INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PERMITTING

Submitted in Accordance with State of Indiana Executive Order 25-42: Maintaining Best-in-Class Customer Service and Ensuring Prudent Use of Taxpayer Funds by Reforming Permitting Along Indiana's Transportation Network

October 10, 2025

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PART 1:
Current Permitting Situation

This report presents findings from a review of INDOT permitting practices in accordance with Indiana Executive Order 25-42.

Indiana Executive Order 25-42, issued on March 31, 2025, requires the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to:

1. Conduct a review of current processes, applications, guides, rules, staff, and operations and submit a written report on the findings to the Governor no later than October 31, 2025, that includes statistics on how many permits have been issued in the past five years, the average length of time for approval, and rules that stand out as reasons for permits being declined;
2. Enhance the Electronic Permit System and INDOT's website to encompass better applicant visibility to all regulatory requirements necessary to obtain a permit;
3. Develop uniform statewide standards by which all permit applications will be reviewed; and
4. Advance and implement a best-in-class timeframe for department response, customer service, and application review.

This report addresses item #1 and describes how INDOT will address items #2 through #4.

This report covers the seven permits issued by INDOT:

- Driveway permits
- Outdoor advertising sign permits
- Right-of-way (ROW) occupancy permits
- Broadband access permits
- Railroad permits
- Miscellaneous permits (e.g., banners and decorations, adopt-a-highway, etc.)
- Tall structure permits

Beyond these permits, INDOT plays a vital role in the development of several environmental permits. (Environmental permits are subject of Indiana Executive Order 25-40). However, in contrast to the permits listed above, INDOT is not responsible for issuing environmental permits. The U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, and Indiana Department of Natural Resources issue environmental permits. Therefore, they are not addressed in this report.

INDOT issues permits to ensure safe and efficient travel on state highways.

INDOT is responsible for over 10,900 center line miles of highways. The state highway system enables safe and efficient movement around Indiana and beyond.

To construct, operate and maintain state highways, INDOT has acquired right-of-way that extends beyond the visible limits of the pavement and shoulders. Protecting this right-of-way is vital for INDOT to achieve its mission, which is to "collaboratively plan, build, and maintain safe and innovative transportation infrastructure that enhances quality of life, drives economic growth, and accommodates new modes of transport."

Before a party outside INDOT can perform construction activities within INDOT right-of-way, they must obtain a permit.

INDOT issues permits to:[1]

- Ensure the safety of the traveling public, highway workers, and permittees
- Establish basic standards and requirements for any work performed within right-of-way
- Protect, maintain, and enhance the quality of the state highway system during and after permitted work
- Ensure that the proposed work is compatible with the primary uses of the state highway system
- Protect the state's and public's investment in the highway facility
- Ensure that temporary uses of state highway right-of-way for special events, etc., are conducted safely and with minimum inconvenience to the traveling public
- Control outdoor advertising in conformance with the U.S. Highway Beautification Act of 1965.

[1] *Indiana Department of Transportation Permit Guide*, May 31, 2019.

INDOT provides extensive guidance regarding the permitting process.

INDOT has developed the following guidance, requirements, and policies based on state and federal laws, national guidance, industry standards, and decades of lessons learned. These resources are available to all permit applicants.

General

- INDOT Permit Guide
- EPS Guide: How to Apply for a Permit
- INDOT District Permit Staff Map
- Permit Form and Affidavits

Driveway Permits

- Driveway Permit Guide
- Limited Access Right-of-Way Break Guidance
- Private Approach Reference Worksheet
- Applicant's Guide to Traffic Impact Studies
- Private Driveway Approach Reference Worksheet
- Traffic Impact Study Meeting Checklist

Outdoor Advertising Sign Permits

- Guide to Outdoor Advertising
- Outdoor Advertising Laws and Regulations
- Outdoor Advertising Control Map
- Scenic Byways Program Information
- Outdoor Advertising Permit Applicant's List
- Transfer of Sign Ownership in EPS Instructions

ROW Occupancy Permits

- Utility Accommodation Policy
- Law Enforcement Equipment Policy
- Utility Accommodation Policy (UAP)
- Weigh in Motion Permit Policy

Broadband Access Permits

- Broadband Application Quick Guide
- Broadband Permit Guidelines
- Broadband Access Policy
- Identification of Broadband Corridors
- Example Broadband Plans of Sufficient Detail
- Broadband Access Permit Applicant's List

Railroad Access Permits

- INDOT Railroad Permit Page

Miscellaneous Permits

- Agricultural Dragline Use of Cross Structures and Ditches on INDOT Right-of-Way
- Public Art and Landscaping Policy

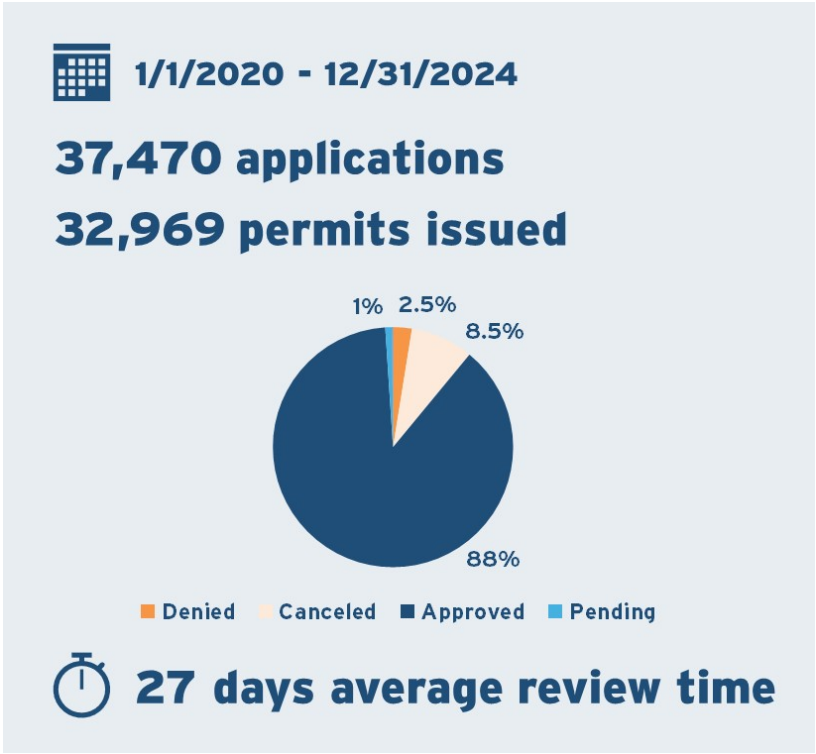
Tall Structure Permits

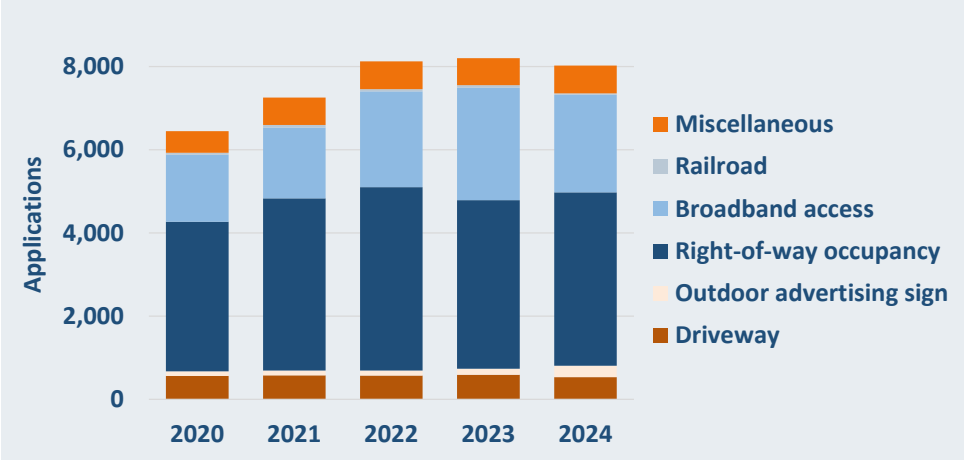
- Indiana Tall Structure Permit Exhibit
- Memorandum on Regulation of Tall Structures and Noise Sensitive Use Permits
- Airport Notification Template for Tall Structure and Noise Sensitive Permits
- INDOT Form 101, Application for Construction within Noise Sensitive Area

Over the past five years, INDOT recieved 7,500 applications per year and issued over 6,500 permits per year.

INDOT's Electronic Permit System (EPS) is an interface for applicants to submit permit applications. EPS tracks the application lifecycle and allows both INDOT and the applicant to track, monitor and collaborate on the permit request. This report summarizes data for applications submitted to INDOT between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2024.

The most common permit types are right-of-way occupancy and broadband access. Applications increased significantly from 2020 through 2022 and have since leveled off.



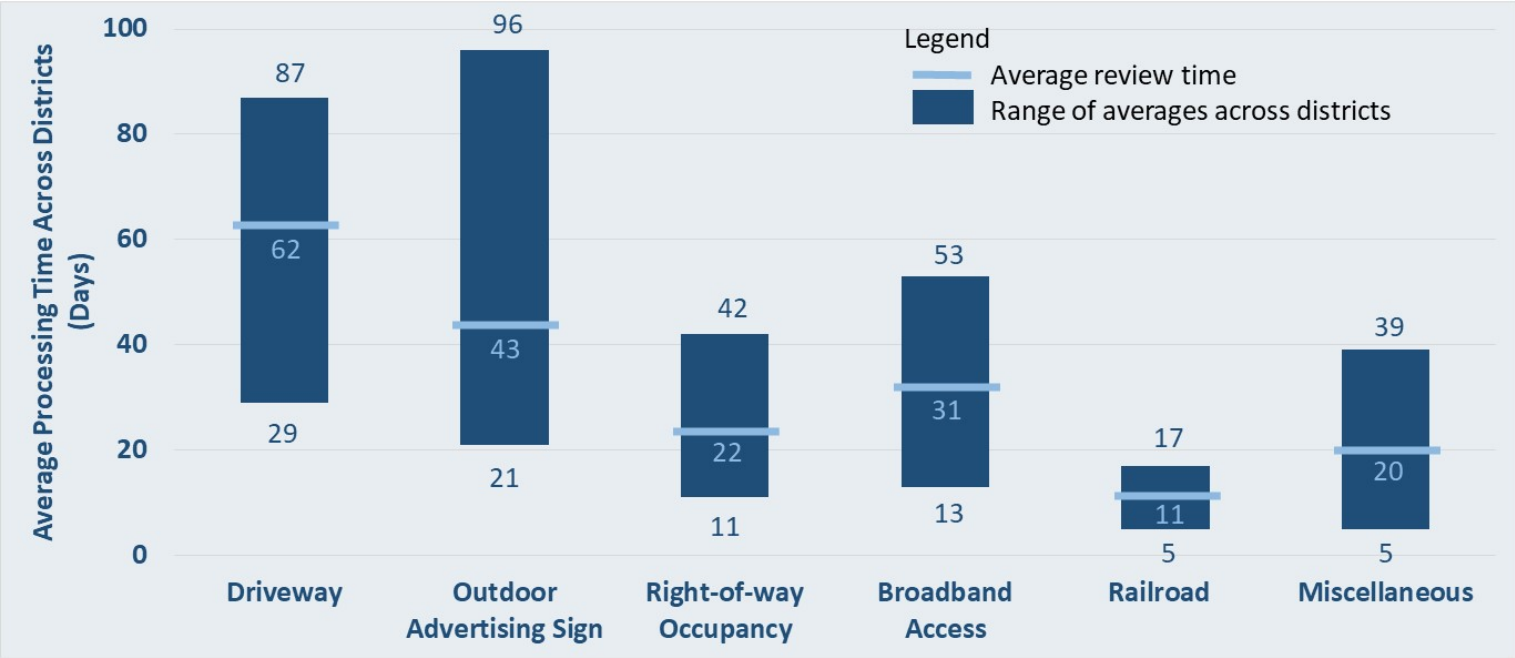


The EPS contains no data on tall structure permits over the past five years. These permits are rare, and none were submitted in this period.

The average review time for permits is 27 days and varies across permit types and INDOT districts.

INDOT is organized into six geographic Districts and issues permits at the District level. A District permit manager is responsible for coordinating with the applicant, district staff, and subject matter experts in INDOT's Central Office. Review times vary across Districts because of differences in internal processes, localized engineering requirements, staffing resources, and interpretations of application guidance. Review time by District is not a function of permit volume.

The main driver of permit review time are the application quality and completeness. Coordination with and follow-up requests to applicants can add significant time to the process.



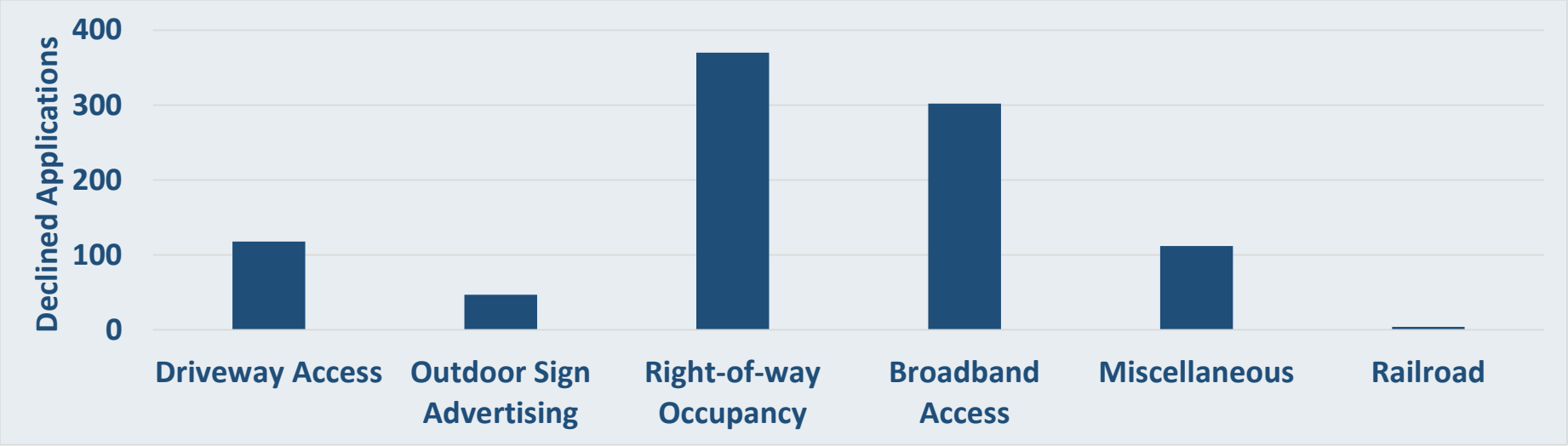
Over the past five years, INDOT declined 2.5% of permit applications.

Over the past five years, INDOT declined 949 of the 37,470 applications it received, with right-of-way occupancy and broadband access permits being the most frequent. The percentage of denied applications has increased steadily over that time and was 4.2% in 2024.

Year	% Declined
2020	1.0%
2021	0.9%
2022	2.2%
2023	3.9%
2024	4.2%

Permit denials by INDOT most often occur when applicants withdraw their projects before the approval process is completed. The other reasons INDOT declines permits include:

- The permit involved construction in an active construction zone. The volume of INDOT's construction activity has almost doubled since 2017.
- There is not enough room in the right-of-way for the proposed improvements described in the permit.
- The proposed construction would cause conflicts with other features in the right-of-way.



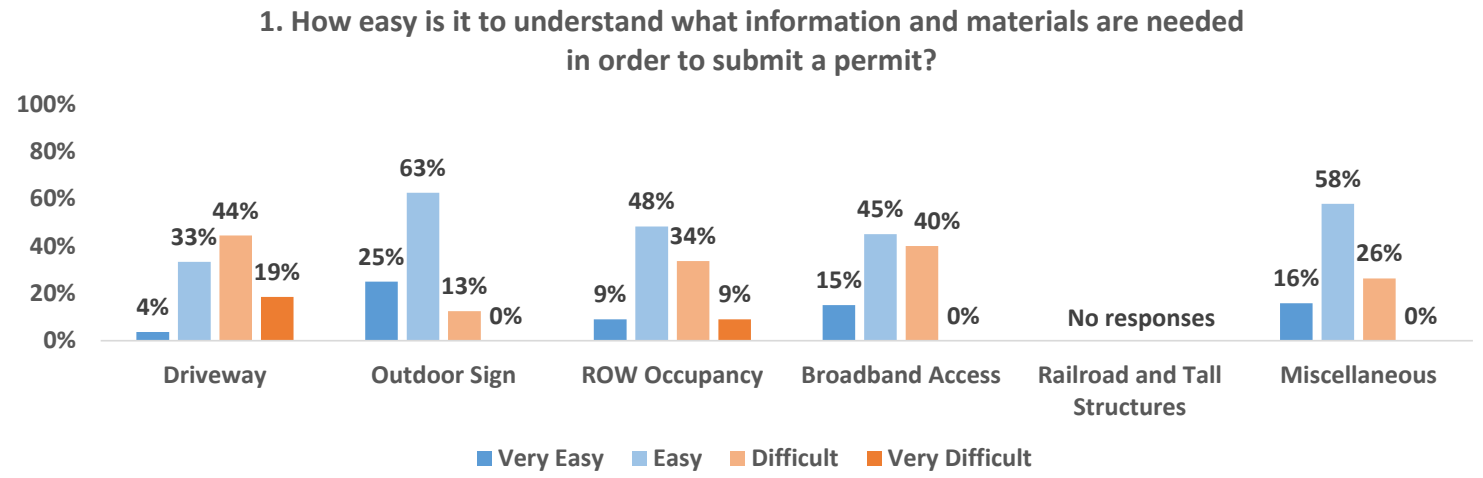
In a recent customer satisfacation survey, applicants rated INDOT's permit process as neutral.

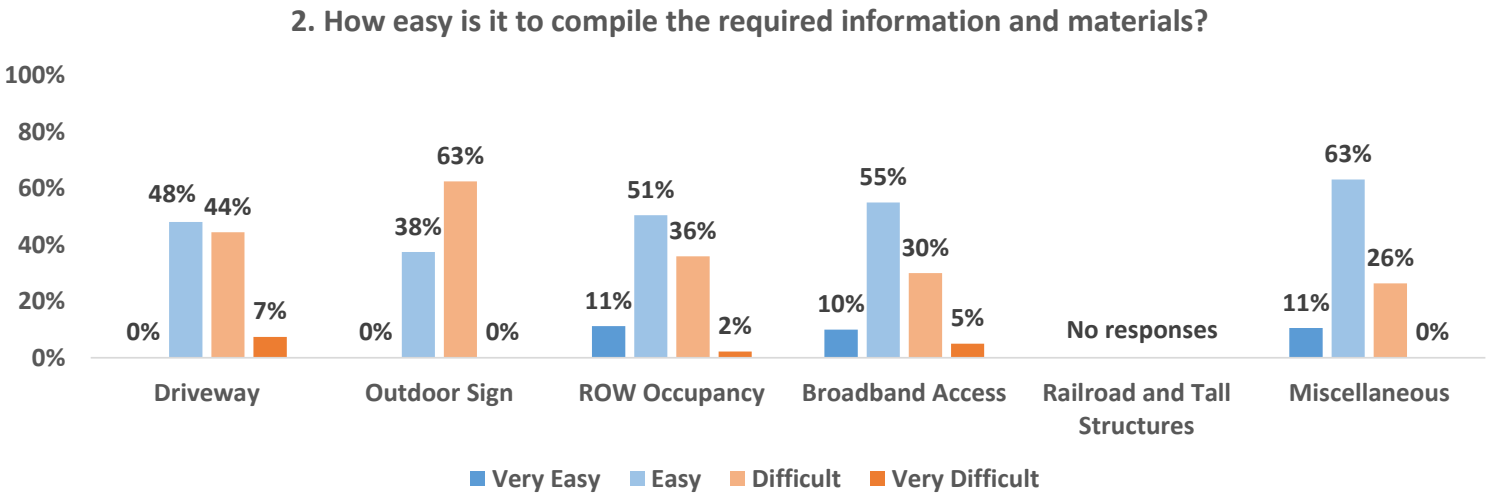
In June 2025, INDOT sent a customer satisfaction survey to all applicants that had submitted a permit application since January 2020. INDOT received 163 responses. The results of the survey are summarized below. Respondents rated their experience as a 2.7 out of 4.

The highest satisfaction rating involved the use of EPS for broadband access permits. The lowest rating was related to the overall experience for obtaining a driveway permit. (More details on the challenges of driveway permits are provided in subsequent pages of this report.)

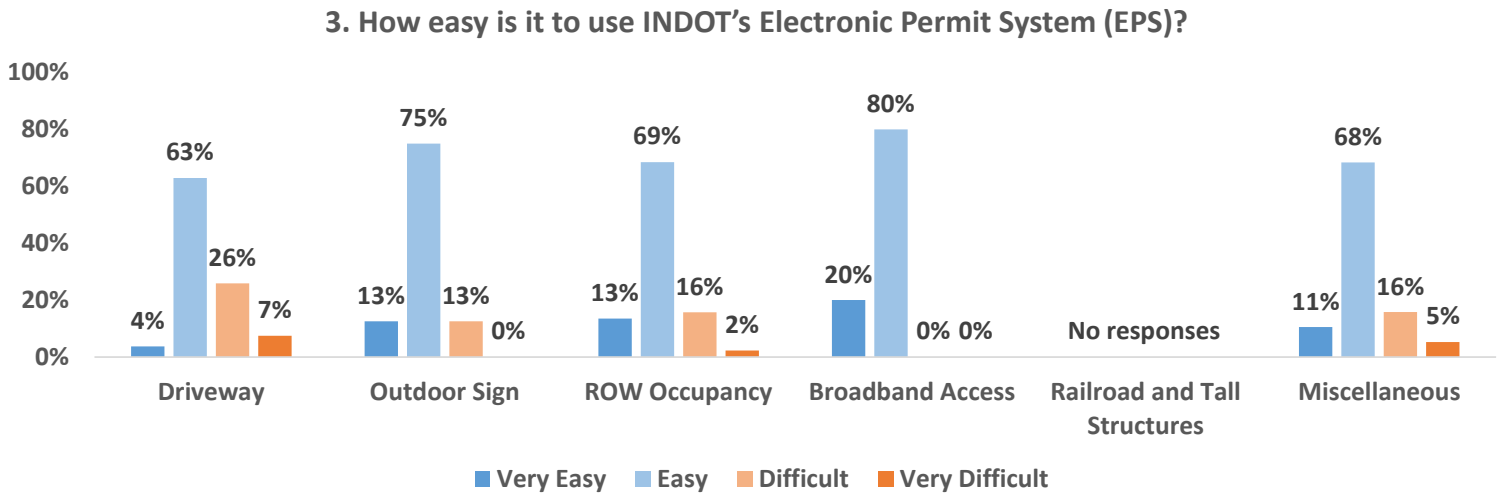
		Driveway	Outdoor Sign	ROW Occupancy	Broadband Access	Railroad	Miscellaneous
1= Very difficult 4 = Very easy	How easy is it to understand what information and materials are needed in order to submit a permit?	2.2	3.1	2.6	2.8	No Responces	2.9
	How easy is it to compile the required information and materials?	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.7		2.8
	How easy is it to use INDOT's Electronic Permit System (EPS)?	2.6	3.0	2.9	3.2		2.8
	How easy is it to follow the status of a permit after it's submitted?	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.7		2.8
1= Very dissatisfied 4 = Very satisfied	How would you rate your overall experience obtaining permits from INDOT?	2.3	2.8	2.6	2.7		2.9

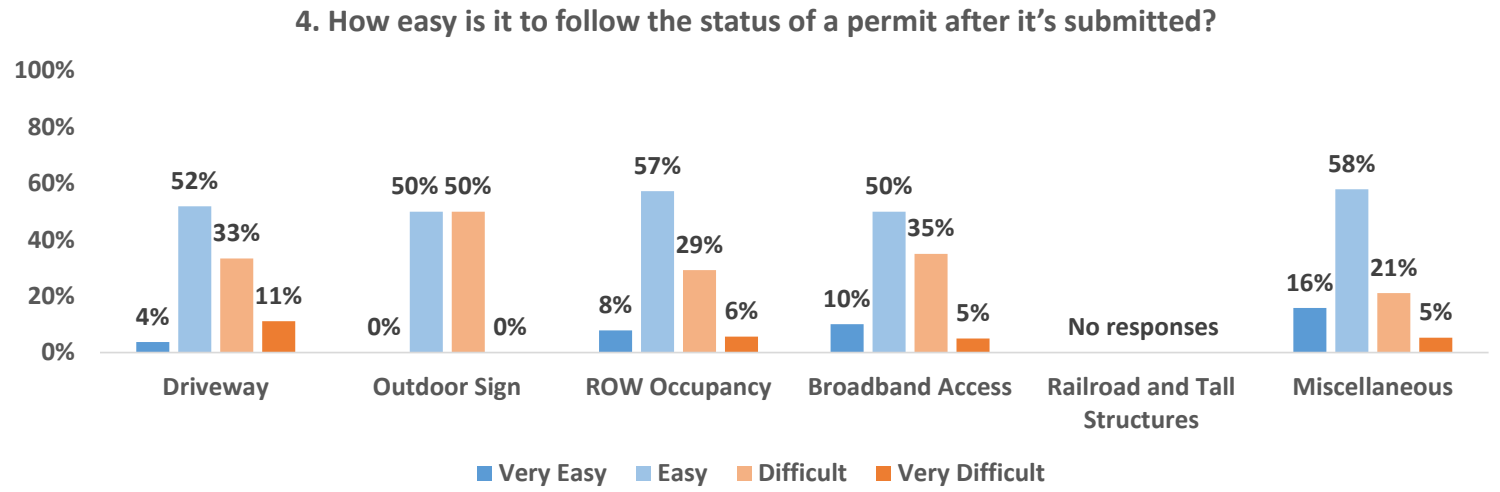
Customer Service Survey Responses



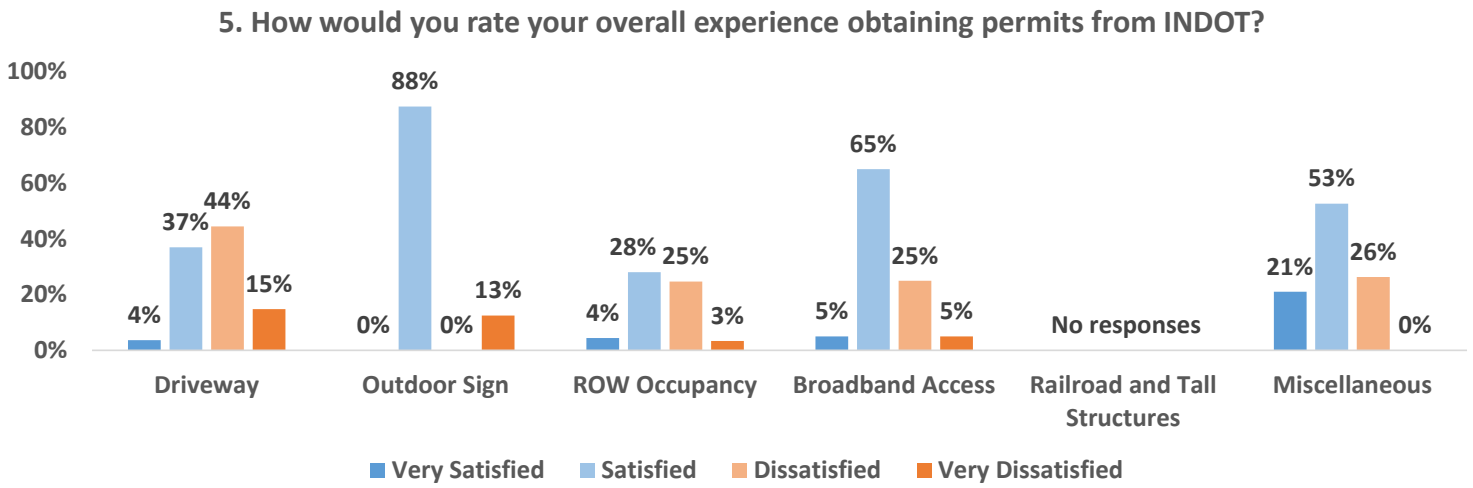


Customer Service Survey Responses, continued





Customer Service Survey Responses, continued

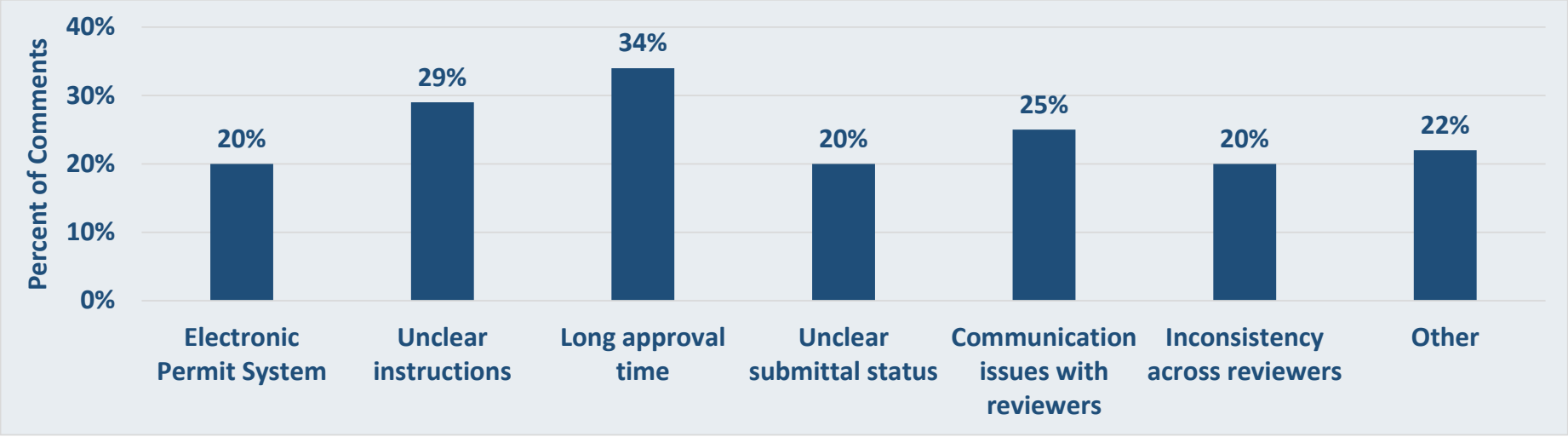


Survey respondents provided feedback on various topics. The most common themes were approval times and unclear instructions.

The survey provided an opportunity for applicants to provide additional feedback and comments on any topic. INDOT received 89 comments.

INDOT received the most comments on the following topics: unclear instructions, long approval time, and communication issues with reviewers. These items are addressed in the improvement strategies provided in the following section.

Only one respondent compared INDOT's permitting process to the process in other states. "I permit in numerous states. INDOT is by far the best. I would not want to see any changes. I have 25 years experience in permitting."



PART 2:
Opportunities for Improvement

INDOT has identified several opportunities for improving the permitting process.

The strategies presented in this section are based on the results of the analysis presented in Part 1, a review of national guidance and best practices, interviews with INDOT staff involved in each part of the permit review process, and interviews with permit applicants.

INDOT has combined the strategies into three initiatives that align with the direction provided in Executive Order 25-42:

- Initiative 1: Enhance the EPS and INDOT's website to encompass better applicant visibility to all regulatory requirements necessary to obtain a permit.
- Initiative 2: Develop uniform statewide standard by which all permit applications will be reviewed.
- Initiative 3: Advance and implement a best-in-class timeframe for department response, customer service, and application review.

Initiative 1: Enhance the Electronic Permit System and INDOT's website to encompass better applicant visibility to all regulatory requirements necessary to obtain a permit.

INDOT will incorporate the modernization of EPS into its ongoing Operation Digital Unity program, which empowers INDOT to prioritize aging, mission-critical systems for replacement. INDOT will also make enhancements to its permit website.

EPS Enhancements

1. **Provide an improved user interface** that walks users step by step through the application process.
2. **Provide checklists** for submittal requirements, flag required fields, and prohibit incomplete permits from being submitted.
3. **Provide enhanced email notifications** to notify applicants and INDOT staff when action is required and when reviews are complete.
4. **Display real-time status updates** so applicants can follow the progress of the review process.
5. **Enable EPS to track broadband agreements** that are associated with permits.
6. **Add automatic flags** when permit exceptions, traffic reviews, or hydraulic reviews are required for a permit.
7. **Combine EPS and Utility Management System (UMS) information** to provide a consolidated view of internally and externally generated permits.
8. **Integrate EPS with INDOT's GIS applications** to provide visualization of project and permit extents.
9. **Add "waiting on applicant"** as a status option so applicants can see when INDOT is waiting for additional information and INDOT staff can be notified when follow-ups are necessary.
10. **Enable design consultants to view utility permits** in their project areas.

Permit Website

1. **Align the website with the new EPS** so the structure, content, and self-service flows are consistent.
2. **Provide templates and examples for all permits**. Include examples that highlighting common mistakes. Templates would help decrease permit development time.
3. **Enhance the reporting of internal and external metrics** by streamlining the dashboard.

Initiative 2: Develop uniform statewide standard by which all permit applications will be reviewed.

Process Updates

1. **Develop uniform review standards** that INDOT can apply to all permit applications. Conduct a workshop to discuss review practices and identify potential discrepancies between districts, such as varying interpretations of the guidance. Where needed, develop a single standard for interpreting ambiguous requirements. Meet twice a year to identify new issues that have arisen since the last workshop and make subsequent guidance updates.
2. **Develop a brief client satisfaction survey** that applicants can submit after the approval process is complete. Encourage applicants to identify any inconsistencies they perceive between their various submittals.
3. **Conduct regular reviews** of permitting processes to track permit timelines, identify trends and opportunities for improvement.
4. **Develop a statewide protocol for applying existing legal tools** (e.g., bond forfeiture) to improve compliance from repeat permit violators.
5. **Use the new EPS to manage INDOT-initiated utility permits** so reviewers can see and access all open permits in a location, regardless of their origination. (These permits are associated with INDOT construction projects.)

Organizational and Staff Updates

6. **Assign a current position in Central Office** to work with staff to streamline and optimize processes and resources, improve consistency across districts, and monitor internal KPIs.
7. **Standardize onboarding and develop ongoing training** for permit reviewers.
8. **Provide options for districts to streamline and economize the resources needed** to review commercial drive permits and traffic impact studies. These documents are typically the most complex and time-consuming aspects of the permit process.
9. **Evaluate the ROI of dedicating resources to inspect broadband installations** to verify consistency with the permit application.

Initiative 3: Advance and implement a best-in-class timeframe for department response, customer service, and application review.

Guidance Updates

1. **Update *overall* permit guidance**
    a. Provide checklists that show how INDOT evaluates permits.
    b. Require a licensed engineer to seal maintenance of traffic (MOT) plans in high traffic urban areas. Provide standard MOT plans for low traffic locations.
2. **Update *driveway* permit guidance**
    a. Call applicants within 5 business days after they submit a commercial driveway permit. This would give INDOT an opportunity to discuss location-specific issues and point applicants to applicable information.
    b. Clarify guidance regarding the number of driveways allowed per property.
    c. Provide additional information about the bonding process, such as when bonds are needed, who should obtain them, and what bonding information is required with the submittal.
    d. Develop separate driveway guidelines for active construction and post-construction use.
    e. Require as-builts for commercial drive permits so INDOT has accurate information needed for future asset management efforts and permit reviews.
3. **Update *broadband* permit guidance**
    a. Provide additional guidance on when a corridor or non-corridor broadband permit is required.
    b. Require that submitted plans match the level of detail required for driveway permits. Require plans that show cross sections, utility depths, ditch grades, etc.
4. **Update *underground ROW occupancy* permit guidance**
    a. Require that submitted plans match the level of detail required for driveway permits. Require plans that show cross sections, utility depths, ditch grades, etc.

Process Updates

5. **Develop a process to flag applications associated with grants for expedited review**. For example, permits associated with federal grants could be a priority because of funding requirements.
6. **Develop a process to flag when permits require additional ROW**. Communicate to applicants that the ROW acquisition process will add time to the typical review process. Initiate ROW process in parallel to the permit process.
7. **Develop a checklist for when permits require a Joint Use Maintenance Agreement (JUMA).** Communicate to applicants that the JUMA process will add time to the typical review process. Develop standard templates for all agreement types. Identify opportunities to issue blanket agreements that cover multiple locations (e.g., an agreement that enables an LPA to mow INDOT ROW.)
8. **Enable broadband and utility permits to span district boundaries.** Currently, a separate permit is required for each district a project crosses.
9. **Update broadband permit review process to require review by a utility engineer**.
10. **Coordinate proactively with local public agencies** when local guidance is not consistent with INDOT guidance.
11. **Require a preconstruction meeting** prior to construction in INDOT ROW in high traffic urban areas.
12. **Require applicants to provide at least two business days' notice before beginning construction within INDOT ROW.** Develop a process to identify when construction activities are occurring without a permit.