

Roundabout eyed for busy Hobart intersection

By **Karen Caffarini**

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A Hobart governing board last week took an initial step toward making improvements at the intersection of 61st Avenue and Marcella Boulevard that will include a roundabout.

The Board of Public Works and Safety approved a contract with Merrillville engineering firm Butler Fairman & Seufert for design and right-of-way engineering services for the project at a cost not to exceed \$516,840.

In addition to the intersection itself, the work will extend about 1,000 feet to the south on Marcella and a portion of the short north leg, City Engineer Phil Gralik said.

This \$3 million project is part of a long-term plan geared toward improving traffic flow along the 61st Avenue corridor, from Interstate 65 to Indiana 51, Gralik said.

"We want to eliminate all traffic signals along 61st Avenue. We'll have roundabouts at all major intersections on the road," Gralik said at a Plan Commission meeting on Thursday.

Gralik said a 20-year traffic study showed that, without the changes, increased traffic along the arterial road could result in traffic backups of up to 12 minutes.

In other matters, the board approved a Community Crossings grant agreement, which provides \$1 million in matching state money for various road projects.

The money comes from Indiana Department of Transportation and the city must provide another \$1 million in cash or kind services.

Road improvement projects to be done with these funds include Bracken Parkway, between Indiana 51 and Old Hobart Road; Lake Park Avenue, from the railroad tracks to 37th Avenue; 41st Avenue, near the Early Learning Center, and 83rd Avenue, from Grand Avenue to Clay Street.

The board also approved requests to improve their easements by Buzz Underwood of Lincoln Carryouts and John Steininger, of the 400 block of East 10th Street. Both plan to put asphalt, concrete or pavers on their easements.

Mayor Brian Snedecor said in the case of Lincoln Carryouts, it's a matter of fixing a problem caused during the

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"When the state made the improvements they elevated the concrete higher than the easement between the road and the parking lot. People have been driving over the grassy area to get to the parking lot," Snedecor said.

Underwood said he planned to blacktop a 5-foot path between the parking lot and street.

The board approved a request for a stop sign at Home Avenue and Pennsylvania Street, based upon Police Chief Rick Zormier's recommendation.

"The other two intersections (in the area) have four-way stop signs. This should be one, too," Zormier said.

Karen Caffarini is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.

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