



Wabash Local Trax Railroad Grade Separation



Frequently Asked Questions DES# 1801915

Project Scope

What is the goal of the Wabash Local Trax Project?

The goal of the project is to improve safety and mobility by addressing the adverse effects of the current at-grade crossings. By constructing a bridge to carry the motorists and pedestrians over the railroad, safety is greatly improved by reducing the potential for train, vehicle and pedestrian collisions while simultaneously providing unobstructed north-south access, reducing delays in emergency response times.

Who will oversee this project?

Local Trax is a partnership with INDOT, local communities, businesses, industries and railroads to improve the quality of life for residents through large-scale rail related transportation projects. The City of Wabash, INDOT and Norfolk Southern Railroad (NSRR) are partnering on the Wabash Local Trax project.

When was the the preliminary preferred alternative selected?

The Engineer's Report updated in June 2020 identified the overpass at East Street as the preliminary preferred alternative.

Are other alternatives still being considered?

Six "build" alternatives and one "no build" alternative were analyzed. While the overpass at East Street is the preliminary preferred alternative, design will not be finalized until the environmental document has been approved.

How did you determine that East Street was the best location for the overpass?

East Street is already a major thoroughfare through Wabash, while some of the other adjacent streets evaluated are less traveled.

How did you determine that East Street was the best location for the overpass (cont'd)?

Preliminary review revealed that constructing the overpass at East Street required the least amount of right of way and impacts to historic properties. It is also the least expensive to design and construct.

Did engineers consider building a tunnel at SR 13?

Yes, the option of tunneling under SR 13 was considered. However, because of shallow bedrock in the area and the proximity to the Wabash River, costs for geotechnical investigations and drainage mitigation made the tunnel cost-prohibitive.

Why are intersections being closed?

Reducing the number of intersections with the railroad greatly reduces the chance for accidents. The East Street overpass will be large enough to accommodate the traffic currently carried by four streets well into the future.

What intersections will be eliminated as part of this project?

Once complete, East Street will cross over the NSRR tracks and the intersections at Spring, Huntington and Thorne streets will be closed.

How did you determine which intersections to close?

INDOT, the City of Wabash and NSRR had several discussions about the best intersections to close based on traffic counts, accident data and the capacity of adjacent streets. All three entities determined that Spring, Huntington and Thorne streets best fit the criteria to be closed.

Project Scope (Continued)

What role does Norfolk Southern play in this plan?

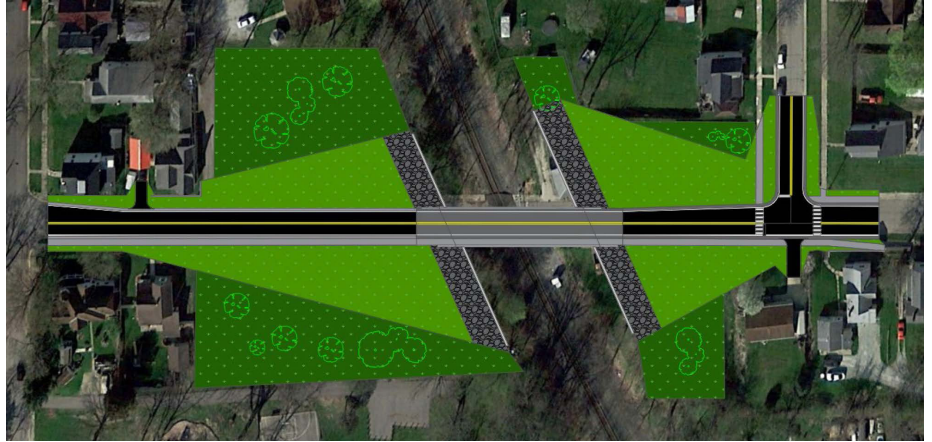
NSRR is a major stakeholder in the project. The project team has worked closely with them to develop the purpose and need of the project and will continue to do so throughout design and construction.

Will the planned overpass include lanes for bicycles and pedestrians?

Yes, the preliminary preferred alternative currently includes accommodations for cyclists and pedestrians to use the new overpass.

Is this project expected to impact any parks, schools or historic properties?

The project is early in the environmental process, and environmental resources – including historic properties and parks – are being analyzed.



Current Design of East Street over NSRR

Impacts and proposed mitigation for those properties will be an important part of the environmental document.

What engineering firm is overseeing the environmental study and design?

WSP is the lead engineering firm overseeing the environmental study and design.

Schedule

What is the schedule for the environmental study?

Environmental study and early coordination is ongoing. The environmental document is expected to be published in September 2021, with a public hearing in late 2021 or early 2022. The team hopes to finalize the environmental document by March 2022.

What is the design schedule?

Once the environmental document is approved, design will continue until late 2022.

When will right-of-way decisions be made?

Design will not be finalized until the environmental process is complete. Final design and impacts to specific properties could be identified in late 2021.

What is the anticipated construction timeline?

Construction – which is expected to last two years – could begin as early as 2023.

Funding

What is the estimated budget?

Total project costs are currently estimated at \$9.97 million, which includes planning, design, right-of-way, utility relocation and construction.

Is all funding for design and construction secured?

Yes.

Will both State and local funds be used?

Yes. The City of Wabash was awarded \$8.56 million from the state-funded Local Trax grant. The remaining costs will be covered by local funds.

Are federal funds being used for this project?

Not at this time.

Right-of-Way Acquisition

Will this project be constructed in existing right of way, or will you need to purchase land?

This project will impact many property owners and land will need to be acquired before construction can begin.

How much land might need to be purchased?

While design is preliminary and impacts to specific properties have not yet been identified, up to 2.3 acres may need to be acquired. Specific impacts to property will not be identified until later in the environmental study.

Does this project affect residences and businesses?

No, at this point, only residential properties will be impacted by this project.

How will the diminishing values of the homes around the overpass be compensated?

Impacts to properties will be evaluated throughout the project development process.

If a property may be impacted, should owners delay plans for improvements to their home?

Because design is preliminary, specific impacts to properties have not yet been identified.

Traffic Impacts

Have you conducted traffic counts for all streets affected by this project?

Yes, traffic counts were taken at the intersection of East Street and Hill Street, and during the peak hours at the intersection of East Street and Walnut Street, in August 2020.

Is traffic expected to increase after this project is constructed?

Yes, it is expected that traffic from the surrounding at-grade railroad crossings will choose the East Street overpass during train events to avoid delays.

Do you believe this project will reduce travel time through this area?

Overall, travel times are expected to decrease due to the elimination of the at-grade railroad crossings.

Can the preliminary preferred alternative handle all of the local traffic diverted from the intersections that are closing?

Yes. After traffic analysis is complete, adjustments to the typical section or turn lanes at intersections may be needed to ensure adequate traffic flow through and around the project area.

Are there plans to widen East Street on each side of the overpass?

No, in order to minimize impacts to the surrounding areas, changes to East street will be limited to the area between the Hill Street intersection to approximately 150 feet past the Maple Avenue intersection.

About Local Trax

The Local Trax rail overpass program provides grants to cities, towns and counties to address high-priority railroad and local road intersections. The program's focus is providing grade separation, closing crossings and constructing other safety enhancement projects at rail-highway intersections.



Emergency Access and Safety

Are INDOT and the City of Wabash coordinating with local emergency responders during the environmental study and design?

Yes, emergency responders are a major stakeholder and will be engaged throughout the project.

How will this project improve access and turning radii for emergency equipment?

Each intersection altered or modified by the project will be analyzed to ensure the required turning movements can be met.

How will this project impact emergency response time?

Removal of the at-grade intersection will provide emergency services with a route that has a “known” travel time that cannot be impacted by stopped trains on the tracks. As with any roadway, motorists will be expected to pull over/stagger to allow passage for emergency vehicles.

Public Involvement

Are the meeting presentations, exhibits and fact sheets available online? If so, where?

Yes, all project information is available at www.cityofwabash.com/traxproject.

When will the public have an opportunity to comment on the plans?

Public involvement will occur throughout the environmental process, including additional public information meetings – where the public can comment on the current design status – and a public hearing for the environmental document.

Will a public hearing be held before design is finalized?

Yes, a public hearing is tentatively scheduled for late 2021 or early 2022.

How can residents get involved in the project?

Public involvement is a critical part of the environmental and design process. The public can submit comments at the various public meetings offered or through the methods listed below.

Will the project team assemble advisory committees or host special stakeholder meetings?

No advisory committees or special stakeholder meetings are planned at this time. If residents would like to provide comments, they are encouraged to submit those via email or postal mail and attend the public meetings.

Questions or Comments?

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Please mention “Wabash Local Trax Project” in your correspondence.

www.cityofwabash.com/traxproject