

From the Mayor...

October 1, 2021

Last month I wrote about the progress we have been making with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to address safety concerns on US 30. In today's column, I would like to give a bit of an update on the options under consideration, as we prepare for the INDOT-sponsored Planning and Environmental Linkage Study (PEL), set to begin in the Spring of 2022.

INDOT will make the final decisions on all corridor improvements with information gathered from the PEL. In addition to evaluating traffic safety data, environmental red flags, the local impact of proposed improvements, soil conditions, and right of way analysis. The PEL study will also rely on significant public input to develop their final recommendations. INDOT will utilize public input data as an important component to formulate their final recommendations.

The City of Warsaw and Kosciusko County are currently in the process of reviewing freeway options with public and private stakeholders, considering emergency service response times, hospital ambulance access, school transportation routes, and employer and commercial access along the routes. Draft drawings and diagrams of preliminary options for routes that either utilize the existing US 30 route or bypass sections of the current route are being shared.

Traffic on US 30 in Kosciusko County is all "at grade" (with the exception of the existing US 30/State Road 15 interchange) which creates conflicts at all intersections that is aggravated by increasing traffic volumes. Creating a freeway eliminates intersections, road cuts and all "at grade" access points. This is done in one of three ways. The first is an overpass /interchange (grade separation) with full on/off ramps. The second is simply an overpass (grade separation) **without** on/off access. The third option is to close or eliminate access.

Preliminary designs utilizing the current route must take into consideration the INDOT requirements that limit the spacing of full interchanges. For example, we have an existing grade-separated full-service interchange at US 30 and State Road 15. Because of both Anchorage Road and Silveus Crossing's close proximity (less than one mile) to that interchange, a request for full service on/off interchange at either of those locations would likely not be approved by INDOT. Instead, they could both be improved with an overpass/underpass grade separation.

In addition, if the current on-route option is chosen, access to US 30 would be reduced. Design of a network of new and existing frontage roads would be necessary as part of the plan to accommodate and maintain safe access to US 30.

Also of note, US 30 traffic analysis that shows during peak traffic times, almost 50% of current US 30 traffic is local. If the current route is utilized, the proposed new interchanges and overpasses would significantly improve local traffic safety and flow in either direction across US 30.

We will be sharing these options at a public meeting in November in preparation of the PEL study that will begin next spring. The study will allow INDOT and their consulting engineers to gather and analyze very complex amounts of data over the next two years and propose a solution.

Public input will be key to shaping the future vision of US 30 in Kosciusko County.