

September 12, 2011

SUBJECT: EPA review and comments for the
Draft Range of Alternatives (dated August 5, 2011) for the
Louisville – Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges Project

Thank you for your continuing coordination with us. EPA Regions 4 and 5 reviewed the Draft Range of Alternatives for the Louisville – Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges Project, and we are providing the following comments. If substantial changes to project plans occur, we may have additional comments as the project proceeds:

Introduction

The Draft Range of Alternatives document (page 2, paragraph 4) summarizes the need to modify the Selected Alternative, and the need to supplement the 2003 FEIS, since there is potential for changes in environmental impacts. It should also be noted that there is a potential for changes in impacts to the community, particularly regarding construction impacts to local traffic, residents and the long-term effects of tolling. Since construction is expected to be phased and will require a period of several years, construction impacts are an issue which may affect various parts of the overall community at different periods of time and for a number of years.

Review of Purpose & Need

We note that this is a priority national transportation project that addresses long-term, cross-river transportation needs in Louisville and Southern Indiana. We agree that the original Purpose and Need statement, documented in the 2003 FEIS, needs to be updated regarding safety data and traffic forecasting information, with the updated information documented in the upcoming DSEIS.

Alternatives Screening

We appreciate the summary of the previous Alternatives Screening and Alternative Selection process documented in the 2003 FEIS, and your consideration of our previous comments regarding alternatives to be considered.

Currently, FHWA/INDOT/KYTC proposes these alternatives for evaluation in the DSEIS, as listed on page 21 of the Draft Range of Alternatives:

1. No-action / No build.
2. The Selected Alternative (as approved by the 2003 ROD with updated information - e.g., financing/cost) without tolls.
3. All alternatives previously evaluated in the 2003 FEIS.
4. A Modified version of the Selected Alternative with tolls and the following cost-saving alternatives: rebuild the Kennedy Interchange in-place; remove the pedestrian walkway/bikeway from the Downtown Ohio River Bridge; and reduce the East End

Bridge and approaches from six lanes to four lanes, with the option to widen to six lanes in the future.

The Draft Range of Alternatives document (page 21) states that the 2003 Selected Alternative is not a reasonable alternative because it is not a financially feasible alternative. The Record of Decision (ROD) issued by FHWA on September 6, 2003 identified the selected alternative and the reasons for its selection.

The Draft Range of Alternatives document (page 9) states that the issue of financial feasibility can now be evaluated more specifically, based on what is now known about available revenues and the ability to consider tolling as a revenue source. To help ensure the SEIS Selected Alternative is a financially feasible alternative, EPA recommends the upcoming DSEIS include the detailed financial studies, including tolling studies that have been done since the 2003 FEIS/ROD, and identify the specific dollar amounts that can be expected from tolling under each SEIS alternative and assess the financial feasibility of each alternative accordingly. Therefore, EPA requests the following alternatives, as potential financially feasible alternatives, also be identified and evaluated in the SEIS:

1. The Selected Alternative (as approved by the 2003 ROD with updated information - e.g., financing/cost) **with tolls**.
2. A Modified version of the Selected Alternative **without tolls** and the following cost-saving alternatives: rebuild the Kennedy Interchange in-place; remove the pedestrian walkway/bikeway from the Downtown Ohio River Bridge; and reduce the East End Bridge and approaches from six lanes to four lanes, with the option to widen to six lanes in the future.

We also note that the TSM alternative will be evaluated in the DSEIS for consideration as part of any selected alternative. We agree that the Travel Demand Management (TDM), Transportation System Management (TSM), and Mass Transit Alternatives have some potential to improve the transportation system, and we note that the 2003 Selected Alternative included these elements (as noted on page 6 of the Draft Range of Alternatives). The DSEIS should clarify the extent that the currently proposed modification to the Selected Alternative will include these elements. The Draft Range of Alternatives (page 21) mentions that TSM will be evaluated in the DSEIS in conjunction with any selected alternative, (TDM and Mass Transit are not mentioned on page 21).

Please include an alternatives comparison table in the DSEIS that provides the cost of each alternative and the dollar amounts expected from each funding source (e.g., tolling, traditional federal formula funds, discretionary funds, etc.) for each alternative, as well as each alternative's various environmental impacts.

Alternatives Analysis

Due to the magnitude of this project, we recognize that it will take years to complete, with several phases in progress concurrently. We note that progress on the project subsequent to 2003

has been made, and that the Draft Range of Alternatives (page 2, paragraph 3) includes a summary of this work.

In addition, it would be useful for the alternatives analysis to include information regarding the timeline of the alternatives, and projected estimated date(s) of construction/completion. The construction timeline is unclear regarding when each phase of the project will be underway, and what measures have been planned to help avoid or minimize traffic disruption during renovation of the Kennedy Bridge and Interchange. Also, we recommend that the DSEIS include a map showing the alternatives at an easy-to-read scale.

Cost estimates are an important part of this project, and the cost-saving measures identified in the Modified Alternative reduce construction costs as compared to the 2003 Selected Alternative. Planning for maintenance costs should also be taken into consideration for the alternatives. The Draft Range of Alternatives (page 21) states that the 2003 Selected Alternative is identified as *"not a reasonable alternative because it is not financially feasible"*.

The Draft Range of Alternatives (page 9) discusses financial feasibility and potential sources of funding for the project, and states that *"Alternatives will be considered reasonable in the SEIS only if they include a revenue source that could be reasonably expected to cover the share of estimated project costs that exceeds \$1.9 billion."* It is unclear whether the revenue source referred to in this statement is limited to anticipated tolls to be collected, or whether it also includes other sources of potential funding. The DSEIS should clarify the funding plans.

In addition, the DSEIS should clarify the research used for this project that shows how tolling of the Modified Selected Alternative is a financially feasible option for funding any portion of this project. The Draft Range of Alternatives (page 9) lists potential sources of funding from federal and State sources. Since page 9 indicates that this funding is potentially available, please clarify whether there is a contingency plan in the event that not all the potential funding sources become available, and how the project will be affected if actual tolling revenues differ significantly from early estimates. We note that the downtown bridge and Kennedy Interchange are of particular concern, since the 2003 EIS substantiated congestion and safety issues, and therefore the DSEIS should particularly address funding availability and contingency planning for this location.

Since there are likely to have been changes in employer-based trip reduction programs and mass transit ridership since 2003, the DSEIS should consider the effects of these measures on current traffic, as well as the potential impacts of the project on trip reduction programs and mass transit during construction, in addition to the potential for these factors to affect future traffic post-construction.

In addition, since the pedestrian path/bikeway is not included in the Modified Selected Alternative, and since current plans call for construction of a similar facility on the Big Four Bridge instead, the DSEIS should include an update regarding the progress of the Big Four Bridge. If plans for the pedestrian path/bikeway are eliminated from the Big Four Bridge, then the construction of this pathway should be reconsidered as part of the Ohio River Bridges Project.