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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE STOOPS OUTLINES STEPS TO OPPOSE I-69 EXTENSION

According to a state funded “Needs Assessment for Local Roads and Streets” from the Indiana LTAP Center at Purdue, 86% of the county roads in Indiana are rated in “critical” need of repair, 30% of our bridges and culverts are rated structurally or functionally “deficient”, and 55% of our county bridges have some component with an estimated life of less than 5 years.

Indiana already has the 4th highest interstate density in the country. It is clear that the benefits of simply concentrating our limited resources on fixing the roads we have far outweighs any supposed benefits of an I-69 — whether they be economic development, safety, cost savings of decreased travel time, or preservation of environmentally sensitive areas and community character — and not just in a limited highway corridor, but all across the state.

I would like to read a paragraph from the State’s Environmental Impact Statement for I-69 through southern Indiana. The paragraph says “INDOT took extraordinary steps to involve the public in each phase of the study... This input played a significant role in decision-making.” In fact, of the unprecedented 22,000 comments received by INDOT on I-69, 21,000 (or 94%) were opposed to the highway, especially the proposed new-terrain route. What is “significant” is that public input was so soundly ignored.

Local elected officials must work together to lobby against the new terrain proposal. Monroe County and the City of Bloomington must present a unified front opposing the construction of I-69.

Elected officials must be the first to call out the State Government’s fraudulent claims of economic development benefits for I-69. As representatives of Bloomington and Monroe County, we must be the leaders in confronting the Daniels Administration’s illegal procedural moves and falsified documents.

We must work with, rather than against, local activists to stop the destruction of our environmentally sensitive areas and vital watersheds from this monstrous give away of over \$4 Billion dollars of OUR money.

And yes, it surely is a give-away. When asked to justify I-69, the Daniels Administration will say it is the important NAFTA highway, linking Mexico to Canada. When you tell them that there is already an existing interstate system running through Indianapolis that runs exactly parallel to the proposed I-69 and is a full 80 miles shorter — What do they say?!

INDOT says, “Well, ya know, its really about linking Evansville to Indianapolis.” Then when you tell them that they can upgrade the existing US 41/I-70 route for almost \$3 Billion Dollars less than a new-terrain route, INDOT says “Well, it’s really about economic development in Southern Indiana.” When you tell them that according to their own studies and long term projections, there is absolutely NO DIFFERENCE in the level of economic growth in 25 years, whether the highway is built or not —

What does INDOT say?! INDOT says, “Well, this is the NAFTA highway!”

But it is certainly about the money, and in the Daniels Administrations eyes, it is better to give away \$1 Billion dollars of the state’s money than none, and far better to give away \$4 Billion dollars for a new-terrain interstate than the \$1 Billion for upgrading existing roads. I just wish the train lobby was able to pay as much in campaign contributions as the highway construction and engineering firms. Then maybe we could get some real alternative transportation options.

The state cannot afford to provide the money to fix the roads and highways we currently have. Our local bridges are in a dangerous state of disrepair. The Governor’s proposal to spend billions of dollars on a new interstate is fiscal mismanagement and pork barrel spending of the worst kind. We must convince the state to give us our share. We can show them that fixing the infrastructure we have and providing alternative transportation options makes economic sense for Monroe County and all of southern Indiana.