



At Your Service

February 3, 2017

To:
NICTD Westlake Corridor Project
33 East U.S. Highway 12
Chesterton, IN 46304

From:
Town of Munster
1005 Ridge Road
Munster, IN 46321

To those interested parties,

The West Lake Corridor Project should be of immense benefit to the town of Munster and other adjacent municipalities. A review of the DEIS reports reveals that there are challenges and concerns that need to be addressed. The following is a list of issues and questions the Town has identified as needing either further clarification or study.

The Town of Munster looks forward to a continued productive and transparent partnership. We believe that if the project addresses the enclosed comments, questions, and suggestions that this will be a tremendous benefit for Munster specifically and northwest Indiana more broadly.

Respectfully,

Dustin Anderson
Town Manager



West Lake Corridor Project - DEIS Comments

- Munster area - The project would add more vehicular and bike traffic to the existing streets and roadways in pre-dominantly residential areas. These residential streets may not be equipped to handle the additional traffic. A study is needed to identify the impacts to local roadways and improvements needed to accommodate the pedestrian/bike/vehicular traffic. The east-west streets that could see an increase in traffic include Broadmoor Avenue (major collector with an ADT of 38,000 vpd (2015) east of Calumet Avenue), Ridge Road (other principal arterial with an ADT of 21,000 vpd (2015), east of Hohman Avenue, Fisher Street (major collector with an ADT of 9,307 vpd (2015)), and Briar Lane. The north-south streets that will show an increase in traffic include Hohman Avenue (major collector with an ADT of 6541 vpd (2015)), Manor Avenue, Harrison Avenue (major collector with an ADT of 2,572 vpd), Jackson Avenue, and Calumet Avenue (other principal arterial with an ADT of 32,880 vpd). Solutions to these issues should be in keeping with the principles of complete streets best practices.
- For those commuters who would be walking or biking to the train station in Munster, the streets need to be made accessible to pedestrians and bikes. For example, Main Street has single and multi-family homes on either side. At a minimum, Main Street will need continuous sidewalk and a bike lane to those commuters who prefer to walk or bike to the station. Will NICTD provide funds to the Town of Munster for making these improvements on impacted local residential streets?
- For Munster commuters coming from the south and east of the Ridge Road station, Harrison Avenue and Briar Lane will become the major north-south and east-west access roads to the main parking area. What is the projected increase in traffic on these two streets which pass through single family residential areas? Improvements may be needed to these two streets. Traffic would also increase on Evergreen Lane and Fisher Place. All these streets traverse through residential areas.
- For pedestrian traffic to the Ridge Road station from the west south of Ridge Road: there should be a pedestrian underpass to join both sides of Briar Lane under the Westlake Extension.
- Ridge Road is a major east-west roadway in the Town of Munster. It carries an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of approximately 21,000 vehicles per day (vpd). An at-grade railroad crossing on Ridge Road would undoubtedly affect the traffic along Ridge Road. The signalized intersections at Manor Avenue, Harrison Avenue (north and south driveway), Hohman Avenue and Calumet Avenue need to be evaluated as a signal system.
- The signals along Ridge Road are closely spaced and could be part of a signal interconnect system. At a minimum, the Ridge Road corridor between Homan Avenue and Calumet Avenue needs to be evaluated for traffic impacts under the build conditions. The signal upgrades, improvements to signal timing, and need for pre-emption needs to be evaluated. How will these improvements be paid for?

- How as the number of parking spaces for each station determined? Munster/Dyer station shows a need for 1700 to 1850 parking spaces and Ridge Road station shows a need for 900-1000 spaces. For these stations that are relatively close, the total number of parking spaces is too high.
- Page ES-14, Section 8.6 – Will the weekday service include non-stop service from Munster/Dyer and/or Ridge Road Stations?
- Page ES-16, Table ES-10.1 – In Munster, where are the at-grade pedestrian/Bicycle crossing proposed? Which crossings are proposed to be grade separated from rail tracks?
- What is the proposed design/layout for the Ridge Road station? Will it be a building or a shelter? The design of the proposed train station building and parking areas should be consistent with Munster zoning and building codes.
- Parking areas should be fenced in compliance with local zoning regulations.
- The Town of Munster will likely enforce resident-only parking in the neighborhoods around the station areas.
- The Town believes that the 3 foot tall barrier will be in sufficient to effectively dampen sound pollution. This barrier should be appropriately sized.
- NICTD should incorporate the one or more of the existing barns at the proposed Ridge Road station area into their platform/station design. These structures – while not on a historic register – are important to the history of the community and their meaningful inclusion would be a conscience and powerful act signifying the transition of time and history.
- Munster area - Fencing would be needed on both sides of the tracks north of Fisher Place all the way to the Little Calumet River in order to maintain safety and prevent unauthorized access to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Chapter 4 – Community and Social Analysis – Page 4-61 – The description says the Ridge Road station will have a 150-stall parking lot. The plans and description in other reports show 450-500 parking area and an over flow parking area with another 450-500 spaces. Please clarify.
- The Main Street connection to train parking area on the east side – Is there a proposed design plan/layout for the underpass to be paid by NICTD?
- DEIS – Chapter 5 – Noise Analysis – Section 5.2.5.1 – At what locations are the wayside horns proposed in Munster? The limits of the noise barrier should be detailed along Manor Avenue. Munster would like to partner in any solution that would drastically reduce – if not eliminate – horn signals.

- What is the proposed plan/layout for the existing signalized intersection at Manor Avenue and Ridge Road? What modifications are proposed at this intersection to accommodate the at-grade crossing?
- Would the Ridge Road station be served by Public Bus/Para transit? If so, improvements would be needed to Harrison Avenue and Broadmoor Avenue to accommodate bus traffic.
- Traffic Technical Report – Section 6.1.1 – Improvements are proposed to intersections Sheffield Avenue/ Seminary Drive, Sheffield Avenue / Northgate Drive, and Sheffield Avenue / Main Street. Improvements include striping, signalization and upgrades, lane additions. How will these improvements be paid for?
- DEIS Section 4.8.3 – Is NICTD planning to have NICTD Police present in the Munster/Dyer and Ridge Road station buildings?
- Page ES-4 – “reducing parking burden at existing stations” is listed as one of the project needs. Has a study been performed to study the existing and projected parking demand at existing South Shore Stations for the project? East Chicago has adequate parking but Hammond station doesn’t seem to. Please provide the parking demand data to justify the inclusion of this issue as one of the project needs.
- Page ES-4, Last Paragraph and Page 1-8 – “In addition to very costly infrastructure, expanded parking would place additional burden on the local road network used to access the sites”. What existing roadways used to access the existing train stations are congested? Please provide an exhibit that shows existing and projected Volume/Capacity ratios to show the existing and projected levels of congestion on study area roadways used to access the stations.
- What is the projected monthly SSL fare from Munster/Dyer and Ridge Road to Millennium Station?
- Section 4.7.3 – Page 4-55: Does the affected environment in Munster include MSE walls for bridge approaches? The visual impacts due to TPSS would be more pronounced north of Fisher Street.
- Visual impacts – A number of trees will have to be removed on both sides of the tracks, north and south of Ridge Road. These trees are located adjacent to existing trails (Monon Bike Trail) and in residential areas. This will significantly impact the visual character and quality of life in the sub-divisions. What is the plan for appropriate reforestation?
- Noise and Vibration – What are the BMPs to alleviate the short, medium, and long term effects of the project, especially those residential areas north of Fisher Street that are in very close proximity to the tracks. The BMPs to alleviate noise, dust, fumes, should be presented to the local agency for review and approval prior to their implementation.
- Has the study considered the impact to emergency services? For example, Ridge Road is used by the residents in Lansing to access the medical facilities in Munster.

- Does the study assume that the Functional Classification of the roadways within the area stays the same through year 2040? Can an exhibit be provided that shows existing and future year ADTs and functional classifications?
- The existing rail bridge clearance over Broadmoor Avenue is 11 feet. The proposed clearance after elevation and reconstruction is 14.5 feet. Would this clearance be enough if traffic were to increase on Broadmoor Avenue including buses and the functional classification of this roadway is changed to a Minor Arterial?
- All existing bike trails will be maintained or realigned. The Town of Munster is very supportive and appreciative of this fact. With the extension of the tracks south along the CSX lines to the Munster/Dyer station, there is an opportunity to extend another significant bike trail through the community. Please build a trail south from Fisher Place to the southern terminus of the Westlake Extension.
- There is currently a pedestrian access tunnel at the eastern end of Belden Place that serves as a neighborhood connection to Eads Elementary School. It is crucial that this pedestrian access remain so that children and their families may continue to walk to school in the morning from the homes to the west of the Monon alignment.
- The Pennsy Greenway Trail will be crossed by the proposed alignment of the Westlake Extension approximately 270 meters directly south of Fisher Place. What is the proposed crossing for this intersection? An at-grade crossing is not desired by the Town.
- How does NICTD intend to address stormwater management? What BMPs will be employed? If there is a desire to utilize surface storage, this storage area (or areas) should be a community asset – a park, open space, or trail connection.
- While it makes sense for there to be an engineered connection between the rail facility to the south and the Westlakes Subdivision to the north, there is not a consensus opinion as to what the connection could and should like from the community. The Town would like the parking and/or ingress and egress of the facility designed and constructed in a manner that will allow a connection sometime in the future – if it is the majority of that neighborhood's residents.