

Rare Reinstallation of Railroad Crossing Puts Businesses on the Right Track

For more than three years, INDOT’s Rail Programs Office and its partners were involved in a plot-twisting adventure worthy of a TV show. It should come as no surprise, then, that the result was the installation of a StarTrack Rail Solutions crossing.

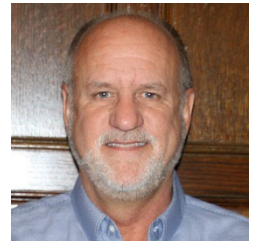
2023 AGENCY GOALS

Plan for the Future
Intentional Partnership

The experience included a surprise discovery that led to the extremely rare occurrence of INDOT reinstalling railroad tracks after previously taking them out of service. INDOT partnered with a county economic council, a short-line railroad, and a local business to install a new crossing that will put all parties on

the track to success.

On four-lane State Road 3 in Decatur County, just south of State Road 46 near Greensburg, a railroad crossing once again runs across the highway. The spur track extends for about a mile east and three-fourths of a mile west. At the western terminus is animal feed manufacturer Lowe’s Pellets & Grain, which in years past used the spur track for transportation purposes.



“The company had not used rail service for a number of years, and the crossing surface was in poor condition, creating a hazard for vehicles passing over the unused crossing,” said Senior Rail Project Manager Tom Rueschhoff (*photo, right*).

INDOT was planning to resurface SR 3. In 2019, Seymour District Utility and Railroad



Coordinator Tim Hartwell (*photo, left*) requested that the track be declared as out of service, enabling INDOT to remove the tracks and replace it with full-depth asphalt pavement. This request led to meetings with railroad officials, Decatur County representatives, Lowe’s Pellets & Grain, a nearby agribusiness, and INDOT officials, including Rueschhoff and Hartwell.

The tracks had been owned by Conrail, which was acquired by CSX Transportation in 1997. At that time, the 1¼-mile tracks were split up into two sections on each side of SR 3.

“Eventually, the tracks were deeded over to the short-line Central Railroad of Indiana (CIND),” said Rueschhoff. “From those 2019 meetings, it was discovered that the tracks were deeded but the crossing was not included in the deed, meaning that Conrail still owned the right-of-way across SR 3. Therefore, Lowe’s Pellets & Grain had to purchase the crossing limits from Conrail if they were interested in reopening the crossing to rail traffic.”

With the SR 3 resurfacing imminent, INDOT helped the situation by placing “Tracks Out of Service” signs at the location instead of deciding to abandon the crossing. This enabled the possibility of someday reinstalling the crossing.

Not long after the resurfacing project, INDOT’s business engagement director talked with the Decatur County Economic Development Corp. (DCEDC) and local agribusinesses. The director discovered that the DCEDC wanted to develop the land beyond the western terminus and that Lowe’s Pellets & Grain needed to use the crossing again for business. Also, Next Generation, a leader in agricultural liquid storage terminals based in Greensburg, indicated that it would need the tracks extended.

“This indication of economic investment meant that these customers would need to be served by CIND on this line in the future, bringing more businesses and jobs to Decatur County,” said Rueschhoff.

This led to the decision to reinstall the crossing.

“INDOT has used StarTrack Rail Solutions for roughly 20 years in certain situations,” said Rueschhoff. “They are full-depth concrete panel crossings that we have used on numerous state roads around the state with the purpose of having a structurally sound crossing surface that can provide a service life of 20-plus years. On state roads with high traffic volumes, including semitrailers, this type of crossing can last multiple cycles of different types of crossing surfaces. This reduces the need to detour traffic as often and provides satisfaction that we won’t have to replace the crossing for two decades.”

StarTrack, a precast concrete solution that uses pre-engineered track-support systems, was used a few years ago on SR 3, north of the Lowe’s Pellets & Grain location, with great success.



The pavement is removed from State Road 3 (clockwise from top-left photo), new precast concrete sections are delivered, installation of the new crossing begins, and the crossing is nearly complete.



INDOT closed southbound SR 3 in mid-December for seven days and northbound SR 3 in late December for nine days to install the new crossing.

To provide traveling public awareness of the crossing becoming active once again with trains crossing SR 3, the railroad has removed the “Tracks Out of Service” signs and has recently installed new “Train Traffic Resumed – Track in Service” signs. Also, INDOT’s Seymour District Maintenance crews will place message boards to warn drivers to be aware that the crossing has been reactivated and train traffic has resumed. The crossing and track work has now been completed; two trains per week are expected to use the tracks to service Next Generation and Lowe’s Pellets & Grain with more expected in the future.

“I am proud of how Central Office and the Seymour District worked closely with the railroad and the local economic development office to bring this previously out-of-service crossing back into service for new customers,” said Rail Programs Manager Venetta Keeffe.