

The planned replacement of a bridge by a contractor on State Road 203 between State Roads 56 and 256 is causing all sorts of headaches for S.R. 203 residents.

S.R. 203 is a nice stretch of state highway which many boaters and campers wishing to reach Hardy Lake take during the summer months. Over 100 tried to do so over the weekend, advised one resident who lives in the Blocher Road intersection area.

The problem is that the Indiana State Department of Transportation (INDOT) has scheduled a bridge replacement at the foot of Howard Lake on S.R. 203. That's nearly 3 miles north of S.R. 56 and .7 of a mile south of S.R. 256. No traffic can get past the construction site for the length of the project, a scheduled 45 days.

Motorists are still trying to use S.R. 203, though, said Donna Paul. "Traffic was awful, a steady stream. They're all trying to still go north on S.R. 203, and, when they realize the bridge is out and they can't continue, they're turning around any way they can to go back south to S.R. 56."

Those turn-arounds over the weekend have already caused some damage to yards and driveways. A small concrete block building once used as a church reportedly sustained some damage when a vehicle apparently hit it and then left the scene. The actions of motorists have led to several residents barricading their driveways so they can't be used to turn around, said Paul.

At least once over the weekend, a resident guided a semi-tractor-trailer to a driveway large enough for the driver to turn the rig around. The lady did the same for a camper hauling a boat trailer.

"It's a terrible situation, and we're all afraid someone is going to get hit or have a bad wreck. People tend to go too fast out here as it is," Paul added.

INDOT's official detour for the closure calls for eastbound motorists on S.R. 56 trying to connect with S.R. 203 to continue on toward Blocher and go up State Road 3, connect with S.R. 256 and go west on that highway to reach the entrance road to the lake or continue on into Austin.

Local motorists have been using Blocher Road a lot to drive a shorter circuit around the closure.

Sometimes, Paul related, out-of-county drivers have followed local cars. In any case, traffic has apparently picked up on connecting county roads, like Blocher Rd. and New Frankfort Road to the north of the closed bridge.

Paul said she called INDOT's Seymour office to complain. She also thinks that putting up more signs warning motorists of the closure to the east and west along S.R. 56 would help. "People are going too fast or they just don't notice.

Then they turn onto S.R. 203 to go north and end up in a mess," she explained. More signs advising of the closure might prevent so many people from trying to use S.R. 203.

She'd also like to see some of the "Road Closed" signs changed to "Bridge Out" signs on S.R. 56 and S.R. 203. "I think that would help as well because then they'd know there's no way they're going to be able to use S.R. 203, so why try," she stated.

The project is not scheduled to be completed until the last week of July.

Consequently, it may be a long, hot, frustrating summer for S.R. 203 property owners.