

INTERSTATE 69

Connecting Communities

By Charlee Beasor

Section 6 – Martinsville to Indianapolis

- Planned route along State Road 37 to Indianapolis announced March 29, 2016
- INDOT anticipates making a final recommendation for public input in 2017 with proposed locations for highway lanes, exits and access roads
- Timetable for construction is unknown
- Total cost for the final leg of expansion is unknown; the state has to find funding within the budget to pay for construction

Section 5 – Bloomington to Martinsville

- The 21-mile section is under construction
- Approximate cost is \$394 million, funded by public-private partnership
- INDOT has moved the projected completion date back by nearly eight months, to June 2017

Section 4 – NSW Crane to Bloomington

- Approximately 27 miles long
- Opened on Dec. 9, 2015
- Cost: \$471 million
- Purdue University researchers estimate driving on I-69 between NSW Crane and Bloomington saves 18 minutes of driving time

Section 3 – Washington to NSW Crane

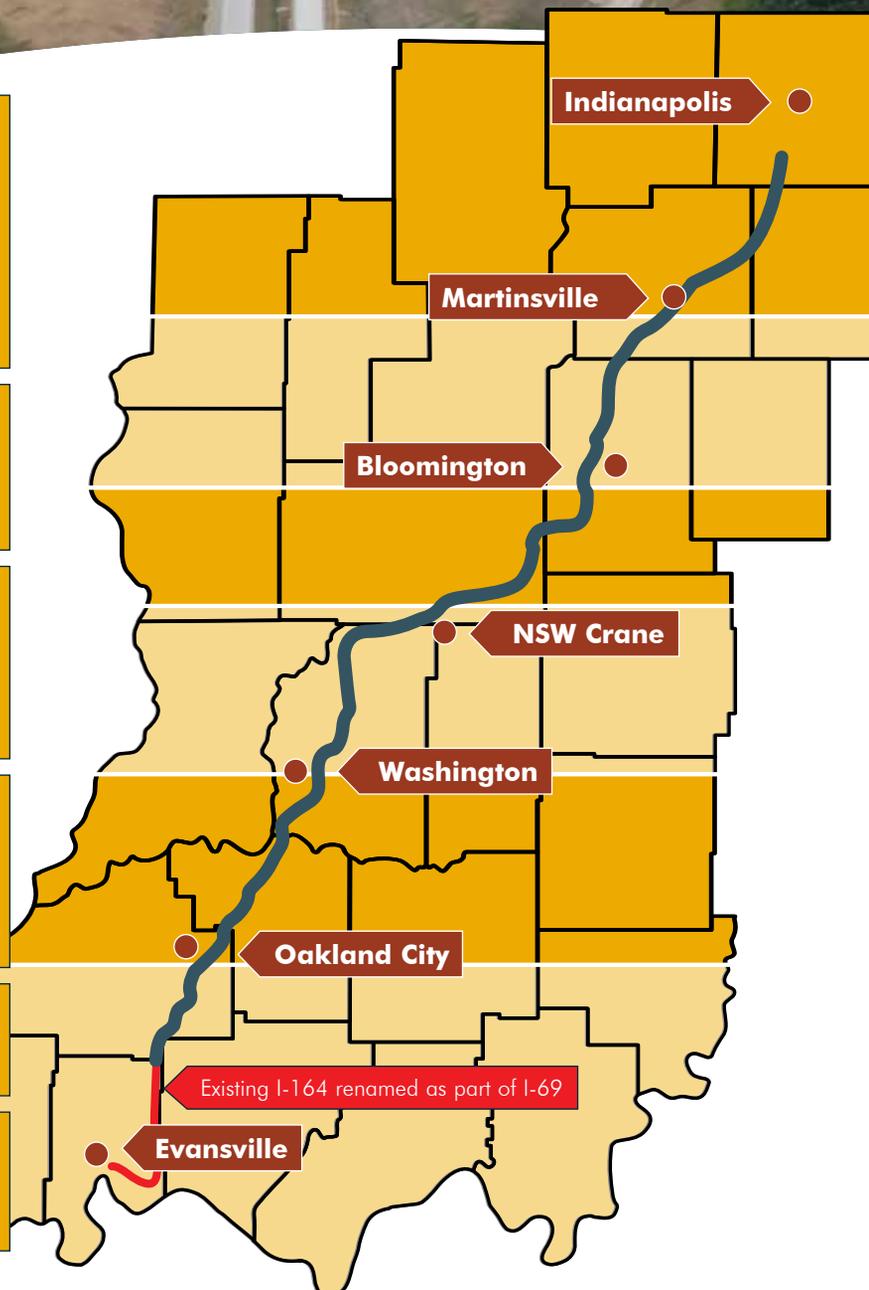
- Approximately 26 miles long
- Opened Nov. 19, 2012
- Sections 1-3 cost: \$642 million
- Purdue University researchers estimate that driving on I-69 between Evansville and NSW Crane saves 38 minutes of driving time

Section 2 – Oakland City to Washington

- Approximately 29 miles long
- Opened Nov. 19, 2012

Section 1 – Evansville to Oakland City

- Approximately 13 miles long
- First two miles of Section 1 opened Sept. 29, 2009
- Opened Nov. 19, 2012



SOURCES: Indiana Department of Transportation; local media reports

Many travelers along Interstate 69 in southwestern Indiana await the typical amenities – restaurants, gasoline stations and more – that will one day appear along certain exits. But while some visual signs are yet to come, the highway is already providing a major business boost.

Residents in Daviess County have been preparing for I-69 for over 10 years. That foresight and community cooperation is how the county has so quickly maximized the economic benefits, says Ron Arnold, executive director of the Daviess County Economic Development Corporation.

He points to a local economic development income tax the county council passed in 2004.

“The council at the time, they wanted to drive the future rather than let it be driven by someone else. They imposed the tax and that allowed us to do a couple projects right off the bat. We built the first building in the technology park (WestGate@Crane),” he notes. “Then we also built a manufacturing building for Olon Industries (in Washington).”

Additionally, the corporation created an economic development foundation and has raised over half a million dollars from the public for a number of projects. Other business investments in the area include Iowa-based Kent Corp.’s Grain Processing Corp. subsidiary, which announced a more than \$70 million expansion at its Daviess County facility. Alliance Barrier Films LLC has also added workers and investments.

Also in the works: a 40,000-square-foot manufacturing spec shell building and railroad cross-dock facility. It will sit on 23 acres on the west side of I-69 that will connect to an east-west CSX rail line.

“If you want to ask anything from the state or federal government, you need to do as much locally as you can,” Arnold declares. “Without I-69 and the promise of I-69, I don’t know the attitude would have been the same. They’re embracing I-69 like it’s a huge gift put at our doorstep, but it is up to us to put our efforts in and use it.”

He adds that WestGate@Crane Technology

Park (located in parts of three counties: Daviess, Greene and Martin) was “corn and bean fields in 2004,” but “today has \$80 to \$90 million in private investment.”

“(Without I-69) the tech park wouldn’t have been approved locally. It was a long-term play, rather than a short-term play,” he concludes. “From where I stand, if it wasn’t for I-69, we’d be looking at probably \$15 million in projects that have been done that wouldn’t have been done.”

A ‘simpler storyline’

Battery Innovation Center (BIC) opened in WestGate@Crane Technology Park in 2013 to create, test and consult on batteries. BIC President David Roberts knows firsthand how much of an impact the interstate has been, as he drives from Indianapolis to work every day.

From getting customers to the company’s doorstep safer to getting its own employees there, he says I-69 has cut valuable drive time from Bloomington to the park. Any reduction on the trip from the Indianapolis International Airport is a benefit as well, Roberts adds.

“The storyline is we’re half an hour more connected than we used to be and when we finally wrap up the I-69 experience, we should

be another half an hour closer. There’s a safety factor in getting to us. The chief engineer and I live up in Indianapolis and make the commute every day. Not a week goes by that we don’t see an accident on 37. It’s way past time to get this done,” he asserts.

Another factor Roberts points to is recruiting talented workers. Access via I-69 enables potential employees that want to live in a city such as Bloomington to work in a rural setting. It also opens the ability to recruit from Indianapolis and beyond.

“Our recruiting is going to be much easier,” he observes. “The reality of it is some folks, especially a younger employee base, like the opportunity to live in Bloomington and what that has to offer.”

Roberts anticipates seeing even more growth around the new I-69 and contends that rural economic development is not only possible but lucrative.

“I think it speaks to the overall dedication to growth and investment that you can have high-tech, growth-oriented rural Indiana. That culture that’s being created there and being encouraged, I think that growth begets growth,” he says. “We’re going to see this snowball picking up steam as we go.”

Former Gov. Mitch Daniels opens the first sections of the new Interstate 69.



Fast facts:

- Total cost: estimated at \$3 billion, partially funded by Major Moves lease of the Indiana Toll Road
- Total length: 142 miles
- Extends from Evansville to Indianapolis, broken into six sections
- Sections 1-4, from Evansville to Bloomington, are open to traffic
- Section 5, from Bloomington to Martinsville, is currently under construction
- The route for Section 6, from Martinsville to Indianapolis, was selected in March 2016

Section 6 update:

Analysis finds that the chosen route along State Road 37:

- Avoids an estimated 1,379 crashes per year
- Reduces travel time from Martinsville to downtown Indianapolis by 11 minutes
- Reduces travel times from Martinsville to I-69 in northeast Indianapolis by 13 minutes
- Increases wages in the four-county study area by a total of \$1.7 billion over 20 years
- Increases the gross domestic product in the four-county study area by \$2.4 billion over 20 years

RESOURCES: Ron Arnold, Daviess County Economic Development Corporation, at www.dcedc.net | David Roberts, Battery Innovation Center, at www.bicindiana.com