

?INDOT updates truck bypass project at local meeting

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 04 September 2008 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 04 September 2008 07:52

???? Runfa Shi and Randall Brown of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) were in Salem on Wednesday, August 27, to meet with local government officials and interested citizens regarding plans for and progress on the truck bypass project to begin construction in 2009. Thirty of the forty land parcels needed have already been acquired for the project that is scheduled to be completed in 2011 or 2012.

According to Project Manager, Shi, the 3.65 mile corridor will run to the southeast of Salem between Highway # 135 and Highway # 56 with an interchange at Highway # 60. The project, originally planned as a four lane expressway was modified to what Shi referred to as a "super two". When asked to give an example of a "super two", the stretch of Highway # 56 east of Salem was noted. This type of roadway construction is characterized by two wide lanes of oncoming traffic with very wide, paved shoulders for emergency use. Mark Roseberry, Salem Building Commissioner, acting as meeting facilitator, explained that the change from a four lane roadway to two lane had solely to do with costs. Besides the obvious decrease in the construction costs, land acquisition would be cut in half.

Those attending the meeting asked several questions ranging from time lines to issues of limited access. According to the current plan, access to the bypass will only be available at the three aforementioned state highways. Several attendees expressed concerns that economic development along the new highway will be drastically handicapped by the lack of accessibility. Both Shi and Brown assured the questioners that once the roadway is finished, future access points can always be considered.

Salem Mayor, David Bower, expressed concerns about the cost to the city for moving utilities to make way for the new construction. According to Bower, information about the need to move the utilities at an estimated cost of \$300,000 was not made available to his administration until March of 2008. In response to Bower's claims that he was unaware of the potential cost to the city, County Commissioner, Mike Goering, produced a document from several years past that notified local governments about their financial responsibilities for the project. Bower ended his comments by saying that there is no money in the budget for it.

Shi responded that the city could go through the process of asking for hardship assistance from the state. That assistance would lower the city's financial responsibility to 10% of the annual revenue for the utilities involved.

The informal meeting ended and participants interacted with the INDOT representatives in small groups.