

I-69 (CORRIDOR 18) SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY



**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND NEED**  
**for Interstate Highway 69**

*Submitted by:*

**Wilbur Smith Associates**

**HNTB Corporation**

February 7, 2000

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Prepared as part of  
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## DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are used in this document:

- **Corridor 18** refers to the High Priority Corridor designated by the U. S. Congress for a potential highway development. The detailed definition of this Corridor has been modified over time with passage of new legislation as described later in this document.
- **I-69** refers to both the existing facility and to its proposed extension from Indianapolis to the Texas/Mexico border.
- **I-69 Corridor** refers to the general location for I-69 giving consideration to the need to determine specific route location for the extension of I-69, and it can include existing I-69.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND NEED for Interstate Highway 69 (I-69)

I-69 is an integral part of High Priority Corridor 18 across mid-America. Corridor 18 originated with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) where the United States Congress designated certain highway corridors of national significance to be included in the National Highway System. The corridor now has been defined by Congress to extend from Port Huron, Michigan at the Canadian border to the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) in Texas at the Mexican border (see Exhibit 1 in the Appendix). Corridor 18 incorporates the following elements:

- Existing I-69 from Port Huron, Michigan/Sarnia, Ontario, Canada to Indianapolis.
- Existing I-94 from Port Huron through Detroit (including the Ambassador Bridge interchange) to Chicago, Illinois.
- A new Interstate route (I-69) from Indianapolis to the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) serving the following:
  - a. Evansville, Indiana,
  - b. Memphis, Tennessee,
  - c. Shreveport/Bossier City, Louisiana,
  - d. Houston, Texas,

The route would pass through Mississippi and Arkansas between Memphis and Shreveport/Bossier City.

- The Southeast Arkansas I-69 Connector from Pine Bluff, Arkansas to the I-69 Corridor identified in the Special Issues Study in the vicinity of Monticello, Arkansas,
- In the Lower Rio Grande Valley:
  - a. US 77 from the Mexican border at Brownsville to US 59 in Victoria, Texas,
  - b. US 281 from the Mexican border at McAllen to I-37, then following US 59 to Victoria, Texas,
  - c. the Corpus Christi Northside Highway and Rail Corridor from the intersection of U.S. 77 and I-37 to U.S. 181, and
  - d. FM 511 from U.S. 77 to the Port of Brownsville.

The following definitions are used in this document:

- **Corridor 18** refers to the High Priority Corridor designated by the U. S. Congress for a potential highway development. The detailed definition of this Corridor has modified over time with passage of new legislation as described later in this document.
- **I-69** refers to both the existing facility and to its proposed extension from Indianapolis to the Texas/Mexico border.
- **I-69 Corridor 18** refers to the general location for I-69 giving consideration to the need to determine specific route alignment for the extension of I-69, and it can include existing I-69.

There are a number of transportation and development needs that can be met by I-69. The length of the corridor, its location, and travel needs along the corridor indicate that transportation service can be provided best by an Interstate Highway type of facility. When viewed from an overall perspective of the full corridor, the benefits that can be realized by an Interstate highway in the I-69 Corridor outweigh the costs to provide the transportation facility. These include international, regional, and local needs that would be served. This document addresses the purpose of and need for I-69 from the perspective of examining the entire length of the corridor.

## **OVERALL PURPOSE OF I-69**

Corridor 18 was designated by Congress as a High Priority Corridor of National Significance in the ISTEA. It also has been described as a "North American trade route", an "international trade route", and a "NAFTA corridor". Congress also has passed legislation that designates the extension of Corridor 18 from Indianapolis to the LRGV as I-69.

A Steering Committee consisting of representatives of eight state departments of transportation and the Federal Highway Administration has directed the analyses for Corridor 18 and I-69. In recognition of the important role I-69 can play, the Steering Committee adopted this statement of overall purpose:

***To improve international and Interstate trade in accordance with national and state goals; to facilitate economic development in accordance with state, regional, and local policies, plans, and surface transportation consistent with national, state, regional, local needs and with Congressional designation of the corridor.***

## **GOALS FOR I-69**

At the conclusion of a 1997 Special Issues Study, the Steering Committee adopted the Representative Corridor shown in Exhibit 2 for the extension of I-69 from Indianapolis to the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV). This general alignment and the aforementioned purpose for the transportation facility permit identification of several goals for I-69. The overall goals for this Interstate facility are now defined as follows:

Goal 1: To improve international and interstate movement of freight and people by ensuring a safe transportation system that is accessible, integrated, and efficient while offering flexibility of transportation choices in mid-America.

Goal 2: To enhance the regional and local transportation systems by providing transportation capacity to meet current and future needs.

Goal 3: To facilitate economic development and enhance economic growth opportunities domestically and internationally through efficient and flexible transportation with particular emphasis being given to economic growth in the Lower Mississippi Delta Region.

Goal 4: To facilitate connections to intermodal facilities and major ports along the corridor.

Goal 5: To facilitate the safe and efficient movement of persons and goods by fostering a reduction in incident risk.

Goal 6: To upgrade existing facilities to be utilized as I-69 within the corridor to design standards suitable for an Interstate highway and commensurate with the projected demand.

Goal 7: To directly connect the urban areas named by Congress (the "named cities" of Indianapolis, Evansville, Memphis, Shreveport/Bossier City, and Houston and the Lower Rio Grande Valley) with an Interstate highway connection.

Designated routes in Corridor 18 *other than I-69* may not necessarily be developed to Interstate standards.

### **NEED FOR I-69**

I-69 exists as an Interstate highway from Port Huron, Michigan to the northeast side of the Indianapolis, Indiana area. Only indirect Interstate highway routes exist from Indianapolis to the Texas/Mexico border in the LRGV. No Interstate highway connects Houston with the LRGV.

Analyses of the I-69 Corridor have shown that extension of an Interstate highway in the I-69 Corridor from Indianapolis to the US/Mexico border in Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) is a feasible project. Currently, there is no Interstate highway within the I-69 Corridor that can be used for a border to border trip within the corridor.

Feasibility studies included consideration of connections between the "named cities" in Federal legislation. These are Indianapolis, Evansville, Memphis, Shreveport/Bossier City, and Houston along with the LRGV. The feasibility conclusions consisted of the following elements for I-69:

- Use of existing I-69 from Port Huron, Michigan to Indianapolis;
- An alignment on new location from Indianapolis to Evansville;
- Upgraded and/or relocated parkways, highways, and other facilities from Evansville to Memphis (includes improvements to existing facilities);
- An upgraded or relocated route from Memphis to a new Mississippi River bridge between Mississippi and Arkansas (including a portion which involves improvements to existing facilities);
- An Interstate highway on new location from Mississippi (at the new Mississippi River crossing) to Shreveport/Bossier City;
- An Interstate highway on new location from Shreveport/Bossier City to a connection with US 59 in northeast Texas; and,
- An upgraded or relocated highway built to Interstate highway standards from northeast Texas to the LRGV (including improvements to existing facilities). In Texas, US 59 will be signed as I-69, and there are currently two routes in the LRGV, US 77 and US 281.

The anticipated return in dollar savings and economic growth exceeds the cost to develop the facility by a significant margin. The following paragraphs provide details related to the full development of I-69 in Corridor 18. Future studies are needed to determine the specific alignment and to obtain required environmental (NEPA) clearances based upon conditions at the time of the additional analyses.

### ***Project Status***

In the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the United States Congress designated certain highway corridors of national significance to be included in the National Highway System. Twenty-one "high priority corridors" were so designated mainly in regions that are not well served by the existing Interstate Highway System. In the ISTEA legislation, Corridor 18 was defined as extending from Indianapolis, Indiana, to Memphis, Tennessee, via Evansville, Indiana.

The designation of Corridor 18 was amended in 1993 by Congress to extend the corridor from Memphis to Houston, Texas, via Shreveport/Bossier City, Louisiana. The corridor definition

again was amended by the National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 to include an extension from Houston to a crossing of the Mexican border in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. This provided an overlap of Corridor 18 with a second high priority Corridor which generally follows U.S. 59 from the vicinity of Texarkana to Houston and on to Laredo, Texas (Corridor 20). The 1995 Act also stated that Corridor 18 was to be located in Mississippi and Arkansas for the section extending from Memphis toward Shreveport/Bossier City. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA21), signed into law on June 9, 1998, added facilities to Corridor 18 and officially designated the extension south of Indianapolis as Interstate 69.

Enactment of NAFTA has stimulated North American international trade flows, many of which are along all or portions of Corridor 18. This includes trade flows from Mexico to the industrial north/northeast portions of the United States as well as trade flows from Canada to areas within or near Corridor 18.

### **Previous Studies**

During the time span from 1991 to 1998, two analyses of the full corridor, and a separate analysis of Corridor 20, confirmed that the corridor was a feasible transportation improvement and a prudent expenditure of public funds. Two Corridor 18 studies related to the full corridor as defined at the time of the analyses, and the other study involved Corridor 20 (US 59) from the vicinity of Texarkana to Laredo and the Lower Rio Grande Valley. These studies and their completion dates are listed below:

- Corridor 18 Feasibility Study (1995)
- Corridor 20 Feasibility Study (1996)
- Corridor 18 Special Issues Study (1997)

The Corridor 18 studies were directed by a Steering Committee representing Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. The Corridor 20 study was directed by a Steering Committee consisting of representatives of each of the Districts of the Texas Department of Transportation through which US 59 passes as well as the Federal Highway Administration.

In 1999, a third analysis was initiated for I-69 (Corridor 18). The Special Environmental Study represents the start of the activities for Corridor 18 to facilitate FHWA's NEPA decision-making process. This document is a result of tasks undertaken in this current study. In addition, the results will be available for use in future detailed location, environmental, and design efforts. The Special Environmental Study also identified Sections of Independent Utility for I-69. These are illustrated on Exhibit 3 in the Appendix.

Other analyses have been undertaken or are currently underway for what have become sections of the I-69 Corridor. These include studies for the Southwest Indiana Highway Corridor, the Mississippi State Highway 304 Corridor, the Great River Bridge crossing of the Mississippi River, the US 59 Corridor Master Plan from Diboll, Texas, to Garrison, Texas, and the I-69 Route Feasibility Study in the Houston metropolitan area. The Corridor 20 Feasibility study mentioned previously included portions of Corridor 18 that at that time extended from the vicinity of Carthage, Texas to Houston.

### **Agency, Advocacy Groups and the General Public's Involvement**

Following passage of ISTEA, a Steering Committee was formed with members representing eight states along the corridor. The member states are Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan. Each of the state departments of transportation and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were represented on the Steering Committee. Initially, this was referred to as the Corridor 18 Steering Committee which was re-named the I-

69 Steering Committee following the passage of TEA21 and the official designation of Corridor 18 as I-69. The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department is the administrative agency acting on behalf of the Steering Committee.

Interagency workshops and briefings have been held during the development of the Corridor 18 and Corridor 20 projects.

There are 10 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) that are directly served by the I-69 Corridor. These include MPO's for each of the "named cities" by Congress [Indianapolis, Evansville, Memphis, Shreveport/Bossier City, and Houston] which have undertaken planning for the accommodation of I-69.

A number of Advocacy Groups were involved during project studies. Some were local in scope; some, regional. The following advocacy groups have been active in providing support for the proposed I-69 (Corridor 18):

- *I-69 Mid-Continent Highway Coalition*—Group comprised mostly of representatives of the local communities along the I-69 Corridor.
- *The Greater Houston Partnership*—Group that consists of civic and business representatives in the Houston metropolitan area.

Public Meetings have been held at key points during the studies. The following meetings were held in Memphis during the Corridor 18 studies:

- November 7, 1994 to receive suggestions and comments.
- September 25, 1995 to discuss results of the Feasibility Study.
- August 29, 1996 to receive suggestions and comments.
- May 28, 1997 to discuss results of the Special Issues Study.

### **System Linkage**

Development of the proposed I-69 Corridor would provide a continuous highway link designed to Interstate highway standards from the Mexican border to the Canadian border, a route length of approximately 1,650 miles (2,650 km). I-69 currently exists to Interstate highway design standards from the Michigan/Canada border to the northeast side of Indianapolis, Indiana. Existing I-69 is in need of bridge and pavement maintenance and upgrades while it also has capacity deficiencies in certain locations. The extension of I-69 to the Texas/Mexico border would cover a route distance of about 1,250 miles (2,050 km).

There is no existing Interstate facility within Corridor 18 for the full distance from Indianapolis to the Texas/Mexico border. This missing Interstate link is in a corridor that has a high demand for NAFTA associated goods movements. However, short to medium length trips far outnumber international traffic along the corridor. There will be local and regional trips that will take advantage of an improved facility designed to Interstate highway standards. By diverting these local trips to the I-69 Corridor, the adjacent State and Federal Highways will likely see a drop in overall traffic levels with attendant increases in travel efficiency and motorist safety. Without this extension of I-69, travel on a facility designed to Interstate standards would be indirect between the named cities in the I-69 Corridor and from border to border.

Throughout its length, I-69 would connect 16 existing Interstate highways crossing Corridor 18 (ten east-west routes and 6 north-south routes). It would link 10 urban areas of more than 50,000 population along the corridor. Within urban areas, development of I-69 could provide the means to upgrade existing Interstate routes, connect major transportation corridors and radial freeways with a new facility, and connect modal and multi-modal terminals to the Interstate Highway Network.

A study of existing and projected international commodity flows, including the results anticipated from NAFTA, show that there is a major desire for travel along an alignment of I-69. At the present time, only I-35 provides a continuous Interstate highway across mid-America from the Texas/Mexico border to Duluth, Minnesota with connections to Canada. Interstate highway connections between Mexico and the northeast/north central United States are continuous but indirect from Laredo, Texas. They do not exist from the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Exhibit 4 illustrates the trade flows transported by truck that utilize existing routes to and from Canada and Mexico. The alignment of I-69's Representative Corridor more directly serves a major portion of this NAFTA and international travel demand. Without the completion of I-69 within Corridor 18, additional travel distances and travel times would be added to commercial trips along the geographic axis identified by Corridor 18. The I-69 northern terminus at Port Huron, Michigan provides an important linkage to an Interstate-quality system connecting to Toronto, Montreal and Quebec, Canada. The I-69 southern terminus provides an important linkage to Monterey, Mexico City and other cities in Mexico.

There are many urban areas within the study corridor that do not currently have direct access to the Interstate system, including the following cities:

- Bloomington, Indiana
- Millington, Tennessee
- Clarksdale, Mississippi
- Monticello, Arkansas
- El Dorado, Arkansas
- Nacogdoches, Texas
- Lufkin, Texas
- Victoria, Texas
- Harlingen, Texas
- McAllen, Texas
- Brownsville, Texas
- Pharr, Texas

Another concern for the overall transportation system is the number of Mississippi River bridges that are located in proximity to the New Madrid earthquake fault. Table 1 shows the crossings between Vicksburg and St. Louis. The area with the highest probability for the most severe damage is north of Helena, Arkansas, to St. Louis. Six of the 12 bridges were built before 1950. Most are not upgraded to current design standards for earthquake prone areas. The I-69 Corridor lies between the US 49 Helena bridge and the US 82 Greenville bridge, a distance of 130 miles (200km), and could provide for additional safety and capacity in the event a major earthquake occurs in the New Madrid zone of influence.

TABLE 1 – Existing Mississippi River Crossings Between Vicksburg and St. Louis

BRIDGE DESCRIPTION									
Route	Location	Distance <sup>1</sup> in miles	Year Built	New Madrid Fault <sup>3</sup>	Capacity Limitation	Structural Considerations	Earthquake Retrofit		
I-20	Vicksburg, MS	--	1973	0.04	4 lanes				
US 80	Vicksburg, MS	--	1930	0.04	2 lanes				
US 82	Greenville, MS	95	1940	0.05	2 lanes	Scheduled Replacement			
US 49	Helena, AR	225	1961	0.09	2 lanes				
I-55	Memphis, TN	298	1949	0.25	4 lanes				
I-40	Memphis, TN	300	1972	0.25	6 lanes		Retrofit in Progress		
I-155	Caruthersville, TN	402	1976	0.36	4 lanes				
US 60/62	Cairo, IL	518	1930	0.22	2 lanes				
I-57	Cairo, IL	524	1978	0.22	4 lanes		Recent Retrofit		
MO 74/ IL 146	Cape Girardeau, MO	568	1929	0.15	2 lanes	Continuous repairs	New Structure Under Construction		
MO 51	Chester, MO	626	1946	0.13	4 lanes				
I-255	St. Louis, MO	795	1984	0.12	6 lanes				

<sup>1</sup> Nearest metropolitan area

<sup>2</sup> Distance upstream along Mississippi River from I-20 in Vicksburg (in river miles)

<sup>3</sup> New Madrid fault consideration (Values shown provide accelerations as a fraction of g values and represent the 90% probability of non-exceedance in 50 years) Higher values are less desirable.

**Capacity**

Throughout the length of the I-69 Corridor (Corridor 18), there are existing sections of highway which are over-capacity and sections wherein no route exists that provides full control of access. General analyses of the full corridor have indicated capacity deficiencies at each of the named cities as well as along portions or all of the connecting links between those cities.

Existing routes that are candidates for I-69 include a number of congested facilities. Table 2 lists these conditions for a number of these candidates, including both existing Interstate routes and other facilities that would benefit from upgrading to full control of access.

**TABLE 2 – Existing Routes Considered for I-69**

Location	Route	Length In miles	Comments
Indianapolis, IN	I-465	20	Indirect Interstate routes; Some sections over capacity
Evansville, IN	US 41 (Ohio River)	30	Inadequate crossing of the Ohio River
Central Kentucky	Parkways	155	Reconstruction of Parkways to Interstate Standards
Western Tennessee	US 51	125	No Interstate highway
Memphis, TN	I-40/240 Midtown Expressway	70	Direct route on Interstate is over capacity Some indirect routes over capacity
Northern Mississippi	MS 304	25	New four-lane highway designed to Interstate standards
Northwestern Mississippi	US 61	90	No Interstate highway
Eastern Texas	US 59	100	No Interstate highway
Houston, TX	US 59	95	Inadequate capacity New route on new location under consideration for many years
Houston to Laredo	US 59	350	No Interstate highway
Houston to LRGV	Via US 77	360	No Interstate highway
	Via US 281	370	No Interstate highway

In addition, the I-69 Corridor could provide some relief for other Interstate corridors. These include the I-35 Corridor; the I-30/I-40 Corridors, particularly through Texas and Arkansas; and I-55 from Memphis to Jackson with connections to I-20 leading to Shreveport/Bossier City and to Dallas/Ft. Worth. For example, relief to I-35 was described in the Final Report of the Special Issues Study with almost all of the reduction occurring along the segment of I-35 between Laredo and San Antonio, Texas.

**Transportation Demand**

Part of the purpose for the I-69 Corridor is to address international and trade-related traffic. While this traffic accommodating freight will represent a small portion of the overall traffic at most locations north of Houston, Texas, it still is a very important element due to its economic significance. Table 3 illustrates the movement of freight related to the I-69 Corridor. About 30 % of the total movements in the United States are related to the I-69 Corridor. Over 70% of these movements are within the corridor while less than 4% are passing through the regions involved.

**TABLE 3 – Freight Movements Related to the I-69 Corridor**

Type of Flow	Flow in Thousands of Tons (1993) <sup>(a)</sup>	Percent of Corridor Total	Percent of US Total
Intra-corridor Flows	2,929,126	70.3	
Flows with Adjacent Regions	547,673	13.1	
Flows Other Regions	534,961	12.8	
Pass Through Flows	159,215	3.8	
<b>Total Corridor Related Flows</b>	<b>4,170,975</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29.6</b>
Non-corridor Flows	9,942,663		70.4
US Total Flows	14,113,638		100.0

<sup>(a)</sup> From I-69 (Corridor 18) Special Environmental Study

An examination of all freight movements (truck, rail, air, and water) shows that most are relatively short with dispersed origins and destinations. These movements are best served by a highway system with many of the longer trips making use of other modes. Not all of Corridor 18 can be effectively served by waterways even though there are many ports connected by the proposed I-69.

The total population of the counties directly served by the I-69 Corridor was 52.2 million in 1994. Population is anticipated to increase by 21% from 1994 to 2020.

As a result of NAFTA, trade is continually growing between the US, Canada and Mexico. Six new bridge crossings are planned connecting to Mexico. Greater than 75% of the nation's exports to Mexico are funneled through Texas. Much of these exports pass through the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The data highlight that the demand along the corridor identified for I-69 is among the highest in the nation, especially from Texas to Memphis. Much of this demand is oriented between Mexico and the industrial north-northeast of the United States. Memphis advertises itself as "America's Distribution Center" with the main facilities for Federal Express located at Memphis International Airport and with one of the largest truck interchange terminals in West Memphis. In 1998, Memphis ranked first in the United States for total air cargo shipments.

Portions of the I-69 Corridor in rural areas are predicted to have as much as 37,000 vehicles Average Daily Traffic by the year 2020. Truck traffic is projected to account for 26% of travel. Travel along the extension of existing I-69 is estimated to reach 23 million vehicle miles (VMT)

(38 million vehicle kilometers) by 2015. Vehicular travel for the period 1995-2020 is expected to show an overall increase of 69%.

### **Legislation**

The corridor has been supported by Congressional mandates since 1991. It was first approved as a high priority corridor from Indianapolis to Memphis in the 1991 ISTEA legislation. In 1993 it was further amended by Congress to extend from Memphis to Houston. The National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 further extended the corridor to include the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21), signed into law on June 9, 1998 again redefined Corridor 18 and officially designated it as Interstate 69.

The current legislative definition (1999) of Corridor 18 includes the following stipulations:

- Includes I-69 from Port Huron, Michigan/Sarnia, Ontario, Canada to Indianapolis,
- Includes I-94 from Port Huron through Detroit (including the Ambassador Bridge interchange) to Chicago, Illinois,
- Requires the corridor to follow the "alignment" generally identified in the Special Issues Study in Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas (for Corridor 18, 1997),
- Provides for a connection from Pine Bluff, Arkansas to the corridor identified in the Special Issues Study in the vicinity of Monticello, Arkansas,
- Includes in the Lower Rio Grande Valley
  - a. U.S. 77 from the Mexican border to U.S. 59 in Victoria, Texas,
  - b. U.S. 281 from the Mexican border to U.S. 59, then following US 59 to Victoria, Texas,
  - c. The Corpus Christi Northside Highway and Rail Corridor from the intersection of U.S. 77 and I- 37 to U.S. 181, and
  - d. FM 511 from U.S. 77 to the Port of Brownsville.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was passed in 1992 and has resulted in additional traffic demands and an increase in international freight movement. The I-69 Corridor is one of several high priority corridors being evaluated to address the needs associated with the increase in goods movements between the three NAFTA partners.

### **Social Advancement/Economic Development**

I-69 would serve as a NAFTA or new trade route linking some of the industrial centers of Canada and the northeast U.S. with the Lower Delta Region and Texas ports and Mexico. I-69 would provide the most direct route for the north-south cross-continent movement of goods and would enhance North America's competitiveness in a global market. From 1994 to 2020, population in the corridor states is expected to grow 21% with an annual growth rate of 0.75%. This results in a 2020 population for the eight corridor states of an estimated 63.2 million.

I-69 not only can address unmet travel needs but also can help spur activity in economically depressed areas such as the Delta Region of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

### **Social Advancement**

Corridor 18 would extend opportunities for social advancement throughout its length. Of particular relevance are the advancements that would be realized by those who live in the economically depressed Delta Region. Disadvantaged persons living in this Region would have

greater access to health services, educational opportunities, job training, and other social and cultural activities.

Previous studies for the portion of the corridor from Indianapolis to Houston estimate significant time savings. For example, savings of four hours could be realized for a full-length trip with an extension of the I-69 facility. Similar savings (considering actual trip length) would result in direct cost savings and an improved competitive advantage to businesses and travelers. Employees would be able to reach places of employment easier, increasing commuter safety and expanding the geographical area where employees could reside and still commute with relative ease. Travelers would experience savings in travel time, greater safety and reduced vehicle operating costs compared with experiences without the new corridor in place. As mentioned previously, this would include commuters as well as long distance travelers and shippers.

Because much of the I-69 corridor is rural, some population currently is not able to expeditiously travel the distances necessary to work in the expanding market place in the major urban areas that are linked together by this highway.

As noted in the Corridor 18 Feasibility Study, populations along much of the corridor from Indianapolis to Houston are below the national average per capita income. Some of the most economically depressed areas in the entire country are in the lower Mississippi Delta and the Lower Rio Grande regions. The corridor would have a positive effect on the Rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities located in the area. By locating the employment centers near the population targeted for employment benefits from the programs noted above, large population shifts via migration may not occur to the extent noted in previous generations.

Environmental Justice analyses determine if minority or low income persons are unduly adversely impacted by a proposed project. It is important to note that the corridors' location could place the facility close enough to be used, via local connectors, by the communities between the major cities but not so close as to have undue direct negative impacts. It may be that a number of communities located some distance from the I-69 corridor would be able to take advantage of proximity in their own regional context.

Two new major river crossings would provide additional economic development. One new crossing would be of the Ohio River at Evansville, Indiana. This section of the Ohio River has only one crossing (US 41 in Evansville) for a stretch of 85 miles (135 km). The second new crossing would be located between Dumas, Arkansas and Bolivar, Mississippi. This section of the Mississippi River does not have a crossing for a stretch of 130 miles (200 km). For the Mississippi River crossing, there also is the need for bridge improvements to address the New Madrid earthquake possibilities. This zone of greatest concern extends generally from Memphis to St. Louis.

I-69 in Texas would cross 60 counties supporting a population of 7.2 million in east and south Texas. These areas represent 40% of the states economic activity, yet 50% of the state's un-employment is within this area.

### **Economic Development**

The economic development opportunities and potentials for Corridor 18 are very significant to the nation and to the regions that the corridor crosses. Construction of I-69 in Corridor 18 would result in direct cost savings in terms of travel time savings, vehicle operating cost savings, accident savings and an improved competitive advantage to businesses. Economic benefits would result from this increased transportation efficiency.

With improved competitive conditions resulting from reduced transportation costs and enhanced time reliability for the delivery of goods, Corridor 18 can be expected to attract significantly more economic production activities. Based on analyses in the Corridor 18 Feasibility Study, if only that portion of the corridor from Indianapolis to Houston were built some 27,000 new jobs would be created by 2025. This includes the Delta Region. The same study estimated that just this portion of the overall corridor would result in \$11 billion in additional wages between 1995 and 2025. The I-69 Corridor improvement would provide increased access to a wider range of job opportunities for persons living in or near the route.

Tables 4 and 5 summarize the results of analyses of the potential impacts of I-69 on the economy. These illustrate the potential level of economic benefits that could be involved if the transportation system were improved with the extension of I-69. A benefit/cost ratio of 1.57 has been calculated for this extension from Indianapolis to the LRGV. Results indicate that \$1.57 in transportation efficiency benefits would be derived from each \$1.00 invested. The Net Present Value indicates that the Nation's economic productivity would increase by nearly \$4 billion.

**TABLE 4 – Total Efficiency Benefits**

BENEFITS OVER 31 YEAR ANALYSIS PERIOD <sup>(a)</sup> (millions)	
Time Savings	\$3,861.8
Vehicle Operating Cost Savings	\$1,824.5
Accident Savings	\$5,287.4
<b>TOTAL EFFICIENCY BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$10,973.7</b>

(a) 1999-2029 Economic Benefits discounted at 7%

**TABLE 5 – Economic Feasibility Indicators**

FEASIBILITY INDICATOR	
Net Present Value <sup>(a)</sup>	\$3,972.9 (millions)
Internal Rate of Return	10.7%
Discounted Benefit/Cost Ratio <sup>(a)</sup>	1.57

(a) Discounted at 7% per year

*Source: Corridor 18 Feasibility Study, Final Report, November 1995*

An improved corridor would have positive effects in the economy as follows:

**Economic Development Impacts  
of the I-69 Corridor**

- Create 27,000 jobs (in 2025)
- Result in \$11 billion in additional wages (1995-2025)
- Produce \$19 billion in value added (1995-2025)

**Modal/Freight Interrelationships**

The proposed corridor would connect major urban areas, port facilities, industrial centers, space industry, airports, public transportation facilities, and intermodal transportation facilities with more direct international border crossings for Mexico and Canada. Such could serve international, interstate and interregional travel as well as local needs.

The I-69 Corridor is served by every major railroad operating in the United States including two Canadian carriers. The Mississippi River has historically divided the eastern and western railroads, thus the major east-west gateways are located along it. One of the four principal gateways, Memphis, is in the I-69 Corridor, while Chicago is a part of Corridor 18. St. Louis, and New Orleans are the other two. All of these gateways are connected to I-69 by Interstate highways and other highways. However, no single railroad serves the entire length of the I-69 corridor.

Rail/truck intermodal facilities are located in a number of urban areas along I-69. These include Detroit, Indianapolis, Evansville, Memphis, and Houston. The major east-west truck terminal in West Memphis would be connected to north-south I-69 to allow for connection of this facility with major industries of the northeast and southwest United States. Amtrak's City of New Orleans passenger service and many airports would have improved access. There also are a number of facilities located within the corridor where highway and marine trailers can be transferred from one mode to another. The largest number of facilities exists in the two rail east-west gateways of Memphis and Chicago.

The proposed corridor could link port systems including those along the Texas Gulf Coast and the Intracoastal Waterway, the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, and the Great Lakes with central core industrial areas and major urban centers. The Port of Houston is one of the world's busiest seaports and is a major international trading center. The Ports of Corpus Christi and Brownsville are other major seaports that would be served by the I-69 Corridor.

In the Special Issues Study, 11 airports with greater than 5,000 enplanements per day that are not directly connected by an Interstate highway are located along the corridor from Indianapolis to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Twelve airports within 60 miles of the Corridor have over 1,000,000 annual enplanements. These airports also offer opportunities for development of air/truck/rail intermodal facilities, in turn having regional transportation enhancements. Memphis, TN is an example of a regional hub airport that has a substantial freight and package service in the form of Federal Express. The highest tonnage of air cargo at a US airport in 1998 was at Memphis International.

The corridor also has the potential for providing a missing Interstate route connecting a number of military installations. The following are not directly served by an existing north-south Inter-

state route. However, east-west access is afforded to some facilities by the existing Interstate system.

- Crane Naval Warfare Center in Indiana,
- Fort Campbell in Kentucky,
- Memphis Naval Air Station in Tennessee
- Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas
- Fort Polk and Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana.
- Corpus Christi and Kingsville Naval Air Stations in Texas

Even discounting the high volumes of relatively short intra-urban trips, the vast majority of passenger and cargo trips is less than 500 miles in length. A review of the characteristics of each modal alternative, including cost to consumers and times for delivery, shows that the vast majority of movements are short length trips best served by an Interstate highway. Other movements could be served by rail, air, water, and urban transit while leaving a high need for an improved limited access highway in the corridor.

### **Safety**

Current highways from Mexico to Canada through mid-America consist of indirect routes, many on facilities without full access control, relative to the major travel demands. Many trips are made along facilities providing less safety features than are common for Interstate routes. As indicated in the Corridor 18 Special Issues Study (1997), the portion of the corridor from the Lower Rio Grande Valley to Indianapolis would result in accident savings of over five billion dollars over a 31-year period if an Interstate type of facility were developed. Upgrading the existing roadways to Interstate standards would lower existing accident rates. Improved safety is also needed in order to accommodate the predicted increase in truck traffic, including that due to implementation of NAFTA.

The Special Issues Study estimated that an Interstate highway would save 3,100 lives, avoid 158,000 personal injuries, and avoid 409,000 property damage accidents. This would occur over the period 1999 to 2029 for the extended I-69 from Indianapolis to the LRGV.

Portions of the proposed corridor could also provide improved emergency evacuation routes. The southern portion of I-69 in Texas could serve as a Hurricane Evacuation Route for northern Mexico and coastal areas in Texas. These are related to areas that currently do not have the advantage of the high capacity and safety provided by an Interstate route.

### **Roadway Deficiencies**

The current highways from Canada to Mexico through mid-America consist of aging roadways and bridges, including Interstate highways. These highways require upgrading and replacement in most cases, and even if I-69 is not extended from Indianapolis to the LRGV. For the areas along the I-69 Corridor where existing route locations might be satisfactory for conversion to an Interstate highway, most will require substantial reconstruction to upgrade the infrastructure and add capacity. These areas include the parkway system in Kentucky, US 51 in western Tennessee, US 61 in Mississippi, and US 59 in Texas.

As mentioned previously, the New Madrid earthquake fault requires an additional consideration for the I-69 Corridor. The roadway and bridges along any new or reconstructed routes will require stronger earthquake resistance than currently exists through southwestern Kentucky, western Tennessee, including the Memphis metropolitan area, and northwestern Mississippi. The portion of the Mississippi River from the vicinity of Memphis to St. Louis is in an earthquake zone having the highest risk level and with bridges built prior to the 1960's. The I-69 Corridor

**Statement of Purpose & Need**

*February 7, 2000*

could provide relief on the east side of the River while leading further south to an additional travel link across the Mississippi River. Without I-69, a new bridge in this area could be missing a direct connection with an Interstate highway and direct access to the full Interstate system.

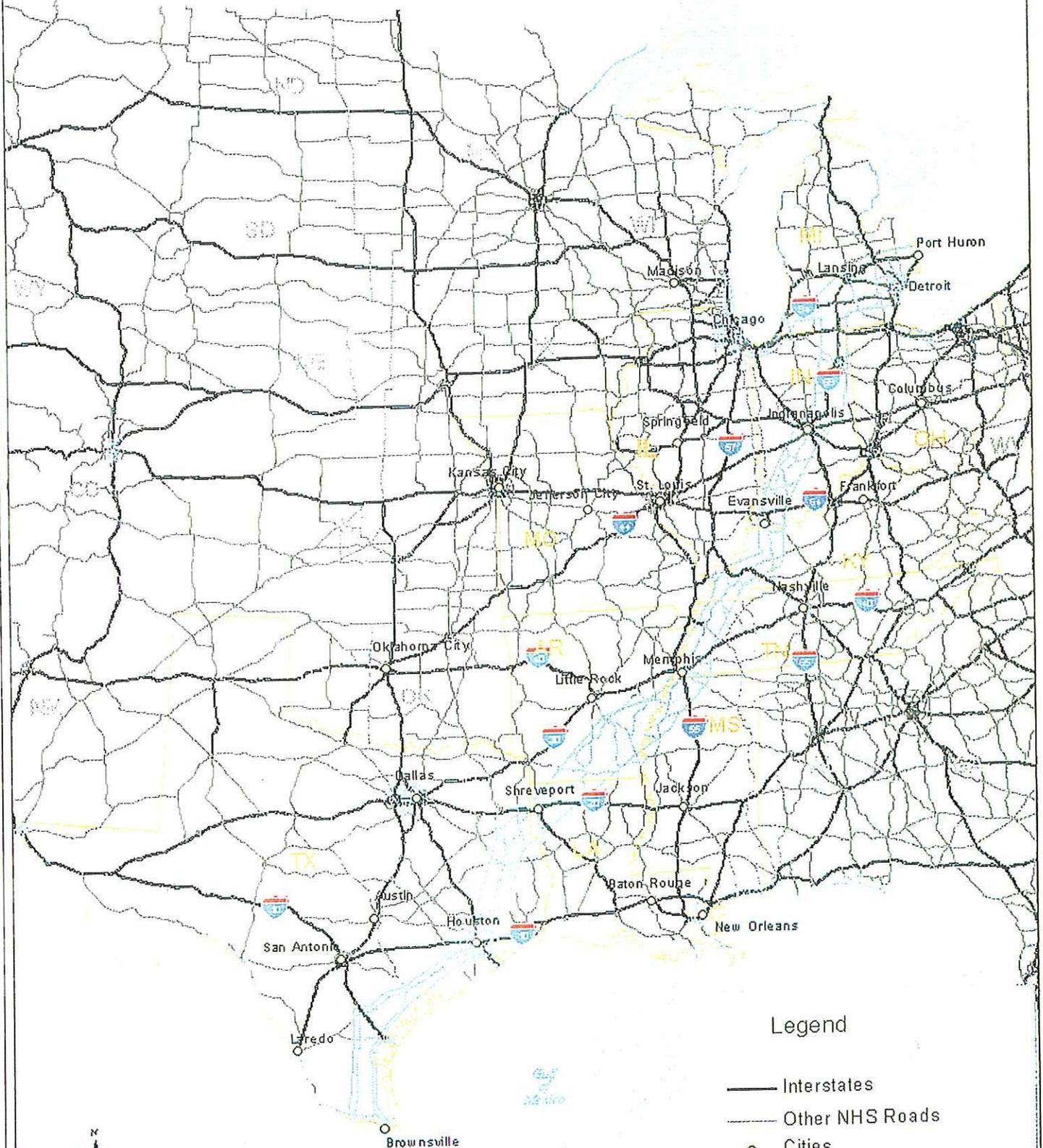
The goal of improving international and interstate movement of trade goods carries with it the potential for a significant increase in truck traffic on existing and new routes throughout the I-69 Corridor. There is also the possibility of larger and heavier trucks using the corridor. With this in mind, consideration needs to be given to measures to deal with a large number of heavy trucks. The use of heavy-duty pavement and truck lanes most often is accomplished more efficiently with a new route on new location rather than upgrading an existing facility in built-up areas. I-69 provides the opportunity to address this specific need and has the added advantage of reducing travel time and travel distance.

The need for improved transportation service in Corridor 18 along the I-69 corridor alignment emanates from travel demand, social advancement, and economic development concerns. The full corridor of over 1,600 miles (Texas/Mexico border to Michigan/Canada border) has a primary need for enhanced transportation service for relatively short trips as well as for long distance travel. The majority of the trips are best served by an Interstate highway extension from Indianapolis to the LRGV in conjunction with upgrading the existing I-69 north of Indianapolis. Transportation along this I-69 corridor would also make use of air, rail, and water modes using existing and improved facilities.

**EXHIBITS**

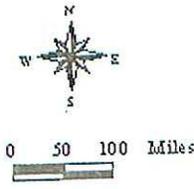
1. Corridor 18 Study Area
2. I-69 Representative Corridor, Extension of I-69 from Indianapolis to Lower Rio Grande Valley (as adopted by the I-69 Steering Committee at completion of the Special Issues Study)
3. Corridor 18 Sections of Independent Utility
4. 1996 Estimated Trucks Carrying NAFTA Trade on U.S. Highway Corridors

# Corridor 18 Study Area



## Legend

- Interstates
- Other NHS Roads
- Cities
- Corridor
- Corridor Region



# Interstate 69

(Corridor 18)

Representative Corridor

