



US 31 South
Resource Agency, Stakeholder & Public
Involvement Summary #1

September 27, 2023

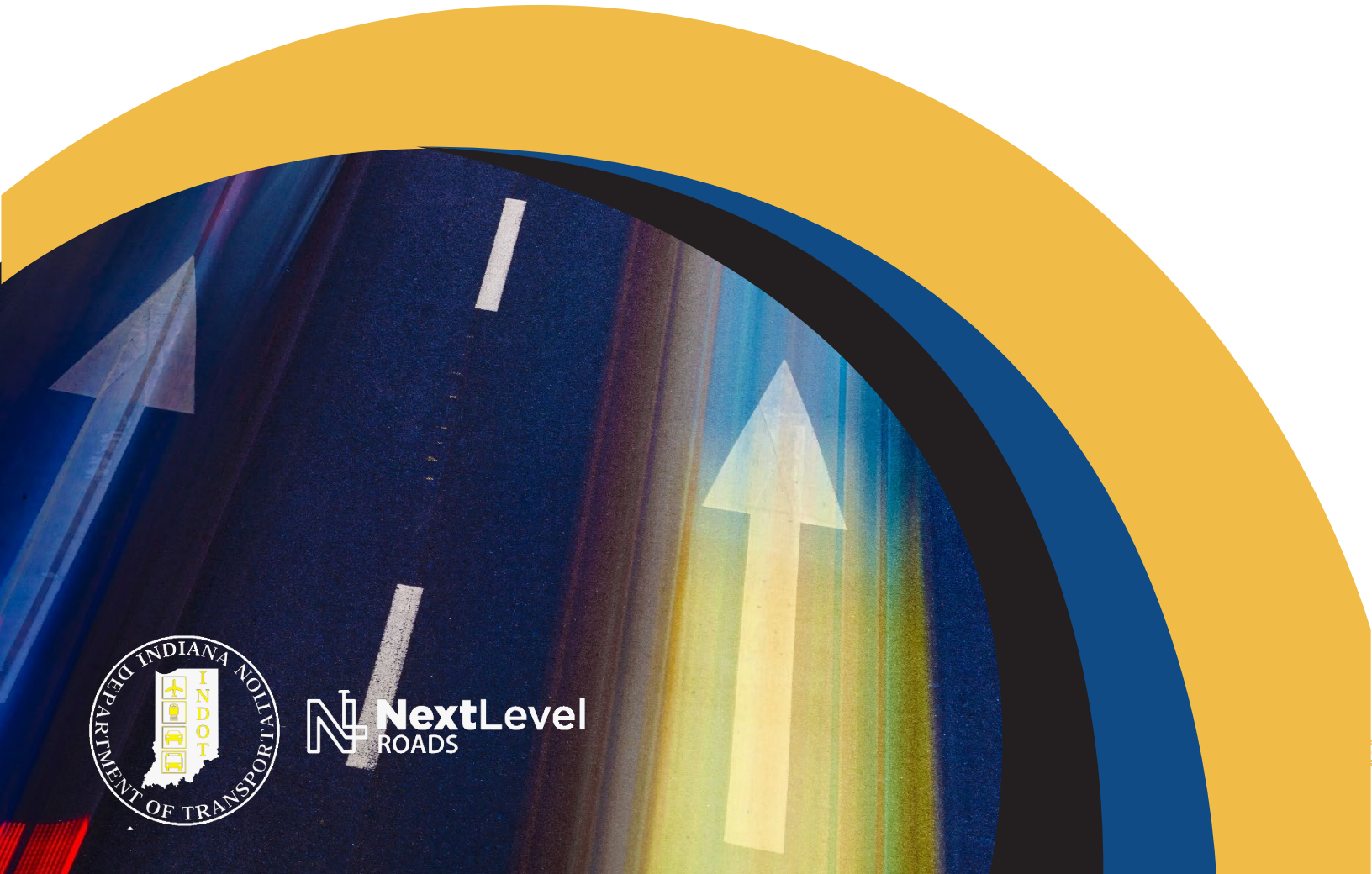


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1. STUDY OVERVIEW

ProPEL is an INDOT initiative for transportation planning that uses collaborative Planning and Environment Linkage (PEL) studies to consider environmental, community and economic goals early in the planning process. Through the PEL studies, INDOT aspires to create smarter transportation systems that build stronger communities.

The ProPEL US 30 and 31 studies span 180 miles across 12 counties. The ProPEL US 31 south study area extends from 276th Street in Hamilton County to just south of the Eel River in Miami County. It includes Cass, Miami, Howard, Tipton and Hamilton counties.

This report provides a summary of the information provided at two (2) Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings, two (2) in-person public meetings, one (1) virtual meeting, as well as the feedback that was collected from the public through December 31, 2022. It also includes the information presented and feedback received from three resource agency coordination meetings held in early 2023. Public feedback will continue throughout the remaining phases: Purpose and Need, Alternatives Analysis and the completion of the PEL Study.

2. PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Feedback from residents, motorists, businesses and others is vital to the success of the studies. Along with the other study areas, the ProPEL US 31 South study team is gathering public feedback throughout the planning process. The initial round of public engagement occurred in December 2022 as part of the Vision and Scoping phase of the ProPEL study. The purpose of these meetings was to:

- Introduce the concept of a Planning and Environment Linkage (PEL) study
- Define the ProPEL US 31 South study process
- Identify the specific goals of the ProPEL US 31 South study
- Help people understand how to participate in the ProPEL US 31 South study
- Solicit input on the fit and function of the study corridor (e.g., future corridor vision, specific transportation concerns, environmental resources of concern, as well as community goals).

Figure 1: ProPEL US 31 Study Schedule



3. OUTREACH AND ADVERTISEMENT

The study team conducted stakeholder and public outreach to raise awareness of the ProPEL US 31 Vision and Scoping portion of the study, encourage participation and solicit feedback during the public comment period. Table 2 contains a summary of these efforts.

Figure 2: ProPEL US 31 South Outreach Efforts

	Outreach Efforts	Date(s)
Stakeholder Advisory Committees	Virtual meetings	11/15/2022; 11/16/2022
Website information	ProPELUS31.com	11/22/2022
Press release (Appendix A)	INDOT media list	11/22/2022
Media alert (Appendix B)	INDOT media list	12/5/2022
Social media posts (Appendix C)	Twitter, Facebook & Instagram posts with in-person meeting information	11/28/2022; 12/6/2022; 12/8/2022
	Twitter, Facebook & Instagram with virtual meeting information	12/9/2022
	Twitter, Facebook & Instagram with meeting recap	12/22/2022
Stakeholder email blasts (Appendix D)	72% open rate and 109 recipients	11/28/2022
	75% open rate and 121 recipients	12/7/2022
Public notices (Appendix E)	Tipton County Tribune	11/29/2022
	Peru Tribune	11/30/2022
	Kokomo Tribune	11/30/2022
Community Office Hours	Peru Public Library	11/1/2022
	Tipton County Public Library	11/2/2022
	Tipton County Public Library	12/13/2022
	Peru Public Library	12/14/2022

4. STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The study team established two Stakeholder Advisory Committees, which included representatives from local agencies, residents, community organizations, churches, social service providers, emergency service providers, businesses and business organizations. One Stakeholder Advisory Committee included individuals from the northern study area (from the northern US 31/Kokomo Bypass intersection to just south of the Eel River in Miami County). The second included representatives from the southern study area (from 276th Street in Hamilton County to the southern US 31/Kokomo Bypass intersection). Virtual meetings with each occurred November 15 and 16. The purpose of these meetings were to introduce the committee to the study, discuss expected roles, and facilitate feedback from the community stakeholders. The study team also encouraged the committee members to assist in raising community awareness about the study and its feedback opportunities. Meeting materials and summaries are included in **Appendix F**.

5. US 30 & 31 COALITIONS PRESENTATIONS

The ProPEL US 30 and 31 Advisor team met virtually with members of the US 30 and US 31 Coalitions on November 21, 2022, to provide an update on the studies, discuss community and stakeholder engagement activities, provide information on next steps, and answer any questions from attendees. Meeting materials and summaries are included in **Appendix G**.

6. AGENCY COORDINATION

As part of the Vision/Scoping phase of the study, three coordination meetings were held with resource agencies, cultural resource stakeholders and federally recognized Tribes. These meetings included:

- November 30, 2022: Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology Coordination Meeting (Virtual)
- January 27, 2023: Resource Agency Meeting & Cultural Resource Stakeholder Meeting (Virtual)
- February 23, 2023: Tribal Partner Coordination Meeting (Virtual)

In general, the purpose of these meetings was to introduce the PEL study process, kick-off the ProPEL US 30 and US 31 studies (all four studies), discuss proposed analysis methodologies and to communicate specific next steps for the studies. Meeting materials and summaries are included in **Appendix H**.

7. PUBLIC MEETING FORMAT

The study team held two in-person meetings:

- December 7, 2022, at the Tipton County Fairgrounds from 5 to 7 pm ET
- December 8, 2022, at Peru Jr. High School from 5 to 7 pm ET

A virtual, on-demand meeting was also available beginning December 9, 2022, until December 31, 2022. All public comments received prior to January 31, 2023, were considered as part of this report.

The format of the meetings was an open house with a presentation (**Appendix I**) from study team members. The open house was held from 5 – 7 p.m. with a presentation scheduled for 6 p.m. During the presentation, the study team shared an overview of the study purpose, process, how public feedback will be gathered and considered, and the importance of public feedback in the study process. The study team highlighted the need for public input on how the US 31 corridor fits and functions within the community.

At the in-person meetings, the informational boards and feedback opportunities (**Appendix J** and **Appendix K**) were situated in a U-shape with two tables and chairs in the middle for participants, if needed. A separate area was designated for a formal presentation by the study team. The information presented at the meeting was organized into the following stations:

- Station 1: Welcome/Sign-In
- Station 2: What is PEL? / ProPEL US 31 South Study Details
- Station 3: Exercise: Corridor Vision
- Station 4: Exercise: Location-Specific Input
- Station 5: PEL Study Areas/ProPEL US 31 North Study
- Station 6: Comment Station

Informational boards included an introduction into the PEL study process, a map of the overall study area, a roadmap of the study purpose, an outline of the study schedule and maps of the US 31 South study area.

The open house exercises were organized in two categories: 1) location-specific feedback and 2) corridor vision. The purpose of these exercises was to gather input on the corridor fit and function. For fit, the study team wanted to understand how participants would like to see any improvements reflect the character of the area and provide opportunities for community gateways. For function, the study team sought to understand how the corridor could support safety, traffic flow, connections, access, biking, walking and recreation.

The location-specific boards included maps of the various sections within the study area. Participants were asked to place color-coded dots on the map to denote any traffic concerns, safety concerns, bike and pedestrian connections, local connections, sensitive resources, and redevelopment potential. Other location-specific boards asked prompting questions with a designated area for participants to write answers on sticky notes. The prompting questions included:

- What are your biggest safety concerns along the corridor?
- Where are your biggest traffic concerns along the corridor?
- What other concerns do you have along the corridor?
- What local connections are needed along the corridor?
- Are there sensitive environmental resources along the corridor?

The corridor vision boards sought to understand the communities’ vision for desired improvements to reflect the character of the area and serve as community gateways. The boards included prompting questions and a designated area for participants to write answers on sticky notes. The prompting questions included:

- What do you like most about the corridor?
- What is the most important thing the study should consider or do as part of the PEL process?

To further provide meeting participants the opportunity to give feedback and ask questions, a map of the other corridors was available as well as a representative from the adjacent US 31 North study area.

The virtual meeting experience was designed to closely mimic the location-specific and visionary feedback gathering. Virtual attendees navigated through the following experiences at each station:

- Welcome/Sign In
- Opening window: A recorded presentation from the in-person public meeting
- Station 1: Provide location-specific information by dropping a pin on a map and identifying current opportunities and issues along the corridor
- Station 2: Answer corridor vision questions about how they would like to view the corridor in 10 to 15 years, including what they like most about the corridor and what the most important thing INDOT should consider as part of the study process.
- Station 3: Provide other comments regarding the study via the electronic form
- Station 4: Visit the website for the other study areas on ProPELUS30.com and ProPELUS31.com.

8. PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDANCE

Participants represented a wide range of interests and included residents, business owners, three elected officials, three government officials, school systems, emergency services, community organizations, members of the US 31 Coalitions and one media outlet.

Meeting Information	Total Attendees
December 7, 2022 (Tipton Fairgrounds)	144
December 8, 2022 (Peru Jr. High)	44
Virtual Meeting	49
TOTAL ATTENDEES	237

9. COMMENT SUMMARY

The study team received approximately 200 comments from the in-person and virtual public information meetings. Approximately 60 additional comments were received via the community office hours and online comment form. The study team grouped the comments by general type of concern into one of the following categories:

- **Local Mobility** – Local mobility comments were primarily related to maintaining access to the homes, businesses, farmland, and towns along, and adjacent to, the US 31 South study corridor by maintaining or improving access to, from, or across US 31.
- **Regional Mobility** – Regional mobility comments typically related to increasing the ability of traffic to access and travel along US 31 with minimal delay. Comments included requests for additional interchanges, overpasses, and/or the conversion of US 31 to a freeway.
- **Safety** – Safety comments related to user safety throughout the study area, with the most frequent concerns indicating high travel speeds on US 31, difficulty accessing or crossing US 31, and red light running.
- **Redevelopment** – Information provided about existing or future redevelopment needs, or concerns.
- **Environmental** – Comments related to historic properties along the corridor, increased vehicle emissions, and traffic noise of high-speed vehicles.
- **Bike and Pedestrian** – Bicycle and pedestrian comments related to the addition of non-motorist facilities on, or adjacent to, US 31, such as sidewalks, trails, transitways, or other multimodal accommodations.
- **Economic Development** – Comments related to economic development focused on the effect US 31 can have on development throughout the corridor.
- **Other** – Comments that don't readily fall into any of the above categories.

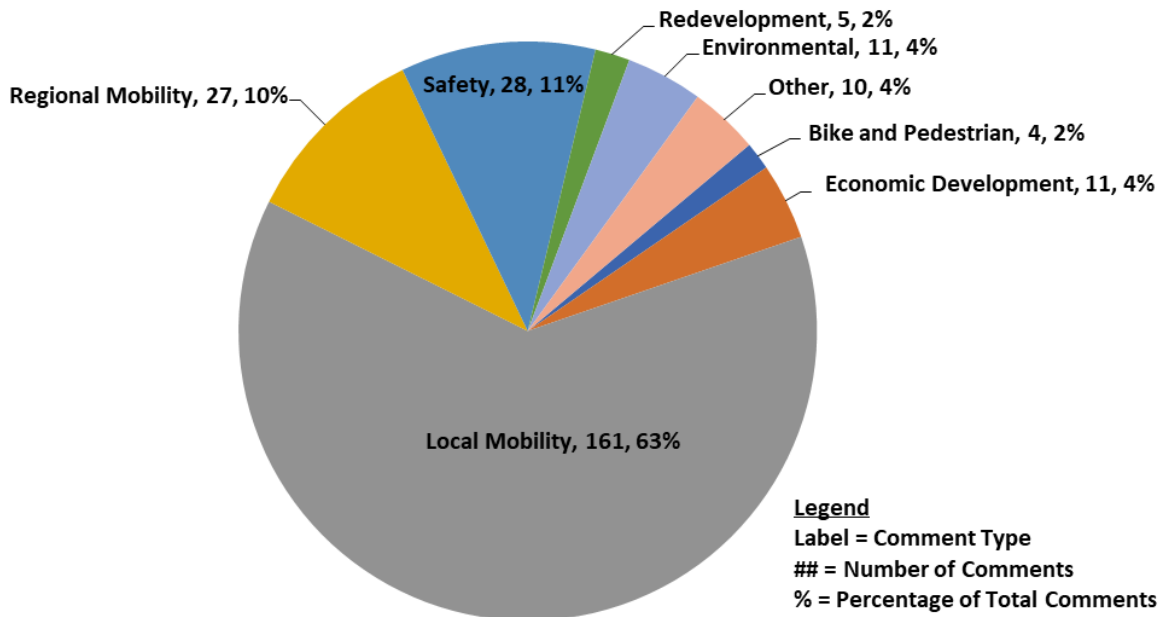


Figure 3: Summary of Public Comment Types Received

As shown, most comments received to date were related to local mobility (63%). These comments were primarily related to maintaining access to the homes, businesses, schools, farmland, and towns along and adjacent to the US 31 South study corridor by maintaining or improving access to, from, or across US 31.

Regional mobility comments accounted for approximately 10% of the total comments received. These comments typically related to increasing the ability of traffic to access and travel along US 31 with minimal delay. Comments included requests for additional interchanges, overpasses, and/or the conversion of US 31 to a freeway.

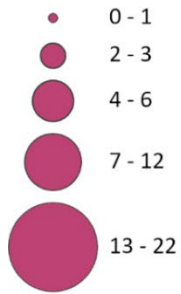
Comments related to safety accounted for approximately 11% of the total comments received. These comments related to user safety throughout the study area, with the most frequent concerns indicating high travel speeds on US 31, difficulty accessing or crossing US 31, and red light running.

Approximately 150 comments were related to specific intersections within the US 3 South study area. The following pages indicate the number of location-specific comments by intersection.

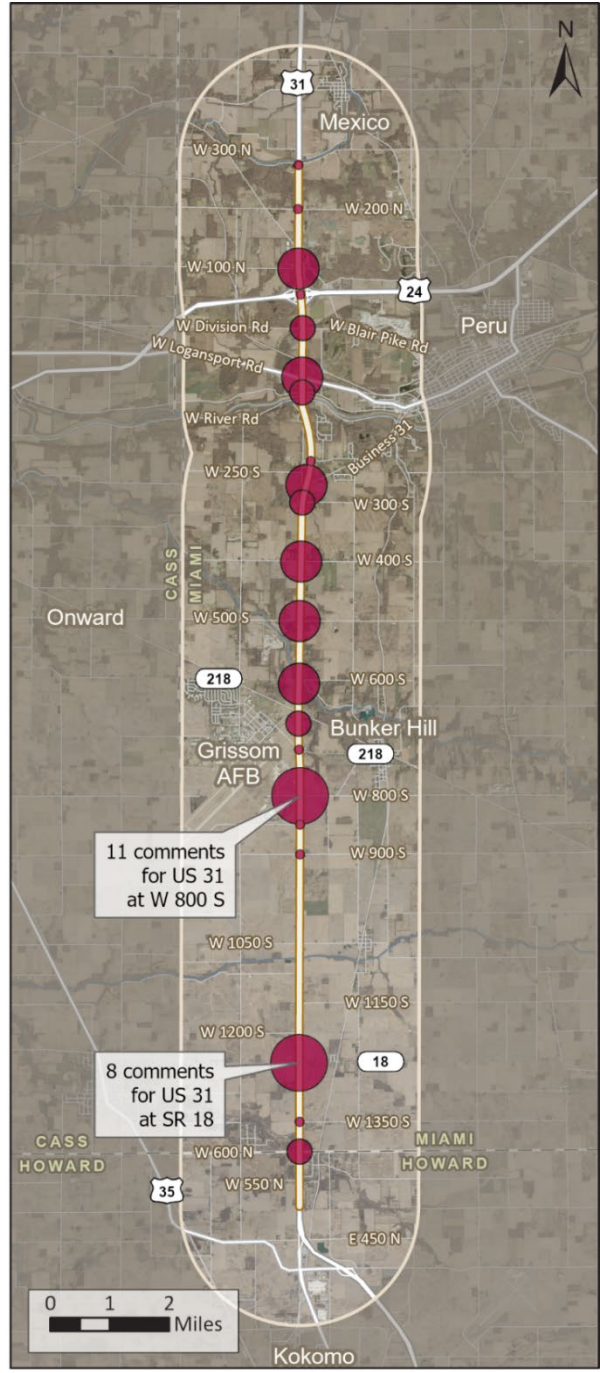
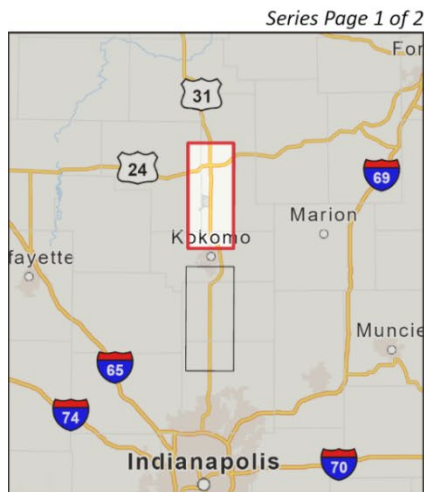
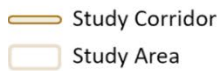
**US 31 South
SR 931 (North of Kokomo)
to CR W 300 N**

Public Involvement Comments

Number of Intersection-Related Comments



PEL Study Boundaries



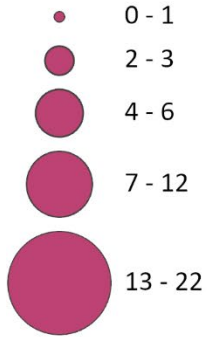
State of Indiana, INDOT, Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, EPA, NPS, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, NOAA, USDA

Figure 4: Number of Intersection Related Comments (1 of 2)

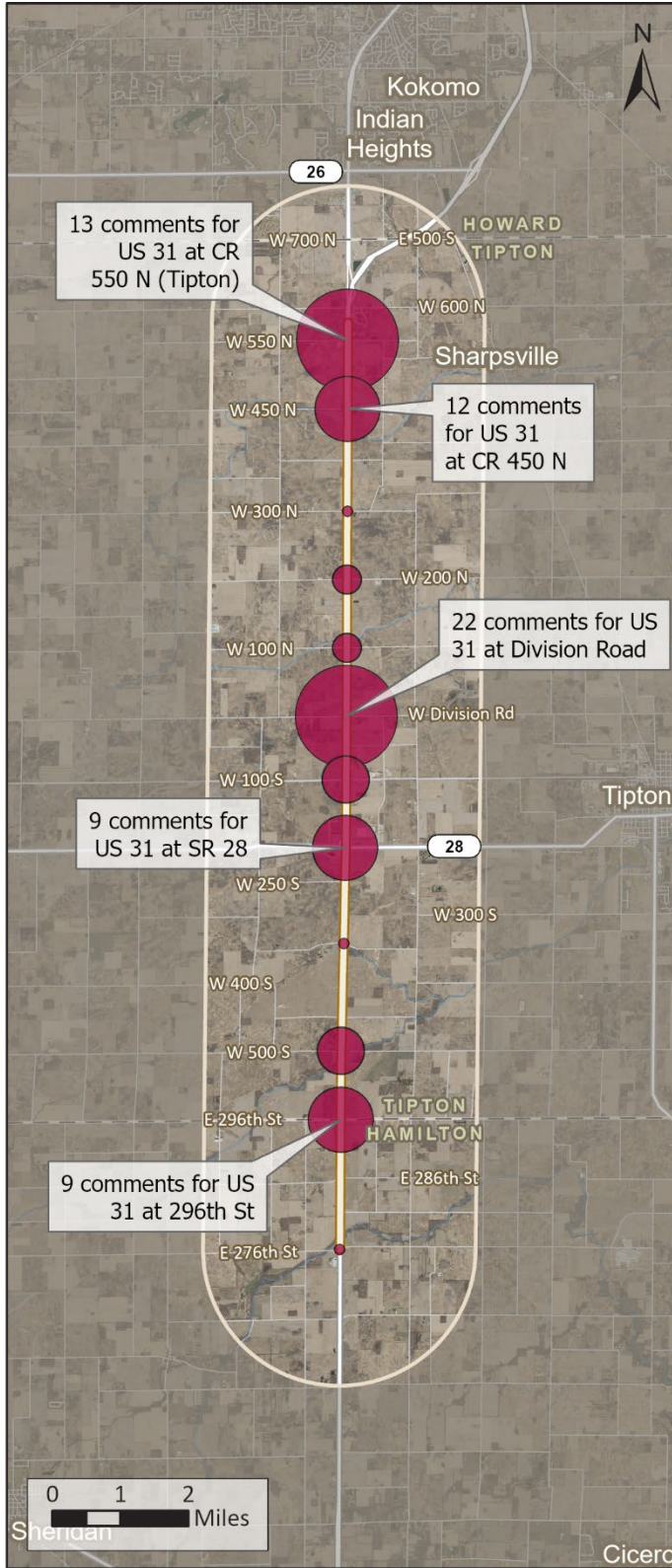
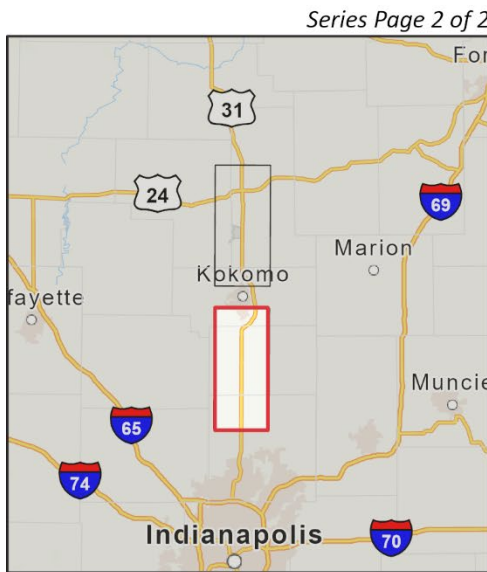
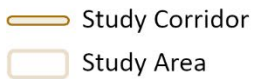
**US 31 South
276th Street to SR 931
(South of Kokomo)**

Public Involvement Comments

Number of Intersection-Related Comments



PEL Study Boundaries



State of Indiana, INDOT, Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, EPA, NPS, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, NOAA, USDA

Figure 5: Number of Intersection Related Comments (2 of 2)

A complete listing of the public comments received, including those shared on the maps and boards, can be found in **Appendix L**. Comments were categorized based on the overall topic raised, including identification of specific solutions, environmental resources, multi-modal improvements, safety concerns, and local or regional mobility.