



Executive Summary

Taxpayers spend an extraordinary amount of money to maintain and expand America's network of roads, rails, bridges, bike paths, and sidewalks. With this investment, we have a right to expect fair and efficient use of our tax dollars. Unfortunately, the current system instead wastes billions of dollars on inefficient and unnecessary projects and fails to equitably balance all transportation needs.

The majority of surface transportation money is spent on highways and roads. In 2000¹, federal, state, and local taxpayers spent approximately \$104 billion on highways, and \$27.8 billion of that total came from federal funds. Transit spending that year totaled \$32.4 billion, with \$5.3 billion from federal funds.² Federal policy has created a system where highway projects receive more money and are more easily approved than other transportation projects, yet highway projects are subject to less federal oversight. The resulting inefficiency has created a situation in which spending on highways has soared to record levels, yet congestion is increasing and many of our existing roads and bridges remain in disrepair.

Road to Ruin highlights 27 proposed federal-aid highway projects from every region in the country. All of these projects face significant public opposition because they would waste tax dollars and cause significant and unnecessary harm to communities, the environment, and public health. Hundreds of projects were reviewed for *Road to Ruin*. Each highlights problems with federal transportation spending and raises questions about how transportation projects are approved.

Federal taxpayers would be forced to spend more than \$24 billion to construct these projects, based on conservative cost estimates. This figure will balloon over time when inflation, inevitable cost increases, and project changes occur.

In addition to direct construction costs, these projects would also amass enormous secondary costs that would also be passed down to taxpayers. New road capacity creates additional maintenance costs. Many of the areas where projects are proposed already fail to meet federal air quality standards. More road capacity would exacerbate this problem by encouraging more driving, resulting in increased spending on health and environmental damage. Finally, new and wider highways and roads would continue to encourage sprawling development, forcing local governments to provide additional and costly public services.

The last federal transportation authorization bill, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21),³ provided \$218 billion for surface transportation projects from 1997 to 2003. Roughly 80 percent of that money was directed to highway programs, leaving transit and other non-highway programs with only one-fifth of the funding pie.

Congress is in the process of reauthorizing TEA-21. The Senate and House of Representatives have each passed versions of a bill, but there is no agreement yet between the two bodies as to the bill's final cost. The House-passed bill authorizes \$275 billion in spending over six years, plus another \$10.6 billion in earmarked funds—money for specific projects—used in larger part to secure votes of individual legislators. The Senate bill authorizes \$318 billion over the same time period. While a conference committee from the two chambers meets to hammer out differences between the two bills, only two

¹ This is the most recent year for which transportation spending data is available for federal, state, and local governments across all transportation modes.

² U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Government Transportation Financial Statistics*, available at http://www.bts.gov/publications/government_transportation_financial_statistics

³ This legislation was first enacted in 1991 as the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act* (ISTEA), and was renewed in 1997 as TEA-21. As enacted, this legislation must be renewed every six years.

things are certain—federal transportation funding will increase sharply, and the 80/20 split between funding for highways and transit will continue.

Although federal investment in transportation is significant, every project request cannot be funded. The maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure should be of first priority, and tough choices regarding new projects must be made.

At a time of record federal budget deficits, we cannot afford to continue squandering money on damaging and unnecessary road projects. For this reason, all 27 projects included in *Road to Ruin* should be cancelled or seriously scaled down.

Problems with Federal Policy

Bad projects result from bad policy. Federal transportation policy has created a system in which highway projects receive a free ride to funding and approval. Expensive, destructive, and unnecessary roads are built partly because federal rules favor roads over other transportation projects and too often fail to require agencies to consider the full range of alternatives and impacts.

Several factors lead to easier approval for highway projects, which results in wasteful highway projects and inefficient use of federal dollars:

- **Uncle Sam Pays More of the Tab for Highway Projects**—No matter the need or expense, Uncle Sam pays for the vast majority of every highway project. Federal tax dollars cover 80-90 percent of the cost for road, highway, and highway bridge projects. In contrast, the federal New Starts program—which funds new rail transit projects and rail system expansions—provides no more than a 60 percent federal share for these projects.⁴ The Bush administration has proposed cutting the federal share for New Starts even further, to 50 percent, while maintaining the current highway cost share of 80-90 percent.⁵

These policies create an unbalanced funding playing-field that in some instances results in new highways even when transit is a community's preferred choice. The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) found that the disparity between road and transit funding could "bias the local decision-making process in favor of highway projects."⁶

- **"Free Money" for Roads**—State governments often provide the non-federal share for highway projects, minimizing or eliminating the need for local investment. As a result, many local officials view highway funding as "free money," making them more likely to approve road projects.⁷ In contrast, transit projects often require local investment, making them less attractive to local officials and forcing transit projects to compete with other important local needs, such as fire, police, and education. When state funds are dedicated to a transit project, this money is often drawn from general revenues instead of using dedicated funding sources such as gas taxes, which places transit dollars in competition with other state needs.⁸

⁴ "Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002," H. Rept. 107-308, 107th Congress (Government Printing Office, 2001).

⁵ The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003: Section-by-Section Analysis. Federal Highway Administration, *available at* <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reauthorization/safetea.htm>.

⁶ U.S. General Accounting Office, "FTA Needs to Provide Clear Information and Additional Guidance on the New Starts Rating Process," GAO-03-701, 12, 2003.

⁷ Edward Beimborn and Robert Puentes, Brookings Institution, "Highways and Transit: Leveling the Playing in Federal Transportation Policy," 6, Dec. 2003.

⁸ Robert Puentes and Ryan Prince, "Fueling Transportation Finance: A Primer on the Gas Tax," 10, March 2003. Thirty states have laws preventing any portion of gasoline taxes from being used for transit projects.

- **Building Today, Paying Tomorrow**—Many states are going into significant debt to fund highway projects by selling transportation bonds to avoid raising gasoline taxes or user fees. In 2001, bonds represented the largest revenue source dedicated to highway spending in Indiana, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. In addition, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Arizona, Georgia, and New York each committed more than half of their gas tax receipts to paying off transportation bond debt.

Since 1990, outstanding transportation bond obligations at the state level have increased by more than 70 percent.⁹ Instead of paying for highway projects with available money, states are issuing bonds against anticipated federal or state transportation funds. This raises a number of significant concerns. First, debt financing drives the cost of transportation projects higher. Second, states' bond ratings may suffer, affecting their ability to issue bonds in the future, including for needs other than transportation. Third, bonds make highway projects more attractive because there appears to be money to pay for them, although it will take decades to pay off these projects. Lastly, anticipated revenues may never materialize, damaging a state's credit rating or forcing a state to divert revenues from other programs.

- **Uneven Playing Field**—To gain approval and federal funding, transit projects face far more intense scrutiny than highway projects. While this policy helps ensure that federal transit dollars are well spent, it also discriminates in favor of highways.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) evaluates and rates each New Starts proposal and requires a comprehensive planning and project development process that considers impacts on employment, operating efficiency, cost effectiveness, land-use policies, and local funding commitment. Highway projects face a far less stringent analysis. Most projects receive an exclusion from review, while less than 3 percent require an Environmental Impact Statement, which is primarily a consideration of the project's direct environmental and traffic impacts. Even in these cases, cost-benefit, land-use, and performance analyses are rarely required or conducted, and state departments of transportation (DOT) do not have to provide hard evidence that a proposed project will be economically or socially beneficial. And while the FTA measures transit projects against similar proposals and projects in other states, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) draws no such comparison between highway projects.

FHWA provides limited project oversight once a highway project has been approved, but FTA carefully monitors the progress of each transit project, including financial performance and schedule adherence.

- **Highway Projects Bring Home the Bacon**—Congress stuffs the six-year transportation authorization bill and annual transportation appropriations bills with billions of dollars for earmarked highway projects. These projects are specifically identified in the legislation and each receives its own funding.¹⁰ Even more projects receive funding in annual transportation appropriations bills. This process enables legislators to obtain funds for specific projects in their districts, regardless of whether those projects are included in local or state transportation plans, comply with federal law, or enjoy broad local support. All earmarked funds a state receives are in addition to other federal transportation "formula" funds. As a result, Congress improperly bypasses the decision-making authority of transportation agencies at all levels of government and wrestles transportation decision-making away from the public.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ TEA-21 contained 1,850 demonstration projects, many of which are for highways, worth several billion dollars over the life of the legislation.

A number of projects in *Road to Ruin* were earmarked for funding in the House version of the transportation bill reauthorization. The biggest porker of the group is the Ohio River bridges project, which would receive \$49.4 million in federal funds as the result of two earmarks.

Limiting Public Input

The administration and some members of Congress are attempting to ensure that highway projects face even easier approval, no matter how ineffective or damaging a project would be.

One example is Executive Order (EO) 13274¹¹, signed by President Bush in September 2002, which may undermine rigorous review and limit public participation and input. Under EO 13274, the administration is handpicking transportation projects for fast-track review and placing them on a “Priority Project List.” The criteria for selecting projects are so broad and vague that virtually any highway may qualify. Several projects on the “Priority Project List” are highlighted in *Road to Ruin*—Interstate 93 in New Hampshire, West Street in New York, Interstate 66 in Kentucky, and the Inter County Connector in Maryland. The administration has moved two other *Road to Ruin* projects—the Circumferential Highway in Vermont and the Ohio River bridges project in Kentucky—from the “Priority Project List” to a “Transitional List,” meaning that FHWA has issued decisions in favor of these projects. In some cases, the administration is pushing projects that have been rejected by various federal agencies or governors on the grounds that they would cause significant damage while offering few benefits.

Attempts are also being made to roll back decades of federal law governing environmental protection, public health, and transportation. The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the Clean Air Act require review of transportation projects to ensure that projects serve broader community needs. NEPA further requires significant public disclosure and public participation. Rolling back these laws would reduce the already limited accountability that is required of federal and local highway agencies, limit the public’s access to information regarding a project’s impacts, and reduce taxpayers’ options to be involved in decision-making.

Conclusion

Most highway projects benefit from federal “blank check” policies. When federal and state governments pay 100 percent of a project’s cost, local governments are more likely to approve a bad highway project over anything else, even if the highway project is unnecessary, faces significant opposition, harms the environment, or contradicts local planning goals. Approval of wasteful highway projects is also easier because states and local governments know they will not be held accountable for how the money is spent or how the project performs, and the federal government does little to verify a project’s economic viability. The uneven playing field makes federal highway dollars a much more attractive option to local officials, who in turn have little incentive to efficiently use the money they receive. These problems plague the projects highlighted in *Road to Ruin*. These projects are poor federal investments that would needlessly cost federal taxpayers more than \$24 billion.

Federal dollars are wasted on inefficient projects, little oversight is exercised, and few opportunities for accountability exist, creating a system in which taxpayers are spending too much money on projects they know too little about.

The good news is that this problem is not incurable. Steps can be taken to improve efficiency, oversight, and accountability of transportation spending. The transit funding and oversight process provides an

¹¹ Office of President George W. Bush, “Executive Order 13274: Environmental Stewardship and Transportation Infrastructure Project Reviews,” Sept. 18, 2002. Available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/stewardshipeo/eo13274.htm>, April 9, 2004.

example of how this may be accomplished. Local and state governments pay a much larger share of each transit project, so they have a vested interest in managing costs effectively. The result is more financially sound projects with greater community support.¹² In addition, greater scrutiny of transit projects makes for better projects. Highway projects should receive the same strict review as transit projects, and impacts and costs should be as transparent as possible. This way, the public would have the information necessary to learn more about local projects and help insure the best and most necessary projects are built first.

Recommendations

To increase cost efficiency, improve project oversight and accountability, and level the playing field between transportation modes, *Road to Ruin* recommends the following:

- (1) **The federal share for new or significantly expanded highway projects should be reduced to 50 percent.** This will significantly increase highway project efficiency by creating greater incentive for local governments to build only the most necessary projects, and will help ensure that costs are kept as low as possible.
- (2) **All projects should face equally tough scrutiny before receiving federal funding.** Transit projects go through a rigorous review process to ensure they will meet financial targets and perform as promised, and the result is well understood and fully considered projects. If highway proposals undergo the same process, better projects will result and the requirements for road building and other modes will be brought more in line with each other.
- (3) **Transportation agencies at every level of government should be required to provide information to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) detailing expenditure of all federal funds for every project they oversee.** USDOT should make this information publicly available and accessible on its website in a format that is easy to understand. Increasing transparency will allow the public to make fully informed decisions and shine a bright light on how and how well federal tax dollars are invested in transportation projects.
- (4) **The role of the federal government in transportation decision-making must be redefined.** The most important role for the federal government is to ensure that federal funds are spent efficiently, that the public is kept fully informed about transportation spending, and that state and local governments are held accountable for spending decisions. The federal government should not unduly influence local decision-making by providing earmarked funds for projects, undermining necessary environmental review, limiting public participation, or “fast-tracking” projects. Ideally, decisions regarding project choice would be made at the local level of government, and without influence from Congress or the administration.

¹² Edward Beimborn and Robert Puentes, Brookings Institution, “Highways and Transit: Leveling the Playing in Federal Transportation Policy,” 6-7, Dec. 2003.



About this Report

Federal Funds

This report includes only proposed projects for which federal funds have been or may be sought.

Alternatives

It is important to note that alternatives have been suggested for some of these projects. While this report does not necessarily endorse any specific alternative, it recommends that they be considered where appropriate.

Savings

Estimates represent an approximate savings of federal dollars. In cases where project proponents have sought federal funds, the price tags are well known. In a few instances, cost estimates are not known or the federal share has not been determined. Unless otherwise noted, the federal share of the project is assumed to be 80 percent.

Contacts

The people and organizations listed in each article are knowledgeable sources of information on the respective project. However, such contacts do not necessarily endorse the report in its entirety.

Maps

The maps for each project are illustrative, intended only to show the general location of the proposed project.

How the Top 10 Were Selected

The 27 highways in the report were all nominated by local citizen organizations and individuals, then researched by Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS) and Friends of the Earth (FOE) staff in consultation with local and national transportation advocates. All 27 projects are unneeded, all have serious problems, all face significant local opposition and none should be built.



The report authors, TCS and FOE, selected the *Road to Ruin* Top 10 list from the 27 proposed highways in the report. This list represents the most wasteful and environmentally harmful highways in the U.S. We ranked the proposed roads by using two major criteria and four minor criteria. The three major criteria are as follows:

- **Cost to taxpayers** High ranking went to those roads with the highest overall cost to federal taxpayers.
- **Impact on the environment** High ranking went to those roads that would have significant impact on the natural environment, including national parks, national marine sanctuaries, national forests, wild and scenic rivers, national wildlife refuges, and state parks.

In addition, extra ranking was also given to those proposed roads that met one or more of the following minor criteria: contributes significantly to the loss of farmland; cuts through historically designated areas and undermines efforts for historic preservation; worsens regional air quality problems; and undermines existing local businesses by routing traffic away from downtowns and thriving business corridors.



Why Groups Support This Report

In compiling this report, the 27 listed projects were identified by a coalition of taxpayers, environmentalists, and community activists seeking to stop new road projects that waste money, damage the environment, and harm local communities. Individual groups support this report for different reasons:

- **Taxpayers** support this report to ensure that tax dollars are used wisely, pork-barrel spending is limited, and wasteful projects are stopped.

Much of the federal spending on highways is provided by the Highway Trust Fund, which is funded by 18.3 cents per gallon of the federal gas tax. Supporters of the federal highway program point out that the Highway Trust Fund finances a large part of the spending, as if that should exempt it from oversight and reasonable priorities.

Gas tax revenues, like all federal dollars, should be spent wisely, yet money is allocated for roads around the country, regardless of whether they are needed or wanted by local communities. In effect, Congress has put highway spending on autopilot, with little oversight or accountability.

- **Environmentalists** support this report to preserve clean air and water, improve energy use, control urban sprawl, and prevent destruction of habitat.

Environmentalists are concerned about the problems caused by America's growing reliance on the automobile. Increasing funding for new roads is fueling sprawl development around the country, which is paving over open spaces, polluting the air, and destroying farmland. New "mega highways" encourage people to live farther from where they shop, work, and eat.

Sprawl development increases driving, which in turn leads to greater dependence on fossil fuels; both contribute to declining water and air quality. New roads also inflict significant damage on habitat, which often dramatically disrupts wildlife and unique natural communities.

- **Local Community Groups** support this report to protect the quality of life in their neighborhoods, preserve their local economies, have a voice in determining their future, and encourage more transportation options.

Citizens in communities around the country are concerned about new roads that destroy homes and businesses. New roads have also transformed many rural communities by fueling suburban sprawl, which consumes millions of acres of farmland every year. In addition, new roads undermine the tax base of existing cities and towns by encouraging residents to locate elsewhere.



Juneau Access Road

Juneau, Alaska

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$240 million

The Project

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) is considering a new, 65-mile highway—the Juneau Access Road—that would connect Juneau, Alaska’s capital, to Skagway and the Klondike Highway in Canada’s Yukon Territory. In 2000, former-Gov. Tony Knowles suspended the project’s environmental study because of cost overruns, and chose instead to improve Alaska’s ferry system—currently the primary means of moving people, vehicles, and goods along the Lynn Canal. In December 2003, Gov. Frank Murkowski reversed Knowles’ decision and ordered that the study be completed, despite significant local opposition. In January 2003, ADOT&PF determined that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) must be prepared to update the original 1997 study; the first draft is expected in June 2004.

Taxpayer Concerns

This road would be an expensive and ineffective replacement for the ferry that currently runs between Juneau, Haines, and Skagway. This region is prone to bad winter weather that forces road closures when ferry service can otherwise continue. Even if the state builds the Juneau Access Road, it would also have to maintain ferry vessels and terminal capacity for use during road closures. The federal government has already invested almost \$40 million for a fast vehicle ferry that will begin operating in the Lynn Canal this year, and has allocated similar amounts for two additional ferries that will serve other communities in coastal Alaska.

As few as 200,000 vehicle trips would occur on this highway every year (fewer than travel on the Washington Capital Beltway in one day!), a number far too low to justify a project this expensive. It would be far more reliable and cost-effective to maintain and upgrade existing ferry service.

Local Community Concerns

The Haines and Skagway local governments oppose the road because of fears it would reduce their draw as tourist destinations. Citizens of these communities overwhelmingly support improved ferry service. Juneau citizens remain divided on the issue, but a close referendum vote in 2000 approved a plan to improve ferry service rather than build the Juneau Access Road.

The ferry system needs upgrading, but limited funding for capital projects essentially forces a choice between building the road and improving the ferry system. Alaska’s ferry system has operated in the Lynn Canal for over forty years and has been paid for primarily with federal dollars. A road along this same route would be duplicative and waste tens of millions of dollars in federal investments. It would also weaken the region’s most economically viable ferry line and could cause significant revenue losses for the entire ferry system. This would reduce essential service for small communities that depend on the ferry for their transportation needs.

This project also raises significant safety concerns. Avalanche studies indicate that many of the 58 avalanche paths along the proposed route are powerful enough to force a vehicle off the roadway and into nearly freezing ocean water. The Juneau Access Road SEIS concludes that it would have one of the highest avalanche risks of any road in the entire country.

Environmental Concerns

The Juneau Access Road would cut through the heart of Berners Bay in the Tongass National Forest. This area is a “Land Use Designation (LUD) II” area—designated by Congress to remain forever roadless and wild—and is recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an “Aquatic Resource of National Importance.” Lands surrounding the bay support numerous wildlife species, including bald eagles, moose, deer, bears, and mountain goats, while the bay itself is home to endangered humpback whales, orcas, salmon, harbor seals, and Steller sea lions.

Proposal and Savings

ADOT&PF should cancel the \$300 million Juneau Access Road.

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The road would damage an area considered critical sea lion habitat by the National Marine Fisheries Service as well as the spawning grounds of the eulachon, an extremely nutritious forage fish that feeds tens of thousands of birds and many marine mammal species each spring.

The Juneau Access Road would destroy opportunities for visitors and local residents to recreate in the truly wild, roadless settings of Berners Bay and the 1.2 million-acre Skagway-Juneau Icefield Roadless Area. The road would also cross the mouth of the Katzehin, a National Wild and Scenic River and mar one of the most spectacular portions of Alaska's famed Inside Passage, a unique region of pristine water, snow-capped mountains, deep fjords, and forested inlands.



State Route 710 Freeway Extension

Greater Los Angeles, California

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$1.12 billion



The Project

The State Route 710 (SR 710) extension was first discussed in 1949 as one in a series of freeways serving Los Angeles County, California. As proposed, SR 710 would connect the existing I-710, which currently ends just outside of Los Angeles, with I-210 in Pasadena. The project's 1994 cost estimate, the most recent available, was \$1.4 billion for this 4.5-mile road, or \$311 million per mile. This number is certainly much higher today, but even using this outdated estimate, SR 710 would cost more per mile than most urban freeways and more than the Los Angeles subway system.

On April 8, 2004, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Transportation Commission rescinded the environmental certification for SR 710. The project is still moving forward, however, and some state officials reportedly plan to pursue the option of building a tunnel instead of an at-grade highway. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$3 million for a feasibility study of the tunneling option in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization. Tunneling any significant portion of SR 710 would sharply increase the project's cost and do little to reduce any of its broader community and environmental impacts.

The decision to rescind the project's environmental certification came on the heels of a December 2003 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announcement that Caltrans must prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) before SR 710 could proceed. In a letter to Caltrans Director Jeff Morales, FHWA Division Administrator Gary Hamby cited numerous reasons for this decision. Previously prepared environmental documents are obsolete and must be rewritten. A number of changes have occurred since the project was first studied, including the discovery of additional historical sites near the freeway's proposed path, implementation of new air-quality regulations, the opening of a new commuter rail, and completion of the Alameda Corridor freight train route connecting regional ports with rail yards in downtown Los Angeles. Finally, Hamby stated that California had failed to make interim transportation improvements required under a 1998 federal approval.

According to an FHWA spokeswoman, this decision does not mean that the agency intends to kill the project, only that it will take a neutral stance until it reviews the SEIS. The decision now lies with Caltrans as to whether to continue to pursue the project. An SEIS will take three to five years to complete and cost taxpayers several million dollars.

Taxpayer Concerns

Building the proposed SR 710 would cost \$1.4 billion or more. The cities of El Sereno, South Pasadena, and Pasadena would lose property tax revenue because Caltrans would destroy 1,000 homes and businesses, reducing annual revenue for the area's school districts by \$1.6 million. California currently owns only half of the properties it would need to build the highway, and would have to spend \$225 million to purchase additional properties. If the project is cancelled, the state could sell the 500 properties it has acquired and reap \$200 million or more and apply these funds to the region's more pressing transportation needs.

Recent transit improvements have made the highway unnecessary. In 2003, Caltrans opened an \$860 million light rail line that serves the corridor's commuter needs, and SR 710 would run parallel to the \$2.2 billion Alameda Corridor, which serves freight movement from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

A non-highway alternative supported by national, state, and local groups would cost at least \$1.2 billion less than SR 710 (at a cost of \$135 million) and could be implemented within five years. This alternative integrates signal coordination, parking management, intersection upgrades, roadway efficiency improvements, improvements to existing highways, and better public transit coordination.

Proposal and Savings

Caltrans should cancel plans to complete a supplemental review for the SR 710 freeway extension, a project that would cost approximately \$1.4 billion. Caltrans should instead pursue a host of transportation enhancements that would cost only \$135 million and take only five years to complete.

Contact

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Local Community Concerns

SR 710 would cut through historic neighborhoods in Pasadena, South Pasadena, and the largely Hispanic community of El Soreno in Los Angeles. It would destroy 70 historic properties and 1,000 homes and businesses, forcing the relocation of over 3,500 people, and impact six districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and other allies have together filed an environmental justice lawsuit to protect El Soreno.

Environmental Concerns

Smog levels in Los Angeles County and across much of southern California are among the worst in the nation, and the region fails to meet federal clean air standards for at least four pollutants. The poor quality of the region's air imperils the health of millions of residents. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers Los Angeles County and neighboring counties in extreme violation of federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, the worst possible rating. The region also violates standards for carbon monoxide and airborne particulates. Repeated exposure to increased levels of these pollutants can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness.

Though SR 710 supporters claim that the highway would improve air quality, the South Coast Air Quality Management District criticized Caltrans' use of an obsolete air pollutant emission model, and the EPA has criticized numerous flaws in Caltrans' analysis of SR 710's impact on air quality and communities. A federal district court based its 1999 injunction against the project partly upon flaws in Caltrans' emissions analysis.

SR 710 is projected to double the number of vehicle trips through the corridor—to 200,000 per day—and many of those vehicles would be diesel trucks. The Air Quality Management District's 2002 Multiple Air Toxics Exposure Study II found that air pollution-related cancer risk was elevated across the Los Angeles Basin; that cars, trucks and other vehicles were primary sources of some carcinogenic air pollutants; and that the highest risk often occurred near major roads.



U.S. Route 1

Florida Keys

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$136 million

The Project

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) proposes to spend \$170 million for numerous changes to an 18-mile stretch of U.S. Route 1 (US 1) between Key Largo and Florida City. These changes include building a two-lane road with a wide shoulder on the northbound side to be used as a second northbound evacuation lane, adding a concrete median barrier, and building a high, fixed bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway to replace an existing drawbridge. This redesigned stretch of road would also be designed to accommodate higher speeds. FDOT's proposal faces opposition from local and national groups because the stated goals of increasing safety and reducing hurricane evacuation time for the Florida Keys can easily be met without changes of this cost and magnitude. FDOT has not fully considered less costly, less damaging alternatives that could meet those objectives.

The Federal Highway Administration approved a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in March 1992. In 1997, FDOT withdrew its request to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for a wetlands permit rather than comply with the Corps' requirement to evaluate secondary and cumulative impacts. Nearly seven years later, FDOT has reapplied for a permit without addressing the project's secondary environmental impacts, and the matter is once again before the Corps.

Taxpayer Concerns

FDOT's proposal is excessive and unnecessary. In a detailed report on the project, a traffic engineering expert at North Carolina State University concluded that increasing road capacity in this corridor is not necessary to improve safety, reduce congestion, or aid hurricane evacuation.¹ The report found instead that a number of smaller improvements to the existing road, such as modifying intersections and installing traffic control devices, would address the problems identified by FDOT at a much lower cost.

Local Community Concerns

FDOT's proposal is purported to increase safety and improve hurricane evacuation, but would instead increase traffic crashes and trigger more growth in the area. An additional northbound evacuation lane on US 1 could also lead to future expansion of the entire highway, and the development and population growth this would trigger in the Florida Keys would nullify any improvement in evacuation capacity. Local residents fear that development resulting from the current FDOT proposal would make a wider road inevitable.

Environmental Concerns

FDOT's proposed highway expansion would destroy 106 acres of high-quality seagrass beds, wetlands, tidal wetlands, and mangroves that are home to manatees, sea turtles, and crocodiles. Local, state, and federal agencies are spending billions of dollars to preserve the Everglades and other protected areas in the Keys, including the National Crocodile Lake Wildlife Refuge, Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary, Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park, and the only coral reef in the continental U.S. These resources make the Florida Keys one of the nation's most environmentally sensitive environments. Easier access to and from the mainland would attract additional development and short-term visitors, thereby increasing wastewater and stormwater runoff and negatively impacting nearshore water and coral reefs.

Proposal and Savings

FDOT should cancel plans for the unnecessary widening of US 1 in the Florida Keys, which would cost an estimated \$170 million.

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¹ Joseph E. Hummer, "Transportation Engineering Analysis of the Proposed Widening of US-1 Between Florida City and Key Largo," July 2002.



Indian Street Bridge

Martin County, Florida

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$88 million

The Project

The Indian Street Bridge is proposed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) as a four-lane, 3,200-foot bridge spanning the south fork of the St. Lucie River in Martin County to connect the towns of Palm City and Stuart. This new bridge would be located just over half a mile south of the existing Palm City Bridge, and is estimated to cost \$110 million. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$5 million for the Indian Street Bridge in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

FDOT relies on an outdated 1988 feasibility study to justify the need for a new bridge. This study concluded that an eight-lane crossing would be required at some unspecified future date, but also determined that further evaluation of all alternatives was necessary.

FDOT published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in November 2003 and plans to publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement in 2004, but has not studied a full range of project alternatives. Community members commenting on the DEIS submitted more than 600 letters of opposition and a petition with over 1,000 signatures.

Taxpayer Concerns

The Indian Street Bridge would not meet the area's present or projected transportation needs. Proponents claim that a new bridge will create capacity across the St. Lucie River to accommodate projected future county growth, but the Martin County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan states that future growth in the region will occur far north and west of the proposed bridge site. The Indian Street Bridge does not, and is not designed to, solve current congestion on the nearby Palm City Bridge, which will carry approximately 48,000 cars each day regardless of whether a new bridge is built.

Reconfiguring existing intersections and approaches to the Palm City Bridge would address congestion more effectively and less expensively than the proposed Indian Street Bridge. FDOT has described these improvements and estimated they would cost less than \$30 million and could be completed much sooner than the new bridge.

Despite the proposed plan's high cost and obvious failure to address congestion in the region, the Martin County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has not seriously considered less expensive alternatives that integrate intersection improvements, improved land use, and improved access via transit, bicycle, and foot.

Local Community Concerns

Old Palm City, with a 2000 population of 20,097, is a small traditional neighborhood on the west side of the south fork of the St. Lucie River. The city is laid out with a grid of interconnected, narrow streets. If the Indian Street Bridge is constructed, 45,000 more cars per day would pass through Old Palm City, increasing congestion at key city intersections and funneling traffic onto a roadway network inadequate to handle the load. FDOT's analysis of the Indian Street Bridge Corridor does not assess the project's impact on regional intersections or neighborhood streets.

The Indian Street Bridge and required connector roads would harm surrounding waterways, generate noise, light, and air pollution, and forever change the area's character. Residents are deeply concerned that the 320-foot right-of-way is wide enough to accommodate eight lanes sometime in the future. The proposed route is close to elementary and middle schools, a senior-care and rehabilitation facility, and two parks. Children biking and walking to school would have to negotiate a four-lane highway. In addition, the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council has expressed concern that the project would trigger sprawl and overdevelopment.

Environmental Concerns

The Indian Street Bridge project was listed as a "high risk" alternative because of its impacts on surrounding wetlands and local endangered species. A 2001 FDOT study indicated that five alternatives would cause less environmental damage than the proposed bridge. The bridge's support structure would harm the tidal estuary of the south fork of the St. Lucie River, an important habitat for fish and the West Indian Manatee, and the bridge would cross an island that contains nesting sites for rare and exotic bird species, including the endangered wood stork.

Proposal and Savings

FDOT should kill the \$110 million proposal to construct the redundant and ineffective Indian Street Bridge.

Contacts

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Interstate 69 Indianapolis to Evansville, Indiana Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$1.5 billion



The Project

The 140-mile Interstate 69 (I-69) extension would be a new highway from Indianapolis to Evansville, Indiana, at a cost of at least \$1.9 billion. This would be one segment of a proposed eight-state, 1,800-mile "Mid-Continent NAFTA Superhighway" linking Canada and Mexico that is estimated to cost as much as \$6-\$10 billion. Critics point to new cost information that indicates the project could cost several times that amount.

Despite widespread and diverse constituent opposition, the late-Gov. Frank O'Bannon announced his preference for the Indiana Department of Transportation's (INDOT) proposed route in January 2003, and Indiana is now spending over \$12 million for studies to justify a project that citizens from every part of the state oppose. Gov. Joe Kernan also supports the new highway, and the I-69 project will be a major issue during Indiana's 2004 gubernatorial campaign.

On December 18, 2003, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and INDOT released a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for I-69 in Indiana, reaffirming their intention to build a new highway despite serious objections from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—which rejected the first Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1996—and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. On March 29, 2004, FHWA issued a Record of Decision approving INDOT's Tier 1 EIS. INDOT still must complete Tier 2 studies for individual segments of the highway.

In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$22.5 million for I-69 in Indiana in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization. This earmark adds to the approximately \$60 million in congressional earmarks for this highway over the last decade.

A less expensive alternative—the "Common Sense" route—would use Interstate 70 and an upgraded U.S. Route 41 instead of building a new highway. The "Common Sense" route would be only 12 miles longer than the new highway that INDOT favors, meaning an additional 11 to 15 minutes on the trip from Evansville to Indianapolis, and would save taxpayers more than \$900 million.

Taxpayer Concerns

Indiana can ill-afford a \$1.9 billion highway that would drain transportation funding from every region in the state. INDOT and FHWA have chosen the most expensive option, while an independent economic analysis found that less expensive routes would match the minimal economic and transportation benefits of the current proposal.

Indiana State Senator Lawrence Borst, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, wrote in an opinion editorial in October 2003 that the state would have to raise the gas tax by 5 cents per gallon or postpone other highway projects for 14 years to fund I-69, and that the project would reduce state education and health care services.

Local Community Concerns

A diverse coalition of farmers, conservationists, business leaders, elected officials, and taxpayer groups oppose building a new highway and instead support the "Common Sense" route. In November 2002, this coalition presented the State of Indiana with 138,000 petition signatures from citizens opposed to the new I-69. Most major Indiana newspapers—including the *Indianapolis Star*—oppose INDOT's route because of its high cost and environmental impacts. In 1999, the Bloomington Common Council adopted a declaration opposing running I-69 through their city.

An Amish community in the path of the proposed highway took the unprecedented step of petitioning the late-Gov. Frank O'Bannon to oppose this project, and nearly 700 of its members signed the petition.

Proposal and Savings

INDOT should stop pursuing the new highway alternative for the I-69 extension, a project that would cost more than \$1.9 billion. The "Common Sense" route—which involves upgrading the existing highway—would cost at least \$900 million less than the current proposal.

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Environmental Concerns

The new I-69 would destroy more than 5,500 acres of farmland and forests. Indiana is already losing farmland faster than any other major farm state except Texas. I-69 would also bisect the new Patoka National Wetlands Project and Wildlife Refuge, destroying many acres of wetlands and damaging critical habitat for bald eagles and other endangered species.

In April 2004, EPA classified three areas along the proposed route—Indianapolis, Evansville, and Green County—in violation of federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, which can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. An Indianapolis transportation-planning agency found that a new highway would generate more traffic and vehicle emissions than the “Common Sense” route.



Interstate 66

Kentucky

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$4 billion



The Project

Interstate 66 (I-66) in southern Kentucky is proposed as a new highway to run 420 miles from Paducah to Pikeville. In its entirety, I-66 would be the "East-West Transamerica Corridor" from Fresno, California to Washington, D.C. The Kentucky segment of I-66 is estimated to cost at least \$5 billion, though the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has never offered concrete cost data for the entire project, so the actual cost could be much higher.

In 1991, Congress identified I-66 as a "high priority corridor" in the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Equity Act (ISTEA), but a 1994 congressional study determined that the Transamerica Corridor was unnecessary and construction costs would exceed potential travel benefits. As a result of this finding, most states abandoned the project. In 1997, however, the Kentucky Transportation Center at the University of Kentucky concluded that the stretch of I-66 proposed through southern Kentucky was economically feasible, a conclusion challenged by a coalition of community organizations.

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KTC) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have divided the Kentucky segment of I-66 into four smaller segments, despite federal regulations that are supposed to prevent such "segmenting." Segmenting a project makes it more difficult for agencies, the public, and decision makers to assess the highway's full impacts.

In April 2002, KTC and FHWA started an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the 12-mile Somerset to London segment in eastern Kentucky. This segment is estimated to cost \$1 billion. In late 2003, the Bush administration fast-tracked the EIS under Executive Order 13274, which allows for expedited review of designated transportation projects. In March 2004, Rep. Hal Rogers, one of the project's most vocal supporters, secured a \$14 million earmark for the Somerset to London segment in the House version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

In March 2003, FHWA approved the 33-mile segment from Pike County, Kentucky to King Coal Highway in West Virginia. The cost of this segment has more than doubled from an estimated \$735 million in 1997 to \$1.6 billion.

Taxpayer Concerns

State Highway 80 (SH 80) already connects London and Somerset and also connects the endpoints of the Cumberland and Hal Rogers Parkways, but KTC instead proposes to build a brand new highway parallel to the existing highway. In addition, I-66 would run parallel between existing east-west interstates, Interstate 64 and Interstate 40. Interstate 75 also runs through this region, and already adequately connects southern Kentucky to jobs, industry, educational facilities, tourism, and recreational facilities.

KTC's report concludes that the new I-66 would increase economic activity in Appalachia and the Lower Mississippi Delta region by connecting southern Kentucky to jobs, industry, educational facilities, tourism, and recreational facilities. However, this economic justification is based on flawed premises and outdated economic models. One of the most egregious assumptions the report relies upon is that the entire Transamerica Corridor will be built, which is very unlikely given the project's proven lack of justification. The KTC also exaggerates the benefits and underestimates the secondary costs of the proposed highway.

Local Community Concerns

I-66 would impact undeveloped green space, scenic beauty, noise, local businesses, and the general quality of life in rural southern Kentucky. It is these qualities that make the region an attractive place to live, work, recreate, and visit, and underlie its greatest economic value as a tourist destination.

Proposal and Savings

KTC should cancel the Kentucky portion of the I-66 project, a massive project that is estimated to cost as much as \$5 billion.

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A number of community organizations oppose I-66 and question the feasibility and need of the project to spur growth and economic activity. From 1980 to 1990, for example, the populations of Laurel and Pulaski counties, through which the London to Somerset segment would run, increased at a faster rate than the population of Kentucky as a whole. The ability of new roads to generate significant economic activity in Appalachia is also questionable, and is just as likely to shift jobs from small town main streets to interstate interchanges.

Community members also feel that fast-tracking the London to Somerset segment under EO 13274 has undermined public disclosure and participation and limited the range of options and impacts to be studied.

Environmental Concerns

The eastern segments of I-66 would traverse and run along the Cumberland Escarpment on the west side of the Appalachian Mountains. This region is rich in streams, wetlands, forests, and diverse plant and animal species. The London to Somerset portion of I-66 would cut a 400-acre swath through the Daniel Boone National Forest, an important ecological area and popular regional recreation destination. This forest is home to black bears, coyotes, mountain lions, the endangered Indiana Bat, rare plant species, and rare fish and mussel species, and contains many sensitive archaeological sites. The Daniel Boone National Forest draws roughly five million annual visitors, and degrading the forest's wild character will affect local economies as fewer visitors would recreate in the area.

The London to Somerset segment would also cross the Rockcastle River—a Kentucky Wild and Scenic River—and impact the area's unique topography, cave network, and archeological sites. Much of the area is underlain with karst formations—limestone that in many places has been eaten away through natural processes to form caves and which can be prone to collapse. Silt or chemical run off generated by the highway's construction or use could contaminate aquifers and streams in the karst. Contaminants can quickly flow as much as ten miles through such networks. Aquifers throughout the region are important sources of drinking water. Flooding is also a frequent occurrence in the region, and adding more pavement will increase flood risks.

I-66 would also increase light, noise, and air pollution in the region's communities and natural areas.



Interstate 265 Ohio River Bridge Louisville, Kentucky/Southern Indiana Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$640 million

The Project

The "Bridge Project" is actually two projects located eight miles apart in the Louisville metropolitan area. The first project, called the eastern bridge, would be a new interstate highway—Interstate 265 (I-265)—and Ohio River bridge in the eastern suburban area of Louisville. It would connect the Gene Snyder Freeway in Kentucky (KY 841) to the Lee Hamilton Highway in Indiana (State Road 265), at a cost of approximately \$800 million. The second project, called the downtown project, includes rebuilding an existing interchange at the convergence of Interstates 65, 64, and 71—now called Spaghetti Junction—and tying the new interchange into a bridge across the Ohio River. The project would largely serve the Interstate 65 corridor and the Louisville central business district. The cost estimate for this project is \$1.3 billion.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, and Indiana Department of Transportation released their Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for these projects in April 2003, after fast-tracking the environmental review under the Bush administration's Executive Order (EO) 13274. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$49.4 million for the bridges project in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

In September 2003, FHWA issued its Record of Decision, approving both the eastern bridge and the downtown project. The study makes it clear that the region's traffic and safety problems can be significantly improved by the downtown project (rebuilding Spaghetti Junction and constructing a new downtown bridge), but offers no evidence of traffic benefits from constructing the eastern bridge.

Taxpayer Concerns

The cost estimate for the eastern bridge increased by almost 400 percent in just seven years, from \$176 million in 1996 to \$800 million in 2003. Federal taxpayers are expected to pay approximately \$640 million of this cost. Although the downtown project carries a price tag of \$1.3 billion, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said that the downtown project satisfies the "safety and congestion issues identified and substantiated in the [Draft] EIS" and would also handle the projected regional traffic volumes. In contrast, the EPA called the eastern bridge "redundant."

The FEIS found that the eastern bridge project would not create any new net permanent jobs. Instead, the bridge would open up new land for development in Indiana, and the FEIS estimates that Kentucky would lose 11,000 permanent jobs over the next 20 years as a result. This would cost Kentucky and local governments nearly \$26 million annually in lost tax revenue.

Local Community Concerns

The eastern bridge threatens historic sites, historic neighborhoods, farmland, and small cities in the eastern Louisville metropolitan area. It would also trigger sprawl in Indiana by providing access to undeveloped areas that lack strong planning and zoning laws. The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) is concerned about the impacts of the eastern bridge on historic family-owned farms, a rural river village, rare remains of lime kilns in Indiana, a nationally significant historic district of estates, and a state-designated scenic byway on the Kentucky side of the project area.

In 2002, two Kentucky General Assembly representatives from Louisville filed a formal complaint with U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta charging violations of the federal Civil Rights Act and federal environmental justice laws with respect to impacts of the eastern bridge on their constituents, including sprawl and urban disinvestment.

Proposal and Savings

KTC and INDOT should remove the redundant I-265 and eastern bridge from the proposed Ohio River Bridges project, saving an estimated \$800 million.

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Environmental Concerns

Local and state environmental organizations are concerned that the eastern bridge would badly damage a groundwater aquifer that the local public water company is developing. That aquifer will provide drinking water for up to one million residents in the Louisville region. The eastern bridge would cross the well system, and its piers and foundations would penetrate the aquifer. The EPA has also expressed concerns about the bridge's impacts on groundwater and drinking water, air quality and public health, forests, wetlands, streams, habitat, endangered species—including Gray and Indiana bats—and noise pollution.

Louisville fails to meet federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, and the region may soon be in violation of a standard for airborne particles. Repeated exposure to increased levels of these pollutants can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. Despite these known air quality problems, the agencies publishing the FEIS rejected the Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District's repeated requests that the FEIS assess the project's cumulative and indirect impacts and impacts on local levels of hazardous air pollutants, and that the agencies model more comprehensive non-highway alternatives.



Inter County Connector (Interstate 370) Maryland Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$1.4 billion



The Project

As proposed in 1997, the Inter County Connector (ICC) would be a 6- to 12-lane, 18-mile interstate highway (Interstate 370) from Interstate 270 near Gaithersburg, Maryland to U.S. Route 1 near Laurel, Maryland. It would also be part of a sprawling "spider web" of highways around Washington, D.C., including most or all of a new Outer Beltway. This road network would cost at least \$20 billion, with the ICC portion estimated to cost at least \$1.7 billion, and as much \$3.2 billion if a plan to fund the project with bonds is approved.

The Bush administration and Gov. Robert Ehrlich are attempting to approve the ICC through an expedited Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under Presidential Executive Order 13274, which allows for expedited review of designated transportation projects. Twice before, agencies have rejected the alignment sought by the road and developer lobbies because it would damage communities, parks, wetlands, and forested stream valleys. The 1997 Draft EIS published by the Maryland and federal highway administrations also found that the ICC would have minimal positive impact on regional congestion. That study and negative comments from the public and local, state, and federal decision makers helped convince former-Gov. Parris Glendening to abandon the ICC.

Maryland's State Highway Administration (SHA) has already spent nearly \$20 million studying and restudying the ICC, and this is the third EIS on the ICC in less than 25 years, yet Gov. Ehrlich has declared the ICC to be his top transportation priority. A 2001 study by a local planning agency found that an alternative that reduced sprawl, balanced jobs and housing, and expanded transit would compete with a sprawl-as-usual road scenario that included the ICC and many other major highway projects. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$9 million for the ICC in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

In 2000, corporate special interests spent millions of dollars to elect pro-ICC candidates and have spent millions working to convince the public that the ICC will relieve congestion and not harm the environment. They are also pushing hard for a westward extension of the ICC, known as the "Techway," which would include a new bridge across the Potomac River and a new Outer Beltway segment into rural Virginia.

Taxpayer Concerns

In 2003, state and regional transportation planners estimated that the ICC would cost approximately \$1.7 billion. The Ehrlich administration proposes to finance much of the ICC's cost through nearly \$1 billion in Guaranteed Advance Revenue (GARVEE) bonds, which allow states to borrow against expected federal transportation funding. Interest on these bonds, however, would add another billion dollars or more to the project's cost, and could boost the total cost to over \$3 billion. This would consume much of Maryland's share of federal transportation funding, and imperil other projects across the state. In 1997, the federal and state highway administrations found that the ICC would not reduce average auto commute times in the area or congestion on the Capital Beltway (I-495), I-270, or I-95 and instead would increase congestion on major north-south commuter routes.

Local Community Concerns

The ICC is opposed by a broad coalition of civic, environmental, and social justice organizations. It would rip through dozens of communities, destroy local businesses and scores of homes, and depress property values. Local communities would also be harmed by increased noise, air pollution, and traffic.

Environmental Concerns

The ICC would undermine local, state, and federal efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and to improve the region's poor air quality. Agency studies have found that the ICC would result in the clearcutting of up to 550 acres of forests, damage stream valleys, and obliterate 20 acres of wetlands in the headwaters of major tributaries to the Anacostia River, Potomac River, and Chesapeake Bay. The ICC threatens twenty rare, threatened, or endangered plant species and would destroy forests that shelter at least 27 migratory songbird species. The ICC would also cut through 145 acres of public parkland.

Proposal

Maryland SHA should abandon the off-rejected ICC proposal, which would cost at least \$1.7 billion to build, and the price tag could be \$3.2 billion if the project is paid for with bonds.

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The 1997 EIS found the ICC would increase driving on local roads, and this could have negative impacts on the region's already dirty air. Washington and Baltimore fail to meet two separate standards for ozone under the Clean Air Act, and some counties fail to meet the standard for airborne particles. As a result, nearly 90 percent of Maryland residents live in counties where smog levels often violate national health-based clean air standards, and repeated exposure to increased levels of these pollutants can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. On nearly one in three summer days in 2002, the ozone level in the Washington region was unhealthy for children, elderly people, and people with chronic respiratory disease.



Grand Haven-Holland Bypass/U.S. Route 31

Ottawa County, Michigan

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$800 million

The Project

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) proposes to build the Grand Haven-Holland Bypass (Bypass), a new 27-mile highway to bypass existing U.S. Route 31 (US 31). MDOT claims that this new road is necessary to improve safety and relieve congestion in the cities of Grand Haven and Holland. Having admitted that the proposed Bypass would not sufficiently ease congestion in Grand Haven, MDOT still proposes widening US 31 to six or eight lanes in that city. The current cost estimate for the combined projects approaches \$1 billion.

In July 2003, Gov. Jennifer Granholm delayed the Bypass by vetoing a \$29 million authorization that MDOT would have used to plan and engineer the highway. Despite this setback, MDOT has not removed the Bypass from Michigan's five-year transportation plan and still intends to submit a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to federal agencies this year. The Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, the region's metropolitan planning organization, strongly supports the project, and has included it on maps in the "2030 Long Range Plan." In addition, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$7 million for the US 31 project in April 2004 in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

Taxpayer Concerns

MDOT's Draft Environmental Impact Statement indicates that growth and traffic triggered by the Bypass might actually increase traffic on US 31. MDOT has also indicated that existing US 31 would have to be widened to six or eight lanes in Grand Haven because the Bypass would not sufficiently reduce congestion there. The Bypass's failure to solve the congestion problem could lead to federal taxpayers being tapped to fund more new highways in the area after the Bypass is built.

Local Community Concerns

The Bypass would divide neighborhoods and communities. MDOT estimates that the Bypass and road widening would destroy 205 homes and 138 businesses. It would also destroy 800 acres of prime farmland, and MDOT projects that an additional 13,000 acres of Michigan's most productive farmland would be converted to other uses within 20 years of the highway's completion. This would have a devastating effect on the farm-based economy of Ottawa County, Michigan's number one agricultural producer.

Environmental Concerns

The impacts of increased traffic and development spurred by the Bypass would undermine Western Michigan's hard-won progress toward meeting federal clean air standards. An air quality analysis found that the Bypass would generate as much additional pollution as adding another power plant to the region. In April 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared the Grand Haven area to be in violation of federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, which can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. The region now faces a 2009 deadline to meet air quality standards.

A highway would destroy at least 47 acres of wetlands, and MDOT's preferred alternative would destroy almost 70 acres of wetlands, including high-quality wildlife areas, and undermine Michigan's investment in the protection of area trout streams.

Proposal and Savings

MDOT should cancel the billion-dollar Grand Haven-Holland Bypass.

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Interstate 35W Access Project

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$121 million

The Project

The Interstate 35W (I-35W) Access Project was proposed five years ago to add new ramps to the existing highway at 26th and 28th Streets in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Since then, it has mushroomed into a \$152 million project that would relocate the 35th/36th Street ramps to 38th Street, add new ramps at Lake Street, add a northbound exit to 28th Street, change access ramps, and reconstruct, repave, and, in some places, widen Lake Street. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is also requiring that the new design accommodate future High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. For this purpose, \$40 million has been included in the project total to acquire land for future I-35W expansion.

To date, the federal government has appropriated nearly \$11 million for project design and right-of-way acquisition, and MnDOT has spent an additional \$3.1 million—including \$2.5 million in federal funds—on design and consulting fees.

In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked another \$10 million for I-35W in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization. Despite potentially significant impacts, MnDOT has prepared only an Environmental Assessment, instead of a more thorough Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This and various other projects proposed by MnDOT were previously part of one large project studied a decade ago. The agency shelved that large project in the face of strong community opposition. Under federal law, it is illegal to segment a large project into smaller projects in a way that prevents assessment and disclosure of the large project's true impacts, but this appears to be what MnDOT is doing.

Local neighborhood boards have rejected the I-35W widening, and two Minnesota legislators, Representative Frank Hornstein and Senator Scott Dibble, have proposed a transit alternative to automobile lanes.

Taxpayer Concerns

The project's scope and cost have expanded dramatically over the last five years. Federal taxpayers would pay roughly \$121 million of the total cost for an unnecessary project that has already been rejected by Minneapolis residents. MnDOT's requirement that land be acquired now for additional future lanes on I-35W essentially guarantees that these lanes will be built, requiring an even larger federal investment.

Especially troubling is what appears to be a significant conflict of interest in the project's management. A few large corporations and non-profit organizations would enjoy the bulk of the project's benefits. Smith Parker, a large, influential Minneapolis law firm that has been designated the I-35W project manager, is also legal counsel for some of the companies that would benefit most, including Allina Health System, Children's Hospitals and Clinics, and Wells Fargo. One Smith Parker employee, who previously worked as a consultant to Abbott Northwestern Hospital and Allina Hospitals, was responsible for securing new ramps at 26th and 28th Streets that would benefit the hospitals. The project manager is supposed to act on behalf of the citizens and taxpayers, not a handful of special interests.

Local Community Concerns

Project opponents do not believe that the agencies have adequately presented these transit proposals or a "No Build" alternative to the community during the citizen advisory process. Building additional ramps along I-35W would disproportionately harm minority and low-income residents, by destroying minority-owned businesses and eliminating affordable housing units. Current homeowners would likely not receive enough compensation for their property to purchase units in the present housing market. The I-35W Access Plan would expand a portion of Lake Street, causing additional loss of area businesses, many of which serve minority and low-income residents.

One of the proposed ramps would also destroy a playground for low-income children. As mitigation, MnDOT proposes to add parkland in the project area, but many would be directly adjacent to the exit ramps—not an ideal location for recreation or relaxation.

Proposal and Savings

MnDOT should reconsider its plans to build the I-35W Access Project, which would cost an estimated \$152 million.

Contact

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Environmental Concerns

To date, MnDOT has provided little information regarding the environmental impacts of the I-35W project. Noise and air pollution generated by increased traffic could severely impact people who live or work close to the highway and on Lake Street. Most of these residents are economically disadvantaged and many are people of color. Just four years ago, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency found that levels of hazardous air pollutants released by cars, trucks, and other vehicles exceed health benchmarks in many parts of the state, with the highest concentrations in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Studies have found that children living within 250 yards of streets or highways that carry 20,000 or more cars per day are six times more likely to develop cancer and eight times more likely to develop leukemia. The I-35W corridor already exceeds this threshold, and traffic would increase further if this project were constructed.



Stillwater Bridge Minnesota and Wisconsin Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$160 million

The Project

The historic, two-lane Stillwater Bridge spans the St. Croix River, connecting Stillwater, Minnesota and Houlton, Wisconsin, just east of Minneapolis-St. Paul. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) proposes to build a new four-lane, one-mile bridge between Oak Park Heights, Minnesota and Houlton, Wisconsin, about one mile south of the existing bridge. MnDOT's preferred alternative—Southern Alignment Alternative B—would also include a six-mile upgrade of Highways 36 and 64.

The existing Stillwater Bridge is an historic vertical-lift bridge built in 1931 and placed on the National Register of Historical Places in 1989. It is a significant historic resource of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Building the new bridge may require removing the historic bridge in order not to violate National Park Service (NPS) policy, which limits the number of bridges in this Scenic Riverway. Although the existing bridge has 5 to 15 years of useful life left, traffic congestion in the area has led to calls for its replacement.

In 1995, MnDOT released a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). In 1996, NPS ordered that no federal permits be issued for the project because it crosses a national Wild and Scenic River. MnDOT opposed the NPS decision in the courts and Congress, and in October 1998, NPS, MnDOT, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT), and the Federal Highway Administration agreed to proceed with a shorter four-lane bridge in a slightly different alignment north of MnDOT's preferred alternative, pending environmental review.

MnDOT is now preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), a process that has been fast-tracked by the Bush administration under Executive Order 13274, which allows for expedited review of designated transportation projects. This review is expected to conclude by the end of 2004. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$13.2 million for the Stillwater Bridge in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

Taxpayer Concerns

A new bridge is unnecessary because an already expanded Interstate 94 (I-94) bridge crosses the St. Croix just to the south. The estimated \$200 million price tag of the proposed Stillwater Bridge is excessive, especially considering that expanding and renovating the I-94 bridge cost only \$28 million. One proposal calls for rehabilitating the existing bridge and implementing other measures—including increased transit and better land use—to reduce traffic in the corridor and preserve the old bridge. This plan is listed as Alternative A in the new SEIS process, which MnDOT has proposed dropping from consideration.

Local Community Concerns

According to a *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* editorial, "the four-lane span would encourage the exporting to Wisconsin of people, tax base, jobs, and economic growth that should be kept in Minnesota." In fact, the growth and land use plans of communities in Wisconsin are based upon the bridge being built. Ironically, MnDOT's plans show that Highway 36 would be congested all the way into St. Paul by 2015 because of the growth triggered by the new bridge and accompanying highway expansions. The proposed design would also cut off the existing business community along Minnesota Highway 36.

Environmental Concerns

The Stillwater Bridge would harm the ecology and character of the St. Croix River, the only Wild and Scenic River in Minnesota, and set a damaging precedent for similar rivers nationwide. In 1997, NPS ruled against the bridge under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, a stance it has since reversed. The mitigation measures that have been proposed, however, are still debated and some experts believe that the new bridge would damage the river. Construction of the new bridge and related highway improvements would destroy five wetlands and 130 acres of farmland, triple the amount of paved surface, and increase the amount of polluted runoff flowing into local streams and wetlands.

Proposal and Savings

MnDOT and WDOT should reject the "Southern Alignment Alternative B" proposal for the Stillwater Bridge project, which would cost \$200 million to construct.

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Interstate 93

Southern New Hampshire

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$336 million

The Project

Interstate 93 (I-93) is an important northeast transportation corridor, connecting Boston, Massachusetts and fast-growing cities in southern New Hampshire, including Salem, Manchester, and Concord. New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) proposes to reconstruct I-93, which is currently four lanes wide, as an eight-lane roadway—the “Four-Lane Alternative”—and upgrade five interchanges. NHDOT estimates that this project would cost \$420 million, making it the largest public works project in New Hampshire since construction of the interstate system in the late 1950s.

In September 2002, NHDOT released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the project. NHDOT and the Bush administration have fast-tracked the process for the I-93 project under Executive Order 13274, which allows for expedited review of designated transportation projects, and release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement has reportedly been imminent since the summer of 2003.

Proposal and Savings

NHDOT should reject the preferred alternative for the planned widening of I-93 in southern New Hampshire, saving an estimated \$420 million, and instead begin a process that considers other options to reduce traffic in the region.

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Taxpayer Concerns

NHDOT’s analysis fails to adequately consider alternatives that would limit increases in the amount of automobile traffic. Failure to consider such options seriously undermines the effectiveness of the project and increases the likelihood that taxpayer money spent on this project will be wasted. In written comments to NHDOT and the Federal Highway Administration, a coalition of seven environmental organizations expressed concerns that inaccurate traffic growth projections used in the DEIS alternatives studies lead to potentially flawed conclusions regarding the viability of the “Four-Lane Alternative.” More realistic traffic growth projections than those used by NHDOT would increase the necessity for “a more creative, multi-modal approach,” including restoration of rail service, expanded bus service, more aggressive transportation demand management strategies, and congestion pricing options.

Local Community Concerns

Widening I-93 would significantly alter southern New Hampshire. A panel assembled by NHDOT estimates the proposed project would bring an additional 40,000 residents—above and beyond already-projected population growth trends—to southern New Hampshire. Based on recent per-capita land consumption rates in New Hampshire, this population growth could destroy 50,000 or more acres of farms, forests, wetlands, and open space. Some 29 communities in the region would be affected by this rapid population growth, many of them outside of the study area considered by NHDOT. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has expressed concern in written comments that the NHDOT plan would do little to mitigate the impact of population growth and land loss in communities that do not abut the highway but that will face additional growth triggered by the widening. EPA also believes the plan does not adequately help local planners prepare for additional population in their communities.

Of particular concern is the lack of broad public involvement throughout the review process, and failure to include communities that would be affected by the secondary impacts of the project. Many of the most controversial aspects of the I-93 project were discussed and decided by a Board of Directors comprised of high-ranking officials from various state and federal agencies, despite suggestions from participating agencies and independent organizations to include interested citizens and stakeholders in the formal process. The limited public participation that did occur—primarily as informational meetings and public hearings—was focused only in the five communities that lie directly in the project corridor, immediately adjacent to the highway. This left out communities that do not abut the highway but that will be impacted by additional population growth and changing land-use patterns.

¹ Letter from EPA Region 1 Administrator Bob Varney to NHDOT Commissioner Carol A. Murray, Sept. 5, 2002. Available at: http://www.clf.org/hot/ltr_20020905_rt_93_widening.htm.

Environmental Concerns

The agencies failed to properly consider the direct and indirect impacts of the I-93 widening on wetlands, wildlife habitat, and water and air quality. This project would degrade water quality in southern New Hampshire. NHDOT's preferred alternative would directly affect five watersheds, three lakes larger than 10 acres in size, 3 ponds less than 10 acres in size, and 21 streams and rivers. The EPA believes that NHDOT's mitigation plan fails to set aside enough land to offset the loss of wetlands that. A report by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire (ASNH) concludes that growth triggered by the project would damage surface waters, wetlands, groundwater, and floodplains. The ASNH also found that increased development in the area would fragment critical habitat and lead to a significant and permanent loss of biodiversity.

Of particular concern, and inadequately considered by the agencies, is the impact of road salt on the area's ground and surface water. Some local water bodies already exceed water quality standards for chloride, the primary component of road salt. Doubling the road's surface area would require more road salt to be used, resulting in more chloride in nearby waters.

The agencies also failed to fully consider the project's impacts on air quality. Counties in the region are in serious violation of federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, which can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. Counties in the project area also exceed EPA health-based safety standards for a number of air pollutants—including particulate matter, benzene, and formaldehyde—though the agencies did not assess these pollutants in the DEIS.



West Street Bypass Tunnel

Lower Manhattan, New York City

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$860 million

The Project

West Street (also known as the West Side Highway and Route 9A) runs below West 59th Street to Battery Park. The portion of the route adjacent to the World Trade Center (WTC) site in lower Manhattan was destroyed in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Before the attack, West Street served approximately 80,000 vehicles and 110,000 pedestrians each day, in addition to significant numbers of bicycle and bus commuters.

Prior to September 11, the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) had completed a five-year, \$400 million renovation of West Street. As part of that renovation, NYSDOT prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1994. NYSDOT is currently preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) in light of changes in the area from the September 11 attacks. The EIS process for this project has been fast-tracked under Presidential Executive Order 13274, which allows for expedited review of designated transportation projects.

A primary goal of the West Street restoration is to provide an “appropriate and respectful” setting for the WTC Memorial while restoring the roadway for the wide array of users that once traveled it. NYSDOT has proposed three alternatives for rebuilding West Street. The “no build” option would make permanent the six-lane temporary roadway that was installed adjacent to the WTC site after the attacks. The second option would build an eight-lane roadway where the temporary six-lane route now lies. The third option would rebuild the previous West Street alignment as an eight-lane roadway, with four lanes of through-traffic diverted underground into a four-block tunnel adjacent to the WTC site, and four lanes of local traffic at street level. This would be a radical departure from the road as it existed before September 11 and as it exists now. The federal government has already committed \$242 million for one of these three options as part of a disaster relief package for New York City.

Taxpayer Concerns

At-grade improvements to the existing road would save taxpayers at least \$685 million, and would be fully covered by funds already dedicated to the project. This would accomplish the primary project goals, and the money saved could be better used to help revive lower Manhattan.

Local Community Concerns

Although Gov. Pataki supports the tunnel option, it faces significant community and official opposition. Rep. Jerrold Nadler, Sen. Charles Schumer, New York City Council Member Alan J. Gerson, New York State Assemblymembers Sheldon Silver and Deborah Glick, New York State Senator Martin Connor, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, Community Board Number 1, the American Automobile Association of New York, and a host of local transportation organizations oppose or seriously question the tunnel option and are calling for consideration of at-grade improvements instead.

The tunnel project as proposed would not significantly improve pedestrian safety or access. Crossing West Street immediately north and south of the tunnel would actually become far more dangerous. This is a vital consideration given the number of pedestrians who traverse this area every day and the local businesses that rely on pedestrian traffic. Before September 11, pedestrians could cross West Street safely and conveniently using a combination of at-grade crossings and pedestrian bridges. Restoring these paths and combining them with a planned east-west pedestrian tunnel with moving walkways to connect Battery Park City to a new transit station, would serve local pedestrians and businesses well.

The tunnel would increase traffic on local streets and reduce vehicle access, and raises concerns about accessibility for local areas in the vicinity of the tunnel. Surface lanes would likely become clogged with tourist-related traffic in the area, and one plan calls for tour buses to discharge passengers along West Street to access the WTC Memorial. While NYSDOT estimates that only 25 percent of traffic would travel on the surface, the agency also acknowledges it has not factored in the increased

Proposal and Savings

NYSDOT should reject the \$860 million plan to construct a four-block bypass tunnel on West Street, all of which would be paid for by federal taxpayers. Consider instead the at-grade options that are more in keeping with the character and needs of surrounding neighborhood, and would cost only \$175 million, which could be covered by funds already committed to the project.

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traffic generated by the memorial. West Street is the primary means of access for nearby Battery Park City (resident population: 7,500; working population: 25,000). Residents and commuters have no other north-south street connection and no subway stops. The at-grade options would minimize traffic growth in the area and would make pedestrian travel safer and more convenient than the tunnel proposal.

The local economy would be harmed by the lengthy construction required to build the tunnel. Tunnel construction would take at least three-and-a-half years, using NYSDOT's optimistic estimates. This would further damage local small businesses, which were dealt a terrible blow by the September 11 attacks. At-grade improvements could be completed in as little as 18 months, and would be more in keeping with the cost-effective and sensible "landscaped promenade" already planned for much of West Street below Liberty Street. NYSDOT will start construction in Summer 2004 of a four-block segment of West Street from Battery Place to West Thames Street at an estimated cost of \$50 million. The "Promenade South Project" will, according to NYSDOT, "increase and improve pedestrian circulation through the area and will help to make nearby parks and neighborhood destinations more accessible to pedestrians."¹

Environmental Concerns

Instead of decreasing West Street congestion as some proponents have suggested, the tunnel would draw more cars and trucks to lower Manhattan and dramatically increase noise and air pollution. In indicating preliminary support for the tunnel, Gov. Pataki said that he believed it would reduce noise pollution near the WTC Memorial site, but traffic increases would likely have the opposite effect, harming the memorial site and the surrounding residential and commercial areas.

New York City is already in violation of two separate federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone and fails to meet federal standards for airborne particulates. Repeated exposure to increased levels of these pollutants can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness.

In addition to general concerns about car and truck emissions' impact on public health, local residents fear that increased concentrations of toxic and carcinogenic air pollutants will occur near the tunnel entrances and harm local communities and children playing on a nearby ball field.

¹ Route 9A Project: Lower Manhattan Redevelopment, NYSDOT website, <http://www.dot.state.ny.us/route9a/promende.html>.



U.S. Route 24 Toledo, Ohio to Fort Wayne, Indiana Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$520 million

The Project

U.S. Route 24 (US 24) is an east-west transportation corridor between Colorado and Michigan, and is the most direct route between Fort Wayne, Indiana and Toledo, Ohio. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose a new eighty-mile, four-lane highway between Ft. Wayne and Toledo. Rather than planning and reviewing the highway as a single project, as required by federal law, ODOT has improperly segmented the project it into three parts, making it difficult for the public and decision makers to assess the highway's full environmental, community, and economic impacts.

In December 2003, the Ohio Transportation Review Advisory Council adopted a draft six-year transportation package that includes \$332 million for building a new US 24. This is part of a \$5 billion highway program announced by Ohio Gov. Robert Taft in August 2003. Gov. Taft's plan calls for building the US 24 segment between State Routes 15 and 424 this year, followed by the Defiance, Ohio to Napoleon, Ohio segment in 2007, and the Napoleon, Ohio to Waterville, Ohio segment in 2008.

ODOT has published a Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Napoleon to Maumee segment. At least five townships in Lucas and Henry counties oppose building a new US 24, as does the Otsego School Board and the Lucas County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Taxpayer Concerns

Fiscal prudence calls for improving the existing US 24 rather than building a new highway. The estimated cost of building a new US 24 approaches \$650 million. In contrast, the performance of the existing highway could be dramatically improved for as little as \$100 million through an access management plan, improved lighting, road closures, left-turn lanes, better signage, and other measures.

Local Community Concerns

The proposed highway is planned through mostly rural areas of Indiana and Ohio and would be built within the Lucas County (Ohio) Farmland Preservation Study Limited Development Zone. It would destroy 5,000 to 7,000 acres of farmland and harm more than 500 farms. The highway would also impact more than 24 potential National Historic Register properties and Native American reservations.

The *Toledo Blade* nicknamed US 24 the "Road to 'sprawlscape'" and said, "Turning U.S. 24 into an interstate-type highway would perpetuate the kind of development almost everyone abhors."¹ Local residents have been united and outspoken in their opposition. Over 500 letters from residents opposing a new US 24 alignment were hand-delivered to FHWA, ODOT, and Gov. Taft.

Environmental Concerns

The new US 24 would cross more than fifty streams and 200 acres of wetlands. Under current proposals, it would run along the Maumee River and three county metroparks for more than 22 miles. It would also cut between sections of the Maumee State Forest. State Road 295, which is currently a rural route, would likely need to be widened if US 24 is relocated. This would fragment and pave over important conservation easements and would dramatically affect the adjacent Greater Oak Openings Preserve area, which shelters rare and unique flora and fauna.

The current Lucas County section also passes through or adjacent to nearly a dozen wildlife and agricultural conservation easements. These publicly-held easements are protected under section 4(f) of the federal Department of Transportation Act

Proposal and Savings

INDOT and ODOT should cancel plans for the proposed US 24, which would cost an estimated \$650 million to construct. Safety improvements to the existing road should be considered; and at a cost of \$100 million, this alternative would save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

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¹ *Toledo Blade*, "Road to 'sprawlscape'," April 25, 2001.

of 1966 and cannot be taken if “prudent and feasible” alternatives are available. Since several other non-relocation alternatives exist, this route appears to violate federal law.

Lucas County, much of Ohio, and part of the Ft. Wayne area fail to meet federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, and Lucas County fails to meet sulfur dioxide standards and barely meets federal standards for certain airborne particulates. Repeated exposure to increased levels of these pollutants can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness.



U.S. Route 202 Expressway Section 700 Southeast Pennsylvania Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$372 million

The Project

For three decades, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has supported building an outer beltway around Philadelphia. Stiff community opposition made construction of the road as one project politically impossible. To minimize public opposition, PennDOT divided the project into eight sections for planning and construction purposes and has succeeded in building five of them. Section 700, one of the three unbuilt segments, would be a new nine-mile highway between Montgomery and Bucks counties, approximately 30 miles north of Philadelphia. The alignment of the new expressway would change US 202 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane, limited-access highway. The most recent cost estimate for Section 700 is \$465 million.

In August 1998, the Federal Highway Administration issued a Record of Decision allowing PennDOT to proceed with Section 700. Although PennDOT was to begin construction in 2003, Buckingham and Solebury townships and the Delaware Riverkeeper filed a joint lawsuit challenging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) decision to issue a permit allowing PennDOT to disrupt wetlands during this project. In March 2004, PennDOT announced that it would reevaluate the need and cost of the US 202 project due to lack of available state funds, but planning and right-of-way acquisition will continue.

Taxpayer Concerns

After studying various proposals, the transportation consulting firm Smart Mobility concluded that existing congestion on US 202 could be alleviated by providing a more complete route network in congested areas, calming traffic, and rebuilding key intersections—at one-quarter of the cost of a new expressway.¹ The Final Environmental Impact Statement indicates that if Section 700 is built, peak-hour congestion would return to existing 202 within five to seven years. Much of the congestion on existing US 202 results from poor intersection design, which the proposed project would do nothing to solve. Instead of building a new expressway in the vicinity of the existing 202—the alternative with the highest cost and greatest impact—the current road’s problems could be solved by implementing computerized signalization, improving existing intersections, and increasing public transportation.

Local Community Concerns

Section 700 would destroy more than a dozen farms and displace nearly 20 businesses. Section 700 is also listed as a road that “fuels growth” in the 2003 Transportation Improvement Plan of the Delaware Regional Planning Commission, despite project proponents’ claims to the contrary. The type of growth that would result from this project is not specified, making local land-use planning impossible and increasing the likelihood of expensive urban sprawl. Right-of-way acquisitions alone would take 116 acres of farmland, compared with only one acre for the US 202 upgrade alternative, and construction of Section 700 would damage Bucks County’s Central and Dark Hollow Parks.

Environmental Concerns

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has expressed concern about Section 700’s potential environmental and community impacts. Construction would undermine efforts to reduce regional air pollution and protect public health. The Philadelphia region, like much of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, already violates two separate Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone and barely meets federal standards for certain airborne particulates. Repeated exposure to increased levels of these pollutants can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness.

Section 700 would also destroy fifteen acres of wetlands and harm as many as 200 more, and dump 100 million gallons of polluted storm water into local streams, increasing the flooding potential of Neshaminy Creek.

Proposal and Savings

PennDOT should cancel any plans to construct Section 700 of the proposed U.S. Route 202 Expressway, a \$465 million project. It should instead consider an alternative plan that can improve congestion on the existing road for only one-quarter the cost of building a new expressway.

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¹ Smart Mobility, “Alternative Plan for the US 202 Section 700 Expressway, Bucks County, Pennsylvania,” available at: www.smartmobility.com/projects/02_us202.html.



Mon/Fayette Expressway & Southern Beltway Southwestern Pennsylvania Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$500 million

The Project

The Mon/Fayette Expressway (Expressway) is a proposed 68-mile highway from Interstate 68 at Cheat Lake, West Virginia to Interstate 376 at Monroeville and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Southern Beltway (Beltway) is a proposed 30-mile sister artery that would run south from the Pittsburgh Airport to intersect with I-79 near Canonsburg, and then east to connect with the proposed Expressway near the Monongahela River. Both would be new four-lane, limited-access tolled highways. The estimated direct cost of building these remaining segments is \$4.2 billion, excluding interest.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) has divided the Beltway into three segments, one of which is currently being built, and the Pennsylvania portion of the Expressway into four segments, two of which have been built; there is a fifth segment of the Expressway in West Virginia. Two Expressway segments and two Beltway segments have not yet been built.

In April 2004, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) closed the public comment period on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the 24-mile segment of the Expressway between Route 51 and Pittsburgh. The estimated direct cost for building this segment is roughly \$2 billion, excluding interest.

In 1998, Congress designated both projects to be part of a "highway priority corridor", qualifying them for special set asides of federal funds. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$13 million for these projects in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization. Rep. Mike Doyle has requested \$70 million for the Pittsburgh leg of the Expressway, and Rep. Tim Murphy has requested at least \$32 million for the Beltway.

In 2002, a coalition of organizations, experts, and interested citizens proposed a multi-modal "Citizens' Plan" in their public comments on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Citizens' Plan integrates transit-oriented development and land use with improvements to existing roads, new urban boulevards, and increased investment in buses, light rail, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The "Citizens' Plan" uses community design principles to reduce urban sprawl, strengthen existing communities, and improve deteriorating roads and infrastructure, while addressing needs for improved mobility.

Taxpayer Concerns

Cost estimates for building the Expressway and Beltway have soared from \$2.2 billion in 1992 to more than \$4 billion in 2004. The PTC proposes to finance these projects through bonds and federal funds. The interest on these bonds could exceed \$3 billion, placing the total cost at well over \$7 billion.

In 2002, an independent review concluded that these new toll roads would hinder economic development in nearby areas, increase congestion, and that building them would be a "truly dismal use" of public funds. The review also found that the total annual benefit of the Expressway would be approximately \$75 million, far short of the toll road's annual cost of \$136.1 million.¹

A March 2004 economic risk analysis commissioned by Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture) indicated that the PTC's traffic and revenue projections are flawed. The PTC used population, household, and job growth projections that more recent U.S. census and regional data indicate were wrong. The analysis concluded that there was less than a 1 percent chance the PTC's traffic projections would prove to be accurate.

Proposal and Savings

The PTC should cancel plans to build the remaining segments of the Mon/Fayette Expressway and Southern Beltway projects. These projects are estimated to cost \$4.2 billion, and a plan to issue bonds could drive this cost over \$7 billion. Although these roads would receive significant funding from state sources, the cost to federal taxpayers would still be at least \$500 million.

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¹ Glattig, Jackson, Kercher, Anglin, Lopez, Rinehart, Inc., "A Truly Dismal Use of Public Funds: A Review of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission's Documentation and Case for the Mon-Fayette Expressway and the Southern Beltway as an Economic Development Generator," April 2002.

If these economic analyses are correct, federal and state taxpayers could be left holding the bag for much of the projects' costs. In fact, the PTC reportedly plans to build the Expressway segment studied in the latest FEIS entirely with federal funds and with bonds backed by state gas taxes and other non-toll revenues.

Despite benefiting from several revenue-generating actions over the last 20 years—two toll increases, plus portions of the state gas tax and driver registration fees—PTC carries a staggering debt load of \$5 billion and is estimated to need more than \$3 billion to repair the Turnpike's existing network of roads and bridges. Critics believe that the PTC has focused too much on adding new road capacity and too little on maintaining its existing facilities.

Studies show that 82 percent of Pittsburgh's roads are "not in good condition," and 85 percent of Pennsylvania's roads are rated "poor," "mediocre," or "fair."² A 2003 report by the Road Information Program shows that Pennsylvania ranks third in the nation for the worst bridges, and more than half of the bridges in the Pittsburgh area—the worst in the state—are either structurally unsound or functionally obsolete.³

Local Community Concerns

The Expressway and Beltway would cut several communities in half, destroy thousands of acres of century-old farms, and destroy many homes and businesses. The Expressway segment alone would destroy roughly 700 homes and 100 businesses. The scope and cost of these highways have left many residents and businesses uncertain about future planning decisions, traffic congestion, decreased property values, and increased taxes.

Local residents fear that these roads would shift jobs out of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle region—a thriving urban area with over 140,000 jobs within walking distance of homes and shops—to undeveloped rural areas along the projects' corridor. A recent report by the Brookings Institution characterizes Pittsburgh as "by far the worst-sprawling large metropolitan area in the country." The study shows that the Pittsburgh Metropolitan area urbanized 8.5 acres of land for every household it added between 1982 and 1997, compared to just 1.3 acres nationally. The region is rapidly urbanizing land while losing population. The study also shows how urban decline "hits taxpayers doubly hard at tax time, as declining property values combine with increased municipal expenses to make it harder and harder to raise revenue."⁴

Community groups are demanding that the agencies either initiate a new EIS or publish a Supplemental EIS to correct numerous deficiencies in the FEIS – including the agencies' reliance on highly questionable traffic and revenue projections and the agencies' failure to fully assess less damaging alternatives.

Environmental Concerns

The Expressway and Beltway would destroy hundreds of acres of farmland, forests, streams, lakes, riverfront, and natural habitat. They would devastate the Monongahela River's north shore where it borders Pittsburgh's city line. This area consists of a five-mile section of forests, watersheds, and natural shoreline, a unique area given its proximity to a large city.

The Pittsburgh region already fails to meet federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone and barely meets standards for certain airborne particulates, yet PTC and FHWA refused to assess related emissions and health impacts in the EIS for the Expressway segment. Repeated exposure to increased levels of these pollutants can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness.

² Surface Transportation Policy Project and Environmental Working Group, "Potholes and Politics 1998," 1998.

³ The Road Information Program, "Showing Their Age: Pennsylvania's Deficient Bridges," June 2003.

⁴ The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, "Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania," Nov. 2003.



Briggs-DeLaine-Pearson Connector

Rimini and Lone Star, South Carolina

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$100 million

The Project

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) proposes building the Briggs-DeLaine-Pearson Connector (Connector), previously known as the Calhoun/Clarendon Causeway, Calhoun Clarendon Connector, James E. Clyburn Connector, and Briggs-DeLaine Connector. The Connector would include a 9.6-mile new or expanded roadway and 2.8-mile bridge between the towns of Lone Star (2000 population: 1,066) and Rimini (2000 population: 817), approximately 40 miles southeast of Columbia, South Carolina. The new bridge would span the upper reaches of Lake Marion—known as Sparkleberry Swamp—and its associated floodplain. The Connector would be the second-longest bridge in South Carolina.

In February 2003, SCDOT released a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Connector. In March 2003, Gov. Mark Sanford and four members of the South Carolina congressional delegation—Sen. Lindsey Graham and Reps. Jim DeMint, Joe Wilson, and Gresham Barrett—requested a cost-benefit study from U.S. Department of Transportation before the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) made its final decision. They expressed belief that this would be necessary for the public to make a fully informed decision on the project. This important analysis was never performed, and FHWA issued a Record of Decision in favor of the Connector in June 2003.

Taxpayer Concerns

Construction would cost an estimated \$110 million, and SCDOT and Rep. James Clyburn—a vocal supporter of the project—have indicated that this project would be completed entirely with federal dollars, with no state or local match. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$14 million for the Connector in its version of the transportation bill reauthorization. In 1998, Congress earmarked \$6.5 million for the Connector as a “demonstration project” under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

An economic cost-benefit analysis conducted for the Southern Environmental Law Center found that expenditures on the Connector would exceed expected project benefits by more than \$48 million.¹ Despite these findings, SCDOT still refuses to analyze the project’s economic costs and expected benefits. In 2003, NBC News featured the Connector in its “Fleecing of America” segment.

Two nearby bridges—the U.S. Route 601 Congaree River bridge and the Interstate 95 bridge over Lake Marion—already provide adequate crossings for area traffic. The Connector would do little to improve mobility and economic conditions in Calhoun, Clarendon, Orangeburg, and Sumter counties. SCDOT’s July 2000 feasibility study found that the Connector would shorten travel times between the towns of Orangeburg and Sumter by just three to 10 minutes, and would not trigger significant economic development. On the contrary, the road could undermine local businesses that rely on revenues from visitors to natural areas threatened by the road.

Local Community Concerns

South Carolina is struggling to maintain its existing roads and bridges. SCDOT has warned that 2,000 of the state’s highway bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, and that 100 or more of those are in the four-county region of the proposed project. SCDOT has identified \$56.9 billion in state transportation needs over the next twenty years—a substantial portion of which is for highway and bridge maintenance—but at current funding rates, the state will fall \$30.6 billion short of that total. One report calls the funding shortfall for transportation projects in South Carolina, “particularly daunting.”²

Proposal and Savings

SCDOT should not pursue the unnecessary Connector, which would cost an estimated \$100 million. Rep. James Clyburn, the most vocal supporter of the project, has indicated his intention to fund this project fully with federal funds.

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¹ Dr. Asad Khattak, “Section III: Transportation Study” in *James E. Clyburn Connector—Environmental Impact Statement Comments*, Southern Environmental Law Center, March 31, 2003.

² James B. London, Ellen W. Saltzman, John C. Skinner and H. Günsel Günaydin, “Transportation Funding Options for the State of South Carolina 2003-2022,” Oct. 2003.

Environmental Concerns

The Connector would damage the Upper Santee Swamp, which provides critical habitat for wildlife and waterfowl. The Upper Santee is one of the largest tracts of unbroken habitat in central South Carolina. It links the Santee National Wildlife Refuge to Congaree National Park and is a key component of the Santee Cooper Lakes Focus Area, a unit of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This area attracts significant numbers of visitors who come to bird watch, hunt, fish, canoe, and experience the solace of one of the last great wild places in South Carolina.



Corridor J/State Route 451

Putnam County, Tennessee

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$50 million

The Project

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) proposes building State Road 451 (SR 451), a new 10-mile, limited-access freeway connecting State Roads 111 (SR 111) and 56 (SR 56) at a cost of approximately \$63 million.

SR 451 would be part of Corridor J, one of 26 highway “corridors” established as part of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS). Congress created the ADHS through the 1965 Appalachian Regional Development Act, and authorized the system to contain up to 3,025 miles; at present there are approximately 2,400 miles of ADHS highways.

As part of the 1998 federal transportation bill, Congress authorized a massive increase in spending for the ADHS, funding it at \$450 million per year. This resulted in a dramatic increase in money for TDOT, which tried to find new ways to spend it. Despite widespread public and political opposition and a lack of justification for building a new highway in this area, TDOT continued to advance its plans for SR 451. In August 2003, a report by the University of Tennessee’s Center for Transportation Research concluded that SR 451 “has significant issues and concerns that should be addressed before continuing on with the project (or deciding not to continue).”¹

In October 2003, TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely announced that the state intended to cancel SR 451 as designed. Even so, TDOT has asked the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to retain the project’s approved funding—approximately \$90 million—and keep it allocated for completing Corridor J. Although TDOT has created a “Citizen’s Resource Team” to consider alternative routes for Corridor J, community members are concerned that TDOT may still be committed to the same route.

Taxpayer Concerns

SR451 is unnecessary and would be a waste of taxpayer dollars. Interstate 40 (I-40), which lies just south of the proposed SR 451 alignment, already connects SR 111 and SR 56. When the ADHS was created, its primary objective was to spur development in areas of Appalachia where “commerce and communication have been inhibited by lack of adequate access.” SR 451 is unnecessary to meet this objective because there is no lack of access in the area. The agency’s own traffic projections indicate that the road would be underutilized, as only 4,000 vehicles per day would use SR 451 20 years after its construction, far below normal engineering standards.

Local Concerns

According to TDOT, 59 homes would have to be destroyed to build SR 451. Many owners of nearby homes have already reported a drop in property value due to their homes being located near the proposed highway alignment. Over 90 percent of the people testifying at three public meetings held by TDOT in 1999 and 2000 stated their opposition to the SR-451 project.

Environmental Concerns

SR 451 would degrade the natural beauty of northern Putnam County, destroy wildlife habitat, and pave over prime farmland. It would also increase local noise pollution and possibly threaten local air quality standards with increased auto emissions.

Proposal and Savings

TDPT should permanently cancel plans to construct SR 451, a redundant highway that would cost over \$63 million to build.

Contacts

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¹ Center for Transportation Research, University of Tennessee, “Tennessee Department of Transportation 15 Project Case Study: Project Assessment Final Report State Route 451 in Cookeville Area,” Aug. 2003.



State Highway 99—Grand Parkway

Houston, Texas

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$3.6 billion



The Project

State Highway 99 (SH 99)—The Grand Parkway—is proposed as Houston's fourth outer beltway. With a planned circumference of 180 miles, it would be extremely distant from the city's center and would cut through seven Texas counties. SH 99 is estimated to cost \$4 billion.

SH 99 is proposed to be a segment of Interstate 69 (I-69), a \$10 billion North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Superhighway connecting Canada and Mexico. I-69 would be approximately 1,800 miles long, nearly 1,000 of which would be in Texas. Several proposed alignments for SH 99 are the same as those proposed for I-69. Texas Transportation Commissioner John Johnson remarked in December 2000 that Texas could increase the federal share of SH 99 if I-69 follows the same route, because interstate highways receive a larger percentage of project costs from the federal government. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$16.5 million for SH 99 in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

The non-profit Grand Parkway Association (GPA)—created by pro-development forces in the Houston area—was initially responsible for developing SH 99 and raising funds for land acquisition and pre-construction engineering. The GPA segmented the project into eleven pieces, a violation of federal law. To get around this, GPA claims that each segment is “a complete and independently justifiable project.” By segmenting SH 99 into multiple projects, the GPA has made it more difficult for the public, key agencies, and public officials to assess and understand this massive project's full costs and environmental and community impacts.

One western project segment, Segment D, was opened in 1997. The remaining ten segments are in various stages of planning. Final Environmental Impact Statements are due soon on segments C and E, and Draft Environmental Impact Statements have been released or are expected soon for five other segments.

Taxpayer Concerns

Houston already has two beltways and a third, almost-complete loop. In some sections, the proposed fourth outer freeway loop would come within six miles of the third outer loop. The GPA was created to secure funds to pay for pre-construction costs such as design, planning, environmental review, and right-of-way acquisition. The purpose of this arrangement was to save taxpayer money that the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) could later spend on road construction. Instead, TxDOT is now paying for both pre-construction and project construction costs, further burdening state and federal taxpayers.

Local Community Concerns

Citizens of the rural areas that would be urbanized by SH 99 would lose their rural quality of life. Developers anticipating SH 99 have already built tens of thousands of homes along the proposed route. Rural infrastructure may not be adequate to meet the new urban demands, and local projects to improve existing roads are being held up for lack of funding. Recent efforts to revitalize downtown Houston would be damaged by SH 99, as the City's residents, tax base, and jobs would be pulled into the suburbs, continuing the trend of sprawl from the inner city.

Environmental Concerns

The proposed project would destroy critical wildlife habitat in Lake Houston State Park, Little Cypress Creek, Big Thicket, Brazos Bend State Park, and the bird-rich Katy Prairie. It would also destroy some of the last wetlands and bottomland hardwood forests near Houston.

Proposal and Savings

TxDOT should abandon its pursuit of SH 99, a fourth outer beltway around Houston, saving \$4 billion in total project costs. If SH 99 is combined with the I-69 NAFTA Highway project, 90 percent of the project funding could be from federal sources.

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This project is being driven by private interests to open up more land for development, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has expressed reservations about the secondary impacts of increased commercial and residential development. Major malls, two huge landfills, and numerous planned communities have been announced along the planned route.

SH 99 would worsen Houston's already unhealthy air quality. Houston is in severe violation of federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, which can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. Groups are concerned that SH 99, especially as part of a NAFTA Superhighway, would bring huge increases in truck traffic and air pollution to the region.



Legacy Highway

Utah

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$1.4 billion



The Project

The Legacy West Davis Highway (Legacy Highway) was first proposed in 1996 by former-Gov. and current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Mike Leavitt as a 120-mile highway from Brigham City to Nephi. For much of its route, this new highway would parallel Interstate 15 (I-15), which lies just a few miles to the east. It would run through five counties and along the east side of the Great Salt Lake. The estimated cost of the Legacy Highway is \$2.8 billion, but based on recent increases in the cost of the highway's first segment, critics believe that the project's overall cost could easily exceed \$3 billion.

In June 2000, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Legacy Parkway (Parkway), the first segment of the Legacy Highway project. The Parkway would be a 14-mile, four-lane highway connecting Salt Lake City and Farmington at a cost of approximately \$450 million. In January 2001, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) issued a Clean Water Act section 404 permit, allowing Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) to fill wetlands in the highway's path. In November 2001, after UDOT had filled eight miles of pasture and wetlands, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals issued a temporary injunction to halt further work. In March 2002, the Court made the injunction permanent after finding that the Corps had violated federal law by issuing the wetland permit. State and federal agencies are preparing a Supplemental EIS to address deficiencies in the initial analysis of alternatives and wildlife impacts.

Proposal and Savings

UDOT should abandon plans for the 120-mile Legacy Highway, a \$2.8 billion project that is redundant and unnecessary. The federal share of this project is expected to be at least 50 percent.

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Taxpayer Concerns

The Legacy Highway would parallel the existing I-15, and in some places the two highways would be less than one mile apart. Plans for rebuilding and widening I-15 are already moving forward, however, making it as wide as 12 lanes in some sections. A new commuter rail through this region could open as early as 2007 and extensions of the Salt Lake light rail system are under study. A widened I-15 and the addition of new transit lines, coupled with transit-oriented development and strategies to reduce automobile use, will meet much of the region's transportation needs, likely making the Legacy Highway redundant and an unnecessary waste of taxpayer dollars.

Local Community Concerns

Legacy Highway would cut through five counties and cross a total of 1.2 million acres of farmland, destroying many of the last acres these counties still have in farm production. There is growing support for mass transit options in many communities that the Legacy Highway would serve. A commuter rail line from Ogden to Salt Lake City is being discussed, and with much of the funding already secured through a sales tax increase, it is expected to be in place by 2007. The need for an additional highway would be vastly reduced if this additional transit capacity is built.

Environmental Concerns

The highway would damage wetlands that are internationally noted for their biological importance as a habitat and breeding site for three million ducks, 500 wintering American bald eagles, and 11 mating pairs of threatened peregrine falcons. This area near the Great Salt Lake is a Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network Site because millions of migrating shorebirds depend on these wetlands every year. At least 114 acres of wetlands would be paved over by the Legacy Highway project. Fragmentation and decreased hydrologic flow would damage an additional 200 or more acres. This would severely diminish the region's habitat value for migrating birds and other species.

Western Utah's towering mountain ranges frequently trap pollutants close to the ground and prevent their dispersion, sometimes for days at a time. This results in a situation in which Utah is already dangerously close to exceeding federal air quality levels. Residents are concerned that increased automobile use triggered by the highway would further degrade regional air quality.



Chittenden County Circumferential Highway

Burlington, Vermont

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$178 million

The Project

The Chittenden County Circumferential Highway (the Circ) is proposed as a 16-mile beltway from Interstate 89 (I-89) in Williston north and west through Essex to Vermont Route 127 in Colchester then to Burlington. The Circ would be a two-lane road, except on steep inclines where a passing lane would be added. The entire project is estimated to cost more than \$223 million. A four-mile, \$34.4 million segment of the Circ opened in October 1993 connecting Vermont Routes 117 and 2A in Essex. The remaining segments would cost another \$190 million.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) published an Environmental Assessment/Reevaluation (EA/RE) in May 2003, after pushing the Circ through a fast-tracked environmental review under Presidential Executive Order 13274, a process that excluded the City of Burlington and the public. The agencies based their assessment on an obsolete and incomplete Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) published in 1986. VTrans and the FHWA rejected requests by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and numerous community organizations to publish a Supplemental EIS to update the 1986 study and address its deficiencies.

In 2003, FHWA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) in favor of the Circ, and in November 2003, VTrans approved a \$31.8 million bid for a 2.4-mile Circ segment—between I-89 and a town road in Williston—and a new exit on I-89. In May 2004, however, a federal court ruled that any work on the Circ must be further delayed because VTrans and FHWA conducted inadequate analysis of the project's impacts. The suit alleged that the EA/RE issued by VTrans and FHWA violates the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, and Section 109 of the Federal-Aid Highway Act. FHWA and VTrans claimed that there had been no significant changes in the environmental and other impacts of the project since the 1986 EIS. The court ruled that significant changes have occurred and must be fully considered. In particular, the court stated that NEPA and Section 4(f) require a rigorous analysis of the highway on sprawl and whether there are alternatives to the Circ that would have less environmental and land-use effects, while meeting the region's transportation needs. Despite this ruling, VTrans and FHWA intend to pursue this project and will conduct another environmental review of the project over the next two years to comply with the court's ruling.

Taxpayer Concerns

The Circ's cost far outweighs its potential benefits. VTrans studies show that local intersections would remain congested even if the Circ is built. The Circ would reduce the average cross-county trip by only 34 seconds, increase interstate congestion by at least 14 percent, and increase countywide congestion by 2 percent.¹

Funding the Circ would undermine Vermont's ability to maintain its existing network of roads and bridges. VTrans' 2000 Annual Report concludes that the condition of Vermont's existing roadways is getting worse, and an estimated \$240 million will be needed over the next 20 years to repair and maintain Chittenden County's existing roads and bridges. FHWA's own studies show that alternatives to constructing the Circ are not only viable, but would provide better traffic relief at a much lower cost.

Local Community Concerns

The *Burlington Free Press* has editorialized against the highway, citing its impacts on downtown Burlington and the sprawling development it is likely to encourage. Anticipation of the highway has already led to construction of a large shopping center on undeveloped farmland and many areas along the proposed route have been rezoned to encourage commercial development. Locals fear that these projects would harm the economic vitality of already established local businesses.

Proposal and Savings

Vtrans should cancel plans to complete the unfinished portions of the Circumferential Highway, which would cost approximately \$223 million to construct.

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¹ Vermont Agency of Transportation, "Chittenden County Circumferential Highway Reevaluation of the 1986 FEIS Segments A-F," 2002.

Environmental Concerns

The Circ would run through 50 miles of Vermont's sandplains—a rare, ancient habitat for such fragile species as the blue lupine and slender mountain rice. The sandplains are Vermont's most endangered ecosystem, and only 4 percent of the sandplain ecosystem remains. The Circ would also threaten water quality, as it would cross ten rivers, brooks, and streams, all of which would flow into Lake Champlain. Growth triggered by the Circ could accelerate wetland loss in Chittenden County and damage approximately 25 additional streams, all of which drain into Lake Champlain. Chittenden County is also close to violating several federal air quality standards. The Circ and the additional growth it would cause would result in enough emissions to place Vermont in violation of the Clean Air Act.



Interstate 81

Virginia

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$1.6 billion



The Project

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is considering a massive, \$13 billion proposal to add lanes along the entire 325-mile length of Interstate 81 (I-81) through Virginia. I-81 begins at the Canadian border in Fishers Landing, New York and runs through six states until it meets Interstate 40 near Dandridge, Tennessee. In Virginia, I-81 runs through the beautiful and historic Shenandoah Valley and rural southwestern region of the state as a four-lane highway.

The primary justification for this project is to improve the movement of trucks through the corridor. Truck traffic on I-81 has increased in recent years and now represents 30 to 40 percent of the highway's traffic. Of the 13,000 trucks that travel I-81 each day, an estimated 70 percent are passing through Virginia. Project proponents argue that adding general-use lanes or creating special truck lanes is the best way to accommodate freight movement. In November 2003, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued notice that it had given VDOT the authority to proceed with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

VDOT received proposals to widen I-81 from two private consortiums—Fluor Virginia and STAR Solutions—under Virginia's 1995 Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA). The PPTA allows Virginia agencies to form partnerships with private entities to build and operate transportation facilities. Both proposals rely on questionable toll-financing schemes that could saddle taxpayers with billions of dollars in debt.

In February 2004, VDOT opted to begin contract negotiations with STAR Solutions, which proposes adding two truck-only lanes in each direction, creating an eight to twelve-lane I-81, and rebuilding 88 interchanges. Unlike the Fluor proposal, the STAR design has no car-only lanes. The truck-only lanes would be separated from the general-use lanes by rumble strips. STAR Solutions' parent company is Kellogg Brown & Root, Inc., the Halliburton, Inc. subsidiary that has been charged with over-billing the U.S. government in Iraq and has disclosed potential financial concerns in a recent filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

STAR's proposal would cost \$13 billion over 40 years, including inflation and interest. STAR claims it would finance the project with truck tolls, \$1.6 billion in federal demonstration highway funds, and \$100 million in Virginia highway funds. VDOT states that the project is to be completed in stages, and depends upon receiving \$800 million under transportation bill reauthorization for the initial federal funding.

U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Don Young has pledged to provide \$1.6 billion to make I-81 a demonstration project of "truck tollways," allowing for exclusive truck right-of-way paid for with tolls. Rep. Young chose I-81 for the location of this demonstration project because he believes this location would favor his desire to press his case for a new national system of truck highways with his congressional colleagues.

VDOT has initiated a two-tiered Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the I-81 corridor. The agency plans to publish a Tier 1 (corridor-level) Draft EIS by late 2004 or early 2005, and to move to a Record of Decision by late 2005. Presumably, the Tier 2 EIS will examine the impacts of a more specific project proposal. Virginia communities and several dozen towns throughout the I-81 corridor have called for full consideration of enhanced rail service and other strategies as alternatives to widening I-81.

Proposal and Savings

VDOT should reconsider its decision to negotiation with STAR Solutions to construct dedicated truck lanes on I-81 in Virginia, a \$13 billion proposal. It is unclear exactly how much federal taxpayers will invest in this project, but Rep. Young's commitment to provide at least \$1.6 billion in transportation demonstration funding would itself be a tremendous public investment.

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Taxpayer Concerns

Despite the involvement of a private corporation to secure private bond funding, this would be an extraordinarily expensive project for federal, state, and local taxpayers. There is no guarantee that STAR's tolling scheme would succeed. Although the amount that federal taxpayers would ultimately pay is unclear, there is little doubt it would be significant. STAR's proposal assumes a federal investment of at least \$1.6 billion, and federal funds may also make up part of Virginia's \$100 million share.

This project could damage Virginia's bond rating and its ability to issue bonds in the future. VDOT Chief Financial Officer Barbara Reese has said that Virginia would have no legal obligation to pay if the chosen contractor defaults, but bond rating agencies would look at the I-81 project as a component of the state's financial health. Ms. Reese states that the contractors' financial plans leave "little room for error in traffic assumptions, revenue collection, or adjustments in project costs."¹ Even minor miscalculations in traffic levels or toll revenue could damage the project's viability.

In November 2003, the three major agencies responsible for rating the health and status of issued bonds, put the Pocahontas Parkway (Route 895), another Virginia PPTA project with has a bond structure similar to the one proposed for I-81, on debt watch because traffic and toll revenues were lower than projected.

Local Community Concerns

A remarkable 40 towns and counties in the Shenandoah Valley officially oppose the STAR proposal and support greater consideration of rail options to divert truck traffic from I-81.² The Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, for example, passed a resolution criticizing both proposals because they would increase truck traffic, accidents, deaths, and air, noise, and visual pollution. These proposals would almost certainly advance the use of Longer Combination Vehicles (LCV), or triple-trailer trucks, raising fears regarding traffic safety.

Despite considerable pressure from local governments to seriously consider rail alternatives, STAR proposes spending only \$56 million to improve 24 miles of rail, most of which is not in the I-81 corridor. This is less than one penny of rail investment for every dollar spent on roads. RAIL Solution, a Virginia non-profit, supports considering rail as a way to reduce truck traffic in the I-81 corridor. A December 2003 report commissioned by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation concluded that improving Virginia's rail system could significantly reduce the corridor's truck traffic.

Widening I-81 would damage or destroy historic resources in the Shenandoah Valley. I-81 crosses seven Civil War Battlefields and the current proposal would destroy more than 187 acres of battlefield for interchanges alone, and truck-only lanes will destroy even more battlefield acres.

New lanes on I-81 would pave thousands of acres of land, not counting what would be required for interchanges. The project would take all or part of 3,434 parcels of land, displacing more than 414 families and businesses. Sound barriers would also be erected in many areas, further dividing cities and towns along the interstate route, and impacting businesses, farms, and recreation areas including national forests adjacent to I-81.

Local governments, businesses, and the tourism industry are also concerned about the potential diversion of trucks avoiding tolls on I-81 to alternate routes such as Routes 11, 29, and I-95. Recent studies³ suggest that the tolling rates proposed by STAR will likely create significant truck diversion to alternate routes, prompting VDOT's current initiative to seek the authority to toll cars as a means of reducing the toll burden on trucks. Tolling cars and local freight shipments presents even further concerns for the economically hard-pressed areas of western Virginia.

Environmental Concerns

The STAR proposal projects an eventual quadrupling of heavy-truck traffic on I-81, which would sharply increase air pollutant emissions, including toxic, carcinogenic, and asthma-inducing pollutants as well as shattering the fragile beauty and rural character of the corridor by triggering industrialization, sprawl, visual blight, nighttime glare, and around-the-clock noise. The I-81 project would also accelerate bank erosion into rivers and creeks, and additional toxic runoff would damage local streams and wetlands. Within the I-81 corridor are sensitive karst aquifers, valleys prone to air inversions, national forests, rivers and streams of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, Blue Ridge and Shenandoah Parkway viewsheds, and the Roanoke and Winchester areas, which already violate federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, which can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. It is estimated that a typical 100-space truck stop with an average 66 percent occupancy introduces 12.5 million pounds of pollution into the surrounding community each year from truck idling. The STAR plan would build six new 200-space truck stops along the route, adding 150 million pounds of new pollution annually.

¹ "Report on the PPTA Advisory Panel Meeting," Nov. 14, 2003.

² RAIL Solution, "A Critical Look at the Transportation Future of Southwest Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley," Oct. 6, 2003.

³ *Interstate 81 Truck Toll Proposal: The Trucking Industry Perspective*, American Truck Association, undated; and *I-81 Toll Impact Analysis*, Memorandum from Jim Blair, Reebie Associates, to George Conner, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Feb. 11, 2004.



U.S. Route 29/Charlottesville Bypass

Charlottesville, Virginia

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$192 Million

The Project

The Charlottesville Bypass (Bypass) is a proposed 6.2-mile, four-lane highway that would bypass a section of U.S. Route 29 (US 29) in Charlottesville and in Albemarle County in western Virginia. Its cost is estimated at \$240 million, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has already spent \$40 million on right-of-way acquisition and preliminary engineering.

In August 2001, the U.S. District Court ruled that VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration had violated federal law by not adequately considering the Bypass's impact on the area's drinking water supply. VDOT has since approved a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to address the concerns of the U.S. District Court and Albemarle County.

In 2002, due largely to lagging transportation funding, Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) temporarily delayed project funding. In March 2004, however, the Virginia Legislature approved a measure that would require repayment of funds already spent on the project by the local transportation district if the Bypass is not built, creating strong incentive for VDOT to build the project even in the face of opposition. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$2 million for Bypass construction in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

Taxpayer Concerns

The project's estimated cost has tripled to \$240 million since VDOT's original \$90 million estimate. The Bypass would cost roughly \$40 million per mile. The Bypass would have little effect on local congestion. According to VDOT studies, the key to solving the area's congestion problem is to build grade-separated interchanges at the most heavily congested intersections. The Bypass, in the absence of these needed interchanges, would begin in congestion and end in congestion. VDOT's studies show that in 2010 the estimated north-south through-traffic—VDOT's main concern and justification for the Bypass—would be only 2,200 vehicle trips per day.

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, Albemarle County, Charlottesville, and VDOT are currently engaged in a cooperative study to explore less expensive and more workable transportation improvements in the Route 29 Corridor.

Local Community Concerns

The Bypass would cut through seven neighborhoods, destroying 41 homes and impacting many others. The Bypass would pass close to six schools, and would take fifteen acres from Albemarle County's largest school complex.

Citizen and official opposition to this highway has been significant. At the most recent public hearing, 7,100 citizens expressed opposition to this project, which the VDOT indicated was the most opposition it had ever received to a proposed transportation project at a single hearing. The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors has unanimously passed two resolutions opposing the project. The Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has voted every year since 1996 to deny federal construction funds for this project until information on its costs and impacts is established and a previously agreed to sequence of improvements is followed, including the grade-separated interchanges. Two bodies appointed by the MPO, the Bypass Design Advisory Committee, a citizen panel and the Charlottesville-Albemarle Regional Transportation Committee, responsible for developing the region's 20-year transportation plan, also oppose the Bypass.

Environmental Concerns

Roughly one mile of the Bypass would be built on steep slopes above and adjacent to the area's primary public water reservoir, increasing silt levels, threatening contamination from run-off, and adding to the threat of hazardous material spills. The community also raises concerns about increased noise and degraded air quality from the Bypass.

Proposal and Savings

VDOT should cancel plans to construct the \$240 million US 29 Charlottesville Bypass project.

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Western Transportation Corridor Northern Virginia Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$1.6 billion



The Project

The Western Transportation Corridor (WTC)—also referred to as the Western Bypass—would be a significant portion of the proposed “Outer Beltway” around Washington, D.C. Most of the 50-mile WTC would run through rural land from Interstate 95 near Fredericksburg, Virginia to State Route 7 near Leesburg, Virginia, and possibly to or over the Potomac River. The estimated cost for building the WTC is \$2 billion. In 1989, Maryland stated that it was withdrawing from the Outer Beltway project when a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) showed that the massive highway would not relieve congestion on the region’s roads.

In 1994, at the urging of developers, former-Gov. George Allen renewed Virginia’s study of the project. The stated purpose of the project was changed from a bypass of Washington—because it would not relieve congestion—to a north-south commuter connector to allow movement between suburban areas in Virginia. Virginia’s Commonwealth Transportation Board initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1997 and approved an \$11.2 million contract for its completion in November 2000. In May 2003, Virginia officials announced that funding to continue the WTC EIS would not be included in Virginia’s six-year transportation plan.

Significant concern remains that this expensive and misguided project may still yet proceed. Some elected officials and special interests, including the newly-elected Loudoun County Board of Supervisors and the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance, are aggressively pursuing the WTC. Using Virginia’s Public Private Transportation Act (PPTA) to get the highway built has also been discussed. Of potentially greater concern is that an Outer Beltway may be segmented and built as smaller projects, contrary to federal law. These projects could include the proposed Manassas Battlefield Bypass and Tri-County Parkway in Virginia, and the Techway—a proposed highway between Maryland and Virginia and a new bridge over the Potomac—and Inter County Connector in Maryland. Maryland is already aggressively pursuing the \$1.7 to \$3 billion Inter County Connector through a fast-tracked Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Taxpayer Concerns

According to VDOT studies, the WTC would not significantly reduce current or future congestion on the Capital Beltway or in surrounding corridors, and would actually increase east-west traffic. The region already has several north-south corridors—including the Fairfax County Parkway, Prince William Parkway, and a widened Route 28—and others are under consideration. VDOT studies show that an upgrade or linkage alternative could handle the projected traffic at far less cost. This project would take money from maintenance and repair of existing roads, bridges, and transit infrastructure.

Local Community Concerns

VDOT studies indicate that the WTC would not relieve congestion on local roads and would actually increase traffic on some intersecting highways. Traffic on Route 50 west of Route 606 would increase by nearly 25 percent; by more than 20 percent on Route 15 north of Leesburg; and by more than 10 percent on Route 7 west of Route 659. VDOT has failed to study the WTC’s impact on Route 28, a crucial north-south route, or any of the roads east of Route 28.

The WTC would also open historic, rural, and productive agricultural lands in Fauquier, Loudoun, and other Piedmont counties to increased development. The American Farmland Trust has ranked the Virginia Piedmont the second most endangered prime farmland area in the country because of sprawl development pressures.

The WTC would spur sprawl in the area, contrary to the counties' comprehensive plans. By encouraging the construction of new residential development further from the urbanized area, the corridor would feed more traffic into the already overcrowded east-west access routes in the region.

Proposal and Savings

VDOT should not pursue the proposed WTC in northern Virginia, a project that is estimated to cost at least \$2.0 billion, or any of the other projects that would individually serve as segments of an outer beltway around Washington, D.C.

Contacts

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Environmental Concerns

Northern Virginia (and the rest of the Washington region) already severely violates federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, which can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. The WTC would increase vehicle use and air pollutant emissions in a region that is having considerable difficulty figuring out how to meet clean air standards.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the WTC "has the potential to directly impact up to 10 times the wetlands areas [and] cross 10 times the flood plain area" of the upgrade and linkage alternative. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Park Service have also expressed concerns about the project's environmental impacts.

The WTC and attendant sprawl could degrade the drinking water supply for much of northern Virginia, as it would cross the watershed for the Occoquan and Beaverdam Reservoirs.



Interstate 73

Southwest Virginia

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$1.12 billion

The Project

Interstate 73 (I-73) is proposed as a federal highway connecting Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. In 1995, I-73 was named a National Highway System High Priority Corridor. In Virginia and South Carolina, plans to build I-73 are moving forward, in contrast to every other state through which the project is proposed. West Virginia and Ohio, the two states who engaged in extensive highway construction on I-73, built four-lane arterial highways with at-grade intersections. Neither built the type of limited access highway associated with the Interstate Highway System. In North Carolina, the I-73 project has been overlaid upon an existing patchwork of planned highway construction projects. In 2001, Michigan halted planning efforts on I-73 as a new highway.

In May 2001, Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) selected building a new highway as its preferred alternative for the project. In March 2004, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) changed the alignment to avoid an historic district in Roanoke identified by citizen-funded surveying. VDOT's new alignment eliminates an existing commercial district in Roanoke County, bulldozes prime farmland and pristine landscapes, and bisects an historic Old Order German Baptist agricultural settlement in Franklin County.

In an effort to reenergize the approval and construction process along the entire proposed corridor, 60 officials from the Carolinas, Virginia, and West Virginia met in November 2003 to discuss how to build the highways faster, including how to achieve necessary funding and how to overcome obstacles such as local opposition. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$2 million for engineering and construction costs associated with I-73 in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

Taxpayer Concerns

VDOT has refused to fully study less expensive, less destructive alternatives, including a comprehensive upgrade of the existing U.S. Route 220 (US 220), in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Instead, VDOT relied upon an outdated, short-range study of upgrading US 220 and did not conduct a full analysis. VDOT has left the public in the dark about a state-of-the-art, cost-effective highway upgrade solution that would better manage uncontrolled access on US 220 and improve the safety and efficiency of the current highway.

Local Community Concerns

VDOT's preferred alignment for I-73 will bisect Franklin County's Oak Hill Old German Baptist Brethren Community and destroy the culture of one of the few remaining Old Order Anabaptist plain sect communities. This culture's hallmarks include rural lifestyle, plain dress, use of traditional religious ritual, selective use of technology, and commitment to nonresistance. Most of Oak Hill's 1,600 acres remain in active agricultural use. I-73 would pave a four-lane freeway through the center of the Oak Hill settlement and literally pave over the stream where Oak Hill practices its traditional outdoor baptisms.

Environmental Concerns

In April 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency classified the Roanoke region as violating federal Clean Air Act standards for ground-level ozone, which can cause lung damage and increase incidences of respiratory illness. In addition, the route chosen for I-73 in Virginia would destroy thousands of acres of prime farmland, forests, and habitat for shrinking populations of songbirds, native wild plants, and animals, and all known habitats of the Roanoke logperch, a federally-endangered fish, would be affected. The area's scenic Blue Ridge Mountain landscapes would be permanently marred, diminishing the region's potential to attract revenue from tourism and new businesses.

Proposal and Savings

VDOT should not construct a new 75-mile interstate fragment from Roanoke, Virginia to North Carolina, at a cost of \$1.4 billion.

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Interstate 405

Seattle, Washington

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$700 million (Phase I)



The Project

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) proposes to spend roughly \$11 billion to increase capacity along the entire 30-mile stretch of the Interstate 405 (I-405) beltway between Seattle's eastside suburbs and Interstate 5. This cost estimate is likely to increase substantially when WSDOT releases a revised estimate based on its 2004 Cost Estimate Validation procedures. The project's political proponents and the local road construction industry have flagged the project as a top priority, calling it critical to the economic health of the Puget Sound region and the entire state.

WSDOT's 20-year plan for I-405 includes construction of two additional lanes in each direction, reconfigured interchanges, and reconstructed arterials that feed into I-405, as well as additional bus and van pool service. The overwhelming defeat of Referendum 51—a gas tax referendum that would have provided \$1.7 billion for the I-405 project—in 2002 forced WSDOT to rethink the massive project, and the agency is now pursuing the project in two parts.

An executive committee of regional transportation officials approved the first phase in October 2003. Under this \$4.7 billion plan, WSDOT would expand I-405 by two lanes in each direction on some portions of the highway, and by one lane in each direction along the rest with sufficient right-of-way for another expansion in the future. One interchange will also be reconfigured. Barely 5 percent of the money for this project would be used to fund transit improvements—additional buses and bus stations, bus ramps to HOV lanes, and an expanded vanpool program—despite WSDOT-commissioned polling that shows public support for trip-reduction is stronger than support for road construction in the corridor. In April 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives earmarked \$3 million for I-405 in its version of the six-year transportation bill reauthorization.

Taxpayer Concerns

WSDOT's planned I-405 expansion would take 20 years to complete and still not solve the corridor's congestion problems. At best, federal taxpayers would be expected to spend up to \$700 million for the first phase. The freeway elements of the preferred alternative would cost over \$1055 per square foot of pavement. Critics point out that the estimated cost of construction approaches or exceeds what WSDOT estimates drivers would save through reduced travel times, and these costs do not even include construction-related delay and increased accidents.

Only \$485 million has been committed for the I-405 project from the nickel per gallon gasoline taxes passed by the Washington legislature in 2003. Although voters roundly rejected Referendum 51, regional transportation authorities are resting their hopes on the passage of a Regional Transportation Improvement District (RTID) ballot measure, which would raise up to \$2.8 billion for the first phase of the I-405 project by increasing sales taxes, license fees, and a three-county gasoline tax. Without this funding, which is far from guaranteed, WSDOT would likely need to abandon the expansion plan or rely on even more massive federal outlays.

A coalition of regional transportation and conservation organizations, Sensible Solutions, proposes a "Triple Win" Plan for the I-405 corridor. This plan focuses on the most congested spots, increases transit, and would also place a priority on freight movement, bicycle and pedestrian projects, trip reduction strategies, and transit-oriented development. At a cost of approximately \$3.1 billion, the "Triple Win" proposal represents a massive savings over the \$11 billion WSDOT proposal, and can be funded with a combination of tolls and state, regional and federal funds that can reasonably be expected over the next 20 years.

Proposal and Savings

WSDOT should scrap the \$11 billion, four-lane I-405 expansion. It is unclear how much of the total project cost will be borne by federal taxpayers, but as much as \$700 million will be required to complete phase one. Instead, a much less expensive program could be implemented, employing "best-first" highway improvements to fix existing design flaws and aggressive transit and trip-reduction efforts, at a total cost of only \$3.1 billion, all of which could be funded by local dollars.

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Local Community Concerns

Expanding I-405 would not solve the corridor's congestion problems. Construction-related delays associated with a 20-year project on I-405 would be massive, worsening regional congestion over the project's life. WSDOT's widening would destroy 300 homes and businesses and would affect more than 1,400 other properties. Widening dozens of miles of neighborhood arterials would also reduce green space, increase neighborhood traffic, and make the streets less safe for children and less conducive to cycling and walking. A 2001 report commissioned by WSDOT concludes that this project will likely encourage sprawl and population shifts from Seattle to outlying areas.¹

Environmental Concerns

The direct and indirect impacts of this project on sensitive wildlife habitat would be severe. I-405 crosses or directly affects some 170 streams, tributaries, and wetlands, which support a number of threatened salmon species. The Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team has identified three Chinook populations in the I-405 corridor: Green River, Cedar River, and north Lake Washington Chinook. A wider I-405 would result in hundreds of additional acres of impervious surfaces, and additional toxic runoff would end up in area waterways, degrading drinking water supplies and the habitat of threatened species. Damage to the region's watershed basins and aquifers would also degrade drinking water. The I-405 expansion would fill as many as 62 acres of wetlands and disrupt 168 individual wetland areas.

¹ David Evans and Associates, "Draft Fish and Aquatic Habitat Expertise Report," Feb. 2001.



Corridor H

West Virginia

Cost to Federal Taxpayers: \$800 million



The Project

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) proposes completing Corridor H—one of 26 highway “corridors” established as part of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS)—from Elkins, West Virginia to the Virginia border near Wardensville. Corridor H was originally designed to terminate in Strasburg, Virginia, but Virginia cancelled its section of the project in 1995 after local residents opposed the project. Virginia decided instead to make minor improvements to the 14-mile section of Virginia Route 55 that would have constituted its portion of Corridor H.

The ADHS was created in 1965 by the Appalachian Regional Development Act, and Congress has authorized it may contain 3,025 miles of highway; at present there are approximately 2,400 miles of ADHS highway. In 1998, Congress authorized about \$2.2 billion over six years for the entire Appalachian Corridor system in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and one-third of Corridor H’s cost was included.

Opponents filed suit against the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and WVDOT in 1996 on the grounds that the project would violate federal law. In February 2000, a federal appeals court helped the two sides reach a court-mediated settlement, which allowed independently useful segments of the highway to be built, including stretches near Elkins and Moorefield, West Virginia. These projects cost nearly \$19.2 million per mile. Environmental impact studies for new alignments in the Shavers Fork and Blackwater Canyon areas are under way, but these segments are contested. Currently there is no construction between the Elkins Bypass and Moorefield.

WVDOT’s failure to control runoff into trout streams during construction of Corridor H segments led opponents to file a new suit in November 2001 to require enforcement of stormwater regulations.

Taxpayer Concerns

Carving through 3,000- and 4,000-foot mountains is expensive. The cost to complete Corridor H was originally estimated to be \$1 billion, or about \$10 million a mile, but construction of the first sections of the project cost nearly double that at \$19.2 million a mile. Most Corridor H segments are not projected to even approach 9,000 vehicles-per-day over the next twenty years, the threshold engineers use to justify a four-lane highway, and Corridor H would not link any major cities, as the largest towns on the route have populations of less than 10,000.

Local Community Concerns

Concerns already exist regarding the availability of funds to repair and maintain existing roads in West Virginia. Present and former directors of the Appalachian Regional Commission agree that Appalachia needs funding for education and job training before it needs funding for new rural roads. There are also concerns that the increase in truck and through traffic will result in more traffic accidents.

Virginia has already decided not to expand Route 55 to connect Corridor H to Interstate 81, but residents there are worried that they would eventually be forced to do so if construction of Corridor H in WV increases traffic dramatically, making a two-lane Route 55 inadequate.

Environmental Concerns

Corridor H would require 100 separate stream crossings, damaging trout streams from sedimentation and pollution. The four-lane highway would cut through the George Washington and Monongahela national forests, and would fragment forest habitat. It would also impair wild lands and historic sites near Blackwater Canyon and Greenland Gap.

Corridor H would harm forests, farms, and traditional “Main Street” merchants throughout West Virginia. The counties it would travel through lack land-use planning regulations, so uncontrolled development would likely result, which could lessen West Virginia’s tourist appeal by marring natural, recreational, and historic attractions. Scenic America has named the adjacent corridor, which includes east-west Routes 55, 93, and 219, as one of the “Ten Most Endangered Scenic Byways”.

Proposal and Savings:

WVDOT should cancel plans to complete Corridor H. The remaining segments are estimated to cost \$1 billion to build.

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