



Chapter 7: Conclusion

INDOT, in cooperation with FHWA, announced on Thursday, September 23, 2004, that **Alternative G-Es has been identified as the Preferred Alternative for the proposed improvements to US 31, from US 30 near Plymouth to US 20 on the south side of South Bend.** Alternative G-Es is a hybrid alternative consisting of a combination of the southern portion of Preliminary Alternative G-C and the northern portion of Preliminary Alternative Es. This alternative was developed in response to many of the comments received on the previously published DEIS.

The purpose of this project is to reduce congestion, improve safety, and improve mobility along US 31 from Plymouth to South Bend. The Preferred Alternative meets the projects purpose and need and the associated performance measures. While the Preferred Alternative has a higher associated total project cost and higher residential and business impacts, it is a better traffic performer and does not exhibit operational problems associated with its interchange at US 20. It also has lower environmental impacts to wetlands and forests and meets the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines that require selection of the “least environmentally damaging practicable alternative”.

FHWA and INDOT are committed to providing a solid, thorough, and beneficial mitigation program. The mitigation recommendations provided in this document will provide lasting benefits to the human and natural environment. It should again be noted that the purpose of this document is to identify potential mitigation measures for the Preferred Alternative G-Es; however, mitigation discussed in this document are not firm commitments. The identified measures will be further examined and developed, where appropriate, during the final design of the Preferred Alternative.

Once the Preferred Alternative Mitigation Package (PAMP) has been provided to the Resource Agencies, a 60-day comment period will begin. Agency comments on the PAMP will then be considered for inclusion in the FEIS. Once the FEIS is published, a comment period will again be offered on the project’s mitigation prior to FHWA’s issuance of the Record of Decision.