



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Date: August 1, 2022

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 along US 31 beginning approximately at the southern terminus of Franklin, approximately 1.25 miles south of Jefferson St (SR 44/SR 144), and will extend to the northern terminus of Franklin, approximately 4.45 miles north of Jefferson St., City of Franklin, Johnson County, Indiana (Des. Nos. 1800082, 2001610, and 1800272). The purpose of this project is to reduce congestion, improve traffic flow, and improve the overall safety of the US 31 corridor included in this project by minimizing the number of intersections with a level of service (LOS) E or F during at least 1 of the peak traffic hours and by reducing the potential points of conflict between vehicles in busy intersections. An additional purpose of this project is to improve the non-motorized connectivity in the City of Franklin. For the structure carrying US 31 over Canary Ditch, the purpose of the project is to provide a structure with a condition rating of at least 7 (good) out of 9. SJCA, 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 SJCA, Inc. Comment forms are available for download at INDOT Seymour District website Seymour.indot.in.gov. Comment forms will also be available at the public hearing.
2. **Participate** as speaker during the verbal comment session during the public hearing
3. **E-mail** comments to Victoria Veach at SJCA at vveach@sjcainc.com.
4. **Mail** comments to Victoria Veach at SJCA, Inc. at 1028 Virginia Ave., Suite 201 Indianapolis IN 46203.
5. **Questions?** Contact Victoria Veach of SJCA, Inc. at (317) 566-0629 or vveach@sjcainc.com or INDOT Customer Service at 1-855-INDOT4U. INDOT@indot.in.gov.

Submit comments (or have comments postmarked by) **August 16, 2022**. Comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the INDOT decision making process. 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:

- INDOT Seymour District Office, 185 Agrico Lane, Seymour IN 47274
- INDOT Seymour District webpage: <https://www.in.gov/indot/2706.htm>
- Johnson County Public Library, 401 State Street, Franklin IN 46131

The US 31 Corridor 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 along US 31 beginning approximately at the southern terminus of Franklin, approximately 1.25 miles south of Jefferson St (SR 44/SR 144), and will extend to the northern terminus of Franklin, approximately 4.45 miles north of Jefferson St., City of Franklin, Johnson County, Indiana (Des. Nos. 1800082, 2001610, and 1800272).

The need for this project arises from a decrease in functionality and safety on the US 31 corridor passing through the City of Franklin, a lack of consistent pedestrian and non-motorized infrastructure along the corridor, and the deterioration of the structure carrying US 31 over Canary Ditch within the identified project area.

The purpose of this project is to reduce congestion, improve traffic flow, and improve the overall safety of the US 31 corridor included in this project by minimizing the number of intersections with a level of service (LOS) E or F during at least 1 of the peak traffic hours and by reducing the potential points of conflict between vehicles in busy intersections. An additional purpose of this project is to improve the non-motorized connectivity in the City of Franklin. For the structure carrying US 31 over Canary Ditch, the purpose of the project is to provide a structure with a condition rating of at least 7 (good) out of 9.

The current preferred alternative is to construct reduced conflict intersections (RCIs), including restricted crossing U-turn (R-CUT) and median U-turn (MUT) intersections, throughout the section of US 31 included in this project. One signalized green-T style intersection will be constructed at S. Main St. At this intersection, S. Main St and northbound US 31 will be controlled by a traffic signal while southbound US 31 flows freely. An acceleration/merge lane will be constructed on southbound US 31 for traffic turning left from S. Main St. RCIs are intersections that rely on U-turns located in medians past the intersection to complete certain left turn and through movements. In R-CUT intersections, left turns will be allowed from US 31 to cross streets, but traffic from cross streets will only be allowed to turn right onto US 31. Left turns onto US 31 and continuing on the same cross street by traveling through the intersection will be restricted by a concrete median. R-CUT intersections will be constructed at Nineveh Rd, Franklin Lakes Blvd/South St, King St, Mallory Pkwy, Westview Dr/N Main St, Earlywood Dr, and Christian Blvd/Oakville Blvd. Two intersections, Jefferson St and Commerce Dr, will allow left turns from the cross street to US 31, but left turns from US 31 will be restricted. In MUT intersections, left turns from all approaches of the intersection will be restricted by a vegetated median. MUT intersections will be constructed at all other intersections in the project. Traffic loons will be constructed opposite each dedicated U-turn location. A traffic loon is pavement that is constructed outside of normal traffic lanes to allow for larger vehicles to safely make a U-turn on a divided roadway. New curb and gutter will be installed along the roadway throughout the entire project. Roadside drainage will collect in new gutters and curbside inlets adjacent to the roadway, then collect in a combination of shallow ditching and storm sewers.

Improvements to non-motorized and pedestrian infrastructure in the project area will be made by adding new infrastructure that ties into the existing network of multi-use trails and sidewalks. On the east side of US 31, a 10-foot-wide multi-use trail will be constructed beginning at the terminus of an existing trail on the north side of S. Main St. On the west side of US 31, a 10-foot-wide multi-use trail will be constructed starting in the northwest corner of the US 31 and Nineveh Rd intersection. Both trails will extend north to the end of the project area. New ADA compliant curb ramps will be constructed at all intersections throughout the project. Pedestrian handrails will be installed to the outside of the multi-use trails along areas where steep roadside embankments exist or where the trails will cross waterways. A total of 4 structures carrying US 31 over waterways will be widened or lengthened in order to accommodate the trails.

At the structure carrying US 31 over Youngs Creek (Structure No. 031-41-07875, Des 2001610), this project will remove the outside portions of the existing bridge superstructure and will install a new portion of concrete deck with sidewalk and concrete railing with new aluminum guardrail mounted on top. The travel lane widths will remain the same, and a concrete median will remain. The shoulders crossing the bridge will be narrowed to 2 feet wide, and 8-foot-wide concrete sidewalks elevated from the travel lanes by an 8-inch curb will be placed on each side of the bridge. Riprap will be installed as needed for erosion control.

At the structure carrying US 31 over Canary Ditch (Structure No. 031-41-03534, Des 1800272), this project will replace the existing structure with a new 3-sided concrete structure with a height of 16 feet, a width of 23 feet, and a length of 164 feet. New wingwalls will be constructed in all corners of the structure. Riprap will be installed as needed for erosion control.

Description of Right-of-Way

The project will require the purchase of right-of-way. For more information see the pamphlet distributed at the public hearing posted on the project website (www.structurepointpublic.com/sr7): ACQUISITION – “Acquiring Real Property for Federal and Federal-Aid Programs and Projects.” Acquisition information can also be viewed at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/real_estate/.

The proposed project requires a total of approximately 6.8 acres of new permanent right-of-way (ROW) in order to construct traffic loons and the multi-use trails and to make improvements to the storm drainage system. A total of 6.37 acres of temporary ROW will be required to grade roadside ditches to ensure positive drainage and to reconstruct cross street approaches. No relocations will be required for the proposed project.

Land Use Impacts	Amount (acres)	
	Permanent	Temporary
Residential	0.22	0.10
Commercial	2.11	5.63
Agricultural	4.23	0.37
Forest	0.24	0.27
Wetlands	n/a	n/a
Other:	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	6.80	6.37

Maintenance of Traffic (MOT)

For local traffic, US 31 will remain open for the duration of construction. Construction will take place in phases with a total of 6 phases planned. Construction is expected to begin in March 2023 and extend until August of 2025. Safety signage will be placed along the route and provisions will be made for access by local traffic and will be posted. An alternate detour route using I-65 and I-465 will be used for through traffic on US 31. Signs indicating the alternate detour route will be placed at the US 31 and I-65 interchange located approximately 14 miles south of SR 44/SR 144 (Jefferson St) and at the US 31 and I-465 interchange located approximately 16 miles north of SR 44/SR 144 (Jefferson St). For local traffic, US 31 will remain open for the duration of construction and phased construction will be used. A total of 6 phases will be used; each phase will consist of 2 sub-phases.

Phase 1 of construction will replace the structure carrying US 31 over Canary Ditch. Crossovers will be constructed north and south of the structure, beginning at Ransdell Dr and Schoolhouse Rd, respectively, and 1 lane of traffic in each direction will be maintained while the structure is replaced. During the first sub-phase (Phase 1), all traffic will be shifted to the northbound side of US 31 while the west half of the new structure is constructed. During the second sub-phase (Phase 1A), all traffic will be shifted to the southbound side of US 31 while the eastern half of the structure is constructed. Phases 1 and 1A are expected to take place between June 2023 and November 2023. construction. The construction timing of this phase will overlap with Phases 2 and 3.

The MOT for Phase 2 will end at Jefferson St, and the MOT for Phase 3 will end approximately 400 feet south of the start of the MOT for Phase 1; therefore, there will be no conflicts in the MOT for Phases 1, 2, and 3. All work associated with reconstructing US 31 and rehabilitating the structure carrying US 31 over Youngs Creek will happen during Phases 2-6. One (1) lane of traffic will be maintained in each direction for the duration of construction. During the first sub-phase of all remaining phases (Phases 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), the inside travel lanes in each direction will remain open while the outside lanes, loons, curb and gutters, trails and sidewalks, curb ramps, cross street approaches, and the drainage improvements are constructed. During the second sub-phase of all remaining phases (Phases 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 6A), the outside travel lanes in each direction will remain open while the inside lanes, concrete center islands, and medians are constructed.

Phases 2 and 2A will construct US 31 from S Main St to the south side of the structure carrying US 31 over Youngs Creek. Phases 2 and 2A are expected to take place between March 2023 and August 2023.

Phases 3 and 3A will construct US 31 from the south end of the structure carrying US 31 over Youngs Creek to approximately 190 feet north of Lemley St. The superstructure of the bridge carrying US 31 over Youngs Creek will be widened during Phase 3. Phases 3 and 3A are expected to take place between August 2023 and March 2024.

Phases 4 and 4A will construct US 31 from approximately 190 feet north of Lemley St to approximately 1,000 feet north of Commerce Dr. Phases 4 and 4A are expected to take place between March 2024 and August 2024.

Phases 5 and 5A will construct US 31 from approximately 1,000 feet north of Commerce Dr to approximately 2,100 feet north of Lancer Dr/Sloan Dr. Phases 5 and 5A are expected to take place between August 2024 and March 2025. Phases 6 and 6A will construct US 31 from approximately 2,100 feet north of Lancer Dr/Sloan Dr to the northern terminus of the project. Phases 6 and 6A are expected to take place between March 2025 and August 2025.

Project Schedule

Milestone	Expected Dates
Categorical Exclusion Released for Public Involvement	July 1, 2022
Public Comment Opportunity	July 16, 2022 – August 16, 2022
Real Estate Acquisition	Begin Early 2022
Begin Proposed Construction	Anticipated Spring 2023

Estimated Project Cost Summary

The total cost estimate for the project, including construction, right-of-way, and engineering, is currently \$50,137,974. 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 SJCA, Inc. for this project and released the document for public involvement on July 1, 2022. The CE evaluates the impact of the US 31 corridor improvement project on the natural and human environment. No significant adverse impacts to the human and natural environment were found during the creation of this environmental document.

Water Resources

A *Waters of the U.S. Determination/Wetland Delineation Report* was approved by the INDOT Ecology and Waterway Permitting Office on October 13, 2021. It was determined that 4 wetlands are likely Waters of the US and jurisdictional under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and that 11 wetlands are not likely Waters of the US and not likely jurisdictional under the USACE. It was determined that 3 streams, Youngs Creek, UNT 1 to Youngs Creek, and Canary Ditch, are present in the investigated area. Youngs Creek, UNT 1 to Youngs Creek, and Canary Ditch were determined to be likely jurisdictional under the USACE due to their eventual connectivity to the East Fork White River, a traditionally navigable waterway. Powell Legal Drain did not exhibit a discernable bed or bank or an OHWM within the investigated area; therefore, it was determined to be an ephemeral drainage feature and not likely jurisdictional under the USACE. The USACE makes all final determinations regarding jurisdiction. This project will permanently impact a total of 0.982 acre of wetlands and 220 linear feet of stream. These impacts have been minimized to the greatest amount possible. An Indiana Department of Natural Resources Construction in a Floodway (IDNR CIF) permit, USACE 404 permit and an IDEM 401 permit are anticipated. Mitigation is anticipated for impacts.

The proposed project will also require a Rule 5 Construction Sediment and Erosion Control Permit from IDEM as more than one acre of land will be disturbed.

Cultural Resources

No archaeological sites were identified within the project area as being eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A historic properties report was completed, and five historic resources were determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, including: The Greenlawn Cemetery, Lochry Addition No. 5 Historic District, Wishing Well Motel, Daily Journal Building, and the Tearman Motel. INDOT, acting on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has determined a finding of “No Adverse Effect” is appropriate for the US 31 corridor improvement project. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the “No Adverse Effect” finding.

Endangered Species and Terrestrial Habitat

A total of 74.46 acres of terrestrial habitat will be disturbed by this project. A total of 1.88 acres of trees will be removed for this project. The widening of the structure carrying US 31 of Youngs Creek (Des 2001610) will require 0.07 acre of tree removal. The replacement of the structure carrying US 31 over Canary Ditch (Des 1800272) will require 0.06 acre of tree removal. The corridor and intersection improvements on US 31 (Des 1800082) will require 1.75 acres of tree removal. Impacts cannot be avoided due to their location adjacent to the roadway. All tree clearing will take place within 100 feet of the roadway, culvert, and bridge, and tree removal will take place during the inactive season for bats. Mitigation for tree clearing is not expected to be required.

The project is within range of the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and the federally threatened northern long-eared bat (NLEB) (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The project was found to “*Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” the Indiana bat and/or the northern long-eared bat.

INDOT Bridge No. 031-41-07875 carrying US 31 over Youngs Creek has shown evidence of use (i.e., nests) by a bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Avoidance and minimization measures must be implemented prior to the start of and during the nesting season. Nests without eggs or young should be removed prior to construction during the non-nesting season (September 8-April 30) and during the nesting season if no eggs or young are present. Nests with eggs or young cannot be removed or disturbed during the nesting season (May 1-September 7). Nests with eggs or young should be screened or buffered from active construction. Details of the required procedures are outlined in the “Potential Migratory Bird on Structure” Required Special Provision (RSP) #107-C-273. This firm commitment is included in the Environmental Commitments section of this document.

INDOT Bridge No. 031-41-07875 carrying US 31 over Youngs Creek and INDOT Bridge No. 031-41-03534 carrying US 31 over Canary Ditch and the project’s surrounding habitat is conducive for use (i.e., nests) by a bird species protected under the MBTA. Prior to the start of the nesting season (May 1), the structure must be inspected for birds or signs of birds. If birds or signs of birds are found during the inspection, avoidance and minimization measures must be implemented prior to the start of and during the nesting season. Nests without eggs or young should be removed prior to construction during the non-nesting season (September 8- April 30) and during the nesting season if no eggs or young are present. Nests with eggs or young should be screened or buffered from active construction.

Community Impacts

The project complies with local and regional development plans for the area. The 2011 Johnson County Comprehensive Plan established goals to participate in regional planning efforts through the Indianapolis MPO, to support quality trails to connect recreational uses/land, to support walkable communities and efforts to develop a community trail system, and to provide for safe intersections. The City of Franklin’s 2013 Comprehensive Plan identifies several goals related to transportation, including improving the functionality and access of the transportation network by including multiple modes of transportation in future planning and construction projects and to promote community connectivity and health by supporting the expansion of the local trail and sidewalk network. The City of Franklin’s 2017 Thoroughfare Plan identifies 3 main goals: to provide a safe transportation network for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians; to maintain an efficient roadway network; and to create a transportation system that encourages other modes of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, and the use of public transit. The Thoroughfare Plan also identifies strategies to achieve pedestrian improvements along US 31 and to pursue improvements in partnership with INDOT, including congestion mitigation along US 31 within city limits and to improve capacity of several city streets along the US 31 corridor.

The project also complies with the Johnson County Trails Master Plan to improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. The project also meets the Master Plan’s goals to create connections between neighborhoods, parks, schools, businesses, and government facilities and to increase the quality of life of county residents. The proposed trails in this project also meet the goals of the 2020 City of Franklin Bicycle and Pedestrian Way Master Plan to connect areas of the city with bicycle and pedestrian facilities; to complete gaps within the existing greenway network; and to improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The MOT for this project will negatively impact travel plans to facilities and events along and near the section of US 31 in this project in the form of lane closures and restricted access to cross streets. Road closures and traffic detours associated with this project may cause delays, but no adverse impacts are expected. The impacts will be temporary and limited to the time of construction, and warning signage of upcoming road construction will be in place north and south of the project area as shown in the MOT plan. Additional travel time to events will be required, but access will not be denied to any locations hosting known events. Pedestrian facilities in this project will be ADA-compliant per local and federal regulations. The proposed project will not result in the relocation of residences, businesses, or farms. The proposed project is not anticipated to negatively affect community cohesion. Minimal impacts are anticipated to the local tax base, property value, and community events.

Environmental Justice (EJ)

The project will require 6.8 acres of new permanent right-of-way (ROW) and a total of 6.37 acres of temporary ROW and no relocations. Therefore, an EJ Analysis is required. Potential EJ impacts are detected by locating minority and low-income populations relative to a reference population to determine if populations of EJ concern exists and whether there could be disproportionately high and adverse impacts to them. The reference population may be a county, city or town and is called the community of comparison (COC). In this project, the COC is Johnson County. The community that overlaps the project area is called the affected community (AC). In this project, the AC is the City of Franklin. An AC has a

population of concern for EJ if the population is more than 50% minority or low-income or if the low-income or minority population is 125% of the COC. Data from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey was obtained from the US Census Bureau Website. The City of Franklin was not identified as a low-income or minority population of EJ concern. The project will result in positive community-wide impacts in the form of improved traffic flow and pedestrian/bicycle connectivity to existing trails and sidewalk networks, regardless of minority or income status. The maintenance of traffic will impact all travelers regardless of income or ethnicity and will not impact EJ populations more than any other population. Once complete, the project will maintain access to all businesses and residences on both sides of the US 31 roadway using a combination of RCIs, median U-turn, green T, restricted crossing U-turn, and boulevard left intersection styles. Traffic turning into businesses will use the proposed turning configurations, which are different from existing conditions, but access to businesses and residences will not be denied. The EJ analysis conducted for this project was forwarded to INDOT ESD which responded, stating that “with the information provided, INDOT-ESD would not consider the impacts associated with this project as causing a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and/or low-income populations of EJ concern relative to non-EJ populations in accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 12898 and FHWA Order 6640.23a”.

