

**THE CITY OF BLOOMINGTON'S  
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN COMMISSION  
JULY 12, 2007**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**The Indiana Department of Transportation's widening of Bloomington's 45/46 Bloomington bypass and East Tenth Street should not be built as currently designed.**

**The project will encourage driving, and discourage walking and biking. While some alternative transportation infrastructure is included in the current project, most of it is inadequate.**

The bypass extends from East Third and College Mall to North College/Walnut. East Tenth is included from the bypass to Pete Ellis Drive. Current project design includes:

- Four travel lanes throughout, with additional turning lanes
- Seven lanes at intersections at East Tenth and East Third
- New intersections at Seventh and near the I.U. golf course.



**A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

The bypass project has been planned by the Indiana Department of Transportation for almost twenty years. During those decades, and especially in the last few years, our national reliance on driving has come to be seen as unsustainable. It's time for a new approach to transportation planning.

Widening roads is like loosening a belt to relieve overeating, and the results are just as predictable. In fact, the proposed bypass widening, scheduled to be completed in 2010, is

already forecast to become congested within the horizon of our current transportation plan. The belt loosening approach to transportation has become culturally engrained and accepted as an inescapable part of modern life because it is self-perpetuating. Widened roads tend to induce more traffic. A newly widened road flows freely, encouraging more motorized trips to more distant destinations. At the same time, walking and biking are discouraged because widened roads tend to be dangerous and unpleasant. Transportation habits and choices about where to live, shop, and play are made with the assumption that the cars will continue to flow. That's why the number of trips in cars and trucks is increasing faster than the rate of population growth. When do we quit loosening our belt?

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Commission urges the citizens of Bloomington to insist that the design of the bypass project not contribute to an increase in motorized traffic. An approach to traffic management that balances walking, biking, and transit with driving is necessary and possible, especially in Bloomington.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REDESIGN**

### **A CONNECTOR, NOT A BARRIER**

The bypass cuts through and divides both Bloomington and the I.U. campus. It is a barrier to the residents of hundreds of apartments and houses just east of the bypass who travel to campus each day. Even though travel distances are within reasonable walking and biking distance, the design of the bypass will cause many who might walk or bike to drive instead. With I.U. planning major new facilities along the east side of the bypass, cross connections will become increasingly important.

Indiana University isn't the only destination cut off by the bypass. Dozens of businesses are within very easy walking distance of Third and the bypass, yet unlike the downtown, shoppers don't consider parking once and walking. With many restaurants clearly visible, very few business workers choose to walk to lunch. These 'bypassed' walking trips all contribute to traffic congestion.

The term 'bypass' is a misnomer. Though INDOT apparently hasn't studied the issue, a spokesperson said that most of the traffic on the so-called bypass is local, not inter-city. With supportive infrastructure, much of this local traffic could be on foot, bike, or bus. The emphasis should be on tying the city and the campus together, not creating a barrier.

### **SIDEWALK/SIDEPATH SEPARATION**

City standards for primary arterial streets call for sidewalks to be separated from moving traffic with an eight-foot wide tree plot. INDOT's current design for the bypass has a maximum of twenty-four inches separation, with many sidewalks directly attached to the curb. The current design does not come close to meeting city standards.

Adequate sidewalk separation improves appearance, but more importantly, it provides crucial pedestrian and bicycling safety. (Since the project does not include bike lanes, sidewalks will be shared by pedestrians and cyclists.) Walking and cycling immediately

adjacent to heavy, fast moving traffic feels extremely dangerous, and most people, except for the brave or those without options, will avoid it.

About 50 percent of pedestrians struck by a vehicle traveling 30mph die. At the 45 mph design speed, it's over 85 percent. INDOT has ignored previous recommendations (1999) from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Commission to provide adequate separation for sidewalks. The lack of sidewalk separation adds insult to injury. Rain spray from fast moving vehicles will easily drench the adjacent sidewalks. Without adequate tree plots, trees won't protect or shade sidewalks. Drivers in air conditioned cars won't notice, but shade is important to pedestrians.



## **PEDESTRIAN CROSSABLE INTERSECTIONS**

Intersection details are crucial to pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. A highway, with its emphasis on high speeds, is the wrong model for design. The current, excessively fast 45 mph design speed generates very large turning radii at intersections, allowing cars to turn faster, and increasing the pedestrian crossing distances. In some areas, pedestrian crossing distances would double. This combined effect will endanger and discourage walking and cycling.

With past lobbying, INDOT has included a bicycle and pedestrian tunnel near a new Seventh Street intersection. This is a helpful feature, but it's connectivity on the east is undetermined, especially to the existing bike path along the railroad which the current design disrupts. A pedestrian-bicycle overpass, originally included to serve areas east of the bypass and north of Tenth Street, has been eliminated from the design.

To knit opposite sides of the bypass together, safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings need to be accessible and reasonably close together. For example, the pedestrian and bicycle underpass at Seventh won't serve the many residences on the north side of the to-be-widened East Tenth Street east of the bypass.

To make the intersections safe and comfortable for pedestrians, redesign is necessary. Tighter turning radii and reduced traffic lane widths would shorten pedestrian crossing distance and slow traffic speeds. Other measures should include pedestrian waiting refuges, or islands built between lanes to slow traffic and give pedestrians protected resting places. Pedestrian activated signal buttons should be reasonably fast acting. Crossings should be strongly articulated, possibly with contrasting paving materials. Intersection design should discourage rolling, right turns.

Important pedestrian and bicycle intersections include those with a close proximity of popular destinations: College and Walnut, Fourteenth (I.U. development), Tenth, Seventh, and Third.

## **TRANSIT**

Bus use along East Tenth Street east of the bypass has grown significantly over the last few years. The dense population of I.U. students, staff, and others currently make well over a thousand bus trips per day. INDOT and Bloomington Transit data show that on East Tenth Street the number of car-trips is dropping while transit trips are increasing. Despite this important, encouraging trend, INDOT has rejected Bloomington Transit's request for bus oriented improvements to the current design.

## **LINKAGES**

Intersecting streets should include sidewalks on both sides. These include:

- E. 10<sup>th</sup>, south side
- Fee Lane and Matlock, both sides,
- E. 17<sup>th</sup> St.
- Fraternity Dr
- New IU drives to the east (14<sup>th</sup>)
- North Sample Lane
- North Dunn
- North Walnut

## **STREETS, NOT HIGHWAYS**

The project, especially between Tenth and Third, should be designed as a street, not as a highway. Motorists expect to encounter pedestrians and cyclists on a street, not on a highway. A street's design, with its tighter turning radii, narrower traffic lanes, sidewalks, tree plots with street trees, and lower speeds, all work to increase pedestrian and bicycle use and safety.

The current highway design model isn't just a problem for walking and biking, it's a poor infrastructure for economic development. Highways don't encourage compact, mixed-use, high value, urban style development.

Vibrant, walk-able, urban, downtown style streets with sidewalk cafes, offices, shopping, and residential uses can carry very high traffic volumes at efficient speeds. The bypass between E. Third and the new E. Fourteenth could become a valuable urban corridor, attracting the increasing numbers of businesses and entrepreneurs looking for the advantages of urban settings.

As Indiana University considers their expansion along the bypass, a new urbanist model would offer many transportation benefits over a suburban office park approach. In Columbus, Ohio, a section of a major traffic arterial running adjacent to Ohio State University has been transformed by a public-private development, creating an intensive, attractive, urban development with offices, retail, restaurants, and a grocery store.

## **MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY INPUT**

Bloomington residents have had minimal say about the character and design of the bypass project. Even city planning and engineering staff has had little opportunity for review of the project. According to INDOT, some changes are still possible in the design of the bypass, but not for the important East Tenth Street portion which is scheduled to start in 2008. This is unacceptable. Bloomington residents deserve a chance to make this entire project something that supports our community's vision for the future.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

Though this is a state project, local leaders must speak out. Please communicate your concerns to Mayor Kruzan, city council members, and county commissioners. Also contact State Representative Matt Pierce and State Senator Peggy Welch. Indiana University is a major stakeholder and its leaders should also be contacted. Letters to the editor are encouraged. Our goal is not to stop the project, but to make it much more encouraging to walking, biking, and transit. Without strong local resistance to the current project, INDOT will move ahead with the current design.

### **THE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY COMMISSION**

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