

the Evansville MPO *Express*

Transportation Planning Updates for Henderson, Vanderburgh, and Warrick counties

INDOT COMPLETES SR 662 ROAD DIET IN WARRICK COUNTY

If you have recently travelled along the newly restriped segment of SR 662 in Warrick County, you have witnessed first-hand the benefits and results of collaborative transportation planning.

SR 662 is part of a nearly 10-mile regional roadway stretching from near downtown Evansville to the Town of Newburgh. The roadway is known as Covert Avenue within the City of Evansville and Vanderburgh County, becoming SR 662 in Warrick County and Jennings Street/French Island Trail through Newburgh.

The Town of Newburgh was the first to initiate enhancements on this corridor through the completion of the final phase of the Rivertown Trail. This trail runs along the Ohio River, through downtown Newburgh and west to the town limits at Ellerbusch Road.

The City of Evansville also began reconstructing the five-mile stretch of Covert Avenue from U.S. 41 to I-69, converting what was a four-lane road to three lanes with various bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, depending on land use context and roadway widths.



While both projects are locally significant, their completion would have left a gap in the overall network. Knowing that INDOT was scoping an asphalt overlay project on the portion of this roadway under their jurisdiction, the Evansville MPO reached out to the Vincennes District Office to make them aware of the other projects occurring in the area and how they fit into the region’s overall vision. The Vincennes District understood the importance of connecting these two federally funded projects and worked with the MPO to reposition the pavement markings to better meet the needs of all road users.

Once construction is completed along Covert Avenue in Evansville and Vanderburgh County, a regional bicycle and pedestrian network will be created, connecting nearly 10 miles between two counties and establishing a framework for future collaboration between local government, the MPO and INDOT.



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Evansville MPO



Henderson • Vanderburgh • Warrick

WARRICK TRAILS UPDATES

*Contributed by Courtney TenBerge,
President of Warrick Trails, Inc.*

Warrick Trails is an all-volunteer non-profit that is building paths throughout Warrick County to connect neighborhoods, schools and parks. Our mission is to provide these paths as a way to promote health, wellness and connectivity in a safe way and making Warrick County a more desirable place to work and live.

Warrick Trails has completed our original goals to date. There is a 5.2 mile loop connecting Friedman Park, Vann Park and two of our Trailheads: Deaconess Trailhead and Upgrade Trailhead. We have also completed the path down Vann Road from Anderson Road to Casey Road (ending at Castle High School). Collaborating with Warrick County and the Warrick County School Corporation, we received TAP funding through the EMPO to connect J.H. Castle Elementary, Castle High, and Castle South Middle Schools. Construction is set to begin this fall. We have completed our shared roadways projects to promote bike and car sharing space safely. Warrick Trails is now beginning construction of a 2.5 mile path in the town of Lynnville.



Along with these trails, we have completed four Trailheads: Deaconess Trailhead on Anderson Road, Upgrade Trailhead at Vann Park that has a 1/2 mile loop, St. Vincent – Aurand Trailhead in downtown Newburgh with an expanded parking lot and Prime Foods Trailhead in Boonville that has a 1/8 mile loop and fitness stations surrounding the track. We are planning to begin construction on our fifth Trailhead – Toyota Trailhead and hope to be done by this fall.

We could not have accomplished any of these trails without our key partnerships. We have received grants and sponsorships from the following groups and all were instrumental in allowing the paths to be complete: Regional Cities, TAP funding, Warrick County Redevelopment, Next Level Trails Grant, Toyota, Deaconess, St. Vincent, Upgrade, Prime Foods, Old National Bank, Vectren, Alcoa and the COMMUNITY. Our events, Run Victoria and Party in Paradise, help to maintain and build these trails so our community support is key. Another key factor is our board. We have some phenomenal board members that are trying to make our community an even better place than it already is.



Deaconess Trailhead



and more new trails...



New trails...



Prime Foods Trailhead

COVID-19 IMPACT ON METS AND HART

When the pandemic began, and many people started to work from home, METS and HART pushed forward to provide transportation to essential workers in Evansville and Henderson with limited cuts. METS reduced hours to end routes at 6:15 PM, instead of the normal 12:15 AM in order to have time for extra cleaning each evening. In order to keep drivers and passengers safe, METS reduced the capacity on buses to nine passengers. As Indiana began opening back up, METS went back to full capacity on buses, but began requiring all passengers to

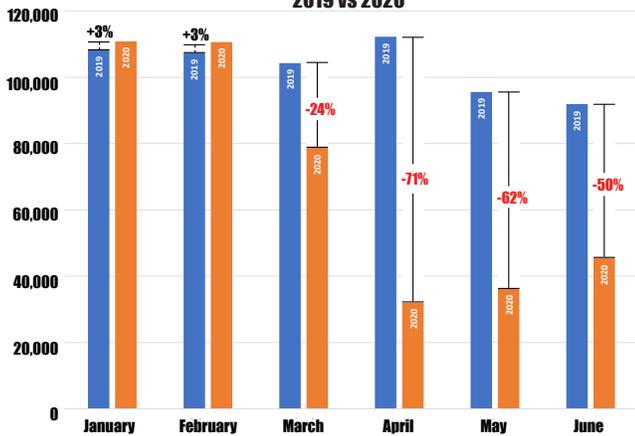
wear a face mask. METS provided hand sanitizer for both drivers and passengers. At its lowest point, METS ridership was less than 30% of what it was a year ago; and at the end of June, ridership was still just 45-50% of what it was last year.

HART cut the Shopper Shuttle route and one Paratransit van due to decreases in ridership. They asked passengers to sit in alternating rows when possible and required face masks. HART fogged each bus every two weeks for a deep clean and provided hand sanitizer for drivers

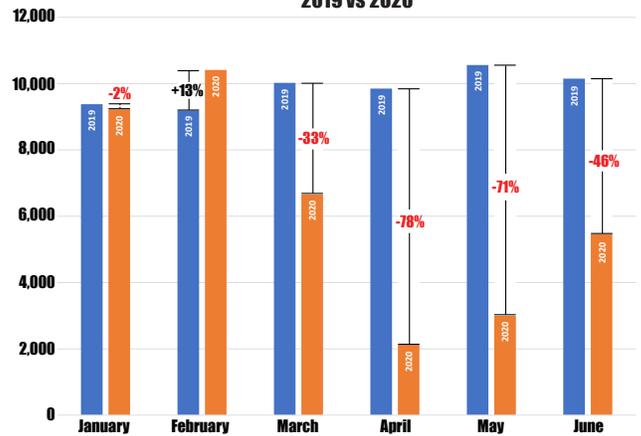
and passengers. In April, HART's ridership dropped to almost 20% of what it was in April of 2019; by the end of June, ridership had increased, but still only about 50% of what it was a year ago.

METS and HART will both continue to monitor the situation and make changes as necessary, such as adding more hand sanitizer dispensers on buses and at facilities. See the charts for a monthly comparison of 2019 and 2020 ridership for METS and HART.

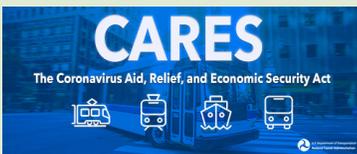
**METS Ridership Comparison
2019 vs 2020**



**HART Ridership Comparison
2019 vs 2020**



CARES ACT FUNDING FOR METS AND HART



On March 27, 2020, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act into law. The CARES Act included \$25 billion to the FTA for distribution to urban and rural transit providers. The funding was made available with a 100% federal share, with no local match. Transit agencies could use the funding for operating and capital expenses to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Any expenses that occurred on or after January 20, 2020 were eligible.

Distribution of the CARES Act funds by the FTA was based on the same formula used for the annual Section 5307 funds. This formula provided METS and HART with a combined \$7,559,446 in CARES Act funding. The MPO used the METS and HART budgets to determine the split between agencies. This gave METS \$6,349,935 and HART \$1,209,511.

By splitting funds in this way, METS was able to pay for their entire 2020 calendar year using CARES funding at 100% federal share. HART, who runs on July-July Fiscal Years, was able to use CARES funding for

approximately half of their FY 2020 budget and will use the other half for FY 2021.

This funding is a huge help to the City of Evansville and City of Henderson. Cities across the country are taking a financial hit due to COVID-19. By removing the local share normally required to fund METS and HART, the cities can use that funding where needed to help respond to COVID-19. METS and HART will continue to be there for anyone who needs their service. Please be considerate of fellow riders, wear a mask, practice social distancing, and thank the bus drivers.

COMMUNITY CROSSINGS AND THE LOCAL IMPACT

The Community Crossings Matching Grant 2020 #1 awards were released in April. The LPAs in the Evansville MPO area (including Gibson and Posey counties) were awarded over \$5.6 million in funding between 9 jurisdictions and LPAs. The two highest awardees were Gibson County and the City of Princeton, both of which were awarded the maximum \$1 million. These funds will help Gibson County and Princeton make noticeable improvements to their road networks.

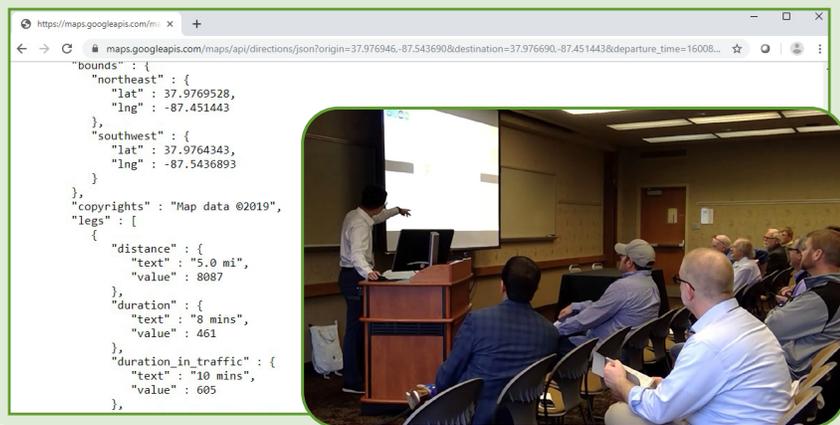
The CCMG funding provides for a positive impact on local pavement condition, especially for smaller communities and LPAs. Looking through the 2016-2018 awards to the LPAs, communities like Darmstadt and Elberfeld have taken full advantage of these funds. Comparing their road networks with and without CCMG funds, Darmstadt updated 37% of their network with funding from the 2017 and 2018 CCMG calls, while Elberfeld updated 15% of their roads with funding from only the 2017 CCMG call. These funds are providing the smaller communities the resource needed in helping them maintain their road networks.

GOOGLE TRAVEL TIME DATA TOOL

The Evansville MPO has developed an innovative way to obtain travel time data. Previously when the Congestion Management Process (CMP) data for travel time was collected, the corridors were driven and travel time data was recorded in person. This was tedious and time-consuming. The new method allows for a simplified way to obtain travel time data along a corridor at any time of a day.

This new method uses the Google Application Programming Interfaces (API) tool. First, the GPS coordinates of the origin and destination points on the corridor are collected. An Epoch Unix Time Stamp Converter is then used to convert the time of day being studied to the Epoch Unix time format. This format tracks time as a running total of seconds from a set date of 01/01/1970. After having the time, the numbers are coded to a pre-defined URL template and the customized code is ran on a web browser. The output is a list of code (shown to the right) that contains the travel time data.

The tool itself is free to use for the first 20,000 queries each month. With the consideration of labor, this new method costs less than 10% of the previous method



and is more efficient. Moreover, this tool has been expanded for use on intersection delay. This innovative turning movement delay methodology does not require traffic count information at the intersection and takes less time to program than traditional traffic analysis software. This tool is being tested on any travel-time-related data acquisition and analysis on current traffic conditions.

This new methodology was presented at the 2019 Indiana MPO Conference and the 2020 Purdue Road School. If you are interested, please contact Xinbo Mi at xmi@evansvillempo.com.

FY 2025-2026 NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Local Public Agencies applied to the EMPO for FHWA funds to construct federal-aid roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects within the region. This year, the Call for Projects was issued for Indiana LPAs (Vanderburgh and Warrick counties) that are within the EMPO Urbanized Area. Any project, regardless of anticipated FHWA funding source, was eligible for submission. Projects eligible for Surface Transportation Block Grant

(STBG) funds, Transportation Alternative funds, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds were eligible for consideration during this call.

Applications were due July 23, with Vanderburgh County, Warrick County and METS all submitting applications. The next step is to prioritize the projects for funding.

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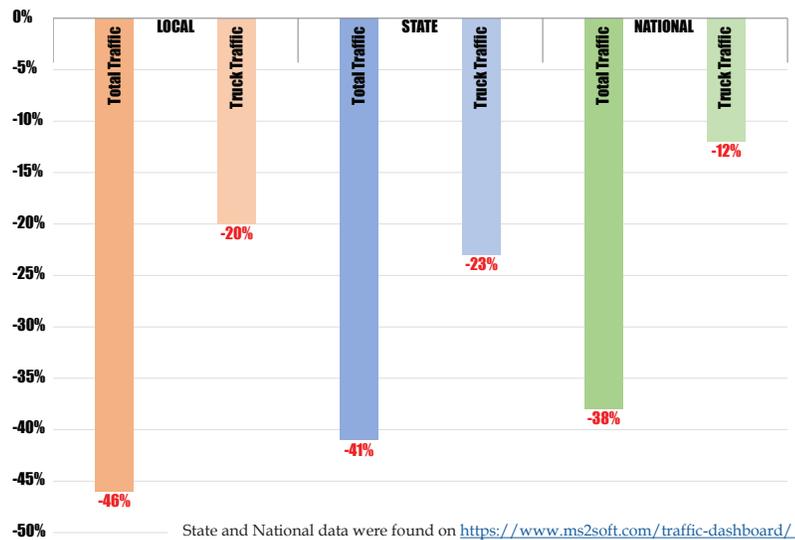
COVID-19 IMPACT ON LOCAL TRAFFIC

After hearing about the noticeable impact of COVID-19 on traffic nationwide, the Evansville MPO conducted a traffic study at strategic locations within Vanderburgh County to see the impact of the pandemic on local traffic.

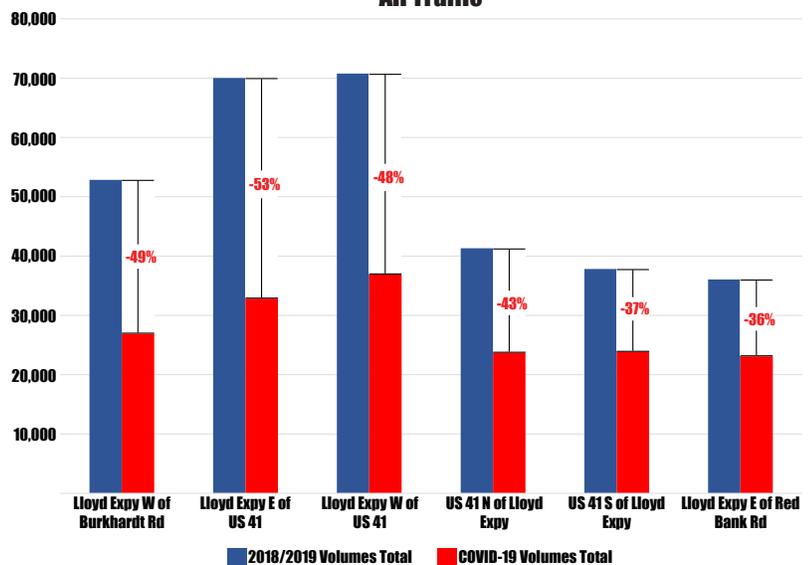
Collection began during the week of March 31st, the week after Governor Holcomb issued Indiana's Stay at Home Order. After collecting the data, the COVID-19 counts were compared to MPO counts done in the previous two years at the same locations. The comparison showed an average decrease of 46% in overall traffic from the sample counts taken. The location that saw the greatest decrease was the Lloyd Expressway east of US 41 with a 53% reduction in overall traffic.

A comparison of the local volumes with statewide numbers for April 1st, 2020 was made possible using the data processed by MS2, and was accessed at <https://www.ms2soft.com/traffic-dashboard/>. The Evansville region saw a slightly greater decrease at 46% versus the statewide decrease at 41% for all traffic. Comparing truck volumes, the MPO data was relatively close to the state numbers at a 20% decrease in the Evansville area compared to 23% statewide. National data was also available through the MS2 website, and showed a nationwide decrease of 38% in total traffic and a 12% decrease in truck traffic for the same day.

COVID-19 Traffic Impact (April 1, 2020)



All Traffic



COVID-19 IMPACT ON STREET AND HIGHWAY FUNDING

The Motor Vehicle Highway Account (MVH), Highway Road and Street Account (LRS), and the Local Road and Bridge Matching Grant Fund, more commonly known as Community Crossings Matching Grant Fund (CCMGF), are all partially funded by taxes on gas and diesel purchases. The Stay at Home Orders limited people's driving and therefore reduced the purchase of fuel. These funds and grants are three of the main sources of transportation funding for local highway and street departments.

Purdue University's Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) has put together resources to help municipalities understand how COVID-19 and the Stay at Home Order has affected roadway funding and maintenance. Find more information on LTAP's COVID-19 Resources webpage (<https://www.purdue.edu/inltap/resources/COVID-19%20Resources%20.php>) or read their article COVID-19 Impact on Gas Tax Projects here: <https://www.purdue.edu/inltap/Digital%20Newsletters/Featured%20Article%201.php>.