



# STATE ROAD 11

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## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

**SR-11 Extension Project (DES 2001154)**

**Harrison County**

Prepared for

Indiana Department of Transportation

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has proposed a new roadway alignment project for SR-11 in southern Harrison County from SR-135 to SR-337. The project effort will involve delivering the project from the preliminary engineering and environmental studies through final design and right-of-way acquisition.

Harrison County is known for its geological features, such as Squire Boone Caverns and historical significance, such as Corydon being the original state capital. Developing a new terrain roadway project in this unique environmentally sensitive region requires a robust public outreach effort.

The environmental studies are a critical first step in the project development process. The primary objective of this step will be to determine the most appropriate location for this new roadway alignment while also identifying and assessing potential impacts to the human and natural environment so measures can be made to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts that may occur. The SR 11 Project will follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process in accordance with INDOT/FHWA guidelines.

Public participation is an essential aspect of the environmental studies process. Outreach efforts will be focused on a grass-roots approach of bringing the project team to those most directly impacted. The outreach and engagement effort will be nimble to accommodate ever-changing conditions associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

There are two primary stages of the project development process: Stage 1 – Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Studies and Stage 2 – Final Design and Right-of-Way Acquisition. Outreach efforts will be initiated during Stage 1 and continue into Stage 2 of the project.

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will be formed to serve as a conduit for the dissemination of project information, to gather key local information, and to assist with the decision-making process. CACs will be held at three key milestones: project kickoff; pre-hearing; and pre-Stage 2 design. A virtual option will be available for those unable to attend in person. Committee members will consist of key stakeholders representing the following groups and organizations.

- Highway Department/Commissioner Liaison
- Harrison County Board of Commissioners - President
- Harrison County Council - President
- Indiana Farm Bureau - District 10 Director
- Indiana Farm Bureau - Regional Manager



- Sheriff's Department
- Emergency Management Director
- South Harrison Community School Corp - Superintendent
- South Harrison Community School Corp - Transportation Director
- Harrison County Convention & Visitor's Bureau
- Fire Chief's Association - President
- Property Owner (within Project Study Area)
- Owner - Indiana Caverns (Local Cave Expert)
- Manager – Squire Boone Caverns
- Harrison County Economic Development
- Harrison County Chamber of Commerce
- Harrison County Plan Commission
- Harrison County Hospital - EMS Manager
- Local Farmers
- Harrison County Surveyor
- Indiana Utilities (Local Gas Utility)
- South Harrison Water Company (Local Water Utility)
- Harrison REMC (Local Electric Utility)
- Harrison County Historical Society
- Local Business Owner

## PROJECT KICKOFF MEETING / PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING (PIM)

A project kickoff meeting will be held early in the project development process to raise public awareness about the project, share project information, describe the project development process, and to introduce the project team to the public. The meeting format is anticipated to be an open house format with a formal presentation and multiple stations for people to speak with the project team and ask



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questions. A press release will be developed to advertise the meeting with local media outlets (*Corydon Democrat* and WSFR) and meeting notices posted to the project website, as well as INDOT and Harrison County Facebook pages to drive meeting attendance.

Additionally, meeting invitations will be mailed to property owners in the vicinity of Watson Road, Melview Road, and Union Chapel Road where potential Buck Creek crossing alternatives will be considered. Efforts will be made to update mailing addresses throughout the project. Comment forms will be provided at in-person meetings and participants (in-person or virtual) will be encouraged to consider offering comments via email as well. The meeting will be held in an ADA compliant location and proximate to the project, provided the South Central School District will host in-person meetings at that time. Otherwise, an alternative location will be identified that will not be as proximate.

All state and local health department requirements at the time of the meeting will be followed. A virtual meeting option will be provided for those unable to attend in person. The option will provide for participants to join by computer or by phone. The meeting presentation will be available to the public at the time of the meeting through the project website and through the virtual host (likely to use Zoom). Details of the virtual option will be ironed out closer to the actual meeting date.

## AGENCY COORDINATION

Federal, state, tribal, regional, and local government agencies will have an interest in the project. Those that choose to participate in the process assist with:

- Early identification of issues of concern regarding environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts.
- Identification of potential mitigation measures that will be considered to inform the project permitting process.
- Timely resolution of issues of concern.
- Provide comments/input at key project milestones: purpose and need, preliminary alternatives, and at the FONSI determination.

The project team will engage agency partners early in the project development process to ensure they are an integral part of this project. An early coordination letter will be sent prior to the first public information meeting soliciting those who wish to engage as participating agencies. At least two coordination meetings will be held to discuss the project, purpose & need, alternatives, potential impacts, mitigation considerations, etc.



## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OUTREACH

Potential Environmental Justice (EJ) census block groups will be identified prior to the PIM so efforts can be made to ensure those communities are engaged in the process. Representatives from the County, South Harrison County Community School Corporation, Indiana Utilities (gas), South Harrison Water Company (water), and Harrison REMC are all represented on the CAC. There is also representation on the CAC for potential EJ communities. The project team will work with these groups to identify the best way to engage potential EJ communities. Additionally, the team will work with the Harrison County Division of Family Resources to identify locations to post fliers to drive community members to the project website or contact information so they can call with questions or comments. The key is early identification of potential communities, so communications and notifications are established from the onset of the project. As the project progresses and the EJ Analysis is completed, a specific meeting may be warranted. The project team will be nimble and will work with INDOT and FHWA to make necessary accommodations for the meeting.

## KITCHEN TABLE MEETINGS (KTMS)

There is no better way to establish a two-way line of communication with affected property owners than the kitchen table meeting process. This is especially true in rural areas where access to venues to accommodate larger meetings can be a challenge. As preliminary design progresses and work on preliminary alternatives allows sufficient understanding of potential routes, individual property owner meetings will be scheduled. The meetings will be held at property owner homes unless they prefer another option. This may include meeting in a different location or a virtual option. Meetings will be used to share information on the project development process and schedule, while also affording an opportunity to learn more about the properties that may be affected. The meetings will establish a direct point of contact with the project team that will remain throughout the delivery of the project. Conducting KTMs at this stage in the process allows information to be gathered from the property owners which will assist the environmental and design teams. The information helps inform the preliminary design of alternatives and the overall decision-making process. Additionally, information gathered from subsequent communications between property owners and the project team will further assist the final design effort.

## PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing is anticipated during the environmental studies process which will afford the opportunity for the public to provide formal comments on the project. The hearing will be conducted according to INDOT/FHWA guidelines. It will include an open house element, stations for communications with project team members, a formal presentation, and the formal hearing component.



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The required legal notice will be published in the local publication(s), such as the *Corydon Democrat* 15 and 7 days ahead of the hearing. Additionally, meeting notices will be posted to the project website, as well as INDOT and Harrison County Facebook pages to drive meeting attendance. Meeting invitations will be mailed to property owners in the vicinity of Watson Road, Melview Road, and Union Chapel Road where potential Buck Creek crossing alternatives will be considered. Efforts will be made to update mailing addresses throughout the project.

A presentation on the project and environmental documentation will be provided followed by a formal comment session. Comment forms will also be provided at in-person meetings and participants (in-person or virtual) will be encouraged to consider offering comments via email as well. The formal comment period will last a minimum of 30 days from the public release of the environmental document. Comments will be recorded as part of the project record and responses to comments developed and provided to the commentor via mail or email.

The meeting will be held in an ADA compliant location and proximate to the project, provided the South Central School District will host in-person meetings at that time. Otherwise, an alternative location will be identified that will not be as proximate. All state and local health department requirements at the time of the meeting will be followed.

A virtual meeting option will be provided for those unable to attend in person. The option will provide for participants to join by computer or by phone. The meeting presentation will be available to the public at the time of the meeting through the project website and through the virtual host (likely to use Zoom). Details of the virtual option will be ironed out closer to the actual meeting date.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLS

A project team has developed a website for the SR 11 project ([WWW.sr11extension.com](http://WWW.sr11extension.com)). The website will contain a general project overview, frequently asked questions, outreach and meeting information, project documents, project mapping, and contact information (name, email, and phone) so the public can reach out with comments, input or to ask questions. The project team will work with the Southeast Indiana Public Relations Director and Communications Director to provide essential information to be disseminated through INDOT's Seymour District Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/INDOTSoutheast/>).

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The public involvement lead/team will participate in weekly/bi-weekly internal coordination meetings and monthly project management team meetings to stay abreast of ongoing work, areas of concern or interest and to relay feedback to the project team on various fronts.



## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The public involvement lead/team will be responsible for responding to multiple property owner, stakeholder, and media inquiries. This will involve communications with technical staff to secure answers to questions or coordinating direct communication between technical staff and those making inquiries. A database of these communications will be maintained and shared with key project team members throughout the project development process. The database will also include notes from Kitchen Table Meetings and summaries from Community Advisory Committee meetings.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- Notice of Survey (Feb 2021): Survey, geotechnical investigations, and environmental field work notice letter initiates first opportunity for inquiries from property owners. Letter directs questions to Public Involvement Lead.
- CAC #1 (May 2021): Project kickoff meeting to discuss process and preliminary efforts on development of Draft Purpose & Need and conceptual alternatives.
- Project Kickoff Meeting (July 2021): Broader public meeting to raise public awareness about the project, share project information, describe the project development process, and to introduce the project team to the public.
- Agency Coordination Meeting (July 2021): Meeting to review Draft Purpose & Need and preliminary alternatives.
- Kitchen Table Meetings (late 2021/early 2022): Meetings to share information on the project development process and schedule, while also affording an opportunity to learn more about the properties that may be affected.
- CAC #2 (mid-2022): Meeting to share final Purpose & Need, preliminary alternatives, while also gathering input on the screening process.
- Agency Coordination Meeting (late 2022): Meeting to present the selected alternative and discuss mitigation considerations.
- Public Hearing (spring 2023): Present the outcomes of the Environmental Studies and provide opportunity for the public to give formal comments on the project.
- Ongoing External Communications (throughout project): The project team will be engaged in property owner and stakeholder communication throughout the project.
- CAC #3 (mid-2024): Meeting to discuss final design, right-of-way, and the project letting schedule while gathering information to inform the completion of the Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) Plan.