

APPENDIX A. PEL STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

Federal Highway Administration

Planning & Environment Linkages Questionnaire⁷

ProPEL US 31 North 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 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) policy on PEL process.

1. Background:

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

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), in cooperation with 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 North 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 North Final Environmental Constraints Report*
- Appendix C: *ProPEL US 31 North Final Existing Transportation Conditions Report*
- Appendix D: *ProPEL US 31 North Final Purpose & Need Report*
- Appendix E: *ProPEL US 31 North Final Universe of Alternatives (Level 1) Screening Report*
- Appendix F: *ProPEL US 31 North Final Level 2 Screening Report*
- Appendix G: *ProPEL US 31 North Final Level 3 Screening Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 North Resource Agency, Stakeholder & Public Involvement (RASPI) Summary Reports*
 - *Appendix H: RASPI Summary #1*
 - *Appendix I: RASPI Summary #2*
 - *Appendix J: RASPI Summary #3*
 - *Appendix K: 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 North study was included in INDOT 2022-2026 State Transportation Improvement Program as Des No. 2100113 (listed as “Planning-Environment Linkage (PEL) Studies for Select Corridors Along US 30 & US 31”).

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
 Nathan Shellhamer, PE – INDOT Traffic Engineering

⁷ https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel/pel_quest.aspx, Updated April 5, 2011

Laura Hilden – Director of Environmental Services
Roy Nunnally – Director of Technical Planning & Programming

FHWA – Indiana Division

Karstin Carmany-George – Senior Environmental Specialist
Patrick Carpenter – Environmental Specialist

Parsons

Tony Pakeltis, AICP – Project Manager
Craig Moore, PE – Traffic Lead
Matt Taylor, PE – Engineering Lead
Dan Prevost, ACIP CTP – PEL/Environmental Lead
Mindy Peterson – Communications Lead

HNTB Corporation

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 study focused on US 31 from just south of the Eel River in Miami County (County Road [CR] 300 North) to CR 700 North in Fulton County, just south of the Marshall County line – approximately 27 miles in length. Within these limits, US 31 is a four-lane Principal Arterial roadway with two lanes in each direction separated by an approximately 50- to 60-foot grass median (excluding turn lanes).

Along US 31, traffic is typically stop controlled for the crossing streets. No signalized intersections are present along US 31 within the study limits. One interchange is present within the corridor. It is located at SR 25, near Rochester, and is configured as a diamond interchange with US 31 crossing over SR 25. SR 14, also located near Rochester, crosses over US 31 via a bridge, however no access is provided between the two roadways. There are no highway-rail crossings along US 31.

The majority of the corridor is rural in nature, with the exception of the SR 25 interchange area at Rochester, which is the only urban area in the corridor through which US 31 passes.

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 North 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 North 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 North 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 North 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.

2. Methodology used:

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

The scope of the PEL study was to:

The purpose of the ProPEL US 31 North study is 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 NEPA

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. A Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) was also formed for the study area.

Multiple coordination meetings with the SAC, 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:

- *ProPEL US 31 North Final Environmental Constraints Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 North Existing Transportation Conditions Report*
- *ProPEL US 31 North Final Purpose & Need Report*

- ProPEL US 31 North Final Universe of Alternatives (Level 1) Screening Report
- ProPEL US 31 North Final Level 2 Screening Report
- ProPEL US 31 North Final Level 3 Screening Report
- ProPEL US 31 North 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 North 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.

The following is a list of resource agencies, cultural resources stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes there were invited to participate in the PEL study:

COORDINATION LIST	STAKEHOLDER TYPE			COORDINATION AT STUDY MILESTONES						
	Agency	Resource Agency	Cultural Resources Stakeholder	Tribes	Vision/ Scoping Meeting	Invitation to Participate	Purpose & Need Meeting	Universe of Alternatives (Level 1)	Level 2	Level 3
National Park Service	X				1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development	X				1/27/2023 X	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
US Fish & Wildlife Service	X				1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting ✓
US Army Corps of Engineers	X				1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Natural Resources Conservation Service	X				1/27/2023 X	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
US Environmental Protection Agency	X				1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
US Coast Guard (9th District)	X				1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting ✓

COORDINATION LIST	STAKEHOLDER TYPE			COORDINATION AT STUDY MILESTONES					
	Agency	Resource Agency	Cultural Resources Stakeholder	Tribe	Vision/ Scoping Meeting	Invitation to Participate	Purpose & Need Meeting	Universe of Alternatives (Level 1)	Level 2
US Coast Guard (8th District)	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
IDEM, Groundwater Section	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting ✓
IDEM, Wetlands & Stormwater	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
IDNR, Div. Fish & Wildlife	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting ✓
IDNR, Div. Outdoor Recreation	X			1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
INDOT - Office of Aviation	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Soil and Water Conservation District	X			1/27/2023 X	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Floodplain Administrator	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Emergency Management Agency	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Surveyor's Office	X			1/27/2023 X	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Fulton County Floodplain Administrator	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Fulton County Emergency Management Agency	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Fulton County Surveyor's Office	X				7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
IDNR, Div. Historic Preservation & Archaeology		X		1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting ✓
Indiana Landmarks, Northeast Regional Office		X		1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 ✓	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X

COORDINATION LIST	STAKEHOLDER TYPE			COORDINATION AT STUDY MILESTONES					
Agency	Resource Agency	Cultural Resources Stakeholder	Tribe	Vision/ Scoping Meeting	Invitation to Participate	Purpose & Need Meeting	Universe of Alternatives (Level 1)	Level 2	Level 3
Indiana Freedom Trails Northeast Region		X		1/27/2023 X	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Indiana Freedom Trails Northwest Region		X			7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Historic Michigan Road Association		X		1/27/2023 ✓	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Historian		X		1/27/2023 X	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Miami County Historical Society/Miami County Museum		X		1/27/2023 X	7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Fulton County Historian		X			7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Fulton County Historical Society		X			7/6/2023 Letter	8/10/2023 X	11/21/2023 Email	3/27/2024 Email	11/12/2024 Email ✓ 12/4/2024 Meeting X
Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma			X	2/23/2023 X		7/17/2023 X	12/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Miami Tribe of Oklahoma			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 ✓	12/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 ✓	12/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 ✓	12/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Shawnee Tribe			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 X	12/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Delaware Tribe of Indians			X	2/23/2023 X		7/17/2023 ✓	12/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email
Forest County Potawatomi			X	2/23/2023 ✓		7/17/2023 X	12/20/2023 Email	4/2/2024 Email	12/5/2024 Email

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:

- Miami County Highway Department
- Fulton County Highway Department

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 (Appendices H, I, and J).

Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) Meetings

The ProPEL US 31 North SAC 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 three 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 68 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. INDOT plans to hold additional Community Office Hours events once the PEL Study Report is published. In addition, the US 31 North study team coordinated participation at 11 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 Rochester Daily Sentinel and the Peru 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 North 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 (PEL Study Appendices H, I, and J).

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 residential and business addresses in the study area. As part of each mailing, over 8,000 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 and Scoping Phase

The initial round of public information meetings occurred in December 2022 as part of the Vision and Scoping phase of the study. The study team held an in-person meeting on December 1, 2022, at Rochester Community High School. A virtual, on-demand meeting was also available beginning December 2, 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 & Need phase of the study. The study team held an in-person meeting on June 7, 2023, at Rochester Community High School. A virtual, on-demand meeting was also available beginning June 8, 2023, until July 31, 2023.

Alternatives Screening Phase

The third round of public information meetings occurred in November 2024 when the Draft Level 3 Screening Report was released for public review. The study team held an in-person meeting on November 18, 2024, at Rochester Community High School. A virtual, on-demand meeting was also available beginning November 21, 2024, 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 North 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 NEPA.

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 vision⁸ was established for the US 31 corridor during development of the study area purpose and need statement:

CORRIDOR VISION

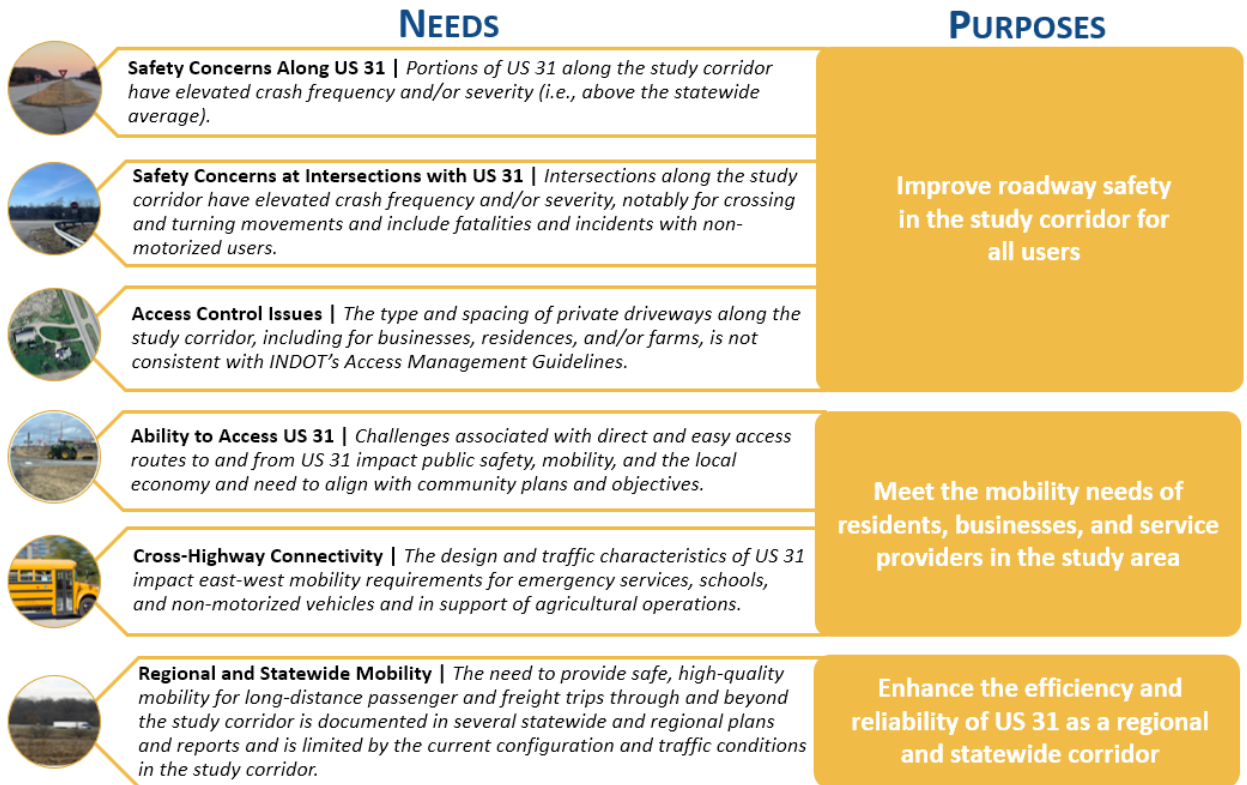
The US 31 corridor will **serve local, regional, and national** travelers by **balancing mobility and access** considerations in a way that:

- 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.



⁸ 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.

As summarized in the figure below, six needs and three associated purposes have been identified for the ProPEL US 31 North study, in addition to seven study goals. Additional details on the development of the purpose and need can be found in the *ProPEL US 31 North Final Purpose and Need Report* (Appendix D).



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



* This goal was refined based on the issuance of Federal Executive Orders 14154, 14148, 14173, and 14281; State Executive Orders 25-49 and 25-37; and USDOT Order 2100.7.

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 North study addresses the study corridor through Miami and Fulton 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 North study used a three-level screening process, depicted in Figure 6 in Section 4.1 of the PEL Study Report, to identify reasonable alternatives that address the identified transportation needs and goals of the study area.

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 E, F, and G.

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 E, F, and G 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 E, F, and G 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.

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 North 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 North Final Existing Transportation Conditions Report* (Appendix C of the PEL Study Report). Additionally, this growth rate was applied to the existing (2022) Annual Average Daily Traffic (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 North Final Existing Transportation Conditions Report* (Appendix C 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 assumptions related to land use, economic development, and future traffic volumes come from the Miami and Fulton County Comprehensive Plans and forecasts from the Indiana Statewide Travel Demand Model. These planning products indicate a modest level of traffic growth in the study area and no near-term need for significant network expansion.

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 North Final Environmental Constraints Report* (Appendix B of the PEL Study Report).

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

The following is a summary of the environmental resources in the study corridor. See Section 3 of this PEL Study Report and the *ProPEL US 31 North Final Environmental Constraints Report* (Appendix B of the PEL Study Report) for more detailed information.

Resource	Existing Environmental Condition
<p><u>Socio-economic</u></p> <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"> • 8 census block groups with minority populations of concern • 14 census block groups with low-income populations of concern • 16 census block groups with LEP populations • 49 census block groups with limited internet access populations • 32 census block groups with limited vehicle access populations • 49 census tracts with persons with disabilities
<p>Infrastructure Constraints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard overhead and underground utilities • 3 underground pipelines • 2 public airports are located within the study area
<p>Parks, Recreation Areas, Wildlife or Waterfowl Refuges, or Publicly Owned Historic Properties (Recreational Facilities)</p> <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"> • Four recreational facilities and 13 historic resources were identified as potentially eligible Section 4(f) properties • No Section 6(f) properties within the study area
<p><u>Natural Resources</u></p> <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"> • 288 NWI mapped wetlands • 81 stream segments mapped within the study area • 28 IDEM 303(D) Listed streams and lakes • 520 acres of floodplain • No flood hazard mitigation grant program lands • Study area is within range of the federally endangered Indiana bat (<i>Myotis sodalis</i>) northern long-eared bat (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>), sheepsnout mussel (<i>Plethobasus cyphus</i>), and clubshell (<i>Pleurobema clava</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 Monarch butterfly (<i>Danaus plexippus</i>), a candidate species.
<p><u>Cultural Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above Ground • Archaeological • Historic Canal Structures • Historic Canal Routes • Centennial Farms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 potentially eligible structures within the study area (includes one already listed in the NRHP, Leedy Barn) • Numerous eligible or potentially eligible archaeological sites within the study area • 139 Centennial Farms and 10 Sesquicentennial Farms within the counties that encompass the study
<p>Mineral Resources/Petroleum Wells</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 oil and gas wells and two abandoned industrial minerals sand gravel pits were identified within the study area

Resource	Existing Environmental Condition
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miami and Fulton Counties are currently in attainment for all criteria pollutants
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 areas were identified where levels of activity are potentially sufficient to warrant mitigation.
Hazardous Materials	<p><u>Sites of potential concern:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One former combined feeding operation • Two landfills • One brownfield site • Three institutional control sites • One UST sites • Four 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 • Seven places of worship • One police station

c. 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 North 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.

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

All applicable resources that may be present and impacted by the 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 this PEL Study Report and in the following supporting document that is located in the *ProPEL US 31 North Environmental Constraints 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.