

SUMMARY

1. Federal Highway Administration

Administrative Action Environmental Statement

Draft

Final

Section 4(f) Statement attached

2. Contacts

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3. Brief Description of the Proposed Action

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are proposing to construct a multi-lane, interstate highway of approximately 120 miles that travels in a southwest-northeast direction from southwest of Benoit near State Route 1 (SR 1) in Bolivar County to east of Robinsonville near SR 304 in Tunica County, Mississippi. The project, located in several Mississippi Delta counties in the northwest part of the state, is identified as Section of Independent Utility Number 11 (SIU 11) of the national Interstate 69 (I-69) Corridor.

4. Significant Actions Proposed by Others

The I-69 Corridor has been defined by the United States Congress to commence in Port Huron, Michigan/Sarnia, Ontario, Canada and terminate in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) in Texas at the United States/Mexico border, a distance of over 1,600 miles. This I-69 Corridor, which was originally known as Corridor 18, was designated by the United States Congress as a High Priority Corridor of National Significance in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). It was further defined and formalized in the National Highway System Designation Act of 1995, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

Since this study on SIU 11 began, other portions of I-69 have been undergoing work ranging from planning and environmental studies to construction activities. The adjacent sections include SIU 10 to the north and SIU 12 to the south. SR 304 in De Soto County has been relocated and built to interstate standards between I-55 and US 61. SIU 10 includes the portion of relocated SR 304 in De Soto County between I-55 and the first interchange east of SR 3 as well as a spur to the south of that interchange connecting the relocated SR 304 with the old two-lane section of SR 304. From the relocated SR 304 interchange to slightly north of the spur's intersection with old SR 304, the design of the spur meets interstate standards. SIU 10 is open to traffic. SIU 12 begins at SR 1 near Benoit in Bolivar County and proceeds to the southwest across the Mississippi River along the alignment of the Great River Bridge project into Arkansas and ends near McGehee, Arkansas. A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) has been completed for SIU 12 and a Record of Decision (ROD) has been issued.

Significant actions by others that relate to this project include the improvements currently underway to the Tunica Airport, the continued development and promotion of the gaming industry in Tunica County, and the continued improvements to the highway system.

5. Summary of Major Alternatives

The major alternatives in this study are:

- No-Build Alternative

- Transportation System Management (TSM)
- Other Modes
- Build Alternatives

The *No-Build Alternative* would retain the existing roadway network. The No-Build Alternative would avoid the negative impacts that highway construction can cause to residences and businesses, wetlands, streams, forests, cultural resources, and other resources. The No-Build Alternative would not meet the project purpose of providing a safe, efficient, and cost effective transportation facility that would meet design year traffic flow and promote economic development within the Mississippi Delta region. Moreover, the No-Build Alternative would leave a gap in the construction of the national I-69 corridor.

Transportation System Management (TSM) is the application of minor construction, operational, and institutional actions to make productive and cost-effective use of existing transportation facilities and services. None of these strategies fulfill the project's purpose and need of building an Interstate highway.

Other modes of transportation would complement rather than replace the proposed facility. Interchanges for the proposed project would be provided in reasonable proximity to the existing railroads, airports, and water ports. These intermodal connections would further enhance the opportunity for economic development in and near the project area. However, as an alternative other modes of transportation would not address the purpose and need of the project.

Build alternative corridors were investigated and refined in a three-tiered process, beginning with many broad corridors and narrowing the corridors down to reasonable and feasible alternatives. Three alternatives were selected for detailed study: a Western Alternative, a Central Alternative, and an Eastern Alternative (see **Figure S-1**). Due to the length of the project, each alternative is divided into a southern, middle, and northern section that have approximately common termini. These three sections of the project are consistently used through the remainder of the FEIS. The Southern Section begins on SIU 12 near SR 1 in Bolivar County and extends northeast to the New Africa Road Interchange on the Clarksdale Bypass in Coahoma County. The Middle Section begins at the northern terminus of the Southern Section and extends north to end on US 61 approximately four miles south of the Coahoma-Tunica County Line. The Northern Section

begins at the northern terminus of the Middle Section and extends northeast to end east of Robinsonville on the SIU 10 Spur connecting old SR 304 with new SR 304.

The Central Alternative in the Southern Section was developed to use as much of existing US 61 as possible from Benoit to Clarksdale. In places where the Central Alternative in the Southern Section is near US 61 but on new location, the new location is necessary to avoid environmental impacts; cultural resources; and relocation of homes, businesses, churches, cemeteries, or other important community facilities. In the Southern Section, the Western Alternative and Eastern Alternative are on new location. The Middle Section has only one alternative, and that alternative mainly uses US 61. The Northern Section has three alternatives, with the Western Alternative using a portion of US 61 while the Central Alternative and Eastern Alternative are on new location. The right-of-way width for each alternative would be approximately 450 feet on new location. Alternatives using the existing US 61 alignment would utilize the existing right-of-way as well as approximately 200 feet of additional right-of-way.

In addition to these sections and alternatives, SR 8 would be widened to four lanes between Cleveland and Rosedale. New roads, called spurs, would also be provided at some interchanges for connectivity to the existing road system.

Western Alternative

Southern Section

In the southern section, the Western Alternative begins at SIU 12, Great River Bridge-Eutaw Landing, and proceeds east to Lake Bolivar before turning southeast to cross SR 1 south of Benoit and just north of Ray Brooks School. The alternative crosses SR 448 north of the point where the alignment of SR 448 changes from north-south to east-west. From SR 448, the Western Alternative proceeds east before turning to the north several miles northwest of Shaw. The Western Alternative continues north and parallels US 61 to the west. It bypasses Boyle, Cleveland, Merigold, and Shelby on new alignment. It then turns northeast and crosses SR 444. The Western Alternative continues in a northeast direction, past Duncan, Alligator, and Rena Lara. It then proceeds east to cross US 61 and connects to New Africa Road at the Clarksdale Bypass.

Middle Section (Western, Central, and Eastern Alternatives)

The Western, Central, and Eastern Alternatives are identical for the middle section of the study area. The middle section begins at the south end of the New Africa Road Interchange and ends approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line. The alternatives would use the current Clarksdale Bypass south and east of Clarksdale. Near Lyon, the alternatives parallel US 49/US 61 to the east to avoid existing development. They rejoin existing US 61 north of Eagles Nest Road and end approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line, where the three major alternatives split in the northern section.

Northern Section

The Western Alternative continues northeast on existing US 61 from four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line to just south of Crenshaw Road. It then continues to the northeast on new location and crosses Dubbs Road, SR 4, Prichard Road, and Arkabutla Dam Road. The Western Alternative then turns east and crosses Kirby Road and SR 3. It turns north to cross the two-lane SR 304 and end on the SIU 10 Spur (SIU 11 project north terminus; SIU 10 south terminus).

Central Alternative

Southern Section

One of the objectives of the Central Alternative was to use as much of existing US 61 as possible. In places, the Central Alternative is on new location to avoid environmental impacts, cultural resources, and relocation of homes, businesses, church, cemeteries, or other important community facilities. The Central Alternative begins at the SIU 12 terminus and proceeds east to Lake Bolivar before turning southeast to cross SR 1 south of Ray Brooks School. It continues to the southeast and crosses several water bodies, including Lake Vista and Bushy Lake. Because a relatively large quantity of wetlands was identified within this initial segment, another option was developed in this area to minimize wetland impacts, relocations, and costs. The new option proceeds southeast across Lake Bolivar, crosses SR 1 north of Scott at Lake Vista, and then turns east to join the original alignment near SR 448. This second option is also part of the Eastern Alternative. East of SR 448, the Central Alternative parallels SR 448 to the north and parallels the Western Alternative. Several miles northwest of Shaw the Central Alternative turns north, joins the Western Alternative south of SR 446, and separates from it after crossing SR 8. The Central Alternative turns northeast and joins US 61 near Merigold. It continues along US 61 to

the Coahoma County line near Bobo with the exception of the portion between Shelby and Hushpuckena where the Central Alternative is slightly east of US 61. The Central Alternative then proceeds on new location west of existing US 61. South of Clarksdale, the Central Alternative turns east and crosses US 61. It then connects to the New Africa Road at the Clarksdale Bypass (on same alignment as the Western Alternative).

Middle Section

There is only one alternative for the middle section, which extends from the south end of the Clarksdale Bypass to approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line. See the Middle Section of the Western Alternative for more detail.

Northern Section

The Central Alternative continues northeast on new location from approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line to just south of Crenshaw Road; it then turns north and joins the Western Alternative prior to crossing Dubbs Road. The alternative remains concurrent with the Western Alternative to the end of the project after crossing the two-lane SR 304 on the SIU 10 Spur (SIU 11 project end; SIU 10 project terminus).

Eastern Alternative

Southern Section

The Eastern Alternative begins at the SIU 12 terminus and proceeds southeast across Lake Bolivar. It crosses SR 1 north of Scott at Lake Vista and then turns east to join the Central Alternative before crossing SR 448. Near the crossing of the Bogue Phalia, the Eastern Alternative and the Central Alternative separate, with the Eastern Alternative continuing east. After crossing US 61, the Eastern Alternative turns north paralleling US 61 to the east. After crossing SR 8 the Eastern Alternative takes a slight northeast turn and crosses into Sunflower County where it continues to the north and passes west of the State Penal Farm at Parchman. It continues north into Coahoma County. East of Bobo, it turns northeast and then connects to the Clarksdale Bypass prior to New Africa Road. The Roundaway–Tutwiler Spur is an important element of this alternative. Since a major purpose of an eastern corridor alternative is to serve the eastern portion of the Delta along US 49 and SR3, this spur is essential to provide a connection to the east.

Middle Section

There is only one alternative for the middle section, which extends from the south end of the Clarksdale Bypass to approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line. See the Middle Section of the Western Alternative for more detail.

Northern Section

The Eastern Alternative is concurrent with the Central Alternative from four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica county line to north of Crenshaw Road where the Eastern Alternative turns northeast to cross Dubbs Road, SR 4, Prichard Road, and SR 3. After crossing SR 3, it proceeds in a northerly path and crosses Arkabutla Dam Road. The Eastern Alternatives makes a slight turn to the northeast and crosses the two-lane SR 304 to end on the SIU 10 Spur (SIU 11 project end; SIU 10 project terminus).

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) addresses the feasibility and potential environmental impacts of each of the alternative studied in detail. In addition, this FEIS addresses the potential for mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the alternatives.

6. Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative is a modified version of the Central Alternative, which uses as much of existing US 61 as possible. The following text describes the Preferred Alternative by section:

Southern Section

The Preferred Alternative begins at the SIU 12 terminus and proceeds southeast across Lake Bolivar. It crosses SR 1 north of Scott at Lake Vista and then turns east before crossing SR 448. As discussed in Section 2.4.3.2, this crossing avoids and minimizes impacts. After crossing SR 448, the Preferred Alternative parallels SR 448 to the north until several miles northwest of Shaw where it turns to the north. This portion of the Preferred Alternative is identical to the Central Alternative, including the revised alignment at Lake Bolivar. After crossing SR 446, the Preferred Alternative generally proceeds northeast and crosses SR 8 on the west side of Cleveland. Northwest of Renova, the Preferred Alternative turns east to join US 61 near Merigold. It follows existing US 61, passing west of Merigold and Mound Bayou, and then passing east of Winstonville and Shelby. From Shelby to Hushpuckena, the Preferred Alternative

is on new location slightly to the east of US 61. At Hushpuckena, it rejoins US 61 and continues north along US 61 to the Coahoma County line near Bobo. It then proceeds on new location west of existing US 61. South of Clarksdale, it turns east and follows the US 61 Clarksdale Bypass.

SR 8 Improvements

The Preferred Alternative would include the widening of SR 8 from Cleveland to Rosedale. SR 8 would have a five-lane section extended west of Cleveland to a point west of the SR 8-Cleveland Interchange, where the roadway would transition to a four-lane divided section and remain this way until the eastern edge of Pace. At that point, the roadway would transition to a five-lane section through the built-up area of Pace. At the western edge of Pace, the roadway would then transition back to a four-lane divided section and remain this way to a point slightly east of Rosedale where it would again transition to a five-lane section and remain this way to the intersection with SR 1.

Middle Section

In the middle section, the Preferred Alternative begins at the south end of the New Africa Road Interchange and ends approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line. It would use the current Clarksdale Bypass south and east of Clarksdale. Near Lyon, the Preferred Alternative would proceed east and north to parallel US 49/US 61 on new location to avoid existing development. It rejoins existing US 49/US 61 north of Eagles Nest Road to approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line, where the northern section begins.

Northern Section

The Preferred Alternative continues northeast on new location from approximately four miles south of the Coahoma/Tunica County Line to just south of Crenshaw Road; it then turns north prior to crossing Dubbs Road. The alternative turns northeast near Arkabutla Dam Road. The Preferred Alternative proceeds northeast and crosses SR 3. South of the two-lane SR 304, the alternative turns north to cross SR 304 and end on the SIU 10 Spur (SIU 11 project end; SIU 10 project terminus).

The selection of the Preferred Alternative was based on careful analysis of natural, cultural, social, and economic impacts on all alternatives and on public comments received during the study. Appropriate mitigation measures and commitments have been developed for the Preferred

Alternative and are highlighted on the Environmental Commitments sheets that accompany the FEIS. Progress on the Environmental Commitments sheets will be tracked during design and construction.

Subsequent to selection of the Preferred Alternative, the project was reviewed to consider the applicability of recent guidance on major projects receiving federal funding. Construction of the proposed I-69 SUI 11 is envisioned to be phased over the next 19 years. Therefore, the project was determined to consist of five distinct and operationally independent phases. The five phases (sections) are detailed in Appendix G and summarized as follows:

- Section 1: 18.465 miles, SR 304 Interchange to South of SR 4 Interchange
Anticipated Letting Date: 2016
- Section 2: 31.549 miles, South of SR 4 Interchange to North of SR 6 Interchange
Anticipated Letting Date: 2022
- Section 3: 48.160 miles, North of SR 6 Interchange to South of SR 446 Interchange
Anticipated Letting Date: 2019
- Section 4: 22.807 miles, South of SR 446 Interchange to Great River Bridge
Anticipated Letting Date: 2026
- Section 5: 17.764 miles, SR 1 at Rosedale to Cleveland
Anticipated Letting Date: 2029

7. Summary of Impacts

The project would have some unavoidable impacts, regardless of the build alternative. As summarized in **Table S-1**, the primary impacts would include relocations, wetlands, streams, floodplains, and farmlands. **Table S-2** summarizes the impacts by section and alternative.

In the Southern Section, the Preferred Alternative would minimize impacts to streams, wetlands, and vegetation. In addition, the Preferred Alternative would serve the greatest percentage of the minority and low-income population, addressing a key component of the project's purpose and need. In an effort to reduce potential impacts, this alternative was developed to use as much of existing US 61 as possible. Most of the cities within the project study area are located along US 61, and therefore, the Preferred Alternative would have the greatest number of residential relocations and noise impacts. The Eastern Alternative in the Southern Section would minimize

residential and noise impacts. However, the Eastern and Western Alternatives would have greater impacts to streams. The Western Alternative would have the greatest total impact on wetlands and vegetation. Although the Western Alternative would minimize residential relocations, it would also serve a much lower percentage of the minority and low-income population.

In the Northern Section, the Preferred Alternative would minimize impact to wetlands. The Preferred Alternative and Western Alternative would have similar impacts to streams and hazardous material sites, while the Eastern Alternative would have the least impact in these categories. The Western Alternative would have the least residential relocations and floodplain encroachment.

With regards to the length of time that has elapsed since the original data collection and comparison of alternatives as presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, this document has been reviewed in light of current (2010) conditions. Based on this review, the information presented, including the basis for the selection of the preferred alternative and the impacts of that alternative, remain valid. The impacts resulting from modifications to the preferred alternative have been incorporated into the document.

Table S-1 Summary of Impacts												
Impact Category	Southern Section			SR 8			Middle Section	Northern Section			Total for Preferred Alternative ⁶	Change in Preferred Alternative Impacts Since Public Hearing ⁷
	Western	Central	Eastern	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D	Common	Western	Central	Eastern		
<i>Human Environment</i>												
Farmland (acres)	4,178	4,133	4,117	478	492	463	1,023	2,603	2,574	2,440	8,193	-29
Residential Relocations	16	25	16	18	13	18	3	7	8	20	54	+1
Business Relocations	1	1	2	3	2	3	1	0	0	0	5	+2
Noise Receptors	2	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	+1
Historic Sites (Adverse Effect)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1
Archaeological Sites (Potential Impact)	4	6	2	1	1	1	2	6	0	4	9	-3
Hazardous Material Sites	0	0	0	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	-10
Minority and Low-Income Population Served by I-69 Within 2 mile radius of Interchange	20,293	24,130	16,573	N/A	N/A	N/A	20,970	370	370	370	45,470	-611
<i>Natural Environment</i>												
Perennial Streams – Number Crossed (Total Feet of Impact)	12 (7,300)	10 (5,165)	14 (9,880)	5 (570)	5 (570)	5 (570)	4 (3,240)	13 (3,775)	13 (3,970)	8 (3,585)	32 (12,945)	None
303 (d) Streams (number) ⁸	7	10	11	0	0	0	1	11	11	12	22	See Footnote
Wetlands (acres) ¹	122	18	63	2	1	2	20	61	28	32	(106) ⁴	+104
Floodplains (acres)	1,103	1,002	847	25	22	25	88	162	567	334	1,682	+414
Vegetation/Wildlife Habitat ² (acres)	210	104	118	59	53	49	5	31	17	16	175	-5

Table S-1 Summary of Impacts												
Impact Category	Southern Section			SR 8			Middle Section	Northern Section			Total for Preferred Alternative ⁶	Change in Preferred Alternative Impacts Since Public Hearing ⁷
	Western	Central	Eastern	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D	Common	Western	Central	Eastern		
<i>Engineering/Utilities</i>												
Transmission Line Impact Number of Crossings (length in feet)	2 (955)	2 (1,470)	6 (3,140)	1 (300)	1 (300)	1 (300)	2 (310)	4 (1,115)	4 (1,130)	4 (1,450)	9 (3,210)	None
Gas Pipeline Impact Number of Crossings (length in feet)	8 (19,030)	8 (13,050)	10 (16,595)	3 (3,330)	3 (3,330)	3 (3,330)	3 (16,860)	12 (38,825)	11 (61,985)	8 (44,090)	25 (95,225)	None
2001 Estimated Construction (millions) ³	537.9	473.6	528.8	55.3	54.1	54.1	91.9	315.9	336.8	306.7	956.4	2001 Estimated Computed Costs
2010 Estimated Construction (millions) ³	701.9	618.0	690.0	72.2	70.6	70.6	119.9	412.2	439.5	400.2	1247.9	2001 Costs Updated to 2010 Costs
Conservation Easements ⁵	11	6	11	5	5	5	0	4	6	11	17	None

¹ Wetland impacts in Southern Section are based on revised alignment for Central Alternative near Benoit

² Vegetation/Wildlife Habitat consists of: Bottomland Hardwood Forest, Upland Scrub/Shrub, and Freshwater Scrub/Shrub communities.

³ See Appendix G for Preferred Alternative cost estimate computations and the cost factors used for updating the cost estimates for the other DEIS alternatives to year 2010 (construction costs in table include ROW).

⁴ In the fall of 2005, an additional field assessment of the wetland impacts within the right of way limits was made. Based on that assessment the 68 acres of impacts (18 + 2 + 20 + 28) was increased to 106 acres for the FEIS to reflect updated information. Similar increases would be anticipated for the other alternatives. See Page 4-47 if additional information is needed on the field assessment conducted on the Preferred Alternative.

⁵ Conservation Easements include Wetland Reserve Program Easements, Farm Service Agency Easements, Ducks Unlimited Easements, and Conservation Agreements

⁶ Impacts Category Totals are based on adding the impacts for the Southern Section Central, SR 8 - Alt D, the Middle Section, and the Northern Section Central.

⁷ Difference in the Preferred Alternative impacts from the impacts presented in Table S-1 of the Draft EIS for the South Section Central Alternative (SSCA) + Middle Section + North Section Central Alternative (NSCA)

⁸ Number of streams shown in table were identified in 2004. Additional TMDL Reports have been compiled since 2004. See Tables 4-14 and 4-15.

Source: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.; Neel-Schaffer, Inc.; 2005-2010

**Table S-2
Summary Comparison of Alternative Combinations**

Impact Category	SSWA ¹ + Middle Section +			SSCA ¹ + Middle Section +			SSEA ¹ + Middle Section +		
	NSWA	NCSA	NSEA	NSWA	NCSA	NSEA	NSWA	NCSA	NSEA
Farmland (acres)	8,296	8,267	8,133	8,251	8,208	8,088	8,235	8,206	8,072
Residential Relocations	44	45	57	53	54	66	41	42	54
Business Relocations	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6
Noise Receptors	2	2	2	5	5	5	2	2	2
Historic Sites (Adverse Effect)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Archaeological Sites (Potential Impact)	13	7	11	15	9	13	11	5	9
Hazardous Material Sites	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Minority and Low-Income Population Served by I-69	41,633	41,633	41,633	46,081	45,470	46,081	37,913	37,913	37,913
Perennial Streams (Crossed)	34	34	29	32	32	27	36	36	31
Perennial Streams (Total Feet of Impact)	14,885	15,080	14,695	12,750	12,945	12,560	17,465	17,660	17,275
303 (d) Streams (number) ⁵	19	19	20	22	22	23	23	23	24
Wetlands (acres)	205	172	178	101	68 (106) ²	72	146	113	117
Floodplains (acres)	1,378	1,783	1,550	1,277	1,682	1,449	1,122	1,527	1,294
Vegetation/Wildlife Habitat (acres)	295	281	280	189	175	203	207	189	188

**Table S-2
Summary Comparison of Alternative Combinations**

Impact Category	SSWA ¹ + Middle Section +			SSCA ¹ + Middle Section +			SSEA ¹ + Middle Section +		
	NSWA	NSCA	NSEA	NSWA	NSCA	NSEA	NSWA	NSCA	NSEA
Transmission Line Impact Number of Crossings (length in feet)	9 (2,680)	9 (2,695)	9 (3,015)	9 (3,195)	9 (3,210)	9 (3,530)	13 (4,865)	13 (4,880)	13 (5,200)
Gas Pipeline Impact Number of Crossings (length in feet)	26 (78,045)	25 (101,205)	22 (83,310)	26 (72,065)	25 (95,225)	22 (77,330)	28 (75,610)	27 (98,770)	24 (80,875)
2001 Estimated Construction (millions) ³	\$999.8	\$1,020.7	\$990.6	\$935.5	\$956.4	\$926.3	\$990.7	\$1,011.6	\$981.5
2010 Estimated Construction (millions) ³	\$1,304.5	\$1,331.8	\$1,292.5	\$1,220.6	\$1,247.9	\$1,208.6	\$1,292.7	\$1,319.9	\$1,280.7
Conservation Easements ⁴	20	22	27	15	17	22	20	22	27

Key: SSWA = Southern Section, Western Alt.; SSCA = Southern Section, Central Alt.; SSEA = Southern Section, Eastern Alt.
NSWA = Northern Section, Western Alt.; NSCA = Northern Section Central Alt.; NSEA = Northern Section, Eastern Alt.

¹ All impacts and totals in the Southern Section are based on SR 8 Alternative D; SSCA + Middle Section + NSCA is the Preferred Alternative

² In the fall of 2005, an additional field assessment of the wetland impacts within the right of way was made. Based on that assessment, the 68 acres of impacts shown in the Draft EIS became 106 acres for the FEIS. If additional field assessments were made on the other alternatives, increases in impacts would also be expected. See page 4-47 for more information.

³ See Appendix G for additional information on the Preferred Alternative Cost Estimate. Relative to the Draft EIS, the 2001 Cost Estimate for the Preferred Alternative increased by a factor of 1.3048. The 1.3048 factor was used for determining the 2010 cost of the other alternatives. Estimated construction costs in table include ROW.

⁴ Conservation Easements include Wetland Reserve Program Easements, Farm Service Agency Easements, Ducks Unlimited Easements, and Conservation Agreements.

⁵ Number of streams shown in table were identified in 2004. Additional TMDL Reports have been compiled since 2004. See Tables 4-14 and 4-15.

Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc. and Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. 2005-2010

8. Areas of Controversy

With meetings held throughout the project as the primary means of achieving input, the public, local elected officials, and state and Federal agencies were actively involved in the development of the alternatives. Controversy has been limited to discussion of specific alignments.

Since this project is primarily in a rural environment containing major farming operations, farmers have expressed concern about losing their farmland and the access they will have to their farmland that is split by an alternative. To address this concern, alternatives were developed along property lines and major streams. When environmentally possible and economically feasible, grade separation bridges were provided at major county roads and frontage roads were provided.

The build alternatives have been developed with considerable input from citizens and local officials. Particular care has been taken to provide I-69 access to small communities that historically have included minority and low-income populations and non-agricultural industries. Access to I-69 would enhance economic opportunities for these small communities, while minimizing impacts to farming operations and farmland. Alternatives located nearest the populated areas also would minimize effects on wildlife habitat.

9. Other Federal Actions Required

A permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is anticipated to be required for this project under provisions of Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. Section 404 requires the application for and approval of a permit before wetlands or other waters can be dredged or filled. The Clean Water Act requires public notice and review of Section 404 permits as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review. Encroachment into floodways would be coordinated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Involvement with historic properties has been coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). This project will be developed in conformity with provisions of the 1990 Clean Air Act, as amended.

10. Measures to Avoid or Minimize Adverse Impacts

Measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts that could result from the proposed project are described below by category:

Farmland: Mississippi Department of Transportation's (MDOT's) acquisition and relocation policies will be followed and any purchase of land will be based on fair market value. In addition, access will be provided where feasible to farmland parcels that are split by I-69. The alignment for the Preferred Alternative was refined in the Southern Section to further minimize impacts on farming operations.

Environmental Justice: Environmental justice community outreach/meetings will continue for the project.

Relocations: Relocation assistance is in accordance with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646) will be followed.

Traffic: During construction, all local and through traffic will be adequately and safely accommodated. All construction operations will be scheduled to minimize delay to traffic.

Utilities: Construction will be coordinated with affected utility companies. Any disruption to utility service during construction would be minimized by phased adjustments to utility lines.

Noise: For the Preferred Alternative, earthen berms will be considered at one location to mitigate noise and visual impacts. The contractor will comply with all state and local sound control ordinances. Each piece of equipment with internal combustion engines shall be equipped with a muffler. Information on location of I-69 will be provided to local officials so that they can inform developers planning projects in the vicinity of the highway.

Air Quality: During construction, all materials cleared will be removed from the project site and burned or otherwise disposed of in compliance with air quality laws and regulations.

Water Quality: Construction materials will be stored and disposed of such that they are not discharged into or alongside of streams and other water bodies. Through MDOT contact with the MDEQ, construction measures will be determined for minimizing water quality impacts at locations with impaired or monitored water bodies. The TMDL development status for any waterways in the study area will be

identified and evaluated to determine the project's potential effect on restoration efforts in these watersheds. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented and maintained by trained personnel in effort to prevent further degradation of the watersheds and to address TMDL concerns.

Wetlands/Waters of the US: In accordance with Section 404(b)(1) guidelines, all practicable measures will be taken to avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands. For the Preferred Alternative, affected wetlands have been delineated and mapped, and copies of the supporting documentation have been provided to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for field verification. An individual permit from the USACE will be required. Unavoidable wetland/stream impacts will be mitigated by the acquisition and restoration of land within the Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge and/or the O'Keefe Wildlife Management Area.

Floodplain: Bridges, pipes, and box culverts will be designed in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) floodplain impact requirements. Flood studies will be performed as required.

Vegetation and Wildlife: Construction limits will be posted and enforced to minimize impacts to vegetation and wildlife. Best Management Practices will be used to reduce runoff will benefit vegetation and aquatic wildlife. Wildlife crossings will be considered during final design, in coordination with US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and state agencies. Exposed surfaces will be promptly re-vegetated during construction.

Threatened and Endangered Species: In areas where habitat fragmentation is unavoidable, measures to reduce the loss contiguity will be employed. Field surveys have been conducted for pondberry, bald eagle, and the fat pocketbook mussel in potential habitat areas during the appropriate season. The alignment of the Preferred Alternative has been shifted to avoid major populations of pondberry. For the protection of all Federally Listed Species, consultation with the USFWS and the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program will occur prior to construction.

Hazardous Materials: Hazardous material sites that could be potentially affected by the Preferred Alternative have been identified. Any site impacted by the project that is determined to contain hazardous materials will be remediated as required by regulations and MDOT policy.

Archaeology: A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been prepared for the mitigation of adverse affects to eligible archaeological sites. Prior to any construction activity, the terms of the MOA will have been fully completed.

Should cultural resources be discovered during construction, all construction activities will cease, and MDOT's Environmental division will be notified so that the site can be evaluated for the proper action.

Historic Structures: For all standing structures located in the APE, the remainder of the Preferred Alternative has been surveyed and evaluated for eligibility for the NRHP. Consultation has been carried out with the SHPO to determine if there are properties in the APE that would have an adverse effect constituting a constructive use.