

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This brief is one in a series about opportunities arising from the development of the Indiana Toll Road. Research was conducted by the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University in conjunction with Building Better Communities at Ball State.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

CENTER FOR BUSINESS & ECONOMIC RESEARCH

The Center for Business and Economic Research is an award-winning economic policy and forecasting research center housed within Ball State University's Miller College of Business. CBER research encompasses health care, public finance, regional economics, transportation and energy sector studies.

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SECTOR TRANSPORTATION ACTIVITY STATE POLICY

Strategic Highway Corridors

As the *Crossroads of America* and the smallest state by area west of the Allegheny Mountains, Indiana is nonetheless home to no less than eight U.S. Interstate Highways: I-64, I-65, I-69, I-70, I-74, I-80, I-90 and I-94, excluding beltways and connectors I-164, I-265, I-465, I-469, and I-865. Five of the eight traverse the Indiana Toll Road Economic Development Corridor.

The state also has significant railroad service, both Class A and short-line; dozens of airports, at least four of which provide scheduled passenger service; and two public ports on the Ohio River and one on Lake Michigan.

And no area of the state is richer in transportation resources than the seven counties along the Michigan border that comprise the Indiana Toll Road Economic Development Corridor. In addition to the Toll Road itself and the U.S. Interstate system, important transportation assets include highways US 30, US 31, US 20, and US 6, for example; the Michiana Regional and the Gary Regional Airports; the Chicago, South Bend and South Shore commuter railroad; Norfolk Southern and CSX freight railroads; and the Port of Indiana – Burns Harbor. Transportation is among the most important economic sectors, if not the most stable and driving force of economic activity region wide.

As a national transportation hub, Indiana economic and transportation policy-makers should consider the creation of a Strategic Highway Corridor designation, similar to that of the State of North Carolina.¹

From its home page, NCDOT says,

The Strategic Highway Corridors (SHC) initiative represents a timely effort to preserve and maximize the mobility and connectivity on a core set of highway corridors, while promoting environmental stewardship through maximizing the use of existing facilities to the extent possible, and fostering economic prosperity through the quick and efficient movement of people and goods. The initiative offers NCDOT and its stakeholders an opportunity to consider a long-term vision when making land use decisions and design and operational decisions on the highway system.

While much of the Indiana Toll Road Economic Development Corridor is well developed, highway interchanges require occasional upgrades and replacements. New exits are also constructed from time to time, as are grade separations and other capital improvements necessary to preserve the smooth flow of traffic and commerce throughout the Corridor. Such a designation results in more dedicated and coordinated planning efforts designed to ensure the longevity and effectiveness of important transportation corridors. Toll Road Study Group members should explore the potential for the creation of such a designation in Indiana and its application to the Indiana Toll Road Corridor.

¹See <http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/tpb/SHC/>.