3: Approximately 1,550 form letters were received from Marshall County residents that endorsed a local access plan that had been proposed during the DEIS Public Comment Period by the Marshall County Commissioners. This form letter stated the following:

"…..several accommodations/changes should be incorporated into the current plan (DEIS access). If left unchanged, the current proposal would do irreparable economic damage to Marshall County and adversely affect the emergency services ability to appropriately and timely respond to sections of our county."

"Please consider accepting the changes proposed by the Marshall County Commissioners and endorsed by each community and many emergency service organizations in Marshall County."

Response 3: See Response 2 above under Public Comments.

Comment 4: There were several comments related to local access in both Marshall and St. Joseph Counties. These comments focused on interchange types and locations; grade separation (overpass/underpass) locations; emergency services access; access for school busses; access to properties split by the new freeway, particularly farms; and changes in the traffic flow patterns associated with local roadways and access to the new US 31.

Response 4: Local access comments were evaluated for feasibility and for local connectivity. The local access plan contained in the DEIS was revisited and revised as deemed necessary to meet these concerns. Also, refer to Agency Comments 1 and 2 above for additional responses related to local access issues.

4.2 Impacts to the Human Environment, Particularly Residential and Business Relocations

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comment 1: Comment from Mayor Steve Luecke, City of South Bend, in April 6, 2004 comment:

> "We believe that constructing a ten foot high elevated road at this location [the section of alternative Es from Kern Road to US 20] would not only eliminate existing businesses along this stretch, but would also squelch further development south of US 20. This is an area that we look to for long-term growth for the City of South Bend, having already extended utilities south beyond Kern Road, nearly to Roosevelt."

Response 1: The segment of Alternative G-Es from Kern Road to US 20 was originally proposed to be an elevated urban section constructed on retaining walls with east-west access across the new freeway facility via underpasses (local roadways going under the elevated freeway). In response to comments received, this segment of the Preferred Alternative is no longer planned to be an elevated section with the exception of the segment around and just north of Kern Road where an elevated section will be required for an interchange at Kern Road and an underpass connecting Main Street to existing US 31 just north of Kern Road. While the most of the businesses along existing US 31 in the segment from near Pulling Street northward to US 20 will likely be displaced due to the required additional right-of-way, INDOT will provide assistance to these businesses in locating a new business location and also assist with their relocation. It is anticipated that many of the existing businesses will relocate in close proximity to their existing locations. Additionally, modifications made to the local access plan for Alternative G-Es should provide a local roadway network in the area south of US 20 that will attract further development and long-term growth in the area.

Comment 2: The following comments are examples of those that were received during the DEIS Public Comment Period related to impacts to residences and businesses:

> "Both Cs and G-C entail an interchange with U.S. 20 less than one mile west of the existing U.S. 31 interchange and both would disrupt or destroy several neighborhoods, including Whispering Hills, Baneberry Hills, Crown Ridge, Sycamore Hills, and other nearby residences." (March 19, 2004, Burch)

"The Berliner and Marx meat processing plant is closed, yet it appears an effort was made to run the road around the plant, increasing the impact to nearby homes. Why not remove a facility that is no longer used and lessen the impact to the area homes." (March 21, 2004, Rosinski)

"It appears that many of the homes that account for the increase in the loss of homes in option Es (versus Cs) is due to Es running through a Southern Acres subdivision just north of Madison. It would seem to be viable to move Es slightly to the west at this point for a very short distance to reduce this impact." (March 21, 2004, Rosinski)

"In looking at cost in another way, this plan will eliminate homes and businesses currently contributing to the tax base of the township/city of South Bend, the county and the state. And that is just property tax. It does not take into account income tax on the individual and businesses located in this route. Centre Township and more recently the City of South Bend have included this income as part of the tax bases and the proposal will almost certainly costs the loss of at least some of that income for local governments." (April 23, 2004, Jemielity)

"If you choose either of the other two routes [alternatives Cs and G-C], you will damage some very nice subdivisions that are on the South side of South Bend, and it will have a very negative impact on the ability of South Bend to improve and develop the South side." (April 25, 2004, Martin)

Response 2: During the process of identifying a final preferred alternative for a project such as this, there are many impacts that are studied and analyzed. Some of the impacts analyzed include but are not limited to the traffic performance of the alternatives and their ability to meet the purpose and need of the project; indirect and cumulative impacts; residential and business impacts; project costs (engineering, construction, right-of-way, etc.); economic impacts (local tax revenue, local business economic impacts, etc.); highway user benefits; neighborhood impacts; local access for emergency service providers and school busses; historic and archeological resource impacts; air quality impacts; noise impacts; impacts to the natural environment – wetlands, farmlands, forests, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, water resources, streams, etc.; hazardous material sites; visual and aesthetic resources; etc. During the course of this study, several attempts were made to avoid and/or minimize impacts to both the human and natural environments, as described in **Chapter 3** of this document. These avoidance and minimization measures were generally shifts in the alignment of the alternatives to miss, for example, a subdivision, or a wetland complex, or a forest area, or an historical or archeological resource, etc. The impacts of each of these shifts were evaluated and advanced for further study or eliminated from the study based on this analysis. Often times, an avoidance and/or minimization measure aimed at avoiding or reducing impacts to one element would increase the impacts to another element. For example, a shift in the alignment of an alternative to miss a wetland complex might have moved the alignment into a residential area and increased the residential relocations substantially. For each of the alternatives studied, avoidance and/or minimization measures were investigated until a "balance" among all of the impacts was obtained.

4.3 Modify Alternatives to Reduce Environmental Impacts (Wetlands, Forests and Forest Fragmentation, Threatened and Endangered Species, Etc.)

AGENCY COMMENTS:

Comment 1: Comment from US Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in May 24, 2004 comment:

> "The proposed project is within the range of the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalist*), the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), the northern copperbelly water snake (*Nerodia erythrogaster neglecta*), and the candidate eastern massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*). The expected status of each of these four species within the proposed project area is discussed in the DEIS (section 5.9.5). The FWS agrees that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle, northern copperbelly or eastern massasauga. However, the presence or absence of the Indiana bat within the project area is not currently known. The DEIS indicated that surveys for the Indiana bat will be conducted in 2004 after the preferred alternative is selected."

Response 1: Coordination with the USFWS concluded that the project has the potential to impact Indiana bat summer maternity roost habitat. Mist netting for bats occurred in July 2004. Four sites were netted for two nights each. No Indiana bats were captured. Because suitable habitat for this species could exist throughout the project corridor, where removal or modification of habitat cannot be avoided, steps to minimize impacts to potential Indiana bats will be required. Potential mitigation measures are further discussed in **Chapter 6** of this document.

Comment 2: Comment from USEPA in May 11, 2004 comment:

> "The potential adverse impacts to water resources, including wetlands, from this project must be considered in light of the massive historic loss of wetlands and alteration of water resources in this area.…..With this has come a loss of wetland systems' natural contributions to clean water, flood water storage and wildlife habitat.…..Using existing wetlands inventories is acceptable for DEIS, including the National Wetlands Inventory and farmed wetland data. For the FEIS several other sources of information need to be examined as well, to avoid adversely impacting ongoing wetlands protection efforts. In recent years many acres of wetlands have been restored in Indiana by the Wetlands Reserve Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. These carry long term or permanent easements to protect these wetlands. Any Wetland Reserve projects in the study area that would be affected by the alternatives under consideration must be identified along with the type of easement granted. In addition, any wetland compensatory mitigation sites required by past 404 permits issued by the Corps of Engineers and 401 permits issued by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management must be identified. Any impacts the alternatives under consideration are likely to have on these wetland mitigation sites must be identified."

Response 2: In accordance with the "no net loss" goals of Executive Order 11990, wetland impacts resulting from project implementation would require that mitigation be planned and scheduled to the approval of the USACE, USFWS, and IDEM. Recommendations of the National Governor's Association

Provision to the Wetlands Conservation and Regulatory Improvements Act (Senate Bill 1304) stated "that regulatory policies should include a clear preferred sequence of mitigation options that begins with avoidance of adverse impacts on wetlands and the reduction of unavoidable adverse impacts and allows the use of environmental compensation only as a last resort, while allowing regulators sufficient flexibility to approve practical options that provide the most protection to the resource and that balance the effects of such actions on the total human environment, recognizing socioeconomic factors." Section 7 of the Watershed Management Act of 1993 provides for a clear sequence of mitigation options.

The DEIS for this project identified wetlands and estimated impacts based on the estimated right-of-ways for the alternatives. Since the publication of the DEIS, several avoidance and/or minimization measures in the form of shifts in the alignment have been made to the Preferred Alternative in order to reduce wetland impacts. Additionally, since the publication of the DEIS, wetlands within the Preferred Alternative G-Es have been delineated and mapped using USACE guidelines to determine precise areas. Coordination with the agencies continued as representatives of the study team met with the permitting agencies (USACE and IDEM) from Monday, October 4, 2004, to Wednesday, October 6, 2004. This meeting was a field review in which management team, USACE and IDEM representatives walked the previously delineated wetlands and made adjustments to the delineations as necessary. A "Waters of the US" verification report detailing wetland impacts has been prepared and submitted to the USACE and IDEM. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Routine Wetland Determination Forms on each of the delineated wetland areas may be found in the "Waters of the US" verification report. Additional information related to wetland impacts and potential mitigation measures can be found in **Chapter 6** of this PAMP.

Comment 3A: Comment from USEPA in May 11, 2004 comment:

> "….had hoped to see an alternative analyzed in detail and carried forward…..that would have had less adverse impact on natural resources, particularly wetlands." Additionally, "…..has issues regarding the loss of forest land and fragmentation of forest habitat." "…..the loss of remaining forest land and core forests in the study area is significant and all reasonable efforts should be made to avoid impacts to forest lands." Finally, the USEPA stated that they rate the DEIS EO-2 (Environmental Objection – insufficient information). This rating was due to "significant impacts to wetlands and aquatic resources and wildlife habitat."

Comment 3B: Comment from USEPA, in May 11, 2004 comment:

> "Section 404 [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404] requires the selection of the least damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) under Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines. We are concerned that there are other alternatives that may have less wetland impacts than the three DEIS build alternatives. Therefore, the selection of one of the DEIS build alternatives as the Final EIS Preferred Alternative might not be consistent with the selection of the LEDPA during the 404 permitting process."

Comment 3C: Comment from US Department of the Interior, FWS, in May 12, 2004 comment:

> "Impacts to forestlands, both upland and wetland, would be particularly significant." Additionally, "Any of these build alternatives (Alternatives Cs, Es and G-C) represent a substantial loss of forested uplands and wetlands in a relatively limited area…..and in an area where forestland is already fragmented."

Comment 3D: Comment from US Department of the Interior, FWS, in May 12, 2004 comment:

> Request that "…..the alignment of the freeway be modified wherever possible to reduce impacts to forestlands, both upland and wetland."

Comment 3E: Comment from USACE in May 12, 2004 comment:

> "Due to the magnitude of the projected wetland impacts, it may be difficult for the Corps of Engineers to grant a permit for the project as proposed. Although Alternative Es appears to have the least impact on waters and wetlands, at this time we cannot endorse any of the proposed alternatives. We advise you to continue to seek alternatives and modifications which avoid and/or reduce impacts to the aquatic environment."

Comment 3F: Comment from IDNR in April 22, 2004 comment:

> "…..recommend choosing an alternative that is east of the existing US 31 to minimize impacts to the environment. In this DEIS, alternatives Cs, Es, and G-C were selected for further study. Alternative G-C, which is a modification of the previous alternative G, is located primarily east of the existing US 31. This alternative offers the best selection in terms of minimizing environmental impacts to natural resources. This alternative avoids the complex glacial drift area in the northwestern quarter of the study area, which contains the highest concentration of important habitats and listed species occurrence." Additionally, INDR recommended modifications to the portion of Alternative G-C north of Roosevelt Road to avoid impacts to natural resources as the alternative "…..passes through a sizeable block of forests just north of Roosevelt Road" and "…..passes near a recently mapped occurrence of the state endangered loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)."

Response 3: During the process of identifying a final preferred alternative for a project such as this, there are many impacts that are studied and analyzed. Some of the impacts analyzed include but are not limited to the traffic performance of the alternatives and their ability to meet the purpose and need of the project; indirect and cumulative impacts; residential and business impacts; project costs (engineering, construction, right-of-way, etc.); economic impacts (local tax revenue, local business economic impacts, etc.); highway user benefits; neighborhood impacts; local access for emergency service providers and school busses; historic and archeological resource impacts; air quality impacts; noise impacts; impacts to the natural environment – wetlands, farmlands, forests, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, water resources, streams, etc.; hazardous material sites; visual and aesthetic resources; etc. During the course of this study, several attempts were made to avoid and/or minimize impacts to both the human and natural environments, as described in **Chapter 3** of this document. These avoidance and minimization measures were generally shifts in the alignment of the alternatives to miss, for example, a subdivision, or a wetland complex, or a forest area, or an historical or archeological resource, etc. The impacts of each of these shifts were evaluated and advanced for further study or eliminated from the study based on this analysis. Often times, an avoidance and/or minimization measure aimed at avoiding or reducing impacts to one element would increase the impacts to another element. For example, a shift in the alignment of an alternative to miss a wetland complex might have moved the alignment into a residential area and increased the residential relocations substantially. For each of the alternatives studied, avoidance and/or minimization measures were investigated until a "balance" among all of the impacts was

obtained. Additionally, Preferred Alternative G-Es has the lowest environmental impacts to wetlands and forests and meets the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines that require selection of the "least damaging practicable alternative".

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comment 4: The following comments are examples of those that were received during the DEIS Public Comment Period related to impacts to residences and businesses:

"Although I understand there is a need to provide a new route for US 31 I would hope that the route chosen would have the least environmental impact possible, and would take inconsideration the preservation of forest and wetlands in undeveloped areas in St. Joseph County." (April 22, 2004, Engle)

Response 4: See Response 3 above under Agency Comments.

4.4 Visual, Noise and Aesthetics Impacts Associated with the Proposed Elevated Roadway Between Kern Road and US 20

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comment 1: Comment from Mayor Steve Luecke, City of South Bend, in June 8, 2004, comment:

"Es would approach South Bend along the current US 31 right-of-way, but it would be an elevated roadway; I have heard different reports ranging from twelve to eighteen feet high. It would have sheer walls, with a 21-foot wide frontage road on either side. This would be a terrible approach to our city!

……. Some communities (Milwaukee comes to mind) are removing elevated freeways from their cities because of the negative impacts they cause. I am confident that we can handle this in a more sensitive manner that reflects modern urban planning."

Response 1: The segment of Alternative G-Es from Kern Road to US 20 was originally proposed to be an elevated urban section constructed on retaining walls with east-west access across the new freeway facility via underpasses (local roadways going under the elevated freeway). In response to comments received, this segment of the Preferred Alternative is no longer planned to be an elevated section. It will be constructed very near to the elevation of existing US 31 in the same area with east-west roadways (Johnson and Jackson Roads) crossing over the new US 31 roadway. The exception to this is the segment of US 31 around and just north of Kern Road where an elevated US 31 section will be required for an interchange at Kern Road and an underpass connecting Main Street to existing US 31 just north of Kern Road.

Comment 2: Comment from Mayor Steve Luecke, City of South Bend, in April 6, 2004, comment:

"We also recommend planting pine trees or other natural screening as a visual shield and sound barrier wherever the road impacts existing residential development."

Response 2: The noise analysis conducted for the DEIS was of sufficient detail to identify potential impact areas associated with each study alternative. A preliminary noise barrier analysis in the DEIS identified likely reasonable and feasible noise abatement measures for the two alternatives that were combined to become the Preferred Alternative. A more detailed noise barrier analysis will be conducted for the FEIS and noise barriers and other abatement measures will also be analyzed in more detail during the design phase. Some examples of noise abatement measures include but are not limited to the alteration of horizontal and/or vertical alignments; noise insulation of public use or non-profit institutional structures; construction of highway noise barriers or earth berms; planting of trees; etc. Final decisions on noise barrier locations and lengths will be determined in the design phase of the project. Further discussions related to noise impacts and mitigation can be found in **Chapter 6** of this document.

Comment 3: The following comments are examples of those that were received during the DEIS Public Comment Period related to visual, noise and aesthetic impacts associated with the proposed elevated roadway between Kern Road and US 20:

> "Our most concern is having a fence and wall put up in front of our house. The value of our house will go down. We have lived here for 40 years. We would rather have the house taken then have a wall in front of it." (March 27, 2004, Harris)

> "Noise is another concern of ours. Yes we have some noise now when semis have to stop quickly due to a light change at Johnson Road, but we don't think that will compare to the noise of an expressway. Sound barrier walls are planned from what we have been told. We don't believe that is enough to help the additional noise." (April 23, 2004, Daniels)

> "We at Southlawn Church take pride in our church and its appearance – I hope talk of raising Johnson and Hwy 31 Road "will not" come to pass – It will become an eyesore to us and the community – During Service the noise from it's elevated will be such from traffic that it will be hard to concentrate on worshiping in our Sanctuary….." (April 23, 2004, Miller)

Response 3: See Responses 1 and 2 above under Agency Comments.

4.5 Maximize Use of Existing US 31 Corridor

AGENCY COMMENTS:

Comment 1: Comment from US Department of the Interior, FWS, in May 12, 2004 comment:

> "…..supports route that upgrade or closely follow an existing highway because new-terrain routes often result in the greatest loss and fragmentation of natural habitats."

Response 1: The alternatives that more closely followed the existing US 31 alignment had reduced environmental impacts, particularly wetland and forest impacts; however, they exhibited much higher business and relocation impacts. For this reason, a combination of existing alignment and new-terrain alignment provided a more balanced level of impacts to both the human and natural environment. Preferred Alternative G-Es is a hybrid alternative consisting of a combination of the southern portion of Preliminary Alternative G-C and the northern portion of Preliminary Alternative Es that developed in response to many of the comments received on the DEIS. The southern portion of Preliminary Alternative G-C is located on the east side of existing US 31. Alternatives located east of existing

US 31 typically exhibited lower wetland and forest impacts. The northern segment of Preliminary Alternative Es follows the existing US 31 alignment from essentially the Kern Road interchange to US 20. This northern segment exhibited a reduction of wetland impacts, and avoided many high quality wetland complexes west of existing US 31 and north of Roosevelt Road. Preferred Alternative G-Es utilized the more of the existing US 31 alignment than any of the preliminary alternatives that were studied in detail in the DEIS.

Comment 2: Comment from USACE in May 12, 2004 comment:

> The USACE "…..encourage alternatives which maximize use of…..the existing US 31 corridor."

Response 2: See Response 2 above under Agency Comments.

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