

After finishing an oft-talked about project in October -- the Salem bypass, the Indiana Department of Transportation put another feather in its cap last Friday when they broke ground on the Star Hill Road.

Work on the project was set to begin Monday (Dec. 10).

According to a press release issued by INDOT, the \$13.6 million dollar will construct a new two-lane road, which will extend from Rake Road near Starlight, to State Road 60 near Borden.

The release says the project will also include the realignment and reconstruction of a portion of Rake Road and improvements to S.R. 60 at the intersection of the new Star Hill Road.

At the ground breaking, local business owners, elected officials and INDOT representative shared stories of how the project became a reality.

Ted Huber, owner of Huber Winery said his dad shared a story where the new road was set to be built as far back as the early 1950s.

"I think dad told me it was 1950 or 54, the governor at that time was visiting Starlight and pretty much had the road project sealed and approved to happen then. As elections go, the governor lost and the road project went out with him."

Huber said in the late 1990s, the Starlight visitor's association put together a 25-year outlook for the community.

"We came back the following week and all of us involved had the same thing as the number one priority -- getting better roads!" he said.

Huber said more than 550,000 people visit Starlight every year.

"That's a lot of people we put into this community on county roads that were not designed for that traffic," he said. "That was our number one goal."

Star Hill Road will provide a safe and efficient two-mile route adequate for truck traffic, as well as major access improvement into the Starlight community.

The roadway features adequate passing zones and paved shoulders for disabled vehicles, all of which will greatly enhance safety.

Huber said the more than 100 people attended all deserve credit for the project finally getting going.

"Every single person in this room deserves thanks," he said. "We all put a lot of time and effort talking to politicians and really talking this project up for 25 to 30 years to get it moving forward. Without everyone this project would have never happened."

Randy Koetter, President of Koetter Woodworking.

"Our forefathers had a vision for a better road from Highway 60 through Starlight to Highway 150," he said. "I didn't know the reason at the time, but seeing where we are now, those folks saw the potential of the true American spirit and entrepreneurial drive."

Koetter said since then there have been hundreds of jobs created and has the envy of a lot of communities in the country of balancing agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and distribution in the same area.

"Our forefathers saw that potential in the beginning," Koetter said.

Koetter said besides the much needed safety Star Hill Road will provide, it also will tie Starlight to Borden and the state forest.

"It will give us in the county the opportunity to go from hundreds of jobs to thousands of jobs," he said. ". . . everyone will see that this project is a great investment and that our forefathers vision is worth investing in the full connection between Highway 60 and 150."

Borden could see a very large increase in traffic once the road is complete.

Rudy Cook said the road will intersect in Borden in sight of the town's community park.

Cook said there are plans to expand that park, which includes plans for a recreational lake.

The park also connects with the Clark County State Forest.

"Our plan is to hook all of this together in one big area," Cook said. "The town is currently in the middle of building a comprehensive plan. This (Star Hill Road) will be a big part of it. We want to get some of those 550,000 people headed our way."

Clark County Commissioners Ed Meyer, Les Young and John Perkins also shared stories of their involvement in the Star Hill Road.

The ground breaking wasn't the only reason for the celebration. INDOT also held a ribbon cutting celebrating the completion of St. John's Road, located in Clark County.

The \$1.3 million reconstruct and realign project improved the overall safety of the roadway, according to an INDOT press release. The improvements feature widened pavement, standard shoulders and guardrail.

"It's a great day seeing everyone's hard work and diligence payoff for these much needed projects," Meyer said. "These projects provide a whole lot of benefit for this area of Clark County."