

## Frequently Asked Questions

### US 31 Limited Access in Hamilton County

**1. Why is this project needed?**

This project is needed because of the high rate of crashes near intersections along this stretch of US 31. Hamilton County is currently seeing an average of 10.98 crashes per mile per year. The majority of these crashes occur within 1,000 feet of an intersection where cross traffic, as well as slowing and accelerating vehicles for turning movements create conflict opportunities. The primary purpose of this project is to improve safety and reduce crashes along US 31 while maintaining local access by providing interchanges and overpasses at select locations.

**2. How will converting US 31 to limited access increase safety along US 31?**

With a traditional at-grade intersection, there are 42 potential conflict points. All of the intersections between SR 38 and 286<sup>th</sup> Street are at-grade intersections. Eliminating and/or converting at-grade intersections to grade-separated interchanges will significantly reduce conflict points and vehicular crashes.

**3. Why do some intersections need to be closed or have cul-de-sacs constructed?**

Constructing over/underpasses or a full interchange at every intersection is not feasible from benefit to cost ratio. Locations have been selected based on a variety of factors, including traffic volumes, crash reduction, construction cost, and end-user utility costs.

For reference, interchanges currently cost approximately \$50 million, overpasses cost \$10 million, and cul-de-sacs cost \$250,000.

**4. Why can't right-in/right-outs be constructed at intersections to allow partial access to county roads?**

While construction of right-in and right-out intersections would be possible at select locations, one goal of the project is to convert US 31 to a free-flow corridor. If right-in/right-out access was granted at county roads, US 31 would need to be upgraded to Freeway standards. This includes the construction of curved entrance and exit ramps accompanied with acceleration and deceleration lanes and would result in added cost and right-of-way impacts. Converting US 31 to Freeway standards would cost an estimated four-to-five times more than the free-flow plan.

**5. How will the limited access conversion affect local businesses?**

Local businesses with only direct access to US 31 will need to be relocated as part of this project if it is not feasible to provide alternate access. Businesses with access from county roads only and not impacted by the physical construction of proposed improvements will remain in place.

**6. With the change in access to US 31, county and local roads will see an increase in traffic including farm equipment and truck traffic. Many county roads are not built to adequate design standards to handle this increased traffic. How will this be addressed?**

INDOT has coordinated directly with Hamilton County regarding proposed improvements and timelines, as the county is responsible for the construction and maintenance of local roads in this area. Coordinating early in project development allows time for counties to plan and execute improvements to their roadways to accommodate future changes and impacts.

**7. Why is Tipton County not included in this project?**

To leverage the time needed to generate a funding stream for improvements north of 286<sup>th</sup> Street, the US 31 Corridor in Tipton County is being studied as part of INDOT's Preliminary Environmental and Linkage (PEL) Study. The ProPel US 31 Study seeks to assess long-term transportation needs along US 31, outside of the previously addressed section of the corridor. More information regarding ProPel US 31 can be found at <https://propelus31.com/>. More information regarding INDOT's approach to PEL studies can be found at [www.in.gov/indot/4035.htm](http://www.in.gov/indot/4035.htm).

**8. How does this project accommodate emergency services?**

During project development, INDOT engaged specifically with emergency service providers, including Jackson Township Fire, Cicero Fire, Sheridan Fire, Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, Hamilton County Emergency Management, Westfield Police and Fire, Carmel Police and Fire, and Indiana State Police to ensure their valuable input was received and incorporated into the project design to ensure minimal impact to response times.

One specific item that came from this coordination is the knowledge that US 31 is a boundary for Sheridan, Cicero, and Jackson Townships, so emergency responders will not be significantly impacted by the US 31 Limited Access Project within their jurisdictions. In situations requiring mutual aid, responders will be able to cross US 31 freely without the delays they currently face. In mass response incidents, the agencies that would come from the south will also be able to access the area without having to clear at-grade intersections on US 31. Finally, coordination with emergency services has taken place over multiple years, allowing significant time for planning to ensure a smooth transition from the current to the proposed final configuration. INDOT will continue to coordinate with appropriate parties as the project progresses.

**9. Why is there an interchange at 276<sup>th</sup> Street when it has such little traffic?**

INDOT evaluated full-access locations by looking at US 31 from the corridor perspective rather than individual cross-street locations. To determine feasible locations, interchange spacing, cross-county connectivity and county road capacity/condition were some of many factors considered. 276<sup>th</sup> Street provided an ideal spacing from the 236<sup>th</sup> Street interchange given the rural nature of the corridor (four-mile spacing), aligned with the county investment in the reconstruction of 276<sup>th</sup> Street and realigning to 281<sup>st</sup> further east, and balanced access to both Arcadia and Atlanta.

**10. Why is there not an interchange being proposed at 256<sup>th</sup> Street?**

The purpose of the project is to improve safety by further limiting access to US 31. This project balanced the need to improve safety with the need to provide access. In a rural setting, INDOT prefers to see a minimum four-mile spacing of interchanges to provide adequate distance between entrance and exit ramps and minimize merging conflict points. The interchanges at 236<sup>th</sup> Street and 276<sup>th</sup> streets provide more than enough capacity to handle the volumes of traffic in this area as well as 20 years post-construction. Also, an interchange in today's dollars can cost around \$50 million. Based on the lack of alignment with the project purpose, lack of need, and significant cost to taxpayers, we are not pursuing an interchange at 256<sup>th</sup> Street as part of this project.

**11. What does the right of way acquisition process look like on this project?**

This project is receiving federal funding which requires compliance with numerous federal and state regulations. The underlying theme of these regulations is to ensure all property owners are treated equally and fairly. Not only are property owners compensated fair market value for land and improvements impacted by the project, but those who are required to move from their property (residents, tenants, businesses, etc.) are also entitled to a broad range of relocation entitlements. FHWA outlines this process and entitlements in detail for land acquisition - <https://www.in.gov/indot/projects/files/FHWA-Acquisition-Brochure-BLUE.pdf> as well as for relocation assistance - <https://www.in.gov/indot/projects/files/FHWA-Relocation-Brochure-GREEN.pdf>.

INDOT considers property owners directly impacted by our projects as key stakeholders. Given the magnitude of acquisition on this project, we have met with property owners at various public meetings as well as in one-on-one meetings upon request to discuss the project as well as listen to property owner interests and concerns. Our goal with early property owner engagement was to find early on how this project could best accommodate property owner interest while still achieving the purpose and need of the project.