

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Subject: US 31 Officially Opened by Governor Pence

Contact: John K. Letherman, President US 31 Coalition

South Bend, Ind. (August 28, 2014) -- Governor Mike Pence officially opened the new South Bend to Plymouth segment of US 31 yesterday by cutting a ribbon and naming a part of the road the Richard Mangus Memorial Highway, in honor of Dick Mangus, a longtime Indiana legislator who lived in Lakeville and worked to make the upgrade possible.

The South Bend to Plymouth segment of the New US 31 represents a new 20-mile stretch of roadway with limited access and no stop lights. It now joins the new 13 mile limited access highway around Kokomo that was opened last fall as the second of three major projects along US 31 between South Bend and Indianapolis. Another 13-mile segment of US 31 is scheduled to open in Hamilton County late in 2015.

“When we cut the ribbon in Hamilton County next fall we will have 46 miles of new highway. The three segments together will have eliminated 31 stop lights, 123 intersections, 668 driveways and two rail crossings from the route,” said John Letherman, President of the US 31 Coalition. While the new road will definitely improve safety, increase mobility and save time for travelers, Letherman cautioned: “When the three sections are all completed we will still have 256 driveways, 105 intersections, seven stop lights and two rail crossings to deal with before we have a free-flowing Interstate quality roadway between 465 in Indianapolis and US 20 in South Bend.

Planning and design have not yet been started for the 70 miles of roadway not included in the three new sections. The US 31 Coalition is currently working with communities along the 70 miles of roadway that are not included in the three segments to help them with long range planning, zoning and right-of-way preservation, so that upgrading the remaining roadway will be compatible with their local needs, once funding is found to complete the overall project. The Coalition is also working with INDOT, the Indiana Legislature and Governor Pence to help find funding for completing the road.

“While the opening of the South Bend segment means a great deal to us now, this project will not be successful until we can set our cruise control in South Bend and not need to touch it until we get to 465 in Indianapolis,” Letherman said. That is the goal of the project. No stop lights and a free flowing and safe roadway connecting North Central Indiana with the Capital.

Members of the Greater Elkhart Chamber and the St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce began meeting in 1996 following then Lt. Governor Kernan’s suggestion that a large Coalition would be needed to make significant changes in US 31. Since that time the Coalition has grown to include supporters from seven counties, nine cities and over 30 companies. Appian’s Dennis Faulkenberg is the Executive Director of the Coalition.