

# **Proposed US-31 Freeway Connection to I-94**



**Napier Avenue to I-94**

**Berrien County, Michigan**

**Final Supplemental  
Environmental Impact Statement**  
to the 1981 Final Environmental Impact Statement

**US-31 Relocation  
From Matthew Road to I-94**

**April 2004**

*Prepared by the Michigan Department of Transportation  
In cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration*

This document has been published by authorization of the Director of the State of Michigan's Department of Transportation in keeping with the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and subsequent implementing regulations and policies that direct agencies to provide the public and other agencies an opportunity to review and comment on proposed projects and alternatives so that potential impacts of the project can be considered and taken into account during the decision-making process.

The cost of publishing 150 copies of this document at \$40 per copy is \$6,000. The document has been printed in accordance with Michigan Executive Directive 1991-6.

Proposed US-31 Freeway Connection to I-94  
Berrien County, Michigan

## Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Submitted Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c) and 49 U.S.C. 303

by the

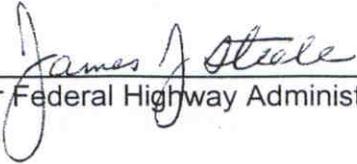
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

and

Michigan Department of Transportation

04/21/2004

Date of Approval

  
for Federal Highway Administrator

The following persons may be contacted for additional information concerning this document:

Mr. James Kirschensteiner, P.E.  
Assistant Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
315 W. Allegan Street, Room 211  
Lansing, Michigan 48933  
Phone: (517) 702-1835  
Email: [James.Kirschensteiner@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:James.Kirschensteiner@fhwa.dot.gov)

Ms. Margaret Barondess  
Manager, Environmental Section  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
425 W. Ottawa Street  
Lansing, Michigan 48933  
Phone: (517) 335-2621  
Email: [barondessm@michigan.gov](mailto:barondessm@michigan.gov)

This Condensed Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) and the previously prepared Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) documents the social, economic, and environmental consequences and mitigation measures associated with the northernmost four miles of the US-31 freeway improvements approved in a 1981 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). No-Build, Transportation System Management, and Build Alternatives are evaluated in this document. Each of the three Build Alternatives evaluated in detail would improve US-31 system connectivity, enhance vehicular travel within the region, and improve access to I-94, I-196, and Business Loop I-94. The Practical Alternatives include the Recommended Alternative from the 1981 FEIS and two alternate US-31 freeway connections to I-94. Important issues and socio-economic and environmental concerns include natural environmental impacts, land use impacts, and noise impacts. This FSEIS fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the guidelines and requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality and the Federal Highway Administration. A Recommended Alternative has been identified in this document with an I-94 connection different from that recommended in the 1981 FEIS.

Comments on this FSEIS are due within 30 days of publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, and should be submitted to Ms. Margaret Barondess at the above address.

## PREFACE

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires that the social, economic, and natural environmental impacts of any proposed action of the federal government be analyzed for decision-making and public information purposes. There are three classes of action. Class I Actions, which are those that may significantly affect the environment, require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Class II Actions (Categorical Exclusions) are those that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the environment, and do not require the preparation of an EIS or an Environmental Assessment (EA). Class III Actions are those for which the significance of impacts is not clearly established. Class III Actions require the preparation of an EA to determine the significance of impacts and the appropriate environmental document to be prepared – either an EIS or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

In June 1981, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved the 1981 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) prepared by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the relocation of 18.4 miles of the existing US-31 highway between Matthew Road near Niles, Michigan and I-94 near Benton Harbor, Michigan. This condensed Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) is an update to the 1981 FEIS for the last northernmost segment of approximately four miles of approved US-31 freeway alignment between Napier Avenue and I-94 in Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, Michigan. Four adjoining segments of the new US-31 freeway south of Napier Avenue have been constructed to date.

This Condensed FSEIS presents the Recommended Alternative for the completion of the US-31 freeway north of Napier Avenue to I-94 which was identified as the Preferred Alternative in the September 2002 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS). This document also addresses comments received during the October 30, 2002 public hearing process and incorporates mitigation measures and refinements to the Recommended Alternative to further minimize impacts. Following the comment period on this FSEIS, a Record of Decision will allow the project to proceed to design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

This document was prepared by the Project Planning Division of the Michigan Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration and other members of the study team. The study team includes representatives from the following divisions within MDOT: Design, Project Planning, Real Estate, Construction and Technology, and Traffic and Safety. Information contained in this FSEIS was also furnished by other federal and state agencies, local units of government, public interest groups, and individual citizens.