

The first trip I remember taking down U.S. 30 into our county was back in 1972 when my family moved to Warsaw. I recall getting off the highway at Atwood and continuing into town on Old 30. It seemed a little peculiar to me that the highway just stopped. Soon after, however, I discovered that construction on that final section was nearing completion.

Since the highway opened, the economic impact of U.S. 30 to our community has been immeasurable. Highway access suddenly expanded local retail markets into regional markets. It became a conduit into our community for commercial growth. Supply and distribution logistics for our industrial partners improved, enhancing local economic development opportunities.

But the diagonal route U.S. 30 took through our community created “road geometry” problems.

Checking the history, I discovered that the Lincoln Highway opened in 1915 and entered Indiana at Dyer and ran to South Bend, down to Fort Wayne, and into Ohio. Several route changes altered the road south to Valparaiso and then on to Fort Wayne through Plymouth and Warsaw (Old 30 as it is known today). In 1926, the entire U.S. 30 was commissioned as a U.S. Highway that ran from coast to coast.

From that historical perspective, the original, established route dictated the course of the local four-lane connection through our community. A diagonal course, cutting across a square “grid” system of roads, sometimes created angled intersections and odd lane configurations resulting in “safety conflicts.” A perfect example of this problem is the Parker Street/U.S. 30 crossing.

When the highway was built, it bisected Parker Street at a 45-degree angle. At the time, a short “connector” road on both sides of the highway was the solution. The area was relatively undeveloped and the solution fit the area. As commercial and residential development ensued and volume increased, traffic and safety problems on the short roads worsened. On the north side, the road was lengthened when Menard’s was built. That significantly reduced stacking problems when the light changed.

The very short connector on the south side remains. It feeds the volume of traffic from U.S. 30, Parker Street, Husky Trail and Patterson Road into the intersection of Dubois and Parker Street. Those roads service all of the new retail development, existing and new residential growth, Harrison School, and county traffic from the lakes region. With the addition of the new YMCA and other development, the traffic volume is expected to increase.

Due to this growth, the City Council and Traffic Commission approved a recommendation in 2010 by engineers to reduce conflict in the intersection by eliminating northbound traffic on Dubois. Several months ago, the Traffic Commission confirmed the safety benefit of that move with three years of traffic counts and accident data.

The change in traffic to one way has created inconvenience for some, no doubt. At the request of those in the M-1 (medical) zone, the City will partner to further study traffic flow in this area. The limitation of road geometry remains a fixed variable. It will not change. Dense development has created land lock that further limits engineered solutions without acquisition and alteration of existing property.

As we work through these challenges, we need to be mindful of a safe, local transportation plan that meets the needs of a community that grew around a soon-to-be 100-year-old asset called the Lincoln Highway.