

From the Mayor...

September 3, 2021

As was announced earlier this year, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has initiated a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study that will propose recommendations to improve safety and traffic flow on US 30. The PEL is scheduled to begin early in 2022.

To be clear, INDOT is initiating this study because it will be making the final decisions on the design of the project. As a part of the PEL study, they will facilitate local listening sessions to gather local public input on the safety needs and future vision of US 30 as a driver of economic prosperity for Kosciusko County. Even though the final decision will rest with INDOT, community input will be a significant component of that decision-making.

As US 30 has become a major interstate thoroughfare for vehicular traffic and freight movement, the seven counties of the US 30 Coalition are all in various stages of local discussion and planning to evaluate freeway improvement options through their communities.

Locally, accident rates on US 30 have significantly risen over the past ten years as a result of increased traffic flow and truck volumes. Improving the safety of local and pass through traffic is the top priority of our community vision of a redesigned US 30. Safe traffic flow will also improve and promote transportation access into and around our community. It will also improve access of our local economy to regional and interstate markets.

For several years, local planners have been evaluating a broad array of redesign options for US 30 in our county. In general, there has been public discussion of staying on the existing route as well as northern or southern bypass route options. In today's column, let's talk about what upgrading the existing US 30 route through Warsaw might look like.

Freeways are designed to eliminate "at grade" conflicts at intersections, road cuts, and driveways along the highway. If we stay on the existing route, "grade separations" will be necessary to eliminate conflict points. Redesigning an existing road would require new interchanges with on and off ramps, over or underpasses, and some road closures. Frontage roads are also a critical part of the plan. When properties lose direct access to the freeway with the redesign, frontage roads allow them to maintain connection to the freeway.

If INDOT proposes the existing route option, we will request that interchange designs are maintained within the existing right of way where possible. This will minimize the need to purchase additional right of way and its impact on existing properties.

We will be meeting soon with stakeholders along the existing route to gather their ideas for the on-route option. Public meetings will follow this Fall.

Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options is the goal of our public meeting process. The 'on-route' option presents a wide array of both.

To have a meaningful impact on INDOT's final decision, we must thoroughly evaluate all of these options on how they will benefit our entire community.

Creating a future vision of US 30 as a safe freeway that improves economic opportunities is key to our success.