

APPENDIX J: RESOURCE AGENCY, STAKEHOLDER & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY #2



US 31 South

Resource Agency, Stakeholder & Public Involvement Summary #2

December 6, 2023

This report was finalized prior to the issuance of several Executive Orders (EOs) and one United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) order, including:

- Federal EOs: EO 14154, EO 14148, EO 14173, and EO 14281;
- State EOs: EO 25-49, EO 25-37, and EO 25-14;
- USDOT Order 2100.7

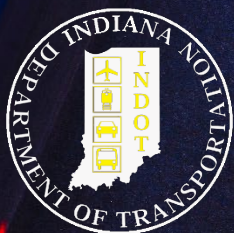
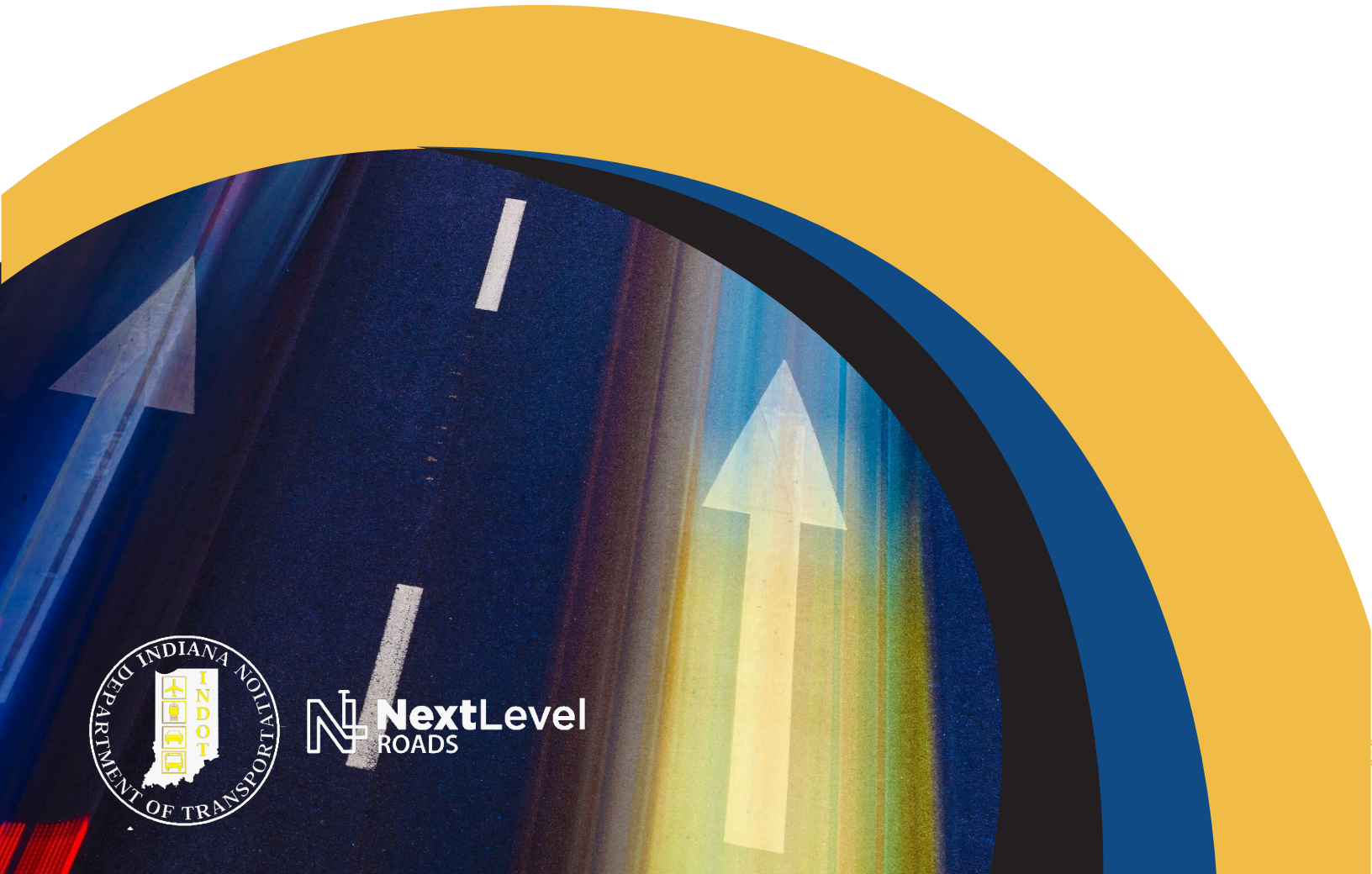


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1. STUDY OVERVIEW

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

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

This report provides a summary of the information provided at two (2) Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings, two (2) in-person public meetings, one (1) virtual meeting, as well as the feedback that was collected from the public from January 1 – July 31, 2023. It also includes the information presented and feedback received from additional stakeholder meetings and coordination, as well as resource agency coordination meetings. Public feedback will continue throughout the remaining phases of the PEL study: Alternatives Analysis and Study Completion.

2. PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Feedback from residents, motorists, businesses and others is vital to the success of the studies. Along with the other study areas, the ProPEL US 31 South study team is gathering public feedback throughout the planning process. The second round of public engagement occurred in June 2023 as part of the Purpose & Need phase of the ProPEL study. The purpose of the engagement was to:

- Report on insights gained from the public during the Vision & Scoping phase.
- Share additional information gathered from engineering and technical assessments.
- Provide an overview of the transportation issues (needs) and desired outcomes (purposes) identified for the US 31 South study area.
- Solicit input on the prioritization of study goals and level of agreement with the Draft Purpose & Need statement.
- Preview the next step: Alternatives Analysis.

Figure 1: ProPEL US 31 Study Schedule



3. OUTREACH AND ADVERTISEMENT

The US 31 South study team conducted outreach to report on insights gained from the public during the Vision & Scoping phase, share data gathered from engineering and technical assessments, provide an overview of the transportation issues (needs) and desired outcomes (purposes) identified for the US 31 South study area, and preview next steps and solicit public feedback. Outreach efforts included community office hours, public information meetings, community outreach events, resource agency coordination, and targeted stakeholder meetings.

The ProPEL US 31 South study team advertised the community office hours and community outreach events through the study website, social media channels and PIMA eblasts to registered stakeholders. In addition to the aforementioned communication vehicles, public information meetings were also promoted through two public notices, a press release, a media advisory and a GovDelivery eblast to INDOT subscribers.

Table 1 contains a summary of these efforts.

Table 1: ProPEL US 31 South Outreach Efforts

Outreach Efforts		Date(s)
Website information	ProPELUS31.com	5/11/2023
Press release (Appendix A)	INDOT media list	5/22/2023
GovDelivery E-bulletin (Appendix B)	20% open rate and 9,001 recipients	5/22/2023
Direct mail (Appendix C)	PIM postcard to targeted residents, businesses	5/31/2023
Media alert (Appendix D)	INDOT media list	6/12/2023
Social media posts (Appendix E)	In-person meeting information	5/19/2023; 5/23/2023; 6/7/2023
	Virtual meeting information	6/29/2023
	Meeting recap video	7/8/2023
	Meeting comment reminder	7/24/2023
Stakeholder email blasts (Appendix F)	66% open rate and 296 recipients	1/11/2023
	66% open rate and 299 recipients	2/13/2023
	58% open rate and 304 recipients	3/8/2023
	68% open rate and 315 recipients	5/2/2023
	70% open rate and 321 recipients	5/23/2023
	54% open rate and 329 recipients	6/1/2023
	64% open rate and 339 recipients	6/7/2023
	64% open rate and 475 recipients	6/20/2023
Public notices (Appendix G)	Tipton County Tribune	5/17/2023; 5/31/2023
	Peru Tribune	5/17/2023; 5/31/2023
	Kokomo Tribune	5/17/2023; 5/31/2023
US 31 South local economic development organizations (LEDOs)	Virtual meetings	3/3/2023; 7/17/2023
Indiana Legislators	Virtual meeting	5/11/2023

US 30 & 31 Coalitions	Virtual meeting	5/18/2023
Stakeholder Advisory Committees	Virtual meetings	5/22/2023; 5/23/2023
Tipton, Howard, Miami Co. Farm Bureau	In-person meeting in coordination with US 31 North	6/7/2023
Miami County Economic Development Authority	In-person meeting in coordination with US 31 North	6/14/2023
Resource Agency coordination	Tribal Partner Coordination Meeting #2	7/17/2023
	Resource Agency and Cultural Resources Stakeholder Meeting #2	9/15/2023
Local Elected Officials	Personal email	7/25/2023
	Miami County Commissioners meeting	9/18/2023
	Howard County Commissioners meeting	9/18/2023
	Miami County Council meeting	9/19/2023
	Hamilton County Commissioners meeting	9/21/2023
	Tipton County Commissioners meeting	9/25/2023
	Tipton City Council meeting	9/25/2023
	Howard County Council meeting	9/26/2023
	Hamilton County Council meeting	11/1/2023
Local Non-Resource Agency coordination	PIMA email blast; 63% open rate and 44 recipients	7/25/2023
Indiana Motor Trucking Association	Link and QR code to survey URL	8/24/2023
Grissom Air Reserve Base	Virtual meeting	8/24/2023
Indiana National Guard	Virtual meeting	10/12/2023
Miami County Correctional Facility	In-person meeting	10/16/2023
Community office hours	Sharpsville Town Hall*	1/17/2023
	Dutch Café	1/18/2023
	Beck's Superior Hybrids	2/27/2023
	JJ's Travel Plaza	2/27/2023
	Galveston Public Library	3/22/2023
	Tipton Public Library	3/22/2023
	Cicero Township Volunteer Fire Department	4/17/2023
	Pipe Creek Volunteer Fire Department	4/17/2023
	Maple Lawn Village Mobile Home Community*	5/9/2023; 10/7/2023
	Cedar Creek Mobile Home Park*	5/9/2023
	Woodland Hills Mobile Home Park*	6/20/2023; 10/7/2023
	Kelley Agricultural Historical Museum	6/20/2023
	Peru Public Library	7/19/2023
	Tipton Public Library	7/19/2023
	West Street Christian Church	8/10/2023
	Peru Public Library	8/10/2023

	Howard County Historical Society	9/19/2023
	Miami County YMCA	9/19/2023
	Peru Public Library	11/8/2023
	Tractor Supply Company	11/8/2023
Community outreach events	Kokomo Strawberry Festival	6/2/2023
	Miami County Fair	6/19 – 23/2023
	Kokomo Jackrabbits game	7/7/2023
	Howard County Fair	7/10 – 15/2023
	Tipton County Fair	7/13 – 16/2023
	Hamilton County Fair	7/20 – 23/2023
	Tipton Pork Festival	9/7 – 9/2023
	Atlanta New Earth Festival	9/23 – 24/2023
	Circus Car & Bike Show	10/1/2023
	Jeeps, Jets & Jams	10/21/2023

* Environmental Justice outreach

4. UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

The US 31 South study team conducted a corridor analysis to identify potential “underserved communities” within the study area consistent with Executive Order (EO) 12898, entitled “Environmental Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” EO 13985, entitled “Advancing Racial Equity and support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” EO 14008, entitled “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” and EO 14096, entitled “Revitalizing our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice.” According to EO 13985, the term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, such as:

- Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color.
- Members of religious minorities.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons.
- Persons with disabilities.
- Persons who live in rural areas.
- Persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Preliminary analysis has identified various underserved communities within and adjacent to the ProPEL US 31 South study area, including:

- Communities with environmental justice concerns: minority populations and persons in poverty (low-income)
- Disadvantaged Communities: communities present within the study area defined by federal tools identified by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT), including:
 - The Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tract tool developed by USDOT, which includes communities with disadvantages related to transportation access, health, environmental, economics, resilience (climate change), and equity (communities with a high percentile of persons (age 5+) who speak English “less than well.”)
 - The Climate and the Economic Justice Screening Tool developed by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), which identifies communities faced with burdens associated with climate change, energy, health,

housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, workforce development, and federally recognized tribes.

- Other underserved communities present within the study area, including, persons with limited English proficiency (LEP), persons with disabilities, households with limited vehicle access, and households with limited internet access.

The full analysis is included in the ProPEL US 31 South Environmental Constraints Report (<https://propelus31.com/us-31-south/>). The study team also utilized the outreach discussed above, including the Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings, to identify or confirm other underserved populations within the study area (Appendix H). Additional (unmapped) communities around Sharpsville were discussed.

Due to the presence of these underserved communities, additional targeted outreach has occurred, including:

- Holding community office hours at the three mobile home parks that have direct access to US 31. These mobile home parks are:
 - Maple Lawn Village (May 19 and October 7)
 - Cedar Creek (May 19)
 - Woodland Hills (June 20 and October 7)
- Coordination targeting minority and LEP populations identified within the study area, including:
 - Coordinating with a church (Iglesia de Cristo Pentecostes) that serves the Hispanic community within and adjacent to Kokomo.
 - Translation services, including translating the direct mail postcard and other study information to Spanish.
- Holding community office hours and outreach in Sharpsville, as coordinated through the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

See **Table 1** for dates of these outreach efforts. The study team will continue to identify opportunities for targeted outreach with underserved populations identified within the ProPEL US 31 South study area.

5. STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The study team has established two Stakeholder Advisory Committees, which includes representatives from local agencies, residents, community organizations, churches, social service providers, emergency service providers, businesses and business organizations. One Stakeholder Advisory Committee includes individuals from the northern portion of the study area (from the northern US 31/Kokomo Bypass intersection to just south of the Eel River in Miami County). The second includes representatives from the southern portion of the study area (from 276th Street in Hamilton County to the southern US 31/Kokomo Bypass intersection). Virtual meetings with each occurred on May 22 and 23, 2023. The purpose of these meetings was to report on insights gained from the public thus far, share additional data gathered by the study teams, provide an overview of needs and desired outcomes and preview next steps. The study team also encouraged the committee members to assist in raising community awareness about the study and its feedback opportunities, and to identify underserved communities within the study area. Meeting materials and summaries are included in **Appendix H**.

6. US 31 COALITION PRESENTATION

The ProPEL Advisor team and members of the US 31 South and US 31 North study teams met virtually with members of the US 31 Coalition on May 18, 2023, to report on insights gained from the public thus far, share additional data gathered by the study teams, provide an overview of needs and desired outcomes, preview next steps and answer any questions from attendees. ProPEL US 31 meeting materials and summaries are included in **Appendix I**.

7. ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

In addition to Stakeholder Advisory Committee and US 31 Coalition outreach, members of the US 31 South study team coordinated and/or conducted outreach to the following stakeholder groups:

- Indiana state legislators (coordinated with Advisor)
- Local media representatives (coordinated with Advisor)
- US 31 South LEDOs
- Farm Bureau members from Howard, Tipton and Miami Counties (coordinated with US 31 North)
- Miami County Economic Development Authority (coordinated with US 31 North)
- Local elected officials
- Local (non-resource) agencies
- Grissom Air Reserve Base
- Indiana National Guard
- Miami County Correctional Facility

See **Table 1** for dates of these outreach efforts.

The Advisor team also coordinated efforts with the Indiana Motor Trucking Association to survey state and regional members about the ways they utilize US 30 and US 31 in northern Indiana. A link and QR code to the survey was sent to 75 targeted companies by the trucking association on August 24. To date, 24 responses have been received, and the Advisor team continues to monitor survey results.

Materials related to each of these outreach activities are included in **Appendix J**.

8. OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

The US 31 South study team is in the corridor regularly to build awareness around the study, provide an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to engage with the study team, and receive public comments related to the study and study milestones. From January 1 to July 31, 2023, the study team coordinated and staffed 14 Community Office Hours events at a variety of times and locations across the corridor. See **Table 1** for dates of these outreach efforts.

In addition, the US 31 South study team coordinated participation six community events in counties in the study area. Collectively, those outreach efforts generated more than 100 public comments about the study.

9. AGENCY COORDINATION

From January 1 to July 31, 2023, two coordination meetings were held with resource agencies, cultural resource stakeholders and federally recognized Tribes. These meetings included:

- July 17, 2023: Tribal Partner Coordination Meeting #2 (virtual)
- September 15, 2023: Resource Agency & Cultural Resources Stakeholder Meeting (virtual)

In general, the purpose of these meetings was to report on insights gained during the Vision & Scoping phase, share data gathered from engineering and technical assessments, provide an overview of the transportation issues (needs) and desired outcomes (purposes) identified for the US 31 South study area, preview next steps, and solicit input and feedback. Meeting materials and summaries are included in **Appendix K**.

10. PUBLIC MEETING FORMAT

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. All public comments received between January 1 and July 31, 2023, were considered as part of this report.

The format of the meetings was an open house with a presentation (**Appendix L**) from study team members. The open house was held from 5 to 7 p.m. with a presentation scheduled at 5:30 p.m. During the presentation, the study team reported on insights gained from the public thus far, shared additional data gathered by the study team, and provided an overview of the issues and desired outcomes.

At the in-person meetings, the informational boards and feedback opportunities (**Appendix M** and **Appendix N**) were situated throughout the venue in a way that would lead participants through the meeting information in a clear and meaningful way. A separate area was designated for a formal presentation by the study team. The information presented at the meeting was organized into the following stations:

- Station 1: Welcome/Sign-In
- Station 2: Study Overview
- Station 3: What We Heard
 - Feedback exercise: Prioritize top two study goals
- Station 4: What We Did
- Station 5: Purpose & Need
 - Feedback exercise: Level of agreement with the identified issues (needs) and desired outcomes (purposes)
- Station 6: Next Steps: Potential Solutions
- Station 7: Comment Station

Informational boards included an overview of the PEL study process, a summary of public engagement activities and comments thus far, a snapshot of the technical and engineering assessments completed, a list of the identified issues (needs) and desired outcomes (purposes), and a look ahead to next steps and potential solutions.

Two feedback exercises were integrated into the public information meeting. The first asked attendees to prioritize their top two study goals. The top two study goals that were prioritized by meeting attendees who participated in the activity were Goal #2 Economic Development and Goal #5 Fiscal and Environmental Practicality. The second feedback exercise asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the five identified issues (needs) and desired outcomes (purposes). Of those meeting attendees that participated in this exercise, 38% strongly agreed with the identified issues and outcomes, while 25% agreed. There was also a staffed comment station to record stakeholder feedback.

To further provide meeting participants the opportunity to give feedback and ask questions, a map of the other corridors was available as well as a representative from the adjacent US 31 North study area. The virtual meeting experience was designed to closely mimic the in-person meeting, and attendees navigated through the informational boards in the same way. The virtual experience also allowed participants to interact with the feedback exercises in the same way.

11. PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDANCE

Participants represented a wide range of interests and included residents, business owners, elected officials, school systems, emergency services, members of the agricultural community, community organizations, members of the US 31 Coalition and media.

Meeting Information	Total Attendees
June 14, 2023 (Tipton County Fairgrounds)	90
June 15, 2023 (Pipe Creek Elementary School)	182
Virtual Meeting	65
TOTAL ATTENDEES	337

12. COMMENT SUMMARY

The study team received approximately 60 comments from the in-person and virtual public information meetings. Approximately 100 additional comments were received via community office hours, community outreach events and the online comment form. 105 of those 160 comments were collected during the public comment period following the US 31 South public information meeting. A breakdown of the comments by general type of concern is below in **Table 2**.

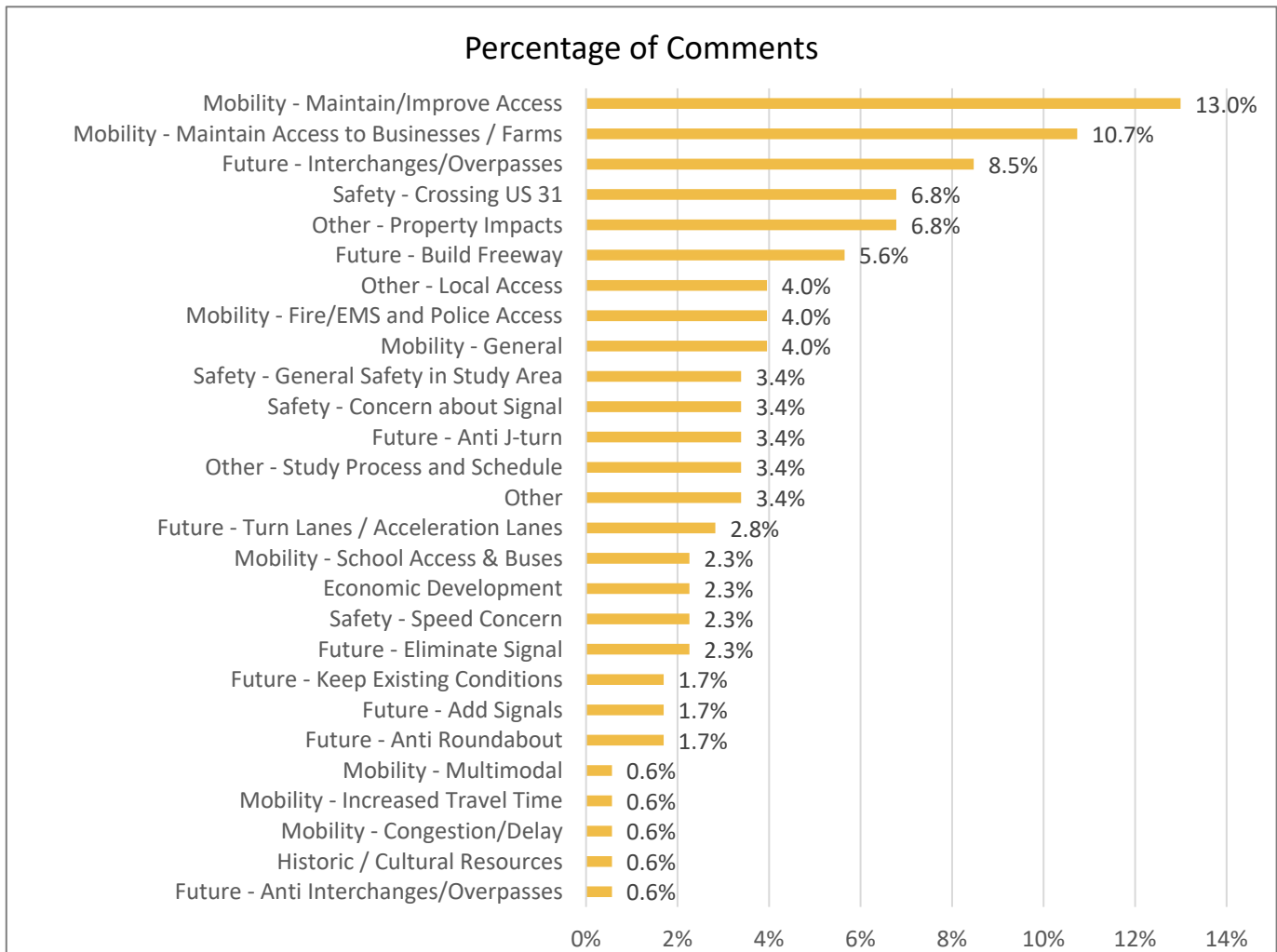


Table 2: Summary of Public

As shown, nearly 36% of the total comments received were related to mobility. The majority of these comments were related to local mobility, including maintaining access to the homes, businesses, schools, farmland, and towns along and adjacent to the US 31 South study corridor by maintaining or improving access to, from, or across US 31. Some comments were related to regional mobility, which were related to increasing the ability of traffic to access and travel along US 31 with minimal delay.

Comments related to safety accounted for approximately 16% of the total comments received. These comments related to user safety throughout the study area, with the most frequent concerns indicating difficulty accessing or crossing US 31, red light running and high travel speeds on US 31.

A complete listing of the public comments received can be found in **Appendix O**.