

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

For

Indiana Project
Lead Des. Number 2001154
SR 11 New Terrain and Bridge over Buck Creek between SR 135 and
SR 11/Melview Road, Harrison County, Indiana

The approved Environmental Assessment (EA) was released for public involvement by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on July 27, 2023. The public comment period was from August 16, 2023, to September 15, 2023, and an in-person public hearing was held on August 31, 2023. Fifty-three members of the public attended the meeting. Comments were received from eight (8) members of the public and two (2) agencies (US Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service). These comments provided no new substantive information requiring additional analysis.

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) proposes to extend SR 11 from the SR 135 and Watson Road intersection east across Buck Creek and its associated floodplain to the SR 11/Old Highway 337/Melview Road intersection. The project will provide improved safety performance by connecting SR 135 to SR 11 via construction of a roadway that meets current design standards, which includes wider lanes, usable shoulders, clear zones, and adequate sight distances to reduce crash frequencies and crash costs.

The 5.1 miles long project maximizes use of existing roadways by extending east from the SR 135 and Watson Road intersection along Watson Road and then along Union Chapel Road. The road will then cross new terrain where there is no current roadway, and a bridge will be built across Buck Creek and its floodplain. The new road will connect to a farm access road on the east side of Buck Creek and eventually tie into Melview Road. The project will terminate at the current SR 11/Old SR 337/Melview Road intersection. The project is in Boone Township, Harrison County, Indiana.

The Selected Alternative includes actions that improve existing roadways to current standards, construct a new roadway, and construct a new bridge. Below is a summary of the scope of the project, but a full project description is identified as the "Preferred Alternative" in the Environmental Assessment Document:

- Upgrades Melview Road, Watson Road, and Union Chapel Road and construction of a new roadway to meet the following current design standard:
 - Two, twelve feet wide travel lanes
 - Six feet wide shoulders
 - Sixteen feet wide clear zone on either side of the roadway
 - Vertical and horizontal curve improvements
- Construction of a new bridge crossing Buck Creek

- Placement of drainage structures along the roadway to facilitate roadside drainage as needed
- Placement of guardrail on bridge approaches and other locations as deemed needed to meet design standards
- Incorporation of karst treatments including grouting and plugging sinkholes beneath the pavement and placement of a reverse aggregate cap over sinkholes adjacent to the roadway.

Right-of-way required for the project includes approximately 132.75 acres of permanent right-of-way (ROW) and 0.90 acre of temporary ROW. Permanent ROW will be acquired including 2.74 acres from residential areas, 50.60 acres from agricultural fields, 25.70 acres from forest, 0.09 acre from wetlands, 29.28 acres from undeveloped (vacant) land, and 24.34 acres from existing roadway parcels. Temporary ROW needed for grading and reconstruction of driveway and field accesses and access to the bridge construction area will be acquired including 0.25 acre from residential areas, 0.28 acre from agricultural fields, 0.11 acre from forest, 0.07 acre from undeveloped (vacant) land, and 0.19 acre from existing roadway parcels. Two residential relocations will be required for the construction of the project.

There will be four (4) streams with a total of 393 linear feet permanently impacted by the project. A total of 0.02 acres of wetlands will also be impacted. The project has been designed to minimize stream and wetland impacts where possible within the project area. Stream and wetland impacts will be mitigated through the waterway permitting process in compliance with federal and state regulations.

Terrestrial habitats impacted by the construction include approximately 28.79 acres of farmland/grassland, 17.15 acres of forest (tree removal), approximately 8.06 acres of mowed lawn areas, and 18.29 acres of undeveloped land (vacant agricultural or residential lands).

The project is within range of the federally endangered Indiana bat, Northern long-eared bat (NLEB) and gray bat. The project effect finding for the Indiana bat and the NLEB species is “may adversely affect” and for the gray bat is “may affect, not likely to adversely.” On April 19, 2023, USFWS issued a Biological Opinion that concluded the project as proposed is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Indiana bat or the NLEB based on the agreement to follow time of year tree clearing restrictions, mitigation through the Conservation Fund (TCF) In Lieu Fee Program, avoidance of hibernacula, and a bridge design that minimizes impacts. Avoidance and minimization measures for these bat species are documented as project commitments.

There are three above ground properties that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places within the area of potential effect for the project; however, there will be no adverse effect to the three resources. There are five archaeological sites identified within the project area but the sites or portions of the sites

in the project boundary are not eligible for listing on the National Register. The portions of the three archaeological sites whose boundaries extend beyond the project boundaries will be avoided. The State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the “no adverse effect” finding for the project on June 15, 2023.

Right-of-way is anticipated to be taken from two of the above ground resources eligible for listing on the National Register. However, because the finding is “no adverse effect” for the effects to the properties, the impacts fall under the June 2020 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the FHWA, the Indiana SHPO, and the INDOT, which determines that a *de minimis* use of a property applies for all projects where the SHPO has concurred with a “No Adverse Effect” finding. Therefore, the project will result in a *de minimis* impact to the two properties. There are no other Section 4f resources in the project area, and no further analysis is required.

This project is in Harrison County, which is currently in attainment for all criteria pollutants; therefore, conformity procedures of 40 CFR 93 do not apply. Greenhouse gas emissions were analyzed for the project. The purpose of this project is to improve safety and it is not being developed to promote development in this area; therefore, the project is not projected to increase vehicular traffic in this region of Harrison County. The analysis indicates the proposed project is anticipated to result in a net reduction in GHG emissions by diverting traffic to a shorter route between SR 135 and SR 11 with no stop conditions and less steep grades.

This project is considered a Type 1 project in terms of analyzing traffic noise impacts. Therefore, in accordance with 23 CFR 772 and the INDOT Traffic Noise Analysis Procedures (2017), this action required a formal noise analysis. Based on the studies completed, no impacted receptors were identified in the area. Therefore, the project will not include noise abatement.

It was determined that the impacts associated with this project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and/or low-income populations of Environmental Justice (EJ) concern relative to non-EJ populations in accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 12898 and FHWA Order 6640.23a.

There are 59 commitments listed as firm commitments and 6 included for further consideration.

The FHWA has determined that this project, as identified in the Environmental Assessment and supplemental project information, will have no significant impact on the natural and human environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on the environmental assessment, public hearing transcript, public and agency comments received. They have been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the environmental issues and impacts of the project. These documents provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that significant

impacts will not occur and an environmental impact statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of these documents.

December 7, 2023

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for: Jermaine R. Hannon
Division Administrator