



# INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Date: June 16, 2021

Dear Local Resident, Interested Citizen, and Elected / Local Public Official:

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is developing a federal-aid project at the SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge, located approximately 4.5 miles south of SR 18, extending approximately 185 feet north and 170 feet south of the center of the bridge in Cutler, Carroll County, Indiana (Des. No. 1601029). The purpose of the project is to improve the legal load rating of the bridge to 36 tons or more so that restrictions are not required according to FHWA Load Rating policy, to improve the superstructure rating from a 5 to a 7 (good), and to improve the wearing surface rating from 5 to an 8 (very good) or 9 (new).

American Structurepoint, Inc. is under contract with the INDOT to advance the environmental documentation for the referenced project.

There are several ways your comments may be presented concerning this project. You may submit comments in the following manner:

1. **Complete** a comment form and return it to American Structurepoint, Inc. Comment forms are available for download at the INDOT LaPorte District website (<https://www.in.gov/indot/2705.htm>) and the project website ([www.structurepointpublic.com/sr75wildcat](http://www.structurepointpublic.com/sr75wildcat)). Comment forms will also be available at the public hearing.
2. **Complete** the digital comment box on the project website or within the virtual open house at [www.structurepointpublic.com/sr75wildcat](http://www.structurepointpublic.com/sr75wildcat).
3. **Participate** as a speaker during the verbal comment session during the public hearing.
4. **E-mail** comments to Leah Perry of American Structurepoint, Inc. at [lperry@structurepoint.com](mailto:lperry@structurepoint.com).
5. **Mail** comments to Leah Perry at American Structurepoint, Inc., 9025 River Road, Suite 200, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240.
6. **Submit** comments or have comments postmarked by **July 16, 2021**. Comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the INDOT decision making process.
7. **Questions?** Contact Leah Perry of American Structurepoint, Inc. at (317) 547-5580 or [lperry@structurepoint.com](mailto:lperry@structurepoint.com) or INDOT Customer Service 1-855-463-6848 (1-855-INDOT4U) [INDOT@indot.in.gov](mailto:INDOT@indot.in.gov).

All substantive comments received will be evaluated and responded to in writing within subsequent project documentation. The documentation will address concerns presented during the public comment process and describe project decisions reached following careful consideration of the views and concerns of the public.

The draft environmental document is available for public review and inspection at the following locations, dependent upon operating hours:

- Flora Public Library (109 N. Center Street, Flora, IN 46929)
- American Structurepoint, Inc. webpage: [www.structurepointpublic.com/sr75wildcat](http://www.structurepointpublic.com/sr75wildcat)
- INDOT LaPorte District webpage: <https://www.in.gov/indot/2705.htm>

The SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge Improvement Project Team thanks you for your participation in this project.

## Project Description

INDOT, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is developing a federal-aid project to improve the SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge (INDOT Bridge 075-08-03653 B, National Bridge Inventory (NBI) No. 024970, Historic Bridge (HB)-1897; Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory (IHSSI) No.: 015-553-65014) located approximately 4.5 miles south of SR 18, extending approximately 185 feet north and 170 feet south of the center of the bridge in Cutler, Democrat Township, Carroll County, Indiana.

The need for the proposed project is a result of the insufficient legal load rating, deteriorated condition of the structural steel, superstructure, and wearing surface, and the inadequate usable shoulder width on the bridge.

- The load rating is 30 tons. The legal load rating is 36 tons.

Secondary concerns include:

- Structural steel deficiencies have been observed:
  - Loss of section (approximately 2-inch x 2-inch voids) on several vertical and diagonal truss members.
  - Thinning of the steel plates connecting truss members.
  - Two bottom chord members are fracture critical and some localized rust has been observed near the connections for these members.
  - Deformation of north floor beam from impact during 2001 rehabilitation.
- The superstructure and wearing surface are rated 5 (fair) out of 9. The superstructure has been rated at fair for over a decade. As it continues to rust and deteriorate, a rating of poor is anticipated in the near future, if the “Do Nothing” alternative is selected. With the fracture critical details, it is not advisable to allow superstructure deterioration to advance without addressing.
- The existing shoulder width on the bridge is 2 feet, 3 inches and does not meet current safety standards, which require at least 3 feet.

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve the legal load rating of the bridge to 36 tons or more so that restrictions are not required according to FHWA Load Rating policy, to improve the superstructure rating from a 5 to a 7 (good), and to improve the wearing surface rating from 5 to an 8 (very good) or 9 (new).

As proposed, the project involves rehabilitation of the existing structure for continued vehicular through increasing the structural capacity to at or above the required load rating. The existing bridge deck will be removed from both spans and a new concrete deck will be constructed. The existing approach slabs will be removed and replaced. Additional rehabilitation of the deck will include installing a new expansion joint at pier 2, creating a new drainage system for the structure and replacing pavement markings in-kind matching previous roadway striping.

The top flanges of truss floor beams in span B and main beams in span A will be cleaned. Shear studs will be installed on top of beams to increase load carrying capacity. Damaged or deteriorated stringers or other structural steel components will be cleaned and patched or replaced “in-kind.” The damaged floor beam will be heat straightened. Gusset plates connecting the cross bracing will be replaced. The existing bearing assemblies will remain in place and will be cleaned and painted. Spalled bearing pedestals will be patched. Spalled sections on abutments and pier 2 will be patched as well. Abutment 1 will be converted into a semi integral end bent. Existing railing will be removed and replaced along with railing transition at all four ends. The original railing (constructed in 1947) will stay in place. Existing guardrail will be reset as necessary. Approximately 88 rivets that have been determined inadequate will be replaced with high strength bolts to increase the load carrying capacity. After the repairs are done, the structural steel will be painted. The usable shoulders on the bridge are currently 2.25-feet on each edge. To meet minimum useable shoulder width requirements, the lane width will be reduced from 11.75-feet to 11-feet to increase the shoulder width to 3-feet. The total clear roadway width will remain unchanged. The structure length will be increased by 0.89 feet from 240 feet to approximately 240.89 feet due to converting abutment 1 to a semi-integral configuration. The bridge approach will be tied-in.

## **Description of Bridge**

The existing Parker thru truss consists of two spans, Span A is 61-foot, 6-inch long deck girder supported by beams and Span B is a 175-foot long standard INDOT truss. The bridge was constructed in 1947 and reconstructed most recently in 2001. The bridge carries SR 75 over Wildcat Creek. The bridge has a structure length of 240 feet with an out-to-out coping width of 32 feet. The existing typical roadway section for the bridge consists of two 11.75-foot wide travel lanes (one northbound, one south bound) bordered by 2.25-foot wide usable paved shoulders and bridge railing. The clear roadway width is 28 feet.

The bridge was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in the Indiana Historic Bridge Inventory (IHBI) and was designated as “Non-Select.” According to the IHBI, this bridge is eligible for the NHRP under Criterion C because it represents an early or distinctive phase in bridge construction, design, or engineering and it retains the historic integrity necessary to convey its engineering significance. It represents a significant phase or feature of the work of a master. It is distinguishable when compared with similar structures and retains historic integrity necessary to convey engineering or design significance. This bridge is also important as it is one of six or fewer examples within the Indiana Department of Transportation’s LaPorte District. This bridge exhibits important contributions made by an accomplished Indiana engineer, designer, fabricator or builder and displays distinctive engineering and/or aesthetic characteristics.

## **Description of Right-of-Way**

The existing right-of-way throughout the project corridor is approximately 40 feet on each side of the centerline of SR 75. The project area is primarily maintained grassed right-of-way with wooded areas along the banks of Wildcat Creek. This project will occur within existing right-of-way. No new permanent or temporary right-of-way will be required for this project.

## **Maintenance of Traffic (MOT)**

The MOT for the project will require a full closure of the bridge and a detour during construction utilizing SR 18, US 421, and SR 26, a distance of approximately 19.5 miles from closure point to closure point. The bridge closure will be limited to the months of June, July, and August to avoid planting and harvest season, as the bridge is located in a rural, agricultural area and the bridge is important for the movement of farm equipment during planting and harvest as there is no other bridge in the area capable of handling modern planting and tillage equipment or grain trucks. Access to all properties within and adjacent to the project limits will be maintained at all times during project construction.

## **Project Schedule**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Expected Dates</b>
Categorical Exclusion Released for Public Involvement	April 16, 2021
Public Comment Opportunity	June 16 – July 16, 2021
Proposed Construction	Anticipated Summer 2023

## **Estimated Project Cost Summary**

The estimated cost for this project is \$1,565,000 which includes design and construction. Both federal and state funding will be used. The project is included in the 2020-2024 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

## **Environmental Documentation**

The INDOT and FHWA have reviewed the Categorical Exclusion (CE) Document prepared by American Structurepoint, Inc. for this project and released the document for public involvement on April 16, 2021. The CE evaluates the impact of the SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge Improvement project on the natural and human environment. No areas of potentially significant impacts have been identified.

## **Water Resources**

The proposed project area was examined for the presence of wetlands and “waters of the U.S.” Two streams and two wetlands were identified within the project area as potentially regulated resources. It is anticipated that the preferred alternative will avoid impacting any streams or wetlands.

## **Cultural Resources**

INDOT, acting on behalf of FHWA, has determined a finding of “No Historic Properties Affected” is appropriate for this undertaking because there are no resources listed in, or eligible for listing in, the NRHP within the APE other than the SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge. Per the terms of the Historic Bridges Programmatic Agreement (PA), the FHWA will satisfy its Section 106 responsibilities involving “Select” and “Non-Select” bridges through the Project Development Process (PDP) of the Historic Bridges PA (Stipulation III). The SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge has been classified as a Non-Select Bridge by the INDOT Historic Bridge Inventory and, thus, the procedures outlined in Stipulation III.B. of the Historic Bridges PA will be followed to fulfill FHWA’s Section 106 responsibilities for the bridge. Therefore, the finding for this project only applies to other resources located within the APE and not the SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge. Pursuant to the Historic Bridge PA, a public hearing is required. After the public comment period for the hearing has passed, Section 106 will be complete.

## **Section 4(f) Resources**

The SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge (INDOT Bridge 075-08-03653 B, NBI No. 024970, HB-1897; IHSSI No.: 015-553-65014) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP in the Indiana Historic Bridge Inventory and was designated as “Non-Select.” The proposed project would result in a use of the SR 75 over Wildcat Creek Bridge as it would rehabilitate the historic bridge for continued vehicular use. The Historic Bridge PA applies to this project. The project adheres to the Historic Bridge PA Project Development Process. INDOT CRO and the SHPO concurred with the Section 4(f) Historic Bridge Alternatives Analysis.

The portion of Wildcat Creek within the project area is a Natural, Scenic, and Recreational River System. Wildcat Creek is used by the public for recreation and as such it is eligible for protection under Section 4(f). As part of the project, no construction activities will occur in the stream but the stream may be temporarily closed to recreational use at the bridge during construction for the protection of the recreational users. INDOT ES concurred that this temporary closure is likely a temporary occupancy on June 16, 2020. In a letter dated August 17, 2020, the Carroll County Commissioners concurred that the temporary occupancy does not constitute a use under Section 4(f), as described in the FHWA’s Section 4(f) Policy Paper (dated July 20, 2012).

## **Endangered Species and Terrestrial Habitat**

Due to the need to provide access for construction, approximately 0.15 acre of terrestrial habitat (maintained grassy right-of-way) may be impacted. No tree clearing is anticipated. The project is within the range of the Federally endangered Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*), clubshell mussel (*Pleurobema clava*), fanshell mussel (*Cyprogenia stegaria*), rayed bean mussel (*Villosa fabalis*), sheepnose mussel (*Plethobasus cyphus*), and snuffbox mussel (*Epioblasma triquetra*), and the threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), eastern massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*), and rabbitsfoot mussel (*Quadrula cylindrica cylindrica*). The USFWS stated there is no habitat for the mussel species and eastern massasauga within Wildcat Creek, so they agreed that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect these endangered and threatened mussel and snake species. Impacts to the two bat species were determined utilizing the bat programmatic informal consultation process. The project was found to “*may effect but not likely to adversely affect*” the Indiana bat and/or the northern long-eared bat.

