

APPENDIX A: COMPLETED PEL QUESTIONNAIRE

Federal Highway Administration

Planning & Environment Linkages Questionnaire¹

ProPEL US 31 South Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study Report

This questionnaire is intended to act as a summary of the planning and environment linkage (PEL) process and ease the transition from planning to a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. This questionnaire is consistent with the 23 CFR 450 (Planning regulations) and other FHWA policy on PEL process.

1. Background:

a. Who is the sponsor of the PEL study? (state DOT, Local Agency, Other)

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

b. What is the name of the PEL study document and other identifying project information (e.g. sub-account or STIP numbers, long-range plan, or transportation improvement program years)?

The *ProPEL US 31 South Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Study Report* documents the PEL study process. During the study, the following documents were prepared to inform and develop the PEL Study Report and are included as appendices:

- Appendix B: *ProPEL US 31 South Final Environmental Constraints Report*
- Appendix C: *ProPEL US 31 South Existing Transportation Conditions Report*
- Appendix D: *ProPEL US 31 South Existing Transportation Conditions Report – Addendum 1*
- Appendix E: *ProPEL US 31 South Final Purpose & Need Report*
- Appendix F: *ProPEL US 31 South Final Universe of Alternatives (Level 1) Screening Report*
- Appendix G: *ProPEL US 31 South Final Level 2 Screening Report*
- Appendix H: *ProPEL US 31 South Final Level 3 Screening Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Resource Agency, Stakeholder & Public Involvement (RASPI) Summary Reports*
 - *Appendix I: RASPI Summary #1*
 - *Appendix J: RASPI Summary #2*
 - *Appendix K: RASPI Summary #3*
 - *Appendix L: RASPI Summary #3 – Addendum 1*

The documents listed above are included as appendices to the PEL Study Report and are available on the INDOT study website.

The ProPEL US 31 South study was included in INDOT 2022-2026 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as Des No. 2100113 (listed as “Planning-Environment Linkage (PEL) Studies for Select Corridors Along US 30 & US 31”). The ProPEL US 31 South study was also included in the Kokomo Howard County Governmental Coordinating Council 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (listed as “US 31 Tipton / Hamilton Co line to US 30 – excluding 931 junctions in Kokomo).

c. Who was included on the study team (Name and title of agency representatives, consultants, etc.)?

INDOT Central Office

Jonathan Wallace – Project Manager
Sandra Flum – Deputy Project Manager
Dan McCoy, PE – Director of Traffic Engineering
Laura Hilden – Director of Environmental Services

¹ https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel/pel_quest.aspx, Updated April 5, 2011

Roy Nunnally – Director of Technical Planning & Programming

FHWA Indiana

Karstin Carmany-George – Senior Environmental Specialist

Patrick Carpenter – Environmental Specialist

HNTB Corporation

Dan Miller – Study Manager

Ryan Huebschman, PE – Transportation Planning Lead

Jennifer Goins, PE – Engineering Lead

Cassidy Hunter – Communications Lead

Adin McCann, PE – ProPEL US 30/US 31 Studies Technical Advisor Team

Kia Gillette – ProPEL US 30/US 31 Studies Technical Advisor Team

Joe Guerre, PE – ProPEL US 30/US 31 Studies Technical Advisor Team

Stacey Osburn – ProPEL US 30/US 31 Studies Technical Advisor Team

- d. Provide a description of the existing transportation facility within the corridor, including project limits, modes, functional classification, number of lanes, shoulder width, access control and type of surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)**

The existing transportation facility within the study area includes US 31 from approximately 276th Street in Hamilton County north to the State Route (SR) 931 south junction in Tipton County, and from the SR 931 north junction in Howard County north to County Road (CR) West 300 North in Miami County. The US 31 Kokomo bypass was excluded from the study. The study area includes approximately 31.5 miles of US 31.

Within the study area, US 31 is a four-lane divided roadway with paved inside and outside shoulders, and open drainage. The majority of the study corridor is characterized by a 50-foot-wide grassy median, except for the US 31 at US 24 interchange, which has a paved median with barrier wall. Existing right-of-way widths are estimated to range between 160 and 370 feet from the US 31 centerline.

Within the study area, US 31 is classified as a “principal arterial – other” roadway. US 31 is part of the National Highway System (NHS) and the National Truck Network (NTN), which indicates its statewide and national significance for freight and intercity mobility.

The study area includes 54 intersections with crossroads. Most crossroad intersections with US 31 are stop controlled; however, there are five signalized intersections in the study area, which are the only remaining traffic signals on US 31 between Indianapolis and South Bend, IN.

Access to US 31 within the study area is partially controlled, with frequent at-grade intersections and direct driveway access. The study corridor includes 125 driveways, 60% of which are residential and 28% of which provide access to adjacent farmlands. Seventy-three percent (73%) of all driveways do not meet the criteria contained within the INDOT Access Management Guide.

In general, the character of the corridor is considered rural; however, there are three census-designated urbanized areas that fall within the study area: Kokomo, Grissom Air Reserve Base (ARB), and Peru.

- e. Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were completed.**

Study milestones and key planning activities include:

- US 31 South PEL Study Kick-off (Summer/Fall 2022)
 - Initiated data collection
 - Identified study stakeholders and developed a plan to engage them
- Vision/Scoping (Fall/Winter 2022)
 - Public Information Meeting #1 (December 2022)
- Baseline Conditions Assessment (Spring/Summer 2023)
 - Existing Transportation Conditions Report (April 2023)

- Environmental Constraints Report (June 2023)
- Purpose & Need (Summer 2023)
 - Purpose and Need Report (June 2023)
 - Public Information Meeting #2 (June 2023)
- Alternatives Development and Evaluation (Late 2023 to Late 2024)
 - Universe of Alternatives (Level 1) Screening (November 2023)
 - Level 2 Screening Report (March 2024)
 - Level 3 Screening Report (November 2024)
 - Public Information Meeting #3 (November 2024)
- ProPEL US 31 South PEL Study Completion (Summer 2025)
 - Public Information Meeting #4 – Virtual (June 2025)

f. Are there recent, current, or near future planning studies or projects in the vicinity? What is the relationship of this project to those studies/projects?

The ProPEL US 31 South study is one of four PEL studies that comprise INDOT’s ProPEL US 30 & US 31 initiative. Together the four studies encompass 180 miles of US 30 and US 31 across 12 counties (Allen, Fulton, Hamilton, Howard, Kosciusko, LaPorte, Marshall, Miami, Porter, Starke, Tipton, and Whitley). Splitting the PEL studies into four distinct study areas enabled each study team to more closely consider community needs and goals. The four PEL studies were closely coordinated to ensure potential solutions are integrated and work together across study area boundaries.

The overall study area, established as a direct result of stakeholder input, includes US 30 from Valparaiso to the Indiana/Ohio state line (excluding the I-69/I-469 section around the north side of Fort Wayne) and US 31 between Hamilton County and US 30 (excluding the US 31 Kokomo bypass).

As one of the first steps in the study, the study team collected and reviewed previously completed land use plans, transportation plans, and planned transportation projects that influence the study area. A total of 30 plans were reviewed as part of this task. The purpose of this effort was to:

- Inform and establish a planning context for the corridor.
- Inform the public and stakeholder outreach process.
- Support the development of the purpose and need for the ProPEL US 31 South study.
- Inform the development of study area goals.
- Inform the early phases of the alternatives development and evaluation.

See Section 1 of the PEL Study Report for further information on the specific plans reviewed and how they informed the PEL study process.

Two separate INDOT construction projects were completed during the ProPEL US 31 South study:

- US 31 interchange at 276th Street in Hamilton County
- US 31 grade-separated crossing of the Norfolk Southern Railroad and County Road 100 South in Tipton County

The future year analysis for the ProPEL US 31 South study considered these improvements completed and part of the future roadway network.

2. Methodology used:

a. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?

The scope of and reason for completing the ProPEL US 31 South study was to identify a reasonable range of alternatives for the study area. The study included several objectives to achieve this outcome:

- Engage the public, study stakeholders, and resource agencies throughout the study.
- Identify community goals for the study area.

- Identify transportation needs within the study area.
- Develop the purpose and need for improvements in the study area.
- Identify and develop alternatives that meet the identified needs and consider community goals.
- Evaluate alternatives and eliminate unreasonable alternatives
- Carry forward a smaller number of alternatives for further consideration in future planning and/or project development, including NEPA environmental reviews.
- Document the study process.

b. Did you use NEPA-like language? Why or why not?

Yes, NEPA-like language was used to ensure a smoother transition between the planning study and subsequent NEPA processes.

c. What were the actual terms used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or list)

The PEL study used the same terms that are used in NEPA such as study area, purpose and need, range of reasonable alternatives, reasonable alternatives, environmental constraints, alternatives development and evaluation, alternatives screening, and No-Build Alternative. The definitions of these terms were the same as the common understanding of the NEPA terms.

d. How do you see these terms being used in NEPA documents?

The terms used in this PEL study are consistent with terms commonly used in the NEPA process and are intended to make inclusion into future NEPA documents seamless. As a result, the planning products from the PEL study, which include NEPA terms, can be incorporated via reference to guide, inform, or shape future NEPA documents. Depending on project scope and timing of advancement, this may require supplementing, refining, or reconfirming the information, analysis, and decisions from the PEL studies during the NEPA process.

e. What were the key steps and coordination points in the PEL decision-making process? Who were the decision-makers and who else participated in those key steps? For example, for the corridor vision, the decision was made by state DOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, the USACE, and USFWS and other resource/regulatory agencies.

The key steps in the PEL decision-making process included the following:

- Identifying existing conditions.
- Determining the purpose and need for improvements in the study area.
- Developing, evaluating, and screening improvement alternatives.
- Identifying a reasonable range of alternatives to be carried forward for further evaluation in future planning and/or project development, including NEPA environmental reviews.

The primary decision-makers participating in these key steps included INDOT and FHWA. INDOT and FHWA held regular coordination meetings throughout the duration of the PEL study. In addition, INDOT solicited feedback from resources agencies, cultural resources stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes at each of these key decision points. Two Stakeholder Advisory Committees (SACs) were also formed for the study area.

Multiple coordination meetings with the SACs, as well as the resource agencies, cultural resources stakeholders and federally recognized tribes were held throughout the study process. See Section 5 of the PEL Study Report for further information on the public involvement and agency coordination efforts.

f. How should the PEL information be presented in NEPA?

The information presented in this PEL study is intended to serve as a foundation for additional analysis and refinement during the NEPA phase. The information, analysis, and planning decisions from the PEL study will be presented as a transportation planning study intended to inform the NEPA review. The following planning products from the PEL study may be appended to or incorporated by reference to guide, inform, or shape future NEPA documents:

into future NEPA documents:

- *ProPEL US 31 South Final Environmental Constraints Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Existing Transportation Conditions Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Existing Transportation Conditions Report – Addendum 1*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Final Purpose & Need Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Final Universe of Alternatives (Level 1) Screening Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Final Level 2 Screening Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Final Level 3 Screening Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 South Final PEL Study Report*

Depending on project scope and timing of advancement, this may require supplementing, refining, or reconfirming the information, analysis, and decisions from the PEL studies during the NEPA process.

3. Agency coordination:

a. Provide a synopsis of coordination with Federal, tribal, state and local environmental, regulatory and resource agencies. Describe their level of participation and how you coordinated with them.

At each key step of the ProPEL US 31 South study, coordination was completed with resource agencies, cultural resource stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes. Six coordination meetings were held during the study:

- Three coordination meetings during the Vision/Scoping phase;
- Two coordination meetings during the Purpose and Need phase; and
- One coordination meeting during the Alternatives Analysis phase.

Note: The Alternatives Analysis phase included three screening steps. The draft screening reports at each step were provided via email to the resource agencies, cultural resources stakeholders, and federally recognized Tribes for review and comment. The study team offered to hold coordination meetings upon request; however, no requests for meetings were received.

Table 1 details the resource agencies, cultural resources stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes there were invited to participate in the PEL study, as well as the attendees of the six coordination meetings held throughout the study:

b. What transportation agencies (e.g. for adjacent jurisdictions) did you coordinate with or were involved during the PEL study?

In addition to regular coordination with FHWA, the following transportation agencies were involved throughout the PEL study process:

- Kokomo-Howard Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Hamilton County Highway Department
- Tipton County Highway Department
- Howard County Highway Department
- Miami County Highway Department

Table 2: ProPEL US 31 South Resource Agency, Cultural Resources Stakeholders, and Tribal Coordination

COORDINATION LIST		STAKEHOLDER TYPE		COORDINATION at STUDY MILESTONES					
Agency	Resource Agency	Cultural Resources Stakeholder	Tribe	Vision/ Scoping	Invitation to Participate	Purpose & Need	Universe of Alternatives (Level 1)	Level 2	Level 3
National Park Service	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
US Fish & Wildlife Service	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting ✓
US Army Corps of Engineers	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Natural Resources Conservation Service	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
US Environmental Protection Agency	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
US Coast Guard (9th District)	X			1/27/2023 ✓		9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
US Coast Guard (8th District)	X				7/27/2023 ✓				11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
IDEM, Groundwater Section	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
IDEM, Wetlands & Stormwater	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
IDNR, Div. Fish & Wildlife	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting ✓
IDNR, Div. Outdoor Rec.	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X

COORDINATION LIST	STAKEHOLDER TYPE			COORDINATION at STUDY MILESTONES					
Agency	Resource Agency	Cultural Resources Stakeholder	Tribe	Vision/ Scoping	Invitation to Participate	Purpose & Need	Universe of Alternatives (Level 1)	Level 2	Level 3
Hamilton County Parks and Recreation	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Hamilton County Surveyor's Office	X				7/27/2023 ✓				11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting ✓
Tipton County Surveyor's Office	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Soil and Water Conservation District	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Tipton County Soil and Water Conservation District	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Surveyor's Office	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Howard County Surveyor's Office	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Howard County Parks and Recreation	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Howard County Soil and Water Conservation District	X			1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Kokomo/Howard County Governmental Coordinating Council	X			1/27/2023 X		9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
INDOT - Office of Aviation					7/27/2023 ✓				11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
IDNR, Div. Historic Preservation & Archaeology		X		1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X

COORDINATION LIST	STAKEHOLDER TYPE			COORDINATION at STUDY MILESTONES					
Agency	Resource Agency	Cultural Resources Stakeholder	Tribe	Vision/ Scoping	Invitation to Participate	Purpose & Need	Universe of Alternatives (Level 1)	Level 2	Level 3
Indiana Landmarks, Central Regional Office		X		1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting ✓
Indiana Freedom Trails Northeast Region		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Historic Michigan Road Association		X		1/27/2023 ✓		9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Hamilton County Historian		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Hamilton County Historical Society		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Hamilton County Genealogical Society		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Tipton County Historical Society		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Tipton County Floodplain Administrator		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting ✓
Howard County Historian		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Howard County Historical Society and Museum		X		1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting ✓
Marshall County Historical Society		X		1/27/2023 ✓		9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Historian		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Historical Society/Miami County Museum		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X

COORDINATION LIST	STAKEHOLDER TYPE			COORDINATION at STUDY MILESTONES					
Agency	Resource Agency	Cultural Resources Stakeholder	Tribe	Vision/ Scoping	Invitation to Participate	Purpose & Need	Universe of Alternatives (Level 1)	Level 2	Level 3
Lightfoot Bros. Farm Services, LLC (Owner-Hopewell Methodist Church)		X		1/27/2023 ✓	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Kelly Agricultural Museum		X		1/27/2023 X	7/27/2023 ✓	9/15/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/13/2024 Email ✓ 12/5/2024 Meeting X
Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma			X	2/23/2023 X		7/17/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Miami Tribe of Oklahoma			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Shawnee Tribe			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 X	11/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Delaware Tribe of Indians			X	2/23/2023 X		7/17/2023 ✓	11/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Forest County Potawatomi			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023	11/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
✓ = Attended the coordination meeting X = Did not attend the coordination meeting									

c. What steps will need to be taken with each agency during NEPA scoping?

Formal NEPA early agency coordination and scoping, including tribal coordination, will be needed to initiate the NEPA process and to help define the level of NEPA documentation and studies. Cooperating and participating agencies were not identified and invited during the PEL study, so that coordination will need to occur at the beginning of NEPA (as needed). If possible, current agency contacts will be preserved once NEPA is initiated to leverage previous knowledge and streamline the NEPA process.

4. Public coordination:

a. Provide a synopsis of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.

The information below provides a high-level summary of the coordination efforts with the public and study stakeholders. More information on each discussion is provided in Section 5 of the PEL Study and the RASPI Summaries (Appendix I, J, K, and L of the PEL Study Report).

Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) Meetings

Due to the length of the ProPEL US 31 South study corridor and its separation at the US 31 Kokomo Bypass, two committees were formed. Each committee included representatives from local agencies, residents, community organizations, churches, social service providers, emergency service providers, businesses, and business organizations. Virtual meetings occurred with each SAC during each of the three study phases, for a total of six meetings.

In addition to the SAC meetings, a total of five meetings were also held with the US 31 Coalition.

General Stakeholder Coordination

Over the course of the study, the study team coordinated and staffed a total of 65 Community Office Hours events at a variety of times and locations along the study corridor, which were informal, in-person conversations where interested individuals or groups could ask questions and provide input. Additional Community Office Hours are planned following completion of the *ProPEL US 31 South PEL Study Report*. INDOT plans to hold additional Community Office Hours events once the PEL Study Report is published. In addition, the US 31 South study team coordinated participation at 18 community events, such as fairs and festivals, in various counties within the study area. The study team held one-on-one stakeholder meetings, upon request.

Traditional Media

The study team used traditional media channels and outlets to regularly communicate study milestones and events, such as publication of draft reports for public review and comment as well as announcements of public information meetings. This included publishing public notices in local newspapers such as the *Tipton County Tribune*, *Peru Tribune*, and *Kokomo Tribune*.

INDOT also issued media advisories and press releases to coincide with these events and milestones.

Study Website

From the outset of the ProPEL US 31 South study, a dedicated study website was implemented and regularly updated to serve as a central hub for public engagement and information sharing. The website was designed to:

- Keep stakeholders and the public informed throughout the study process.
- Provide 24/7 access to relevant materials, allowing people to explore information on their own time.
- Host draft reports during public review periods.

- Enable study stakeholders and other interested individuals and groups to easily provide their feedback via an online comment form.
- Serve as the portal for virtual public information meetings, as well as hosting copies of content shared at in-person public information meetings.
- Feature interactive tools, including a mapping application and video content, to help users better understand the technical analyses, and how they informed the study's recommendations.

This approach helped the study team maintain transparency, encourage meaningful public input, and make complex information more accessible.

Social Media

Social media was used throughout the study process to help keep stakeholders engaged and informed. The social media efforts included Twitter/X, Facebook, and Instagram. Further information about social media efforts, including documentation of social media posts is provided in the RASPI Summaries (Appendices I, J, K, and L of the PEL Study Report).

Targeted Outreach

The study team completed targeted outreach to ensure sensitive communities were engaged as part of the study process. These efforts included three Community Office Hours events held at mobile home parks within the study area, as well as providing translated study materials for limited English proficiency (LEP) populations.

Postcard Mailings

The study team completed several direct mailings of postcards to resident and business addresses in the study area. As part of each mailing, approximately 18,000 postcards were distributed. The postcards contained information such as the locations and dates of upcoming public meetings, instructions on how to access digital and hard copies of draft reports published for public review, as well as instructions for how to provide comments to the study team. To accommodate populations with limited English proficiency, the back of the postcard was translated into Spanish.

Postcard mailings occurred at the following milestones:

- May 2023: Announcement of Vision/Scoping phase public information meetings.
- November 2023: Publication of the *Draft Universe of Alternatives (Level 1) Screening Report* for public review and comment
- April 2024: Publication of the *Draft Level 2 Screening Report* for public review and comment
- October 2024: Publication of the *Draft Level 3 Screening Report* for public review and comment. Announcement of public information meetings learn more about the alternatives screening process and its results.

Public Information Meetings

The study team offered public information meetings in a variety of formats, including both in-person sessions and virtual or on-demand options to ensure broad accessibility. These meetings were organized around the three study phases to allow feedback accordingly:

Vision/Scoping Phase

The initial round of public information meetings occurred in December 2022 as part of the Vision/Scoping phase of the study. The study team held two in-person meetings:

- December 7, 2022, at the Tipton County Fairgrounds
- December 8, 2022, at Peru Jr. High School

A virtual, on-demand meeting was also available beginning December 9, 2022, until December 31, 2022.

Purpose and Need Phase

The second round of public information meetings occurred in June 2023 as part of the Purpose and Need phase of the study. The study team held two in-person meetings:

- June 14, 2023, at the Tipton County Fairgrounds
- June 15, 2023, at Pipe Creek Elementary School

A virtual, on-demand meeting was also available beginning June 16 until July 31, 2023.

Alternatives Analysis Phase

The third round of public information meetings occurred in November 2024 as part of the Alternatives Analysis phase of the study. The study team held two in-person meetings when the *Draft Level 3 Screening Report* was released for public review and comment:

- November 14, 2024, at the Tipton County Fairgrounds
- November 19, 2024, at Peru Jr./Sr. High School

A virtual, on-demand meeting was also available beginning November 15 until December 13, 2024.

5. Purpose and Need for the PEL study:

a. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?

A goal of the ProPEL US 31 South study was to identify a reasonable range of alternatives for the study area. The study included several objectives to achieve this goal:

- Engage the public, study stakeholders, and resource agencies throughout the study.
- Identify community goals for the study area.
- Identify transportation needs within the study area.
- Develop the purpose and need for improvements in the study area.
- Identify and develop alternatives that meet the identified needs and consider community goals.
- Evaluate alternatives and eliminate unreasonable alternatives
- Carry forward a smaller number of alternatives for further consideration in future planning and/or project development, including NEPA environmental reviews.

b. Provide the purpose and need statement, or the corridor vision and transportation goals and objectives to realize that vision.

The following information is also provided in Section 2 of the PEL Study Report.

Corridor Vision

The following vision² was established for the US 31 corridor during development of the study area purpose and need statement:

² The corridor vision was refined in the PEL Study Report based on the passage of several federal and state Executive Orders (EOS) as well as one USDOT order. See **Section 3.2** of the PEL Study Report for additional information.

The US 31 corridor will serve local, regional, and national travelers by balancing mobility and access considerations in a way that:

- **Enhances safety for all users;**
- **Provides transportation solutions for all; and**
- **Complements local community goals and objectives, including maintaining the character of the study area.**

The corridor vision, which was collaboratively developed for both the ProPEL US 31 North and US 31 South studies, is separate from and does not take the place of the purpose and need statement.

During the Level 3 screening process, INDOT supplemented the corridor vision based on the analysis completed throughout the study. More specifically, INDOT identified a long-term vision of upgrading US 31 in the study area to a free-flow facility, which is a road without traffic signals, stop signs, or yield signs for mainline traffic.

Due to multiple factors, the study concludes that implementation of an entirely free-flow facility on US 31 in the study area will likely extend beyond the study's planning horizon of 2045. In the interim, the study provides INDOT with a flexible guide to incrementally upgrade US 31 in the study area to a free-flow facility.

Transportation Needs

The following transportation needs have been identified for the ProPEL US 31 South study area:

- Safety concerns due to high crash frequencies and/or high crash severities within the study area.
- Operational issues at unsignalized intersections across the study area.
- Lack of consistency with INDOT's Access Management Guidelines.
- Mobility requirements across the US 31 corridor (east-west).
- Safe, high-quality mobility for long-distance passenger and freight trips through the study area.

Purpose

To address the needs identified above, the purpose of the ProPEL US 31 South study is to:

- Improve safety along US 31 by reducing the frequency and severity of crashes within the study area.
- Improve traffic operations by reducing delay at unsignalized intersections.
- Improve access control through implementation of INDOT's Access Management Guidelines.
- Support east-west mobility for schools, emergency services, and agricultural services.
- Enhance the efficiency and reliability of US 31 as a regional and statewide corridor.

Given the size of the study area and the needs identified, the purpose and need statement was developed to support a range of potential improvement solutions. This could include corridor-wide improvements, as well as localized improvements that address the identified needs.

Study Goals

Goals represent overarching outcomes that are desirable, but not specifically required since they are not measurable with respect to identified study area needs. Goals for the US 31 South study corridor were identified primarily through public and stakeholder input and are supported by local, regional, and

statewide planning documents. The goals were also aligned with the adjacent ProPEL US 31 North study, as applicable.

The following goals were identified for the ProPEL US 31 South study area:

- Economic Development – Provide transportation infrastructure to support local economies and economic development goals.
- Transportation for All – Provide fair solutions that consider the needs of all communities, including sensitive communities.³
- Multimodal Access & Connections – Accommodate non-motorized, transit, and active modes of travel in and across the study area.
- Emerging Technologies – Support emerging technologies and related infrastructure, including alternative fuel, and autonomous or connected vehicles.
- Fiscal & Environmental Practicality – Identify fiscally responsible improvements and avoid/minimize impacts to the human and natural environment.

Goals are not the basis of eliminating or carrying forward PEL study alternatives.

c. What steps will need to be taken during the NEPA process to make this a project-level purpose and need statement?

The purpose and need statement developed for the ProPEL US 31 South study addresses the US 31 South study corridor through Hamilton, Tipton, Howard, and Miami counties. It was developed in a manner consistent with FHWA PEL guidance. Therefore, INDOT plans to incorporate it directly or by reference to guide, inform, or shape future NEPA documents. Depending on project scope and timing of advancement, this may require supplementing, refining, or reconfirming the information, analysis, and decisions from the PEL studies during the NEPA process.

For example, the purpose and need statement may need to be refined or supplemented. It is possible that not all of the needs or purposes would apply to the roadway segment or intersection project being developed. It is also possible that as a project is developed, additional needs specific to the project limits are identified. Therefore, the initiation of any project should revisit the applicability of this purpose and need statement and should consider whether additional public and stakeholder engagement is necessary in that process.

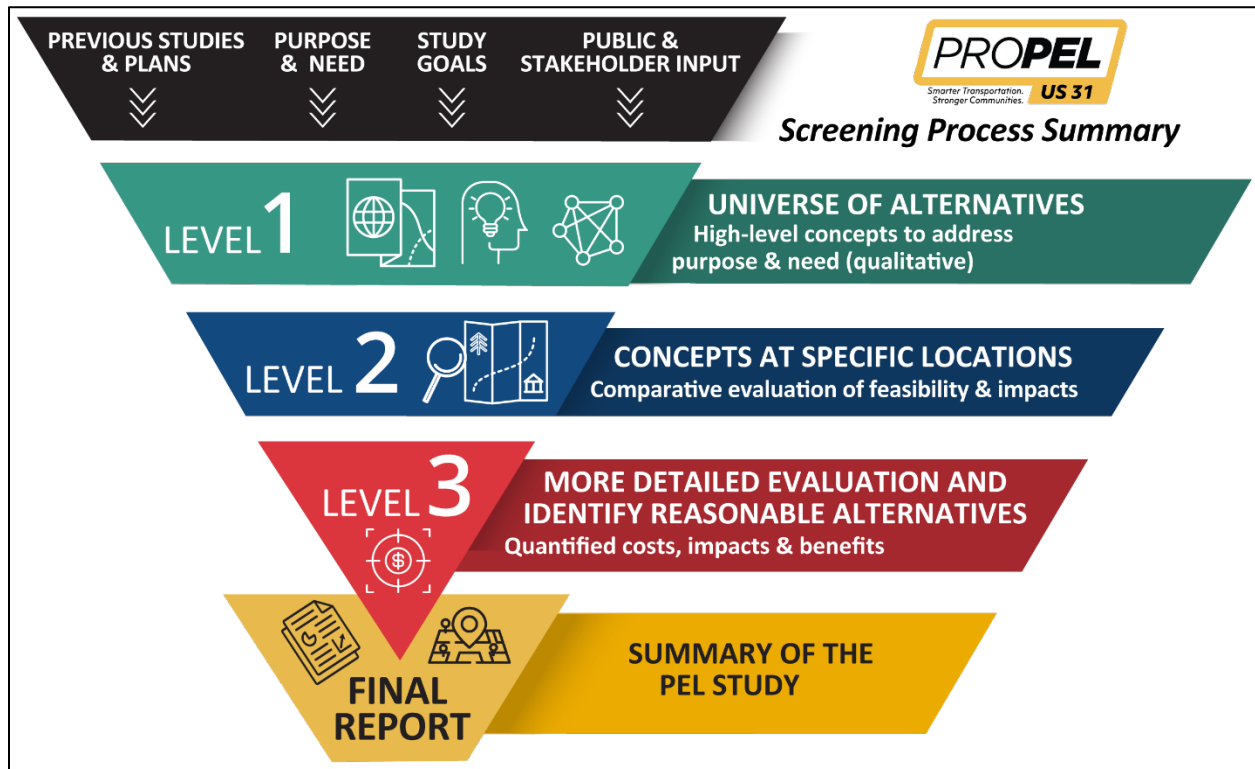
6. Range of alternatives: Planning teams need to be cautious during the alternative screen process; alternative screening should focus on purpose and need/corridor vision, fatal flaw analysis, and possibly mode selection. This may help minimize problems during discussions with resource agencies. Alternatives that have fatal flaws or do not meet the purpose and need/corridor vision will not be considered reasonable alternatives, even if they reduce impacts to a particular resource. Detail the range of alternatives considered, screening criteria, and screening process, including:

a. What types of alternatives were looked at? (Provide a one or two sentence summary and reference document.)

The ProPEL US 31 South study used a three-level screening process, depicted in **Figure 1**, to identify reasonable alternatives that address the identified transportation needs and goals of the study area.

³ This goal was refined in the *Final Level 3 Screening Report* based on the issuance of several federal and state Executive Orders (EOs), as well as one United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) order, including EO 14154, EO 14148, EO 14173, EO 14281, USDOT Order 2100.7, EO 25-49, EO 25-37, and ES 25-14.

Figure 1: ProPEL US 31 South Alternatives Development and Screening Process



The Level 1 screening process considered a set of 55 transportation improvement concepts – also referred to as the Universe of Alternatives – including the No-Build Alternative. Concepts considered included: corridor improvements, off-corridor improvements, intersection improvements, intersection improvements, spot improvements, transportation systems management & operations (TSMO) improvements, potential policy changes, as well as transit & non-motorized improvements.

The Level 2 screening process evaluated improvement alternatives at the 18 primary intersections within the study area for reasonability and potential impacts.

The Level 3 screening combined comprehensive sets of intersection improvements and different access management strategies to create Improvement Packages for sections of the study area. These sections, called Planning Segments, considered improvements at all study area intersections as well as the roadway sections between them. Multiple Improvement Packages were considered in each Planning Segment.

Further information regarding the alternatives development and screening process can be found in Section 4 of the PEL Study Report and Appendices F, G, and H of the PEL Study Report.

b. How did you select the screening criteria and screening process?

The screening process used a multi-level screening approach to progress from a high-level, qualitative assessment in the Level 1 screening to a more detailed quantitative assessment in Level 3 screening. Screening criteria were developed and utilized at each screening step to assess each alternative’s ability to address the purpose and need (i.e., benefits), as well as potential impacts, and costs.

See Section 4 of the PEL Study Report and Appendices F, G, and H of the PEL Study Report for further detail on the screening criteria and screening process.

- c. For alternative(s) that were screened out, briefly summarize the reasons for eliminating the alternative(s). (During the initial screenings, this generally will focus on fatal flaws.)**

During the screening process, alternatives were eliminated if they did not meet purpose and need and were not considered practicable (Level 1). During the Level 2 and Level 3 screening steps, alternatives with limited benefits compare to its impacts/costs were identified as unreasonable and eliminated from further consideration unless conditions in the study area significantly change in the future (e.g., changes in land use, baseline environmental and/or traffic conditions, etc.).

See Section 4 of the PEL Study Report for further detail on the results of the screening process. For a complete list of alternatives considered and reasons for elimination see the alternatives screening reports in Appendices F, G, and H of the PEL Study Report.

- d. Which alternatives should be brought forward into NEPA and why?**

The alternatives carried forward from the Level 3 screening, which are described in Section 4.4 of the PEL Study Report should be brought forward into subsequent NEPA and project development studies in the relevant planning segment. These alternatives meet the study's purpose and need, support study area goals, and are considered reasonable based on the results of this planning study. Note that some improvement packages may require further analysis in the future to determine if the tradeoffs between the potential benefits, impacts, and costs are a reasonable solution to the planning segment's transportation needs.

Depending on multiple factors, including statewide priorities, and funding availability, improvement packages considered as part of this PEL study could be combined in different ways in the future to address the identified transportation needs and support the goals of the study area.

- e. Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process?**

Yes. The public and stakeholders had the opportunity to comment throughout the study process through a series of SAC meetings, public information meetings, Community Office Hours events, individual stakeholder meetings, resource agency and cultural resources stakeholder meetings, tribal coordination meetings, and other public events (e.g., local fairs and festivals). These individuals and groups could also submit comments on the ProPEL US 31 study website at any point during the study. Additionally, a dedicated telephone number was established to enable interested persons to speak directly to a study team member to ask questions and/or provide comments.

See Section 5 of the PEL Study Report for further information on the public involvement and agency coordination efforts.

- f. Were there unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders, and/or agencies?**

Section 6 of this report provides details regarding study elements or issues that require further consideration during development of any future projects in the corridor. In summary, these topics include:

- The potential to upgrade US 31 to a limited access freeway facility.
- The potential for loss of access to/from/across US 31.
- The use of Reduced Conflict Intersections (RCIs) as a safety improvement strategy in the study corridor.
- Emergency service response times if access is changed.

- The need to complete resource identification and impact assessment at a level appropriate for NEPA documentation.

7. Planning assumptions and analytical methods:

a. What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?

2045

b. What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?

To estimate future 2045 design year volumes, a traffic growth rate was calculated using outputs from the Indiana Statewide Travel Demand Model (updated for the US 30/31 PEL Studies). This model provided estimated intersection volumes for each of the study intersections for a base year (2019) and a future year (2045). The future year model included both existing and committed projects on, and adjacent to, the US 31 South study corridor. Using these volumes, an average annual growth rate of 0.6% was calculated.

This growth rate was then applied to the 2022 peak season turning movement volumes (TMVs) to estimate the 2045 design year TMVs for the AM and PM peak hours. The peak hour TMVs for each study intersection are provided in the *ProPEL US 31 South Existing Transportation Conditions Report* (Appendix B of the PEL Study Report). Additionally, this growth rate was applied to the existing (2022) AADT volumes to estimate the 2045 design year AADT volumes. The projected design year (2045) AADT volumes can be found in Section 6.2 of the *ProPEL US 31 South Existing Transportation Conditions Report* (Appendix B of the PEL Study Report).

c. Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with each other and with the long-range transportation plan? Are the assumptions still valid?

Yes, the planning assumptions, corridor vision/purpose and need statement, and the applicable long-range transportation plans are all consistent with each other. The assumptions are still valid.

d. What were the future year policy and/or data assumptions used in the transportation planning process related to land use, economic development, transportation costs, and network expansion?

The future year assumptions related to land use and economic development come from local government land use plans and the Indiana Statewide Travel Demand Model.

The assumptions related to transportation costs and network expansion come from the Indiana Statewide Traffic Model, the INDOT Long Range Transportation Plan (2018-2045), as well as local transportation plans.

The INDOT Long-Range Transportation Plan (2018-2045) identifies US 31 as a major corridor in the state, and thus, critical to mobility and economic activity. The plan identifies an opportunity to enhance system reliability and safety by upgrading rural segments of US 31 into free-flow access and recommends improvements for traffic flow and safety.

8. Environmental resources (wetlands, cultural, etc.) reviewed. For each resource or group of resources reviewed, provide the following:

a. In the PEL study, at what level of detail was the resource reviewed and what was the method of review?

The environmental review and evaluation were based primarily on existing secondary source data collected from various GIS databases. These sources were supplemented by limited windshield surveys in the corridor, as well as data provided by the public and stakeholders. Full details on the existing environmental data collected is provided in the *ProPEL US 31 South Environmental Constraints Report* (Appendix B of the PEL Study Report).

a. Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?

The *ProPEL US 31 South Environmental Constraints Report* (Appendix B to the PEL Study Report) provides a detailed evaluation of the existing conditions for the key resources within the study area. These resources are summarized below in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Existing Environmental Conditions for Potentially Impacted Resources

Resource	Existing Environmental Condition
<u>Socio-economic</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-income and minority populations Limited English Proficiency Limited Vehicle Access Limited Internet Access Persons with Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 census block groups with minority populations of concern 41 census block groups with low-income populations of concern 42 census block groups with LEP populations 108 census block groups with limited internet access populations 72 census block groups with limited vehicle access populations 111 census tracts with persons with disabilities
Infrastructure Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard overhead and underground utilities Six railroads cross through the study area, two active railroads with Norfolk Southern. Two airports, one public and one private, are located within the study area
<u>Parks, Recreation Areas, Wildlife or Waterfowl Refuges, or Publicly Owned Historic Properties (Recreational Facilities)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FHWA Section 4(f) Regulations (23 CFR 774) Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF) of 1965 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three recreational facilities, one managed land, five trail segments, seven cemeteries, and 21 historic resources were identified as potentially eligible Section 4(f) properties No Section 6(f) properties within the study area
<u>Natural Resources</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NWI Wetlands and INDOT Mitigation Sites Streams (including IDEM 303(D) Listed) Floodplains and Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Lands Canal Structures and Canal Routes – Historic Lakes Protected Species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 197 NWI mapped wetlands Three INDOT mitigation sites, impacts should be avoided 128 stream segments mapped within the study area 36 IDEM 303(D) Listed streams and lakes 43 floodplain polygons No flood hazard mitigation grant program lands One historic canal structure and one historic canal route Study area is within range of the federally endangered Indiana bat (<i>Myotis sodalis</i>) and northern long-eared bat (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>), the proposed endangered tricolored bat (<i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>) and salamander mussel (<i>Simpsonaias ambigua</i>), the federally threatened Rabbitsfoot (<i>Quadrula cylindrica cylindrica</i>) and round hickorynut (<i>Obovaria subrotunda</i>), and the whooping crane (<i>Grus americana</i>), an “experimental population”.
<u>Cultural Resources</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Above Ground Archaeological Historic Canal Structures Historic Canal Routes Centennial Farms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 potentially eligible structures within the study area (includes four already listed in the NRHP (three of which have been demolished) Numerous eligible or potentially eligible archaeological sites within the study area One historic canal structure and one historic canal route 462 Centennial farms within the counties that encompass the study
Mineral Resources/Petroleum Wells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 41 oil and gas wells and one mineral resource wells were identified within the study area

Resource	Existing Environmental Condition
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study area is partially located within Hamilton County, which is currently a maintenance area for 8-hour Ozone (1997). The study area is also located within Tipton, Howard, and Miami Counties, which are each currently in attainment for all criteria pollutants.
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36 Common Noise Environments have been preliminarily identified, with 17 areas requiring further investigation.
Hazardous Materials	<p><u>Sites of potential concern:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One superfund site One brownfield site Two institutional control sites Four UST sites Ten LUST sites
<p><u>Other</u> Schools, places of worship, cemeteries, hospitals, fire stations, police stations, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One school Two places of worship Two police stations

b. What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)?

As projects resulting from the ProPEL US 31 South study move into the NEPA phase, a variety of environmental and community factors will require careful evaluation. These include potential impacts to natural resources, cultural resources and historic properties, local infrastructure, and nearby homes, businesses, and public facilities. While the PEL study identified areas of concern at a high level, NEPA will require more detailed analysis, coordination with agencies, and public input to fully understand and address these impacts.

Key considerations will include avoiding or minimizing disruptions to communities, managing environmental impacts such as water resources or wildlife habitat, and ensuring continued access to essential services. Community impact assessments completed during subsequent NEPA reviews should include consideration of impacts to community cohesion, as well as impacts to local mobility and access that could result from implementation of increased access control along the study corridor. Where impacts are unavoidable, appropriate mitigation strategies will need to be developed to reduce harm and support long-term project sustainability, including but not limited to, avoidance and minimization measures through design, time of year restrictions and best management practices during construction, and enhancement of existing resources.

c. How will the planning data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?

All applicable resources that may be present and impacted by a project will require more detailed field surveys and/or analysis during the NEPA phase.

9. List environmental resources you are aware of that were not reviewed in the PEL study and why. Indicate whether or not they will need to be reviewed in NEPA and explain why.

All applicable environmental resources were reviewed at a cursory level based on secondary source data. Many of these resources will require more detailed field surveys and/or analysis during the NEPA phase for any projects advanced from this PEL study.

The resources identified during the PEL study are discussed in Section 3 of the PEL Study Report and in the *ProPEL US 31 South Environmental Constraints Report* (Appendix B of the PEL Study Report).

Numerous archaeological resource sites were identified throughout the study area; however, in accordance with 54 USC 307103 and Indiana Code 14-21-1, which provides protection for archaeological sites and burial sites, information related to such resources is not publicly shared herein.

10. Were cumulative impacts considered in the PEL study? If yes, provide the information or reference where the analysis can be found.

No, cumulative impacts were not considered in the PEL study. They will be considered, as required, during future NEPA processes.

11. Describe any mitigation strategies discussed at the planning level that should be analyzed during NEPA.

No mitigation strategies were identified during the PEL study but will be developed, as needed, during the NEPA phase.

12. What needs to be done during NEPA to make information from the PEL study available to the agencies and the public? Are there PEL study products which can be used or provided to agencies or the public during the NEPA scoping process?

All applicable PEL study information and reports have been made available for public and agency review via public and agency meetings and the study website. This same approach can be used to make these PEL study products available during the NEPA scoping process.

13. Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of?

- a. Examples: Controversy, utility problems, access or ROW issues, encroachments into ROW, problematic land owners and/or groups, contact information for stakeholders, special or unique resources in the area, etc.**

Section 6 of the PEL Study Report summarizes next steps and key considerations for future project teams. There are no additional issues at this time that a future project team should be made aware of other than what has been detailed in this PEL Study Report and associated appendices.