

Starke County Highway Department Monthly Report

April 2021

Personnel – In addition to looking for a superintendent we are also accepting applications for part-time summer help to mow county rights-of-way with tractors and for full-time highway maintenance workers. All of those positions have been posted.

Transition from Winter to Summer Operations

We recently brought all of our tractors and other summer equipment back from storage and are in the process of getting everything ready now for the season.



We have replaced one culvert already and have several others on the list. The first step is to call in utility locates to ensure the safety of our workers when they are digging, and that will be done this week. We've also removed several beaver dams and are responding to those on an as-needed basis.

We will be doing our annual culvert inspections in the coming weeks as well and will be getting ready for our spring bridge cleaning. The fire truck we acquired from California Township is outfitted with hoses, nozzles. The cap for it came in today, so it is ready to go. It will make very fast work of bridge cleaning. Once the bridges are clean we will see if they need to be sealed.

Sign Inventory – We are in the process of organizing our sign shed before we do a complete inventory and order. At last count we have 5,534 county-maintained signs. We track the sign type, location and condition in GIS and have been making upgrades in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices to ensure we are compliant with state guidelines.

PASER Ratings – These are an assessment of pavement conditions and are done every spring and fall as part of our road improvement planning process. We will be doing these in the coming weeks as well. This data is included in the annual Asset Management Report we are required to file with the state.

Oil Prices – We got very competitive oil prices from our three suppliers this year and those are currently under review. We do need to decide which vendor we are using for AE-150 and AE-200 soon so we can make pug and patch. We will not be chip sealing until August.

New Vehicles – The new distributor truck is on order. I spoke with the representative from Southeastern Equipment today, and they will come out and show us how to operate it after it is delivered. The new pickup truck should be in at Lochmandy Ford in Knox later this month, and the new single-axle truck is still at Terry Truck Equipment in Winamac where he is finishing up a final few things. Hopefully we will have it soon.

Upcoming Training Sessions

Wednesday, April 7 – Purdue LTAP PASER Training – All of our new people are registered. The training is taking place online and they will be completing it at the garage. As you know we do PASER ratings in the spring and fall to assess pavement conditions and plan our mix of fixes for road preservation as well as to complete the annual Asset Management Report that is required by the state. Bob will be doing the spring round of PASER in the next few weeks now that winter is (hopefully) behind us.

Thursday, May 6 – Purdue LTAP Aerial Lift Training – This is a full staff training at the highway garage which will cover safe use of the bucket truck. Purdue LTAP is providing the trainers, and they will be using our truck.

TBD – Purdue LTAP Temporary Traffic Control Training – This is another full staff training at the highway garage. We just submitted the request last week and got notice this morning that we are approved to host it, but we do not yet have a date. Since the training is onsite we will provide the barricades. The on-site training will give our staff a chance to actually practice setting up traffic control, which should be very useful for them. We can also ask the trainer to emphasize traffic control for rural roads and get a much more personalized training than the previous regional classes we attended pre-COVID.

TBD – Meth lab awareness training – We are working with Mark Ennis from Bliss-McKnight to schedule this training so our drivers know what to look for and avoid when they are picking up roadside trash. In the past a trooper from the Indiana State Police has come to the garage to present this training. We were not able to conduct this training last year due to COVID-19, and as you know we have several new drivers.

Grant Status

We were able to max out Community Crossings funds in 2020. We had some money left over after the 250 N and Range Road Hot Mix Asphalt projects, and we applied for and got two small projects. One is HMA on 600 E between 700 N and 900 N. Weather permitting we are going to start berming that road this week in anticipation of that. We will be doing the work ourselves and using the grant money to pay for the materials. We also got CCMG money to replace the culvert on 300 E just north of 800 N. That pipe is ordered and should arrive this week. We will also be doing the installation ourselves.

INDOT has not yet announced recipients for Community Crossings 2021-1. We applied for funds to hot mix CR 700 E between SR 8 and 625 S as part of our ongoing truck route plan. The eventual goal is to have all residents of Starke County within a couple miles of either a state or a local hot mix asphalt road.

We have grants in process to replace three bridges: Bridge 7 on CR 1200 E over the Yellow River; Bridge 137 on CR 300 E over the Yellow River and Bridge 59 on CR 700 S over Bogus Run. We were just recently awarded funds during the most recent INDOT call for projects for this bridge. The design RFP is currently posted, with proposals due April 16th. Several firms have inquired about that project, and we are hoping for a good response.

Bridge Inspections – We just completed Phase II of our bridge inspection cycle and will be posting the RFP for the next inspections in July per INDOT's schedule. Josh Gonya from United Consulting is here to present those findings.