

May 12, 2017

Governor Eric Holcomb
206 State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Holcomb:

Thank you for your support of the US 31 Project. We appreciate that you have said that it is a "Finish What You Start" Project, one that is of highest priority.

The Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce has supported the US 31 project for many years, and has worked closely with the Indiana Department of Transportation in the long process leading to the construction of a highway project.

The passage of HB 1002 is a sustainable funding mechanism for transportation projects. Thank you for signing it. With the estimated increase of \$618M over the next 7 years, we now have a sufficient amount to construct US 31 in the sections between the completed segments. Local economic development organizations have been working to develop plans that incorporate the new freeway.

We must complete the entire freeway from South Bend to Indianapolis with no intersections or at-grade crossings. Now that funding is available, we need to move from planning short-term fixes to planning the construction of the entire freeway. The focus for planning this vital economic artery can create a freeway in the entire corridor, including proper interchanges for moving traffic instead of being constructed as a hodgepodge of types of roads and intersections. To expedite this, we ask that INDOT begin the environmental studies for the US 31 corridor this year.

The completion of the corridor is critical to the economic development initiatives in Elkhart County. In order to attract new or expanding business opportunities, we need to have a reliable infrastructure system for commodities movement. Studies have shown that companies prefer to locate within ten miles of an interstate, or an interstate quality road. With the unimproved segments remaining on the US 31 corridor, the full benefits of efficient and safe travel are not realized. Completing US 31 as a freeway will result in 1,200 fewer accidents annually and 15 fewer fatalities. U.S. 31 improvements are estimated to generate 1,190 jobs, \$366M in economic output and \$212M in personal income.

We appreciate your commitment to the US 31 project, and the economic benefits that will arise for northern Indiana and the entire state.

Kyle Hannon
President/CEO
Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

cc: INDOT Commissioner Joe McGuinness

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