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Planned Median U-Turn Projects

U.S. 41 Intersection Improvements Located at Freelandville Road and Old U.S. 41

Many alternatives have been considered to improve safety at US 41 intersections with Freelandville Road and Old US 41 near Oaktown. After careful consideration, INDOT appreciates the opportunity to present to the public a Median U-Turn (MUT) design to achieve that objective.

What is a Median U-Turn?

There are several variations or specific forms under the broad Median U-Turn family of designs. They all involve in some manner an indirect U-turn made downstream of the main or original intersection to replace what otherwise would be a direct left turn or crossing movements.

Why Median U-Turns?

Simply put, where site-specific traffic and road conditions are fitting for their use, MUT intersections save lives and reduce risk of serious injury accidents. They are different from conventional intersections in Indiana, but are more common in other states, and have been proven effective at significantly improving intersection safety.

How do Median U-Turns improve safety?

They break up complex driver decisions into simple ones that are made one at a time. Notably, crossing or turning left onto a high-speed four-lane divided highway from a side street involves seeing and reacting to cars & trucks approaching from multiple directions. MUT intersections still allow for all movements between the main road and side street, but achieve better safety by directing certain movements to use U-turn locations on either side of the main intersection. By limiting or eliminating conflict points between two motor vehicles, MUTs reduce the risk of high-speed, right-angle accidents that are often severe, causing serious injury.

Aren't the intersections too busy for MUTs?

No, MUTs have been implemented successfully at intersections across the United States, commonly on busy and high-speed four-lane divided highways like U.S. 41.

Can semi-trucks, farm equipment and school buses use MUTs safely?

Yes, MUTs are constructed to accommodate large vehicles, such as semis, farm equipment, school buses, and emergency vehicles – any type of vehicle that a conventional intersection can handle.

Why not a stoplight?

Experience has shown that installing a stoplight or traffic signal is not necessarily the best solution to improve safety at a divided highway intersection. Rather, whether or not it's better to use or not use a stoplight depends on a number of factors involving sheer traffic volume, the mix of traffic, how much is turning left or right as opposed to going straight, prevailing speeds, past accident types, presence of curves and grades, etc. The merit of installing a stoplight at either or both US 41 intersections has been closely studied, and under the conditions at these two sites, determined to be less effective than installing Median U-turns.

Is there proof that MUTs work?

Yes, there is overwhelming evidence of the effectiveness of MUTs at improving intersection safety. The Federal Highway Administration has determined the in-service experience of states heavily using this type of intersection design, mainly Minnesota, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Maryland, and Iowa, among many others, positively should be promoted for use of the design to all states. A major "before versus after" studies by FHWA, other state departments of transportation, and traffic safety researchers consistently supports this finding. Most recently, in 2017, Minnesota completed a study that compared intersection accidents before to after installation of its many Median U-Turns., and found a 100% reduction of fatal and serious injury right-angle accidents, a 77% reduction of all severity right-angle accidents, and a 50% reduction of injury accidents of all types (right-angle, head-on, and rear-end, etc.)