

Official detour will take lots of traffic out of Scottsburg while SR56 is closed

Written by Marty Randall

Wednesday, 01 September 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 01 September 2010 14:25

Officials of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) have selected an official detour while the railroad crossing on State Road 56 (McClain Avenue) is closed in Scottsburg.

And the amount of time the crossing will be closed has been lengthened by a couple of days.

The closure of S.R. 56 between Bond and Main Streets in Scottsburg will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, September 13, and will end on the following Monday, September 20, according to the latest announcement by INDOT. Originally, posted signs said the closure would be from September 13 to 18.

Also, most traffic traveling east into Scottsburg on S.R. 56 will be detoured south onto U.S. Highway 31 at its intersection with S.R. 56.

From there, traffic will be directed south to the highway's intersection with State Road 356. Detoured vehicles will then turn east onto S.R. 356 and travel that two-lane highway to the intersection of State Road 3 before turning north and going several miles to the T-intersection of S.R.3 and S.R. 56, where vehicles can continue east once again on S.R. 56.

West-bound traffic coming into Scottsburg on S.R. 56 will turn south at S.R. 3, turn east on S.R. 356 and then back north onto U.S. 31 to reconnect with S.R. 56 West.

Local traffic can, it was noted in the INDOT announcement, drive up to the point of closure before turning off onto local streets to find their way around the temporary construction site.

Is this going to work? Are semi-tractor-trailer drivers wanting to head east really going to make this large of a detour? Maybe, maybe not.

Looking back a few years when most of downtown Austin's West Main Street (State Road 256) was closed for major renovation by INDOT for several months, local police each week caught several semi-tractor-trailer rigs on local city streets, streets that were certainly not designed for that heavy traffic.

Most of the time, it wasn't a pretty sight.

Overhanging trees were struck by the taller-than-normal rigs. Sometimes, police caught up with drivers only when they'd mired their rigs in private lawns while trying to make tight turns.

Even if drivers of such big rigs observe the detour directions, smaller trucks and cars will probably try to cut through the city on side streets, especially if the drivers are familiar with Scottsburg.

Ron West, one of the owners/operators of Hancock's Drug Store, isn't too worried, however, about traffic trying to work its way around the closed crossing. Hancock's, one of the community's oldest businesses, is located at what is known as Coonie's Corner, a small shopping mall between Bond and the railroad crossing.

The drug store's drive-up window for pharmacy customers is located off a side street, just west of the crossing. Plenty of people already turn after the pharmacy building and cut down that little section of North Railroad Street on its east side to access businesses such as Saegesser Engineering and Amick's Home Furnishings, both facing West McClain Avenue, and the agencies in Scottsburg Heritage Station, the Greater Scott County Chamber of Commerce and the Scott County Economic Development Corporation, as well as the Scottsburg municipal parking lot, which is bordered by North Main Street on its east side.

"I don't think (the closure) will affect us much if at all. At times, it might be a mad jam, but I doubt it," West commented.

David Wells, who serves as Scott School District 2 transportation director, also didn't appear to

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be too worried about the week's closure of S.R. 56.

"A lot of our (school bus) drivers already use Cherry Street (one way east) and Wardell Street (one way west), so we'll just direct all of them there temporarily," he related. Wells added that school bus drivers using Wardell St. will be told to get back onto S.R. 56 so that buses will go through the S.R. 56/U.S. 31 intersection. He said, "We don't want a school bus to go to the end of Wardell and then try to make a turn onto (U.S.) 31 against traffic."

Major/Asst. City Police Chief Scott Zellers stated that he hoped the detour route will be clearly marked by INDOT for out-of-town motorists to follow from both the east and the west.

"Local motorists will know how to get around the crossing. If it's closed for just a week, we should be able to handle traffic situations that may arise," he advised.