**FAQ#1**

**What is the Rethink 65/70 Coalition?**

We are Indianapolis neighborhoods, businesses, organizations, citizens and civic leaders coalesced around a unique opportunity to rethink the current plan to tear-down and rebuild I65/70 through downtown Indianapolis.

**FAQ#2**

**What is the coalition’s vision?**

Our vision is to replace the existing raised interstate with an alternative that creates new economic development capacity that attracts employers and workforce resources with a compelling environment. We urge that funds allocated to the interstate tear-down be invested in an alternative plan to maintain and advance the city and state as preeminent places to live, work, play and visit. Let’s rebuild in a way that provides equal or greater mobility for both commuters and residents. Let’s rebuild it right.

**FAQ#3**

**Why is this so urgent?**

INDOT plans to tear-down and rebuild its 50-year old infrastructure and widen the freeways that cut through the north, east, and ultimately, south sides of downtown. Time is short. INDOT is in the engineering-led decision-making process, and will proceed soon to authorize the demolition and reconstruction of the northeast 65/70 split. This first project will establish the basic template for overall downtown interstate reconstruction.

There is a rapidly narrowing window for affecting project direction before the project is literally cast in concrete for future generations. INDOT plans to issue bid documents to competing contractors in late 2018/early 2019.

**FAQ #4**

**Is this unique to Indianapolis?**

Other major cities in the U.S have been faced with the same question of what to do with highway infrastructure that has outlived its useful life. Their more thoughtful solutions have inspired our coalition to envision alternatives guided by economic development, quality of place, and smart transportation goals.

**FAQ#5**

**What are the alternatives?**

Many communities are tearing-down and replacing their urban interstates with multimodal\* boulevards. The Indianapolis city grid is largely intact except where interrupted by the interstate. By reconnecting the street grid, commuters and residents have multiple opportunities to enter and exit the highway instead of one or two limited ramps that can’t handle peak travel times.

Imagine a multimodal boulevard that provides north/south and east/west crosstown connectivity along the current inner loop interstate alignment. It would be characterized by low speeds, landscaped medians, and multiple connectivity points with the existing street grid. It would include one-way, very low-speed frontage streets separated from through lanes by a landscaped median with on-street parking and wide sidewalks. Development along the frontage streets would range from existing historic residential neighborhoods to mixed-use residential, commercial and retail or corporate offices, depending on location and land use contexts. The new multimodal boulevard might even be less expensive than the proposed INDOT project!

The new multimodal boulevard has a smaller footprint than much of the elevated portions of the existing interstate. New boulevard-facing development can occur on this excess right-of-way, taking advantage of frequent transit, bicycle access and greenways. This large, newfound spatial resource has the potential for high value-capture potential, much like a TIF district.

The multimodal boulevard is envisioned to incorporate park elements such as frequent tree plantings, public art, and an urban bicycle-pedestrian greenway connecting neighborhoods to parks and trails such as the Monon, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, the Canal, Fall Creek and the White River.

There are some good and many bad examples of modern multi-lane boulevards to learn from, regarding walkability, traffic management and safety. Indianapolis could lead the way in making this street typology a national model for placemaking through transportation.

*\* Multimodal: a transportation facility that safely accommodates multiple modes of travel including pedestrians, bicycles, and motorized vehicles (automobiles, transit, local freight) in an integrative/holistic setting commonly referenced as Complete Streets/Context Sensitive Transportation. A multimodal system supports community development patterns characterized by walkability and social equity.*

**FAQ#6**

**How can the multimodal boulevard replace the complicated splits and interchanges to handle commuter traffic?**

Interstate traffic would transition to downtown at Boulevard Circles. The circles would be located at each existing interchange that INDOT plans to replace so they operate as a system. The Boulevard Circles ultimately would connect each of the boulevard’s three legs (four if West Street were included). They would manage and integrate inbound/outbound commuter traffic onto the boulevard for its distribution onto the street grid, thereby eliminating the concentrated entry into, and egress from, the downtown grid that is so problematic today.

The Boulevard Circles are large diameter “smart” traffic circles engineered to handle peak hour traffic volumes by utilizing new signalization technologies that mediate between incoming and through traffic. The incoming interstate spurs either merge onto the circle or pass under it. Local boulevard traffic circulates on a separate pair of lanes from thru traffic lanes.

The two modes, boulevard through traffic and interstate traffic, are merged with que-detecting and balancing signalization (the Smart part) that meters their flow to achieve a relatively high volume but low speed circulating system. The raised median between the two sets of lanes prevents weaving except where controlled by signals.

**FAQ#7**

**How do you accommodate high volumes of traffic that pass through the inner loop?**

INDOT states that 25-35% of the total inner loop traffic is through traffic (traffic originating and terminating beyond the I-465 beltway). We believe that some of that can be incentivized to use an *improved* outer loop that offers similar or improved travel times. Nevertheless, the remaining 65-75% is still a high volume that needs to be accommodated.

We are aware that, even though the proposed boulevard/community grid system is intended to distribute inner loop traffic more efficiently than the current interstate’s spaced ramp system, detailed modeling of traffic distribution could lead to a recommendation that some of the proposed surface boulevard occur above a depressed highway segment serving longer trips within the downtown perimeter. Its purpose would be to prevent overloading the surface boulevard to the effect of unacceptable neighborhood and congestion impacts. Striking the right balance is a priority objective of the proposed independent study.

**FAQ#8**

**How does the Multimodal Boulevard support regional economic development?**

Indianapolis is the central hub of Indiana, (and arguably the Midwest) for manufacturing and logistics, two inextricably integrated industries. Conexus Indiana, a private sector-led initiative, is focused on advanced manufacturing and logistics industries. It ranks Indiana nationally on a report card scale of A-F across nine categories. The state does well in most of those, with an A grade for both manufacturing and logistics health. But Indiana is stuck in the middle for *human capital* with a C grade. The report card emphasizes that human capital is the most important factor in company location decisions. How does that consideration inform reconstruction of the inner loop?

The interstate inner and outer loops and the spokes between them are important to both logistics (movement of goods) and to how they affect the quality of place that attracts and retains the human capital that is foundational to advanced manufacturing. Merely accommodating traffic without considering how that affects livability is not enough.

The attraction and retention of a technically competent workforce, the educators that train and mentor them, and the sought-out research teams that drive innovation is highly related to quality of life and quality of place. Such talent is highly mobile, going to places that aggregate talent in all fields by quality of place measures, some important ones being livability, social opportunity, diversity and mobility.

The Multimodal Boulevard vision is based on a balance between transportation and quality of place as a win-win for these two interdependent and mutually inclusive imperatives. The Rethink 65/70 Coalition believes we must redefine project goals. The feasibility study we want to undertake, with INDOT’s support, will apply quantitative metrics by experts that consider a wide spectrum of cost-benefit considerations.

**FAQ#9**

**How does the Boulevard Vision facilitate new development?**

The Boulevard would occupy a much smaller footprint than the existing interstate and its associated ramps that now bring high speed interstate traffic onto city streets. That excess right-of-way can be repurposed for new development to dramatically expand the economic development potential of downtown Indianapolis. Notably, currently underperforming private parcels along both sides of the existing inner loop would accrue higher development potential and value if they front an attractive and accessible boulevard rather than an interstate wall.

Preliminary estimates of new development potential along segments of the I-65 north leg alone indicate up to $200 million in assessed value generating over $7 million in annual property tax increment, with approximately $100 million bonding potential. That can be part of an innovative funding scenario for the Multimodal Boulevard, while also growing the tax base and stimulating general economic activity.

FHWA must ultimately sign off on how right-of-way relinquishment is executed. But recent rule-making indicates flexibility regarding use of excess right-of-way as long as highway purposes are protected and if the proposed disposition “includes a benefit to the public expected from the proposed use, addressing a long standing public need, a financial benefit to the public from the use, or a social or environmental benefit from the use”. FHWA defers to State DOT’s for detailed execution of agreements that meet those broad conditions.

**FAQ#10**

**Beyond the economic development interest, what do the roadbuilding and logistics industries think about the proposed change of scope for this project?**

Road builders are indifferent to what they build as long as they are empowered to apply their resources productively and meaningfully and with continuity. The proposed alternative will be as big, maybe bigger, than the current INDOT project. The new development potential spinoff benefit to the general construction industry and the regional workforce will be significant.

The logistics industry understands the need for a comprehensively designed overall system for inter-regional freight as well as for efficient freight and distribution systems that serve the Indianapolis area. The industry understands the cost-benefit of paying its fair share for modernizing that system. It is also anticipating autonomous vehicles and considering the cost-benefit of managed lanes to facilitate that. The inner loop needs to be planned within that dynamic.

The Boulevard Vision coalition understands that these industries are important stakeholders in this initiative, and valued advisor on how it is developed.

**FAQ#11**

**How can you achieve such a large vision and what has been accomplished to date?**

It is a large vision. We have accomplished a lot but much remains to be done.

We have generated accurate visualizations of the INDOT project to show the magnitude of project impacts, and we have researched historic archives to remind the community of how, fifty years ago, thoughtful people tried but failed to shape the original interstate to be more respectful of the community it was designed to serve.

We have reviewed multiple case studies of what other cities have and are doing to reshape their urban interstate segments to become community-serving as well as car-serving, and how those cities are innovatively funding those projects.

We have developed a preliminary concept of what a visionary alternative would look like, how it would function, how it could be built. This effort has resulted in a broad consensus among community leaders that a more visionary alternative makes sense.

But to achieve the vision it must be quickly advanced from its current concept level to pre-engineering, scope level documents that can conclusively demonstrate feasibility. This work needs to be done by a planning, design, and engineering team independent of INDOT but with INDOT’s cooperation, working with the existing community-based advisory group such that this work continues to be transparent to and informed by the community. This independent study should be evaluated based on community-benefit criteria in addition to traffic management.

Towards that end, at the request of Coalition leaders, a team of local and international experts composed of urban planners/designers, transportation planners, engineers and economists has been assembled to move the vision to the level necessary for alternatives evaluation.

For this effort to achieve the desired outcome, the City of Indianapolis, the MPO and the Indiana Department of Transportation must come together to support this process.

**FAQ#12**

**What is the cost impact of additional study and possible delay to the project?**

Relatively insignificant if undertaken soon. The State’s investment to date has been for consultant fees for planning, engineering and public outreach. The early analysis and planning efforts undertaken by INDOT are valid and their costs are justified. But changes and delays caused by community remonstrance will become costly once construction contracts are released. A community-supported alternative could reduce the probability of costly delays.

The near-term project timeline may need to be extended to allow development of the Multimodal Boulevard alternative to a transparent, objective and comprehensive level. The long-term project timeline may or may not need to be extended, depending on ultimate project scope, phasing and funding structure.

**FAQ#13**

**How can the alternative be funded?**

The Multimodal Boulevard Vision Alternative is a suitable candidate for innovative funding strategies promoted by FHWA. We are examining strategies that could accelerate the larger project that is now constrained by incomplete funding. Those could provide economy of scale efficiencies inherent in a larger initial phase, including more effective, less disruptive maintenance of traffic during what will be an extended period of construction.

We believe that a reduction of right-of-way and relinquishment of surface facilities to the City could shed INDOT system maintenance costs. Likewise, it could create new revenue-generating development that can be leveraged to help fund the costs and maintenance of a more visionary alternative. We will continue to explore value-capture concepts and many other funding concepts and programs typically available for this magnitude of infrastructure investment.

**FAQ#14**

**Is this just pouring money into Indianapolis at the expense of other communities?**

Indianapolis, as the capital city, should be viewed as synonymous with the State of Indiana as a positive relationship. Its regional economic health is mutually interdependent with that of the state and Indiana’s multiple regional economic centers as a dynamic interconnected system. For this reason, any infrastructure investment of this magnitude must do more than simply replace aging roads and bridges; it must enhance Indiana’s and its urban area’s ability as a place to compete with other American states and cities in the attraction of new talent, businesses, and private investment – all critical components to a healthy statewide economy.