



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Interstate Highways Congestion Policy 2026

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APPROVAL BY:



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Table of Contents

Policy Statement	3
Purpose	3
Scope	3
Activities and Operations Exempted from this Policy	4
Terms and Definitions	4
Process	5
Responsibilities	10
Authority	13
Appendices	13
Effective Date	13

Policy Statement

The Indiana Department of Transportation (Department or INDOT) is committed to building and maintaining a safe transportation network for all users and workers. It shall be the policy of the Department to enhance safety and mobility in all interstate work zones by preventing or minimizing the formation of queues due to congestion.

Where queues form because of work zone-related restrictions, it shall be the policy of the Department to require either:

- (1) The immediate protection of the back-of-queue with in-place and operational queue mitigation; or
- (2) The immediate removal of the restriction from the roadway, where roadway conditions would allow for the safe removal of temporary traffic control, to stop the formation or growth of a queue and to dissipate any formed queue.

Purpose

Pursuant to 23 CFR 630 Subpart J, the primary goal of this policy is to reduce and eliminate crashes and fatalities involving workers and motorists associated with congestion and the presence of queues due to work zone-related roadway restrictions. A secondary goal of this policy is to minimize delay and inconvenience to road users due to the presence of work zone-related roadway restrictions.

To achieve these goals, work zone-related roadway restrictions shall be carefully evaluated to either:

- (1) prevent the formation of congestion and queue by the selection of
 - a. Appropriate work zone strategy to maintain sufficient capacity for the traffic demand.
 - b. Appropriate timing of restrictions and operations to avoid times where traffic volumes are highest.
- or -
- (2) when not preventable, mitigate the dangers associated with work zone-related congestion and queues.

Scope

Except as provided below, this policy applies to the following:

- (1) All work zone-related roadway restrictions with activities and operations on all Indiana interstates, including the Indiana Toll Road, regardless of the

type of operation, work or entities involved. This includes any work-zone-related roadway restrictions:

- a. taking place on interstate lanes, shoulders, ramps and intersecting roadways; and/or
 - b. occurring adjacent to an interstate and causing, or are anticipated to cause, congestion and queuing on the interstate.
- (2) Any activity, operation, or restriction that will reduce or limit the capacity of a roadway, including but not limited to, lane closures or restrictions, shoulder closures or restrictions, full or directional closures of an interstate, full closures of interstate-to-interstate system interchange ramps or non-system interchange ramps, and short term, temporary traffic breaks on an interstate.
- (3) Any operation that will create work zone-related roadway restrictions, including, but not limited to, construction operations, maintenance operations, utility operations, operations approved through an INDOT Permit, engineering inspection and data gathering operations, and operations facilitating special events.
- (4) Other interstate operations occurring outside of paved areas, including, but not limited to, litter removal, ditch work, clearing right of way, mowing operations, and other work operations occurring off the roadway and shoulder. See Appendix F for additional requirements for interstate operations occurring outside paved areas.

Emergency Repairs and Urgent Repairs to INDOT Infrastructure as declared by the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, an INDOT District Deputy Commissioner or their designee, in accordance with Appendix A, are exempt from the requirements of Appendices B, C and D.

Activities and Operations Exempted from this Policy

- Emergency response to incidents and crashes
- Winter operations related to snow removal and pavement treatments for snow and ice
- Queue Truck operations
- Law enforcement operations such as issuing tickets

Terms and Definitions

See Appendix G for Terms and Definitions applicable to this policy.

Process

A. Preparation for Work Zone-Related Roadway Restrictions

1. Confirm that the activity or operation is not exempted from the policy. (See Activities and Operation Exempted from this Policy.)
2. If the need for the restriction or work is for an emergency or urgent repair as described in Appendix A, pursue an Emergency or Urgent declaration (Appendix A). Emergency and Urgent Closures, as described in Appendix A, are exempt from requirements associated with the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times in Appendix B and from requirements for a Policy Exception as described in Appendices C, D and E.
3. If the activity or operation is not exempted, or the restriction/work is not for an emergency or urgent repair, plan for the restriction.

The impacts that work zone restrictions may have on interstate traffic should be considered and evaluated as early as possible.

For INDOT contracts, an assessment of work zone impacts begins during the scoping process and continues through the design process. These considerations should include an alternatives analysis to determine the most appropriate work zone strategy type and the selection of work hours to be incorporated into the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) associated with this work.

For all interstate work zones, Temporary Traffic Control Plans (TTCPs) of sufficient detail and depth are required.

Extra consideration should be given to the setup and removal of temporary traffic control (TTC) devices, which will often require short-term restrictions. Note that when implementing restrictions, it will often require the use and phasing of other restrictions, such as short-term lane closures, to implement temporary traffic control elements such as pavement markings and delineation devices for a lane width reduction. Additionally, interstate work often requires TTCPs with multiple phases. Changes from one phase to another will also often require short-term restrictions. Such restrictions are also subject to the policy regardless of their duration and must be planned carefully to comply with this policy. These short-term restrictions needed for the setup and removal of TTC, as well as the transitioning of phases of a TTCP, are commonly referred to as “MOT for MOT.”

Work that will occur toward the end of construction, such as placing pavement markings or completing punch list items, is often overlooked during the preparation of a restriction. Thought should be given to which types of work will be performed throughout the life of a project and the types of restrictions that will be needed.

High-level evaluation of the relative considerations of overall truck traffic, as well as cross-sectional elements of the traffic space of a work zone, is necessary. Planned restrictions on segments that have been identified as High-Volume Interstate Segments will be subjected to greater scrutiny, stricter requirements, and a more formal review process when a Policy Exception is being sought. High-Volume Interstate Segments have been identified in the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times tables of Appendix B.

Planning of restrictions should follow these steps:

- a. In consultation with the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times in Appendix B, policy-compliant restrictions should be planned to minimize disruption and impacts to the interstate system. Implementing restrictions in the field in accordance with the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times does not excuse, absolve, or obviate the need for queue mitigation if queues form because of work zone-related restrictions.

However, for any restriction meeting all the following criteria, the requirements of Appendix D shall apply when a Policy Exception is granted in accordance with Appendix C:

- The work is associated with an INDOT Construction Contract
 - The restriction will be on a High-Volume Interstate Segment
 - At least two open lanes will not be provided for a series of 24-hour closures totaling a duration of longer than 14 days
- b. It is the intent of this policy to promote safer work zones and minimize delays for the public, but not to prevent work from taking place on interstate routes. If the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times provided in Appendix B do not offer sufficient opportunity to accomplish the work, a Policy Exception may be requested in accordance with Appendix C.

When a Policy Exception is being sought, segments where the restrictions will occur should be checked to see if they are subject to the following additional requirements:

- i. **High-Volume Interstate Segments.**

For INDOT Construction Contracts, determine if the restriction is within a High-Volume Interstate Segment and whether the requirements of Appendix D apply. An alternatives analysis shall be required to determine the most appropriate work zone strategy type and the selection of work hours. It is recommended that the Requestor confer with the Reviewer on the selection of alternatives before starting the analysis.

ii. **District Special Project Corridor Segments.**

Determine if the restriction is within a District Special Project Corridor Segment listed in Appendix E. If so, the Policy Exception request shall address any additional requirements for the segment as described in Appendix E. It is recommended that the Requestor contact the Reviewer during planning to discuss these additional requirements.

c. For mowing and other interstate operations outside of paved areas, see Appendix F.

4. Submit IHCP Restriction Notification Form to Reviewer.

All restrictions, including those that comply with the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times in Appendix B, must be reported to the Reviewer in the appropriate District Traffic Office via an IHCP Restriction Notification form. This is to ensure agency awareness and to provide the Department the opportunity to give feedback and guidance. If a Policy Exception is being sought, required supporting documentation should also be attached.

5. Review by the District Office.

The Reviewer will assess the IHCP Restriction Notification form and the Policy Exception request, if one is being sought. The Reviewer will coordinate with the Requestor, the Approver, and, if necessary, the Work Zone Council.

If the restriction will require Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) involvement, the Reviewer may notify FHWA of planned restrictions to begin coordination. If the restriction will require FHWA concurrence or approval, the Approver will coordinate the approval or concurrence with FHWA.

The Reviewer will upload the IHCP Restriction Notification form to the Department's Electronic Records Management System (ERMS). Any approved Policy Exceptions shall be attached to the IHCP Restriction Notification form uploaded to ERMS.

Review times will vary depending on the level of complexity of the restrictions and the level of impact to traffic. The following review times will apply to each submission:

- A review conforming with the Select Interstate Times and Restrictions shall be completed within seven days.
- Reviews that involve a Policy Exception will be completed within 21 days.

- Reviews that involve the Work Zone Council will be completed within 60 days.

Multiple submissions, resubmissions, and meetings may be required to obtain a final decision from the Work Zone Council.

Failure of INDOT to meet the review times for a Policy Exception does not grant approval.

6. The Requestor will receive the IHCP Restriction Notification form from the District Traffic Office. The form will indicate one of the following:
 - a. Concurrence of the District Traffic Office that the planned restrictions comply with the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times of Appendix B
 - b. Approval of a Policy Exception request by an Approver, in accordance with Appendix C
 - c. Approval of a Policy Exception request by an Approver and the Work Zone Council, in accordance with Appendix D
 - d. Notification that either the District Traffic Office does not concur that the planned restrictions comply with the requirements of the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times of Appendix B or that the submitted Policy Exception request has been denied. The Requestor may revise and resubmit the IHCP Restriction Notification form and their Policy Exception request.

If applicable, FHWA concurrence or approval will be indicated on the form.

7. The Requestor shall ensure that the Responsible Site Supervisor is provided with the IHCP Notice of Restriction form, any approved Policy Exception, and all requirements stipulated on the form or in an approval for implementing restrictions in the field, including any queue mitigation requirements. This shall be accomplished based on the type of work:
 - a. For work related to an INDOT contract, the requirements shall be included in the contract documents through any required Recurring Special Provision (RSP). The IHCP Notice of Restriction form and any attached approved Policy Exception shall be included as additional information via the Department's Letting Documents website.
 - b. For work by internal Department forces, a copy of the IHCP Notice of Restriction form and any attached approved Policy Exception shall be provided to the foreman, crew leader, or highest-ranking technician on site.

- c. For work by Permittees of an INDOT Permit of any kind, the requirements shall be included in the terms of the Permit. The IHCP Notice of Restriction form and any attached, approved Policy Exception shall be included in the documentation made available to the Permittee on the Department's Electronic Permitting System (EPS).

B. Implementation of Work Zone-Related Roadway Restrictions Affecting the Interstate

The Responsible Site Supervisor shall provide advanced notification for all interstate work zone-related roadway restrictions on the interstate in accordance with the Department's Condition Acquisition Reporting System (CARS) Policy, which may be found on the Department's Travel Information site.

Additionally, the Responsible Site Supervisor shall notify the INDOT District Public Relations Director of the planned restrictions no later than at the time the CARS entries are made.

Restrictions shall be implemented in accordance with the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times in Appendix B or in accordance with the requirements of an approved Policy Exception. Restrictions where no work is occurring for more than three days should not be left in place unnecessarily when it is safe and prudent to remove them.

C. Approval Authority

This policy authorizes the following to approve Policy Exception requests provided that any required concurrences have been obtained:

- Policy Exceptions developed for work related to an INDOT contract must receive the approval of the Managing Director of Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSMO) or their designee.
- Policy Exceptions developed for work by internal Department forces, including Maintenance, must receive the approval of the District Deputy Commissioner (DDC) or their designee.
- Policy Exceptions developed for work by Permittees of an INDOT Permit of any kind must receive the approval of the District Deputy Commissioner (DDC) or their designee.
- Policy Exceptions developed for work related to the repair or replacement of Traffic Management Division's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) infrastructure must receive the approval of the Managing Director of Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSMO) or their designee.

Approval Authorities may, at their discretion, elect to waive particular submittal requirements for a Policy Exception request.

An approval of a Policy Exception by an Approval Authority shall remain valid even when the approval appears to conflict with requirements outlined in this policy or in other published guidelines, standards, specifications, and policies, or when submittal requirements are waived.

D. Delegation of Review Authority and Approval Authority

Approvers may assign a qualified designee responsible for the final review and approval of Policy Exception requests on a continuous basis. Continuous delegation of approval authority should be documented through the Department's Legal Division.

Reviewers, District Traffic Engineers, and Approvers may delegate their review authority to a qualified designee to cover absences.

Responsibilities

A. Requestor

When the need for an interstate restriction is identified, the Requestor shall be responsible for:

1. Developing Temporary Traffic Control Plans to provide optimal safety and mobility. Plans shall be of sufficient detail and depth to convey the intended traffic control strategy and phasing of traffic control in coordination with, and consideration of, construction scheduling or work operations. Plans shall indicate locations, dimensions and quantities of traffic control elements, including any advance signing and detour routes needed. Plans should also include a well-conceived and realistic typical cross section that takes into consideration the condition of the existing pavement, required lane widths and lateral buffer space, needed working space, and the actual size of traffic control devices.
2. Preparing and submitting the IHCP Restriction Notification form.
3. Assessing for each restriction:
 - a. If they can be completed within the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times in accordance with Appendix B.
 - b. If the restrictions cannot be completed within the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times in accordance with Appendix B, decide if a Policy Exception request should be sought. If so, then include any required analyses and supporting information in accordance with Appendix C.

- c. If a Policy Exception request is being sought, then determine if the proposed restriction falls within a High-Volume Interstate Segment or within a District Special Project Corridor Segment and prepare a Policy Exception in accordance with the requirements of Appendices C, D and E as applicable.
4. The Requestor shall ensure that the Responsible Site Supervisor is provided with the IHCP Notice of Restriction form, any approved Policy Exception, and all requirements stipulated on the form or in an approval for implementing restrictions in the field, including any queue mitigation requirements. This shall be accomplished as described in Section A.7 under Process.

B. Reviewer

Typically, the Reviewer is a District Traffic Office staff engineer. The Reviewer will review the IHCP Restriction Notification form and, if needed, provide guidance to the Requestor. The Reviewer will sign the form to indicate concurrence with the request and return it to the Requestor to acknowledge their compliance with the policy.

For restrictions where a Policy Exception is being sought, the Reviewer will coordinate with the Requestor. Once the Reviewer and the District Traffic Engineer concur with the Policy Exception request, it will be forwarded on to the Approver and, as necessary, the District Traffic Engineer will coordinate with the Work Zone Council.

If the restriction will require FHWA involvement, the Reviewer may notify FHWA of planned restrictions to begin coordination. If the restriction will require FHWA concurrence or approval, the Approver will coordinate the approval or concurrence with FHWA.

The Reviewer will upload the IHCP Restriction Notification form and any approved Policy Exceptions to the Department's Electronic Records Management System (ERMS).

C. District Traffic Engineer

The District Traffic Engineer will assess reviewed Policy Exceptions for operational feasibility and impacts to work zone safety and mobility. Once the District Traffic Engineer and the Reviewer concur with the Policy Exception request, the District Traffic Engineer and the Reviewer will forward the request to the Approver and, when applicable, coordinate with the Work Zone Council.

For restrictions associated with an INDOT Construction Contract on a High-Volume Interstate Segment, the DTE will review Policy Exception requests in accordance with Appendix D and submit the Policy Exception request on to the

Work Zone Council or the Approver with supporting justification and recommendations.

D. Work Zone Council

For restrictions associated with an INDOT Construction Contract on a High-Volume Interstate Segment, the Work Zone Council (Council) will review Policy Exception requests in accordance with Appendix D and provide a determination as to whether the Council concurs. The determination will be communicated to the Reviewer and the Approver.

E. Approver

The Approver will review Policy Exception requests and approve them in consultation with the Reviewer, the DTE and the Council as necessary. If the restriction will involve the FHWA and require a concurrence or approval, the Approver will coordinate the approval or concurrence with FHWA.

F. Responsible Site Supervisor

The Responsible Site Supervisor will typically be one of the following, based on the type of work:

- The Contractor's Certified Worksite Traffic Supervisor (CWTS) for work related to an INDOT contract
- The foreman, crew leader, or highest-ranking technician on site for work by internal Department forces, including Maintenance
- The Permittee for work by external forces via an INDOT Permit of any kind

The Responsible Site Supervisor shall provide advanced notification for all interstate work zone-related roadway restrictions affecting the interstate in accordance with the Department's Condition Acquisition and Reporting System and TMC Reporting Policy (referred to as the CARS Policy), which may be found on the Department's Travel Information site.

The Responsible Site Supervisor shall ensure that queue mitigation measures, especially any required measures as a part of an approved Policy Exception, are available and ready for immediate implementation should there be a need for them, prior to commencing the implementation of a restriction. It is necessary to continuously monitor traffic for the presence of queues. If a queue develops, queue mitigation measures shall be implemented or the restriction removed from the roadway.

Restrictions shall be implemented in accordance with the Select Interstate Restrictions and Times in Appendix B or in accordance with the requirements of an approved Policy Exception. Restrictions where no work is occurring for

more than three days should not be left in place unnecessarily when it is safe and prudent to remove them.

G. Indiana Toll Road Operator

The Indiana Toll Road Operator shall be responsible for compliance with and oversight of this policy on the Indiana Toll Road. The Toll Road Operator shall develop internal processes for the administration of the policy.

Authority

The Department, through the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee, may adopt rules to carry out its responsibilities as conferred by Indiana Code §8-23-2-6(11).

This policy was established pursuant to 23 CFR 630 Subpart J – Work Zone Safety and Mobility, which establishes requirements and provides guidance for systematically addressing the safety and mobility impacts of work zones and developing strategies to help manage these impacts on all Federal-aid highway projects.

Appendices

The appendices for this policy are posted online on the Department's website. Refer to the most recently updated version of the appendices at the following location:

<https://www.in.gov/indot/IHCP>

Effective Date

The policy is effective 90 calendar days after the date of approval. On the effective date, this policy replaces all previous Interstate Lane Closure Policies and Interstate Highways Congestion Policies and shall be incorporated into daily operations and maintenance activities immediately. All existing approved Policy Exceptions to a prior version of this policy shall remain valid.

All existing mowing contracts shall remain valid.

All pre-approvals stated in Appendix B of the 2017 policy shall remain valid for:

- All permits approved prior to the effective date of this policy,
- All maintenance work completed prior to the effective date of this policy, and
- All contract work let prior to the effective date of this policy.

With the concurrence of the Approving Authority, a Policy Exception for an INDOT contract approval may continue to be governed by the 2017 Interstate Highways Congestion Policy executed on Jan. 6, 2017, and amended on May 19, 2021, provided that the Policy Exception request was submitted prior to the effective date of this policy.



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