

Successful South Split Project Highlights INDOT Teamwork

The South Split project, which involved reconstructing and lowering I-65 and I-70 under seven bridges between the north and south split in Indianapolis, was completed and opened to traffic Oct. 16, more than two weeks ahead of an aggressive 59-day schedule bid by the construction contractors.

Behind this amazing achievement, however, were hundreds of hours of work by a dedicated team of INDOT Greenfield District and Central Office employees. This effort involved all aspects of a successful construction project – from initial planning to bid document preparation to pre-construction planning to construction scheduling to site and traffic management to communications.

“The team of INDOT employees that made this project a success really highlighted the strengths of our department,” said Greenfield District Deputy Commissioner Brandye Hendrickson. “They were dedicated, driven and adaptable, and provided the expertise and experience needed to complete this project far quicker than the 90-day schedule originally projected.”

Project Manager Trevor Mills quickly obtained regulatory clearance from the Federal Highway Administration to close the interstate, accelerate construction and expedite completion of the project while providing a safer environment for workers and motorists. Because of the lead time needed to secure two new steel girders for the Virginia Avenue bridges, Mills rushed a separate procurement contract to order these before the South Split project contract.

Mills instilled the same sense of urgency into consultants Parsons Transportation Group, United Consultants, Cardno TBE, Continental Mapping, and Earth Exploration, guiding these vendors to complete work to provide design plans in just five weeks.

Greenfield District Construction Engineer Michael Wilmot was involved early in the project, allowing for thorough review and revision of construction and traffic control plans prior to contract letting. This enabled Wilmot and his staff of inspectors to anticipate potential problems and work out solutions beforehand. Improving on-site decision making allowed contractors to keep on schedule while operating 14 12-hour construction shifts per week.



Gov. Mike Pence visited the South Split project on Sept. 30. Joining the governor (second from left) were (left to right) District Construction Director Roland Fegan, Project Manager Trevor Mills, INDOT Commissioner Karl B. Browning, and Greenfield District Deputy Commissioner Brandye Hendrickson.

Mills and Wilmot coordinated before and throughout construction with many INDOT divisions, utility providers, public agencies and other key stakeholders to deliver the project on time and under budget.

INDOT's Indianapolis Traffic Management Center developed and implemented a safe transportation management plan, which included monitoring traffic patterns, communicating with motorists via dynamic message signs, and working with state and local police for incident response and traffic enforcement.

INDOT's Central Office and Greenfield communications staff developed a plan to announce the project to the public and media, and identified methods to keep people updated on each step of the project. Staff identified key messages for a news conference announcement, a public open house, community presentations, media interviews, and outreach through social media. The Central Office Communications Department designed project branding, maps and information cards, and launched an informational website. The Purdue University Joint Transportation Research Program, in coordination with INDOT, compiled videos that greatly contributed to public awareness and received widespread play on local media.



Gov. Pence talked with members of the South Split project team near the Virginia Avenue bridge. Joining the governor (third from left) were (left to right) Greenfield District Deputy Commissioner Brandye Hendrickson, District Construction Director Roland Fegan, District Highway Engineer Supervisor Kirk Stafford, Project Manager Trevor Mills and District Construction Engineer Michael Wilmot.

INDOT project management, construction, communications and traffic management staff contacted and consulted about the project with the Indianapolis Department of Public Works, city-county council, emergency responders, and other key stakeholders, such as hospitals, major employers, community groups and downtown destinations. These stakeholders adapted plans to soften the effect of the South Split project and helped disseminate information to constituents, customers and employees.



Gov. Mike Pence hailed INDOT – and all those involved in the project – when the completed project opened to traffic.

“On behalf of the people of Indiana, I express my appreciation for the hard work and professionalism of the Indiana Department of Transportation and its contractors for completing these needed public safety improvements ahead of schedule and under budget.”

The South Split project was necessary to increase bridge clearances and reduce the potential for collisions from unpermitted and off-route trucks with oversize and unsecure loads. More than 400 collisions have been recorded at South Split bridges over I-65/I-70 since 1999, and the frequency of vehicle bridge strikes has increased in recent years. Repeated bridge strikes posed a safety concern.

By closing the interstate through the work zone, INDOT was able to accelerate construction and expedite completion of the project while providing a safer environment for workers and motorists.