



Interstate 69 Evansville IN-Henderson KY Bridge

Attn: Mr. Jim Poturalski, Project Leader, Indiana DOT
Ohio River Crossing I-69 ORX

Attn: Mr. Marshall Carrier, KYTC Project Manager
Ohio River Crossing I-69 ORX

1970 Barrett Ct. Ste. 100
Henderson KY 42420

Dear Gentlemen:

We, at Ride Illinois, are writing to you at the recommendation of Administrator Mayela Sosa of the Indiana office of the Federal Highway Administration. ***The purpose of this letter is to call your attention to serious issues pertaining to the planned Interstate 69 bridge over the Ohio River between Henderson, Kentucky and Evansville, Indiana.***

Ride Illinois is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving bicycling conditions throughout Illinois. We are the advocate for all Illinois bicyclists, promoting bicycle access, education, and safety. Our organization was incorporated in 1992 as the League of Illinois Bicyclists and re-branded as Ride Illinois in 2015. Our mission remains the same.

Ride Illinois proudly support Indiana Trails' campaign to include separated, protected bicycle-pedestrian multi-use pathways on the proposed \$1.5 billion Interstate-69 Bridge Project (I-69 ORX) between Evansville and Henderson--just as we see on dozens of other major bridges around North America.

Ride Illinois members enjoy cycling all over the Midwest. Southern Indiana is high on the list of destinations due to its rolling hills, quaint towns, and abundance of parks and forests. Therefore, our organization supports the call for adding protected bike/ped infrastructure to the I-69 bridge.

Working Statewide for Better Bicycling

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As far back as 2006, there were 22 documented interstate highway bridges in the United States with protected bicycle-pedestrian accommodations, per the League of American Bicyclists and the Missouri Bicycle & Pedestrian Federation. Our research shows many additions to that list in 2020 in the form of interstate and non-interstate major bridges.

The US-54 bridge over the Missouri River in Jefferson City, MO is a notable success story similar to the I-69 bridge. The northbound bridge has a cantilevered bicycle and pedestrian lane opened in April 2011. It is used in both directions for river viewing and access to the Katy Trail State Park. Without that improvement, there is no safe infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians to cross the Missouri River for many miles in either direction. The improvement was applauded by residents, business owners, elected officials, and business owners.

Surveying American bridges, we find major structures of varying designs with protected multi-use pathways in places like Charleston SC, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Kansas City, Detroit, Tennessee-Arkansas, Virginia Beach/Norfolk, Portland OR, New York, Montreal, the Virginia Capital Trail, San Francisco-Oakland, West Newton PA, and elsewhere.

Ride Illinois is asking for your attention in re-assessing one of the most expensive public works projects in recent Indiana-Kentucky history. This re-assessment is requested in the name of **safety and for ease-of-access to non-motorized travelers** crossing the Ohio River.

We understand that current planning for the bridge **does not** include the presence of safe, separate, protected bicycle/pedestrian accommodations adjoining the bridge structure and its approaches, and there is minimal indication that participating state departments of transportation have thoughtfully, proactively, aggressively advocated for such accommodations—such as they did in the case of the Madison-Milton U.S. 421 Bridge, or the Louisville-Jeffersonville East End George Rogers Clark Bridge. **(These are two milestone accomplishments, of which Indiana and Kentucky should be justifiably proud!)**

Rather, plan alternatives suggest car/truck-only utilization of the planned bridge, and of any remaining of the two currently-existing older U.S. 41 bridges. This is in contrast to dozens of designs nationally where we see that interstates, freeways and major thoroughfares have separate, protected bike-ped accommodations on bridges.

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Current planning for the I-69 bridge flies in the face of multiple design/construction recommendations nationally.

As national tourist routes such as the US Bicycle Route System #37 from Chicago to Kentucky and points south--and Adventure Cycling Association routes, along with a possible connector to the American Discovery Trail--consider limited safe ways to cross the Ohio River in Southwest Indiana and Western Kentucky, decisions must be made in terms of which routes to recommend to travelers. Difficulties in safely crossing the Ohio between Louisville and the Mississippi River present obvious barriers to bicycle tourists, as well as to local and visiting pedestrians. Placing bicyclists and pedestrians upon older-style bridges such as those west of Louisville puts them shoulder-to-door handle with trucks and autos, and at elevated portions of such bridges, subject to wind gusts that create dangerous loss of control and potential collisions with vehicles.

Numerous best practice design standards at the national/federal levels (USDOT, AASHTO, etc.) repeatedly recommend the incorporation of bicycle-pedestrian accommodations within such infrastructure--and in fact, numerous bridge projects around the U.S either have or are about to have such accommodations.

Two major, creative examples in Indiana and Kentucky are the previously-mentioned reconstruction of the historic U.S. 421 bridge over the Ohio between Madison, Indiana and Milton, Kentucky with its new separate bicycle-pedestrian features, and, the recently-constructed George Rogers Clark Bridge over the Ohio ("East End Bridge") connecting the east suburbs of Jeffersonville IN and Louisville, and also with a separate multi-use pathway to be connected to local trails. ***Given the national and international implications of Interstate-69, we ask the same for the I-69 bridge.***

Indiana Trails notes that the Sagamore Parkway Bridge over the Wabash River between Lafayette IN and W. Lafayette has been reconstructed to include a new separate multi-use pathway intended to connect with local trails, as is the case with the U.S. 150 bridge in downtown Terre Haute.

A new car/truck-only bridge between Evansville and Henderson will not only perpetuate auto dependency and traffic congestion--a stated concern of USDOT--but will add to air pollution in the Ohio River Valley, which is historically prone to heightened particulate emissions levels,

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depending upon seasons and weather conditions--and restrict mobility of citizens using non-motorized means of transport in Kentucky and Indiana, and those touring our states from other regions of the U.S. Tourist access to dozens of amenities on both sides of the Ohio River will be hampered, and it will be harder to reach not only Evansville/Henderson, but also U.S. Bicycle Route #76, and, ironically Kentucky's original "Trail Town" of Dawson Springs.

A brand new \$1.5 billion bridge with no bicycle/pedestrian accommodation makes a sad statement to thousands of cyclists and walkers/hikers: "You aren't that important." (Particularly in light of the \$1.1 billion cost of the Louisville East End Bridge.) Furthermore, the lack of bike/ped access essentially forces one to travel across the bridge by motor vehicle. Climate change and adult and childhood obesity are two major issues that require collective action. Providing infrastructure so that cyclists and pedestrians can safely cross the Ohio River along I-69 is both practical and logical. We urge the Federal Highway Administration to incorporate bike/ped infrastructure into this project.

As one coordinator of a new statewide trail in Indiana stated matter-of-factly, ***"Shouldn't every bridge have bike and hike accommodations?"***

Users of bicycle-pedestrian pathways around the U.S. are increasing in quantity as the numbers of trails and greenways are on the upswing. (Along with said budgets). During the Covid-19 pandemic, bicycle sales have gone through the roof, and trails have been forced to close due to overwhelming popularity. Preventing pathway users from safely crossing major waterways in population centers runs counter to the increased citizen use of such corridors that we see, and counter to the public pronouncements by Kentucky and Indiana promoting outdoor exercise, tourism, local economic development, physical, mental and emotional health, and the interconnectedness and accessibility of trails and pathways.

We ask that adequate safe bicycle-pedestrian facilities be included in the final design of the I-69 bridge in accordance with best practice design standards recommended nationally, and in accordance with multiple other successful bridge bike-ped projects nationwide.

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We hereby request that Kentucky and Indiana halt planning for I-69 ORX until the partnership examines all bicycle-pedestrian accommodations on major bridge structures in the U.S. and North America whereby such accommodations have already been put in place, or are in various stages of planning.

If citizens can cross numerous major bridges along Virginia, Missouri, Kansas or Oregon waterways on protected pathways, then surely Indiana and Kentucky citizens--as well as our out-of-state visitors--deserve as much and more.

Thank you for your immediate attention and very best regards.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave Simmons", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dave Simmons
Executive Director, Ride Illinois

Cc: Mayela Sosa, Administrator, FHWA



Below is a partial list of tourism amenities near Evansville IN and Henderson KY within range of the ORX-69 Bridge that are of potential interest to bicyclists and pedestrians. Numerous recreational and historic sites too numerous to mention are not included on this list:

Indiana:

Downtown Evansville
Angel Mounds St. Historic Site
Evansville Trails
Warrick Trails
LST-325 Ship
Burdette Park
O'Day Discovery Lodge
Eagle Slough Nature Preserve
Ashumbala Nature Preserve
University of Evansville
University of Southern Indiana
Mesker Park Zoo/Amphitheater
Wesselman Park and Woods
American Discovery Trail
U.S. Bicycle Route #37
New Harmony State Historical Site
Harmonie State Park
Hovey Lake State Fish/Wildlife Area
Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial
Lincoln State Park
Holiday World
Interlake State Recreation Area
Blue Grass State Fish/Wildlife Area
Oakland City University
Ohio River Scenic Railway
Ohio River Scenic Byway

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Kentucky:

J.J. Audubon State Park
J.J. Audubon Nature Preserve
Audubon Wetlands Trail
Downtown Henderson
Green River State Forest
Ellis Park
Deer Creek Lodge
Sebree Spring Park
Farmer and Frenchman Winery
Lake Venus
Higginson-Henry Wildlife Management Area
Henderson Community College
Murray State U.--Henderson
Earle C. Clements Job Corps Center
Columbia Sportswear Distribution Center
Dawson Springs, Kentucky's first "Trail Town", and Pennyrile Forest State Resort Park are approximately one hour south
U.S. Bicycle Route #76 , the TransAmerica/BikeCentennial Route, traverses Kentucky east-west crossing I-69 at Sebree, 19 miles south of Henderson
U.S. Bicycle Route #23 travels south from #76.
Underground Railroad Route--Adventure Cycling Association (ACA)
Madisonville Community College
Glema Mahr Center for the Arts

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