

INDOT To Study U.S. 30

Kosciusko County Times Union

Staff Report

Tuesday, February 16, 2021 9:28 PM

After the recent announcement that the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) will begin a study to improve the U.S. 30 corridor from Valparaiso to the Ohio state line, the U.S. 30 Coalition issued a news release Tuesday thanking Gov. Eric Holcomb, INDOT Commissioner Joe McGuinness and the northern Indiana legislative delegation for their diligent work to make this study a reality.

"On behalf of the locally elected officials and representatives that make up the U.S. 30 Coalition, we applaud the decision to initiate a designed solution to improve this critical roadway through our communities," said Mayor Joe Thallemer, president of the U.S. 30 Coalition.

The Coalition has long advocated that a freeway is the best and only option for improving U.S. 30 because of the considerable safety and economic disadvantages associated with the current structure of U.S. 30, according to the news release.

In this study, known as a Planning and Environment Linkages study, INDOT will examine various options to improve the safety, traffic flow, freight movement and economic development potential of the corridor, including the construction of a freeway. INDOT has agreed that the study will recognize the importance of U.S. 30 remaining a consistent type of roadway and not a mixture of improvements and it will not be designed to merely examine the quickest or least expensive solution.

"We look forward to studying the long-term needs for U.S. 30 and engaging with businesses, local leaders and communities along the corridor as we consider all options for the future," McGuinness said. "The Planning and Environmental Linkage study will take a fresh look at the route and consider community, economic and environmental goals as we evaluate how to best improve safety and mobility on U.S. 30."

With the onset of the study, INDOT agreed to institute a moratorium on J-turns on the U.S. 30 corridor except for the one currently under contract at CR 500E in Whitley County. Any projects that are currently underway on U.S. 30 will not detract from the ultimate purpose of the study.

In the news release, the Coalition thanks the northern Indiana business community, who made it abundantly clear to Holcomb and his staff that business retention and expansion is at risk without improving U.S. 30 to a freeway. "Our business and government leaders have consistently said that the increasing traffic numbers and

corresponding accident rates on our main commercial thoroughfare are untenable for our region's future," the release states.

The Coalition will work with INDOT through the study process, making sure that communities' interests are well represented.

Rep. David Heine said, "The commitment from our governor and INDOT Commissioner did not happen by accident. This got done because of the collaboration between our business leaders, our U.S. 30 coalition and our state representatives and senators along the corridor. This commitment is great news for economic development in northern Indiana!"

The U.S. 30 Coalition is an advocacy group charged with upgrading U.S. 30 to a freeway, from Valparaiso to the Ohio line. It wants to ensure that U.S. 30 works for citizens, businesses, farmers and all other community members, all while providing safe travel for drivers.