resistance

to the Interstate-69 “NAFRA Superhighway”

Written by some eco-anarchist producers & collective incendio.
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This article was originally written for the bilingual (Spanish/English) journal Incendio (Wildfire), which intends to connect English/Spanish speaking anarchists throughout the world to anarchist, indigenous, ecological, and social struggles occurring throughout Latin America.

http://www.anti-politics.net/incendio

It was formatted into pamphlet form by folks fighting I-69 in Indiana.
A New Road-

The U.S. government is currently poised to roll out a new strip of asphalt all the way from Laredo, Texas up to Port Huron, Michigan. Currently, the I-69 exists as a stretch of highway connecting Port Huron, Michigan (where nearly half of all the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) traffic crosses the U.S.-Canada border) to Indianapolis, Indiana. Interstate-69, if completed, will stretch over 2000 miles, through the states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas.

The main purpose of this interstate is to provide a channel for trading goods between Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. It would act as a piece of the life-support system for the NAFTA and, if enacted, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Some are calling it the "NAFTA Superhighway."

From Indiana, it is scheduled to end at Matamoros, Mexico, on the border with Texas. It is in Matamoros that I-69 would connect with the Atlantic corridor highway associated with Plan Puebla Panama (PPP), an even more notorious 'development project' in Central America. Throughout its route, I-69 will mean the destruction of thousands of acres of vitally important forests and wetlands, the eviction of thousands of farmers from their family farms and the elimination of hundreds of rural communities.

Resistance to the highway has existed since NAFTA's passage. I-69 has been on the drawing boards for more than 15 years. While its Michigan segment has long been completed, construction in Indiana and Texas has been obstructed by massive grassroots opposition. Farmers, residents and environmentalists continue to band together for one simple reason: I-69 is a disaster for everyone and everything in its way.

In Indiana alone, some 5,000 acres of farmland and 1,500 acres of forests and 300 acres of wetlands are to be paved over by I-69. If the Indiana Department of Transportation and the private companies involved in assessing and
developing the highway are successful, I-69 will be similarly destructive within each of the states that it passes through.

The NAFTA Superhighway, has been dubbed the "biggest engineering and construction project in the history of the U.S." It's planned to be 1,200 feet wide and consume 146 acres (almost 1/4 of a square mile) per mile. Because the corridors will contain high-speed passenger and freight rails and underground water, gas, and petroleum pipelines, as well as multiple high-speed truck and passenger vehicle lanes, they will be constructed at grade level and permanently divide the areas through which they pass. To make matters worse, the extensive grading and construction of barriers to protect the high-speed traffic will alter air currents and watersheds and prevent the movement of wildlife.

Various environmental protection groups are campaigning against the project, and the powerful Texas Farm Bureau, citing the concerns listed above among others, has asked the Texas legislature to "scrap" the whole corridor project. Many local communities, including 35 counties in Texas, have passed resolutions against having the NAFTA corridors in their backyards. Ranchers in Grimes County, Texas, which will be divided by the I-69 corridor, have organized what they call a "direct action" network against the project. When one rancher was asked what "direct action" means, he nodded towards the scoped rifle in the gun rack in his pick-up and said, "We're ready for when they come to take our land."

When the PPP was announced by Mexico's President Vicente Fox in 2001, (partially as a means to excuse heightened military action against the Zapatistas), the PPP was a development project consisting largely of highway construction and electrical grid updates (to allow electricity produced in Central America to be sold more directly to the US). Other aspects of the PPP, such as the proposed construction of huge hydroelectric dams on indigenous lands and the creation of a Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (to be administered by Mexico's largest biotechnology firm, Grupo Pulsar), have either been downplayed or canceled in response to the massive indigenous resistance inspired by all aspects of PPP planning.

I-69 and the PPP also share a common planner (Wilbur Smith Associates) and a common impetus: that to best further the interests of capital, it is most efficient to embrace a project that accomplishes two tasks at once: creating the infrastructure that is absolutely essential to the success of the FTAA and destroying existing communities that remain outside of the domination of the global economy. The PPP and I-69 will merge, literally, in Matamoros, the expected site of more than 45 percent of all FTAA-related traffic crossings in and out of the US.

With this in mind, Roadless Summer was initiated by a handful of affinity groups in late 2004, in order to re-focus radical and anarchist resistance to I-69 and its related projects. A number of different people departed on speaking tours across Indiana and the U.S., in order to spread the word about I-69 and argue that, as the U.S. anti-globalization movement continued to decline, it made more sense to target the infrastructure projects necessary for capitalist globalization, rather than continue to hold ever-smaller protests against symbolic meetings. The goal of this initiative was to bring to bear energy from wider anarchist circles against the highway project during the summer of 2005. Local organizers hoped that this would re-invigorate resistance in Indiana, lay the groundwork for future collaboration with farmers and others resisting eviction, and "create an atmosphere of un-plannability" for companies involved in the project. Much of the campaign was structured around confrontational, though legal, office and home demonstrations, reflecting the fact that many people involved had been inspired by recent anti-corporate campaigns, such as the struggle to shut down the notorious vivisection firm Huntingdon Life Sciences. While these tactics were successful at disrupting offices and reducing the efficiency of the planning process, these tactics did fail to cause any companies to abandon the project, and also helped widen a divide between anarchists involved in the resistance and local people defending their land. The failure to force companies away from I-69 planning resulted from the secrecy adopted by the state and its contractors, a factor which has hindered precise targeting of pressure towards companies that might withdraw.
On the other hand, the divide that occurred was not over tactics, per se. Most farmers and other community members supported even the more militant office invasions, and in fact the first office invasion conducted against I-69 was by a retirees' group in Indianapolis called the Southwest Perry Civic Association. The bigger issue was the social isolation that these tactics facilitated. Many of these demonstrations could be safely held by just a few people, and there was a wide consensus against publicizing these actions in the media. Given this reluctance to interact with the mass of I-69 opponents on the spectacular level of press releases and the media, it was a failure that anarchists associated with Roadless Summer could not develop a different model that also allowed for work and good discussion with other local people. As the struggle against I-69 is beginning to intensify again, local organizers are seeking to develop a model that will allow for both the use of confrontational tactics and continuous discussion with the wider community, without either resorting to the media or collaboration with reformist citizens' groups (both common traps for radicals seeking to break out of the activist ghetto).

Regardless of the difficulties that emerged because of some of the tactics that were used, participants in the Roadless Summer campaign were able to apply significant amounts of pressure to those companies implicated in construction, act in solidarity with others in struggle, and deal a concrete blow to project. Reeling from both public anger and pressure from activists, and also facing objective problems with funding, planning for I-69 was temporarily derailed at the end of the summer.

Roadless Summer 2005 & Prehistory, Action

Chronology-

Here is a chronology of actions, some of which Roadblock Earth First! (rbef!) organized or facilitated, some of which were done by other folks doing organizing locally, and some of which rbe! had nothing to do with (i.e. illegal actions). This is far from being a comprehensive list in a lot of ways; there were several meeting disruptions, office/home demonstrations, office invasions and other actions that occurred but weren't reported or kept track of.

Some pre-history

November 4, 1999 - Police disperse a Bloomington rally held in Solidarity with the anti-WTO protests in Seattle. At the rally, organized by Buffalo Trace Earth First!, the Indiana Forest Alliance, and Education for a Sustainable Future, a modified I-69 sign is burned. The crowd chants "Burn the WTO" and "One struggle, one fight: ecology and workers' rights".

September 9, 2000 - Communique sent by the Earth Liberation Front and received by the North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office -

"Greetings,

Late Friday night, the Earth Liberation Front paid a visit to the GOP headquarters in Bloomington, Indiana leaving it in flames as we left. The fire was set as a reminder to politicians such as John Hostettler that we are watching and that we will not sit idly by as they push for plans like I-69. The construction would fill the coffers of Multinational Corporations at the expense of the environment and of working people everywhere. I-69 is just one example of the willingness of the rich to bleed the Earth and the working class to fulfill their money lust. We have no faith in the present system of electoral politics where every candidate both Republican
and Democrat is funded with corporate blood money. Because there are no viable options on the ballot, we must find another means of voting. Our non-participation in and active resistance against this system, controlled by the rich, is our means of voting. We are everywhere and nowhere."

**August 20, 2002** - 600 people pack an I-69 public meeting at a Bloomington high school. During the meeting, police are reportedly called in, first to extract anti-I-69 residents who will not remain silent and then to escort to safety pro-I-69 speakers, who are threatened by the angry crowd.

**November 22, 2002** – The lawn of the governor’s mansion in Indianapolis is declared “under construction” with signs for I-69 and Road Construction scattered across the grounds and set in concrete. The yard also is dug up in preparation for more road work.

**November 23, 2002** – Over 100 people gather for a Thanksgiving dinner prepared by farmers from along the route of I-69. After dinner, everyone marches on the governor’s house to show their opposition to the interstate.

**April 26, 2003** - Two Bloomington activists are arrested for trespassing as they attempt to drop a gigantic banner off of a developer’s construction crane. One side of the banner reads "I-69 benefits who? They, not you!"

**2004-2006:**

**2004**

**July 8** - Members of the Indiana Forest Alliance begin to hold a weekly vigil and demonstration at an I-69 office in downtown Bloomington. The vigils continue for many months.

**October 22** - 400 people rally in Indianapolis against I-69. Farmers from southern Indiana arrive in tractors, which they had earlier used as a slowly-moving blockade along the roads that might be upgraded to interstate-status. Local an-

archists carry a banner highlighting I-69’s "Imperial Design" and highlighting its links to the Plan Puebla Panama. While members of the political coalition against I-69 deliver a petition to the Statehouse, anarchists and members of the Bloomington Circus Collective lead a festive breakaway march of 150-200 people, blocking traffic throughout Indianapolis' city-center.

**2005**

**May 21** - A few groups co-sponsor a picnic in Washington, IN, a small town that will be destroyed by I-69. People involved in Roadless Summer from Indianapolis bring food and root beer kegs to a park, in order to have fun and facilitate discussions between anarchists and local organizers.

**May 26** - Members of Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads, a southern Indiana anti-I-69 group, are ejected from the Oakland City Indiana Department of Transportation public information meeting. Also, a confrontation emerges between public relations representatives from Bernardin, Lochmueller, and Associates Inc. (the primary firm backing I-69 in Indiana) and Roadless Summer participants.

There are several office demonstrations and office invasions targeted against the two Bloomington I-69 planning offices, one of which is operated by DLZ (a firm involved in engineering work for I-69) and the other by Bernardin, Lochmueller, and Associates. A local newspaper reports that at one office demonstration, an electric noise-maker (making a "loud, shrilling fire-alarm sound") is left hidden in an office, shutting down work until it is found and disabled in water. Later, one person faces felony charges for one of these actions, having been accused of stealing a confidential notebook while inside an office.

There is also news coverage of a graffiti campaign that left anti-I-69 slogans on walls and other surfaces across Bloomington.

**June 4** - Nearly 100 people march against I-69 and the Plan Puebla Panama in Indianapolis. After taking the streets, the crowd moves towards the Indiana Statehouse and storms it.
Nearly $3,000 of damage is done when its antique limestone walls and marble pillars are covered in spray painted slogans such as "I-69 is the enemy." At least one person is unarrested as the crowd moves away from the statehouse, though 24 are later arrested as police reinforcements arrive. Link: (www.infoshop.org/linews/article.phpstory=20060607153423813)

**June 16** - More than 200 people attend the Indiana Department of Transportation public information meeting outside of Bloomington. Indiana Department of Transportation representatives are ridiculed and shouted down by the vast majority of the crowd and Earth Firsters drop banners simultaneously around the meeting hall. It is later revealed that the Bloomington Police Department had nearly 100 riot police on alert at a nearby staging point because of previous serious disturbances at public information meetings.

**June 24-30** - Roadless Summer participants take a bike tour along the proposed route of I-69, between Bloomington and Evansville. Along the way, they talk with people in affected communities and distribute information about the highway and its connections to capitalist globalization.

**July 10** - A number of people have a night-time demonstration at the Rural home of a Bernardin, Lochmueller, and Associates manager.

**July 16** - About 150 people join a night march in Bloomington. Minor confrontations with the police occur near the downtown I-69 planning office, where other activists also drop a large banner. Later, demonstrators drag newspaper boxes into the street to slow the police pursuit of the march. Local liberal punks respond by removing the barricades and protecting corporate property! No arrests are made after the march disperses, though many people are pursued and some are detained.

**July 17** - More than a dozen people have a Sunday-night demonstration at the house of Tom Sharp, Indiana Department of Transportation's commissioner, in Indianapolis' suburbs. Demonstrators go door to door informing his neighbors of his activities in planning a very unpopular highway, while others chalk his driveway.

**July 18** - A series of office invasions occur in Indianapolis, against DLZ and Hetrick (public relations firm), which is contracted by Bernardin, Lochmueller, and Associates to do public relations work for I-69. It is later revealed that the Hetrick office went on permanent lockdown following this action.

**July 19** - The Bloomington westside I-69 planning office is attacked. The incident included a failed attempt at arson using multiple improvised Molotov cocktails. Approximately $5,000 in damage is done. Link: (www.i69info.com/)

**July 30** - Two Earth Firsters interrupt politicians at an Indiana Department of Transportation meeting in Greenfield, Indiana, by shouting and unfurling a banner. Greenfield is not on I-69's route, but residents are fighting two other road projects, and local residents join a picket formed outside of the meeting.

**August 16** - There are a series of office invasions and home demos in Evansville, In. More than 20 people attempt to invade the headquarters of Bernardin, Lochmueller, and Associates, and are met by company officials who are prepared for them. Confrontations occur as BLA management staff attempt to break through the activists' banner and photograph them. Later that night, home demos occur against the homes of a number of BLA high-level management.

**August 25** - There is a joint day of action against Huntingdon Life Sciences (multinational vivisection corporation) and I-69 in Cincinnati, OH. There are a number of office demos, including one against the local DLZ office.
2006 Update on I-69 and the struggle to stop it-

Pressure to stop the project was intensified in the summer of 2005 due to a number of factors. Not only did a relatively small number of environmental and anti-capitalist activists embark on the Roadless Summer campaign of demonstrations and agitation, but, more importantly, a series of legally-mandated public meetings provided a forum for community anger around Indiana and the Indiana Department of Transportation was forced to admit that it faced a two billion dollar shortfall for I-69 and other proposed roads. This nearly-perfect storm led Indiana officials to briefly consider cancelling the project, and then later for the governor to propose delaying the project for decades. This ambiguity regarding I-69 and it's future, which emerged in late July 2005, was one of the major obstacles to the Roadless Summer campaign (should we declare victory or is this just a ruse?), especially since much of the planning and construction slated for the summer was delayed early on due to funding problems.

Privatization and International Outsourcing

Unfortunately, the solution to the funding crisis was only too obvious. By early autumn, Indiana’s governor Mitch Daniels announced his intention to sell off ownership of the yet-to-be built I-69. Local activists have largely been stuck in a waiting game - the changes that will accompany a sell-off will probably change the entire terrain of resistance to I-69.

Secret negotiations began to sell off other highways in Indiana, eventually leading to the sale of a road to Cintra-Macquarie, a Spanish-Australian conglomerate partially owned by Ferrovial, a multinational infrastructure development corporation. This has meant that I-69 is back on track to begin construction in 2008 and be completed in 2018 as a toll road, a fact which has led to even more generalized opposition. This conglomerate is also poised to buy and build I-69, and Cintra (in collaboration with another company) is already committed to build and own I-69 in Texas. This has meant that I-69 is back on track to begin construction in 2008 and end in 2018. Discussions have already begun
across Indiana and across the region to insure that as construction approaches, resistance will re-intensify. We know that if they try to build this road, more blows will be struck against it, with greater strength and reflecting a growing generalized anger, and that these blows will also be against every related megaproject, from the Trans-Texas Corridor to the PPP, and against Capital and the State globally.

Companies involved in the Interstate-69:

Indiana Section:

*Cintra -* [http://www.cintra.es](http://www.cintra.es) (Madrid, Spain)

*Macquarie Infrastructure Group* (Sydney, Australia)


*BAA Indianapolis LLC*

2500 S. High School Road - Suite 100 Indianapolis, IN 46241-4941


*DLZ -* while this is not a national or multinational company they have a pretty wide presence in the Midwest. They're the only company we know of who have put real pressure in other parts of the country to move I-69 forward.

*DLZ Indiana, LLC* 3802 Industrial Blvd. Unit 2 Bloomington, Indiana 47403 (812) 334-8869

They also have offices in: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Massachusetts. See their website for office locations: *www.dlzccorp.com*. Look through the careers section for addresses or search the internet.

*I-69 Mid-Continent Highway Coalition* - This is a I-69 advocacy group. They're not as active as they used to be, but they still get mentioned for their work. Their website has a lot of links for other collaborators.

[http://www.i69info.com](http://www.i69info.com) - "The best of the proponent websites. Perhaps the only one with any real content." - i69tour.org
Wilbur Smith Associates - is a multinational transportation development firm involved in dozens of projects around the world. They are planners on both sides of the border for Plan Puebla Panama. This company does project coordination. They have wrapped up for now as far as we know. Visit: www.wilbursmith.com They have offices in at least 49 US cities. There’s also one office in London, one office in Ontario, Canada, and several others throughout Asia and the Mid-East.

Michael Baker Jr., Inc. 5261 Fountain Drive, Suite A; Crown Point, IN 46307

Interstate 69 is only one of many infrastructure projects this engineering group is a part of. One of their specialties is “to successfully deliver complex and controversial projects to state departments of transportation”. The firm’s primary services include engineering design for the transportation and civil infrastructure markets, operation and maintenance of oil and gas production facilities, and construction management for building and transportation projects.

http://www.mbakercorp.com

Texas Section:

Cintra and Zachry are the main companies involved in the Trans-Texas Corridor.

Cintra - http://www.cintra.es/ (Madrid, Spain)

Zachry Construction Corporation

Other companies:

Ferrovial-Agroman - http://www.ferrovial.es/ (Madrid, Spain – parent company of Cintra)

Earth Tech, Inc. - http://www.earthtech.com/ (offices all over the world - find one)

Bracewell & Patterson, LLP (Houston and Austin, Texas)
Rodriguez Transportation Group (Texas)

Aguirre & Fields, LP - http://www.aguirre-fields.com/ (Stafford, Texas)

OTHON, Inc. - http://www.othon.com/ (Texas and Florida offices)

Pate Engineers - http://www.pateeng.com/home.htm (Texas)

HRM Consultants, Inc. - http://www.hrmrow.com/ (San Marcos, Texas)

P1 Resources - http://www.p1jobs.com/index.php (Irving, Texas)

Southwestern Capital Markets Inc. - http://www.scm-inc.info/index.asp (San Antonio, TX)

Railroad Industries Incorporated -
http://www.railroadindustries.com/ (Nevada)

Amey, PLC - http://www.amey.co.uk/ (UK)


Public Resources Advisory Group -
http://www.pradvisors.com/ (New York)

PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP - http://www.pwglobal.com/ (offices all over)

"One rural resident asked INDOT officials if they had calculated the possible cost of vandalism to the highway that could result from building a road so many people are so fiercely opposed to.

"He noted that electronic sensors (cameras) would record passing cars for tolling purposes, because the plan is not to have toll booths. These sensors he suggested, will make a wonderful target for a .22 caliber rifle."

-Bloomington Herald-Times, Friday June 30, 2006