



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Date: May 11, 2021

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 State Road (SR) 7 beginning approximately 500 feet south of CR 275 West (W) and continuing to a point approximately 300 feet north of CR 300 W in Queensville, Jennings County, Indiana (Des. Nos. 1592223 and 1802827). The purpose of the project is to address current roadway deficiencies and reduce the likelihood of crashes at the intersections of CR 275 W, Country Squire Boulevard, and the entrance to Dollar General along SR 7. An additional purpose of the project is to improve the culvert condition rating to at least a 7 (good) out of 9 (excellent).

American Structurepoint, 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 American Structurepoint, Inc. Comment forms are available for download at INDOT Seymour District website (<https://www.in.gov/indot/2706.htm>) and project website (www.structurepointpublic.com/sr7). Comment forms will also be available at the public hearing.
2. **Complete** the digital comment box on the project website or within the virtual open house at www.structurepointpublic.com/sr7
3. **Participate** as speaker during the verbal comment session during the public hearing
4. **E-mail** comments to Leah Perry of American Structurepoint, Inc. at lperry@structurepoint.com.
5. **Mail** comments to Leah Perry at American Structurepoint, Inc., 9025 River Road, Suite 200, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240.
6. **Submit** comments (or have comments postmarked by) **June 10, 2021**. Comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the INDOT decision making process
7. **Questions?** Contact Leah Perry of American Structurepoint, Inc. at (317) 547-5580 or lperry@structurepoint.com or INDOT Customer Service at 1-855-INDOT-4-U (1-855-463-6848) INDOT@indot.in.gov.

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:

- Jennings County Public Library (2375 IN-3, North Vernon, IN 47265)
- American Structurepoint, Inc. webpage www.structurepointpublic.com/sr7
- INDOT Seymour District webpage: <https://www.in.gov/indot/2706.htm>

The SR 7 Intersection Improvements & Small Structure Replacement Project Team thank you for your participation in this project.

Project Description

INDOT, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is developing a federal-aid road project to improve intersections and replace a small structure along SR 7 beginning approximately 500 feet south of CR 275 W and continuing to a point approximately 300 feet north of CR 300 W. The project area includes the intersections with CR 275 W, Country Squire Boulevard, the commercial entrance to Dollar General, and CR 300 W in Queensville, Geneva Township, Jennings County, Indiana.

The need for this project is a result of the current roadway deficiencies and resulting history of crashes at the intersections of CR 275 W, Country Squire Boulevard, and the entrance to Dollar General along SR 7 within the project area. An additional need is the deteriorated condition of a large culvert, CV 007-040-26.89, located underneath SR 7 just north of the intersection of CR 275 W.

The purpose of the project is to address current roadway deficiencies and reduce the likelihood of crashes at the intersections of CR 275 W, Country Squire Boulevard, and the entrance to Dollar General along SR 7. An additional purpose of the project is to improve the culvert condition rating to at least a 7 (good) out of 9 (excellent).

The current preferred alternative includes intersection improvements on SR 7 at the intersections of CR 275 W, Country Squire Boulevard, and the entrance to Dollar General. The posted speed limit will decrease from 55 mph to 50 mph before or during project construction. Additionally, the vertical alignment of SR 7 will be adjusted to meet stopping sight distance standards for a 50 mph design speed. By reducing the speed limit, work needed to flatten the crest to address and the effects due to grade changes to the intersections and driveways will be minimized. Drives along the corridor will have their approaches adjusted to accommodate the change in vertical alignment and to meet acceptable INDOT Standards. The intersection of SR 7 and CR 300 W will be reconstructed to tie into the proposed vertical profile of SR 7. Pavement will be replaced or rehabilitated, wherever feasible, within project limits. The proposed typical cross-section for SR 7 will consist of one 12-foot-wide travel lane in each direction with a 12-foot-wide northbound left-turn lane at Country Squire Boulevard and at the entrance to Dollar General. In general, existing drainage will be maintained.

SR 7 at CR 275 W and SR 7 at Country Squire Boulevard: As part of the proposed intersection improvements, CR 275 W would be closed to SR 7 and a cul-de-sac constructed on the roadway. This will eliminate the conflict caused by this T-intersection's close proximity to the T-intersection at Country Squire Boulevard. A left-turn lane will be installed on northbound SR 7 for Country Squire Boulevard and the current substandard passing blister will be removed.

SR 7 at Dollar General: A left-turn lane will be installed on northbound SR 7 at the entrance to Dollar General.

CV 007-040-26.89: The existing 60-foot-long, 5-foot-tall, and 5-foot-wide reinforced concrete box culvert that is located on SR 7 just north of the intersection of CR 275 W (CV 007-040-26.89) will be replaced, lengthened, and upsized. The culvert will be lengthened to eliminate the need for guardrail at the culvert. The new reinforced concrete box culvert will be 5-foot tall, 8-foot wide, and 115-feet long and will require riprap placement for erosion control purposes. The culvert will also be realigned with the stream channel to address current issues with scour

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 4.737 acres of permanent right-of-way along SR 7 and CR 275 W from residential, commercial, agricultural, church property, and wetlands. Of the 4.737 acres, 2.434 acres is reacquisition of apparent existing right-of-way. The project also requires approximately 0.462 acre of temporary right-of-way from residential, commercial property, and wetlands along SR 7 (primarily along the north side of SR 7 at the commercial properties east of Country Squire Boulevard and at access drives). No relocations will be required for the proposed project.

Amount (acres)		
Land Use Impacts	Permanent	Temporary
Residential	2.450	0.271
Commercial	0.104	0.190
Agricultural	1.896	0.000
Forest	0.000	0.000
Wetlands	0.065	0.001
Other: Church	0.222	0.000
TOTAL	4.737	0.462

Maintenance of Traffic (MOT)

The MOT for the project will require a short term closure and the use of a detour utilizing Interstate (I)-65, United States Highway (US) 50, and SR 750, a distance of approximately 38.8 miles from closure point to closure point. Construction would be phased to minimize disruption of traffic. During phase I, CR 275 W will be closed while the approach access to SR 7 is removed and replaced with a cul-de-sac. On SR 7, one 10-foot wide travel lane will be maintained for northbound/southbound travel using a temporary signal. During Phase II, SR 7 will be closed south of the entrance to Dollar General and detoured. During Phase III, one 10-foot wide travel lane will be maintained for northbound/southbound SR 7 travel using a temporary signal. Access to all properties within and adjacent to the project limits will be maintained at all times during project construction. The MOT will be implemented per all INDOT Design Manual and Standard Specification requirements. The MOT will remain in place for approximately 10 months.

Project Schedule

Milestone	Expected Dates
Categorical Exclusion Released for Public Involvement	April 29, 2021
Public Comment Opportunity	May 11 th – June 10th, 2021
Real Estate Acquisition	Late 2021/Early 2022
Proposed Construction	Anticipated Summer 2022

Estimated Project Cost Summary

The estimated cost for this project is \$3,593,910 which includes design, land acquisition and construction. 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 American Structurepoint, Inc. for this project and released the document for public involvement on April 29, 2021. The CE evaluates the impact of the SR 7 Intersection Improvements and Small Structure Replacement project on the natural and human environment. No areas of potentially significant impacts have been identified.

Water Resources

The proposed project area was examined for the presence of wetlands and “waters of the U.S.” One stream and 10 wetlands were identified within the project area as potentially regulated resources. It is anticipated that the preferred alternative will permanently impact approximately 172 linear feet stream and 0.096 acre of wetland. It is anticipated the impacts to the stream will require the issuance of an Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) Section 401 Regional General Permit (RGP) and a USACE Section 404 RGP. Compensatory mitigation is not anticipated.

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 one historic resource was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, Oak Grove Farm. INDOT, acting on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration

(FHWA), has determined a finding of “No Adverse Effect” is appropriate for the SR 7 Intersection Improvements and Small Structure Replacement Project. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the “No Adverse Effect” finding.

Endangered Species and Terrestrial Habitat

Approximately 3.6 acres of terrestrial habitat consisting of approximately 2.57 acre maintained grass right-of way/lawns, 0.42 acre of wooded area, 0.23 acre active agricultural fields, and 0.38 acre of early successional habitat/fallow field may be impacted. Approximately 0.42 acre of trees may be cleared during bat inactive season (between October 1 and March 31). Impacts to terrestrial habitat including tree removal cannot be avoided due to their location adjacent to the roadway. Tree Removal Avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented. 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 “*may effect but not likely to adversely affect*” the Indiana bat and/or the northern long-eared bat.

Community Impacts

The proposed project involves addition of turn lanes, closing access of an intersecting street, replacing a culvert, and adjusting vertical alignment to increase stopping sight distance. This will reduce the frequency and severity of crashes. Therefore, it is considered a net benefit for the community as the project will address road safety. Temporary negative socioeconomic impacts the project will have on the community include temporary inconveniences commonly associated with construction such as noise, fugitive dust, increased travel delay, and potential utility disruptions. However, these impacts are temporary and will cease upon completion of the project. These temporary inconveniences do not outweigh the benefits the project.

Permanent socioeconomic effects are not expected. 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.

The closure of CR 275 W to SR 7 is a permanent impact as it changes access, however, those travelling along CR 275 W and wanting to access SR 7 will still be able to by utilizing CR 350, SR 3 and US 50, which is a distance of approximately 2.7 miles from the intersection of SR 7 and CR 275 W to the intersection of SR 7 and US 50. This adds a maximum distance of approximately 3.8 miles to the traveler’s route, when traveling from the intersection of SR 7 and CR 275 W through the new route and back to the intersection of SR 7 and CR 275 W to travel north along SR 7. As Country Squire Boulevard is a primary access road to Country Squire Lakes (a mobile home community composed of many individual properties) and CR 275 W runs through a less-densely populated residential and agricultural area, effects to the community have been minimized by closing CR 275 W to SR 7 instead of Country Squire Boulevard to SR 7. Additionally, the SR 7 and Country Squire Boulevard intersection has the highest turning volume of any intersection along SR 7 between SR 3 and US 31, with a peak (4:45-5:45 pm) hourly count of 190 vph. The turning peak hourly count (5:00-6:00 pm) for turning volume at SR 7 and CR 275 W is much lower at 58 vph. While this will be a permanent impact, it will not be substantial. Alternatives which maintained access to CR 275 W were considered. This included a do-nothing alternative. While a do-nothing alternative would avoid any impacts to the identified communities, it would not meet the purpose and need of the project. Realigning the roadway and keeping CR 275 W open to SR 7 was also considered, but this alternative had substantially increased impacts to wetlands and streams, right-of-way acquisition, and construction costs.

Environmental Justice (EJ)

The project will require 4.737 acres of permanent right-of-way (of which 2.434 acres is reacquisition of apparent existing right-of-way) and 0.462 acre of temporary right-of-way 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 Jennings County. The community that overlaps the project area is called the affected community (AC). In this project, the AC is Census Tract 9603.02. 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 (<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>). Census Tract 9603.02 was identified as a low-income and minority population of EJ concern. Based upon the scope of the proposed project, it was determined the identified populations will not experience a disproportionately high and adverse impact from the project.

