October 7, 2024

Abell Gelaye, P.E.
Design Policy/Geometrics Program Manager
FHWO-IN
575 N Pennsylvania Street, Room 254
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Abell.

Based on evaluation of alternative designs and coordination with the Town of Munster Town Council and conversations with emergency response personnel, the preliminary preferred design for the Ridge Road project is to maintain two through travel lanes in each direction. The Grant Agreement between the Town of Munster and the United States Department of Transportation specifically state in the General Project Description and the Statement of Work that the project will be designed as a three-lane section throughout. Traffic volumes, existing and future, dictate that this would not be possible the entire length of the project – specifically at the Calumet Avenue intersection – due to inadequate level of service results due to the capacity reduction. In addition, after the initial studies serving as the baseline for the RAISE Grant application, a nearby regional hospital was shut down, resulting in an increase in emergency vehicle operation along Ridge Road through the Town of Munster. The proposed amendment is to revise the language to allow flexibility in the number of total lanes and utilize federal and local guidelines for complete street design and the FHWA Safe Systems Roadway Design Approach.

The proposed preliminary preferred alternative does not reduce the number of through lanes but is laid out to achieve elements in each of the 4 hierarchies defined within the FHWA Safe Systems Roadway Design. Those hierarchies and the design elements to be included to meet those hierarchies are as follows:

1) Remove Severe Conflicts → The Ridge Road design layout will include better definition for crossing and turning movements along the corridor. Private drives will be reduced or revised to be right-in/right-out controlled through use of driveway splitter medians or center medians. The design also includes narrower lanes to reduce the overall crossing distance.

2) Reduce Vehicle Speeds → Narrower lanes and street trees are all proven methods to decrease travel speeds. Final design will also consider permanent speed feedback signs or monitoring measures if deemed appropriate.

3) Manage conflicts in time → Improved and updated traffic signals designed with pedestrians/bicyclists in mind. Traffic signal preemption for emergency vehicles will be added at all signalized intersections. Pedestrian traffic signal devices will be added and/or updated to current accessibility standards at all locations. Final design will also evaluate and consider potential options for pedestrian activated mid-block

crossings with a center refuge for areas with long distances between traffic signals for safe crossing opportunities.

4) Increase attentiveness and awareness → Adding backplates with retroreflective borders to traffic signals and high-visibility markings for pedestrian crosswalks will increase the attentiveness of all users and improve the awareness of conflicts along the corridor.

The Town of Munster is committed to making the Ridge Road a safer roadway for all users. With the proposed amendment to the Grant Agreement, we are committed to following FHWA guidelines for Complete Streets and utilizing the FHWA Safe Systems approach for roadways.

Respectfully submitted,

David B. Nellans, President
Munster Town Council