

We recently announced that the City of Warsaw was awarded 2.4 million dollars in federal transportation funds to rebuild Husky Trail. Many similar sized communities with worthy road projects were also considered by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) for a small pool of available funds, so I was very pleased that our project was chosen.

Husky Trail is a busy road. Harrison Elementary School sits right in the middle of the project. There are also family and senior residential neighborhoods, some still developing, that feed directly out onto Husky Trail. The greatest impact, however, has been the recent commercial growth and continued future development in the immediate area.

While I was sitting on the Plan Commission several years ago, debating whether or not to rezone for commercial development in this area, we knew the roads were inadequate and the traffic counts were growing. We knew the Parker Street crossing would only get worse. In addition, handling the increasing influx of county traffic only adds to the growing pressure on Husky Trail. Creating a safe, orderly flow for the neighborhoods, merchants, and school families is the end goal.

The improvements will begin at Mariner Drive and extend north to the city limits just south of the bridge. The conceptual plan of the reconstruction will add to the lane configuration, improve the intersections, and create curbing and sidewalks. Requisite environmental and archeological studies must be completed on the site before plans can be engineered. (Why an archeological study, you ask? I just heard of a farmer in Indiana who was digging a pond and unearthed an unmarked burial site.)

The design will then be engineered and costs will be finalized. The city will also have to evaluate the existing Husky Trail right-of-way. When the "original" road widths were laid out, they were generally narrow by today's standards. As a result, those narrow widths may necessitate acquisition of additional right-of-way to accommodate the project. After that, bid documents will be prepared and let. The process is lengthy and construction is scheduled for 2015. As road projects go, however, our timeline is actually aggressive. Some projects can drag on for years if the process gets bogged down.

Assisting us with the entire process from application through completion will be the Michiana Area Council of Government (MACOG). MACOG currently is assisting our county with the roundabout projects and has provided guidance on past projects. Jeremy Skinner, our city planner, will work closely with MACOG and INDOT throughout the project. Adherence to schedule and cost containment will be mutual goals. The funding requirement for the city will be 20% of the total project cost.

Roads and other infrastructure projects are the result of growth and progress. Funding for these projects is often done as a partnership. The Parker Street extension north of 30, the improvements in front of Menard's and Martin's Supermarket, and the improvements at the Warsaw Commons on 300 North and 15 were all shared with developers. In this case, the Federal government (funded primarily by gasoline and diesel taxes and surcharges) is our partner. I thought it would be interesting and informative to give you an overview of how those partnerships work from the city's perspective.