

## CHAPTER 1: PROJECT HISTORY

### 1.1 Transportation Planning History

The need for improvements in cross-river mobility in the LMA was initially identified through the Congressionally mandated metropolitan transportation planning process, as set forth in Title 23, U.S. Code, Section 134.<sup>1</sup> That transportation planning process began in 1963, when the states of Indiana and Kentucky and local communities established a cooperative transportation-planning program. That early program produced the first transportation plan for the LMA in 1969. Since 1973, the KIPDA has been responsible for maintaining the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process for the LMA. (The KIPDA metropolitan area is shown on Figure 1.1-1.) That responsibility includes developing and continually updating a 20-year long-range transportation plan



Figure 1.1-1  
LOUISVILLE METROPOLITAN AREA

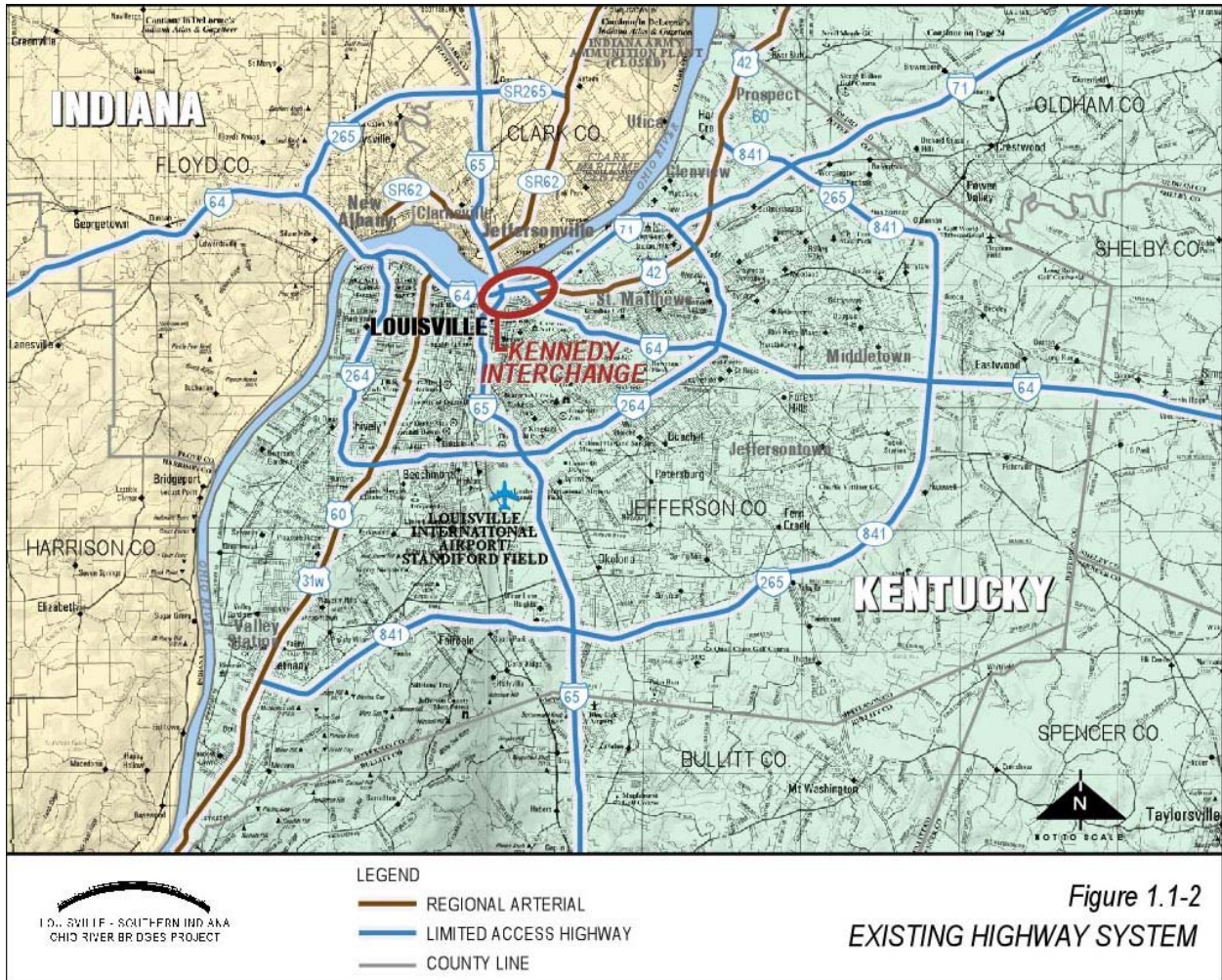
LOUISVILLE - SOUTHERN INDIANA  
OHIO RIVER BRIDGES PROJECT

for the LMA that serves as a guide for major investments in the LMA’s multimodal ground transportation system. Agencies responsible for operating, maintaining, and improving the transportation systems are required to develop their own plans within the framework of the long-range transportation plan. The process to develop and update the metropolitan transportation plan includes state and local elected and appointed officials, local government professional staff, transportation providers, and representatives of business, public interest, and civic groups.

Proposals to improve cross-river mobility through the construction of one or more additional highway bridges over the Ohio River have been in every long-range transportation plan prepared for the LMA since 1969. The recommendations of the first long-range plan in 1969 included “the extension of I-265 through Clark County [Indiana] with a crossing of the Ohio River at Utica [as] an extremely important addition to the freeway system . . .” This extension would have connected with the then proposed I-265/KY 841 near U.S. 42 in eastern Jefferson County, Kentucky. (See Figure 1.1-2.) The next long-range transportation plan, completed in 1978,

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of transportation planning, the LMA is defined as the “urbanized” area, and currently includes all or portions of Jefferson, Bullitt and Oldham counties in Kentucky, and Clark and Floyd counties in Indiana. The identification of the counties included within the LMA for purposes of transportation planning is made by the KIPDA, the official Metropolitan Planning Organization for the LMA.

again called for the extension of I-265 from I-65 in Indiana to the terminus of I-265/KY 841 at U.S. 42 in Kentucky, with a bridge over the Ohio River.



The third long-range transportation plan for the LMA was prepared by KIPDA in 1993. This plan again recommended an extension of I-265 between I-65 in Indiana and I-265/KY 841 in Kentucky, with a new Ohio River bridge. (An extension of I-265 has been constructed from I-65 to S.R. 62 in southeastern Clark County, Indiana. That extension, which has been designated S.R. 265, ends short of an Ohio River crossing.) In 1993, KIPDA also recommended improvements to the geometrically complex Kennedy Interchange in downtown Louisville to alleviate congestion and safety problems. Known locally as “Spaghetti Junction,” the Kennedy Interchange is the junction of three interstate highways—I-64, I-65 and I-71—and is located on the southern bank of the Ohio River at the foot of the Kennedy Bridge, which carries I-65 across the Ohio River. (See Figure 1.1-2.)

## 1.2 Metropolitan Louisville Ohio River Bridge Study

The specific problems associated with cross-river mobility in the LMA were evaluated in greater detail beginning in the early 1990s. From 1991 to 1994, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) sponsored the Metropolitan Louisville Ohio River Bridge Study. This study investigated the need for a new Ohio River bridge in the LMA, and evaluated four potential corridors for construction of such a bridge:

- Western Corridor – connecting KY 841 (Gene Snyder Freeway) in southwestern Jefferson County, Kentucky, through Harrison County, Indiana, to I-64 in Floyd County, Indiana;
- Central Corridor – potential crossings in the vicinity of downtown Louisville, Kentucky, and Clarksville/Jeffersonville, Indiana, including the K&I Railroad Bridge, a bridge parallel to I-65 (Kennedy Bridge), and the Big Four Railroad Bridge;
- Near Eastern Corridor – connecting I-264 (Watterson Expressway) and I-71 in eastern Jefferson County, Kentucky, with S.R. 265 at S.R. 62 in southeastern Clark County, Indiana (two subcorridors were evaluated); and
- Far Eastern Corridor – connecting KY 841/I-265 (Gene Snyder Freeway) in far northeastern Jefferson County, Kentucky, with S.R. 265 at S.R. 62 in southeastern Clark County, Indiana (three subcorridors were evaluated).

Public meetings were held in 1991 and 1993. The conclusion of the study was that improvements in the Western Corridor were not needed because of insufficient cross-river travel demand (only 4,100 daily river crossings predicted in 2010), but that the other three corridors should be evaluated further as viable options.

## 1.3 Ohio River Major Investment Study (ORMIS)

Based on the results of the Metropolitan Louisville Ohio River Bridge Study, and over 25 years of local transportation planning, KIPDA initiated a Major Investment Study in 1995 to “address the problem of current and future travel mobility across the Ohio River between Kentucky and Indiana in the Louisville region.”<sup>2</sup> The Ohio River Major Investment Study, or ORMIS, evaluated a wide range of transportation improvements that might address cross-river mobility needs, including light rail transit, multiple new highway bridge corridors, reconstruction of the Kennedy Interchange, travel demand management strategies, transportation system management measures, and enhanced bus service. KIPDA stated that ORMIS was to serve “a supporting function in the process of developing the Kentuckiana region long-range transportation plan.”

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<sup>2</sup> FHWA and FTA established the Major Investment Study, or MIS, process in 1993 with the issuance of 23 CFR 450.318 (Metropolitan transportation planning process; Major metropolitan transportation investment). According to 23 CFR 450.318, an MIS was required when the need for a major metropolitan transportation investment was identified and federal funds were potentially involved. The purpose of the MIS was to identify an investment strategy to implement the preferred solution(s) to the identified problem.

To assist in that process, KIPDA formed a broad-based advisory committee, the ORMIS Committee, to guide the study and make a recommendation to KIPDA's Transportation Policy Committee (TPC), the official decision-making body for ORMIS. ORMIS also incorporated an extensive public involvement program, including four sets of public workshops between December 1995 and November 1996.

In December 1996, the KIPDA TPC unanimously endorsed the recommendation of the ORMIS Committee for a preferred investment strategy incorporating four elements: a "two-bridge solution;" bus-oriented transit improvements; short-term traffic operational improvements; and a regional financial summit to deal with funding needs. The "two-bridge solution" included: building a new Ohio River bridge parallel to the Kennedy Bridge (I-65) between downtown Louisville and Jeffersonville, Indiana; reconstructing the Kennedy Interchange adjacent to the Kennedy Bridge; and building another new bridge approximately eight miles east of the Kennedy Bridge, connecting KY 841/I-265 (Gene Snyder Freeway) in eastern Jefferson County, Kentucky, with S.R. 265 at S.R. 62 in southeastern Clark County, Indiana.

The recommendations of ORMIS reaffirmed the conclusions reached in the Metropolitan Louisville Ohio River Bridge Study concerning the need for improvements in cross-river mobility in the downtown area (between Louisville and Clarksville/Jeffersonville) and between eastern Jefferson and southeastern Clark Counties. The ORMIS report described this strategy as "a total package of improvements to address cross-river mobility deficiencies over the long term." The recommended "downtown" bridge was predicted to address daily peak period congestion problems, and to improve safety and reduce the impact of accidents and other incidents. In addition, the report concluded that "only a complete rebuild of Spaghetti Junction [Kennedy Interchange], with shoulders that allow emergency vehicle access and additional lanes for critical ramp movements will significantly address the incident problem." The eastern bridge was described as a "valuable contributor to the overall efficiency of the regional transportation network and a highly cost-effective investment in the region's future." The report also noted, however, that an eastern bridge would not solve the problems within the Kennedy Interchange. The ORMIS executive summary is provided in Appendix D.

#### **1.4 KIPDA Horizon Year 2025 RMP**

At the same time ORMIS was proceeding, KIPDA was preparing the LMA's fourth long-range transportation plan. This plan, completed in 1996 and periodically updated since, is entitled *Horizon Year 2020 RMP* (Horizon 2020). It projected future transportation needs through the year 2020, based on then current conditions and using improved travel-forecasting procedures. The Horizon 2020 plan also reviewed the projects recommended in previous long-range transportation plans to determine their continued viability for addressing future needs. After the initial plan development in 1996, KIPDA updated the RMP in February 1998 to reflect the recommendations of ORMIS, as approved by the KIPDA TPC. Horizon 2025, the current RMP for the LMA, includes recommendations for a new six-lane bridge parallel to the existing Kennedy Bridge (I-65), reconstruction of the Kennedy Interchange, and a new four-lane I-265 freeway over the Ohio River between KY 841/I-265 in eastern Jefferson County, Kentucky, and S.R. 265 at S.R. 62 in Clark County, Indiana. The KIPDA RMP will be amended between



publication of the FEIS and approval of the ROD to reflect the FEIS Preferred Alternative (6-lane I-265 Freeway over the Ohio River, rather than the 4-lanes in the current RMP). FHWA will not sign the ROD until KIPDA has demonstrated fiscal constraint and conformity for the FEIS Preferred Alternative.

### **1.5 Louisville-Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges Project**

Based on the recommendations of ORMIS and the current KIPDA long-range transportation plan, the INDOT and the KYTC agreed in December 1997 to jointly pursue needed improvements to cross-river mobility between Jefferson County, Kentucky and Clark County, Indiana. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on March 27, 1998 indicating that FHWA, in cooperation with INDOT and KYTC, would prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate alternatives for improving cross-river mobility between Jefferson and Clark Counties, including the ORMIS recommendation.

The scope of this EIS had its origin in the previous studies and transportation plans sponsored by KIPDA (representing the local jurisdictions) and the state transportation agencies (INDOT and KYTC), which have demonstrated a need for improvement in cross-river mobility between Jefferson County, Kentucky and Clark County, Indiana. That overall need includes specific needs for improvements in both the downtown Louisville/Jeffersonville area and in eastern Jefferson and southeastern Clark Counties. The FHWA, INDOT and KYTC believe that those specific needs and their potential solutions are interrelated and, therefore, should be evaluated together.