

WESTCHESTER-LIBERTY TRAIL PHASE III

Chesterton, Porter County, Indiana

Des. No. 1902832

PROJECT INFORMATION PACKET



AMERICAN
STRUCTUREPOINT
INC.

Contact: Meghan Hinkle, American Structurepoint, Inc.
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February 15, 2023

Dear Concerned Citizens, Local Residents, and Elected Public Officials:

The purpose of this Project Information Packet is to explain the proposed project and to receive your comments, concerns, and suggestions and/or request for a public hearing. There are several ways your comments may be submitted, as outlined below:

1. **E-mail** comments to Meghan Hinkle of American Structurepoint, Inc. at mhinkle@structurepoint.com.
2. **Mail** comments to Meghan Hinkle at American Structurepoint, Inc., 9025 River Road, Suite 200, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240.
3. **Submit** comments (or have comments postmarked by) **March 1, 2023**. Comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the decision making process.
4. **Questions?** Contact Meghan Hinkle of American Structurepoint, Inc. at (317) 547-5580 or mhinkle@structurepoint.com.

All substantive comments received will be evaluated and responded to in writing within subsequent project documentation. The documentation will address concerns presented during the public comment process and describe project decisions reached following careful consideration of the views and/or concerns of the public.

Preliminary design plans along with the Categorical Exclusion (CE) document and other project documents are available for review at the following locations:

1. In-Person at:
Chesterton Town Hall Municipal Complex, 1490 Broadway Ave Chesterton, IN 46304
Westchester Public Library, 200 W Indiana Ave Chesterton, IN 46304
2. Online at the American Structurepoint, Inc. Website:
<https://www.structurepointpublic.com/wlt>

The Westchester-Liberty Trail Phase III Project Team thanks you for your participation in this project.

Project Description

The Westchester-Liberty Trail Phase III Project (Des. No. 1902832) is in Chesterton, Porter County, Indiana. The total length of the project is 0.99 mile. Specifically, the project consists of three connected segments. The first segment (Segment 1) begins at the intersection of CR 1100 North and North CR 50 East and extends approximately 0.45 mile east along the north side of CR 1100 North before ending where an existing sidewalk begins. The second segment (Segment 2) exists between CR 1100 North and Laurel Creek Drive, beginning 0.21 mile west of the intersection of CR 1100 North and North CR 100 East and extends south approximately 0.30 mile on a new alignment through a wooded area before connecting to Laurel Creek Drive within the Tamarack Subdivision Park. The third segment (Segment 3) begins where Segment 2 ends, along the north side of Laurel Creek Drive, and extends east 0.20 mile to the intersection of North CR 100 East and Laurel Creek Drive. Segment 3 then extends south approximately 0.05 mile along the west side of North CR 100 East to the intersection with Rail Road where it will end.

The need for Westchester-Liberty Trail Phase III project is evidenced by the current connectivity between the two existing Westchester-Liberty Trail corridor sections and existing sidewalks located in the northeast quadrant of the project area, along CR 1100 North and North CR 100 East. The existing project area is reliant on pedestrians and bicyclists sharing the roadways with motor vehicles. This results in potential conflicts between pedestrians/bicyclists and motor vehicles between existing corridors of the Westchester-Liberty Trail. The first existing corridor section of the Westchester-Liberty Trail I begins at the intersection of the Prairie Duneland Trail and 23rd Street and extends south for approximately 1.0 mile before extending east along CR 1100 North for approximately 1.0 mile and terminating at the intersection with CR 50 North (also locally known as 5th Street). The second existing corridor section of the Westchester-Liberty Trail II begins at the intersection of North CR 100 East and Rail Road and extends east for approximately 0.30 mile before extending south along Keller Drive for approximately 0.30 mile and connecting to the Coffee Creek Preserve.

Generally, the project proposes to construct an 8-foot-wide shared-use path, connecting Westchester-Liberty Trail I to Westchester-Liberty Trail II, and existing sidewalks.

Segment 1

The new paved shared-use path would be constructed along the north side of CR 1100 North, from the intersection of North CR 50 East to the existing eight-foot-wide concrete sidewalk which begins approximately 250 feet west of North CR 100 East. There will be crosswalks added at the intersection of CR 1100 North and North CR 50 East to connect the new shared-use path to Westchester-Liberty Trail I. Two culvert pipe extensions (STR 101 and STR 102) will be necessary and consist of adding new pipes of the same size to the outlet of each structure. STR 101 would be extended five feet north and STR 102 would be extended three feet north, carrying streams Pope O'Connor Ditch and unnamed tributary (UNT) to Pope O'Connor Ditch, respectively. In the area of STR 101 and 102, the new shared-use path would be bordered by a guardrail to the south and a pedestrian handrail to the north. Additionally, inlets, storm sewers, and driveway culverts will be installed as necessary to facilitate drainage along CR 1100 North.

Segment 2

This segment would include construction of an 8-foot wide boardwalk through portions of the forested area and includes a new stream crossing. A small culvert (STR 106) would be constructed where the new shared-use path crosses over UNT to Pope O'Connor Ditch in the wooded area between CR 1100 North and Laurel Creek Drive. The new shared-use path would then enter the Tamarack Subdivision Park and be constructed adjacent to the existing four-foot-wide gravel sidewalk.

Segment 3

The new paved shared-use path would exist along the north side of Laurel Creek Drive and continue south along the west side of North CR 100 East to the intersection of Rail Road, where it would connect with Westchester-Liberty Trail II. The existing sidewalk along Laurel Creek Drive would be removed and replaced with a new eight-foot-wide shared-use path. ADA-compliant curb ramps would be constructed at

all intersections as needed. There would be crosswalks added at the intersection of North CR 100 East and Rail Road to connect the new shared-use path to Westchester-Liberty Trail II.

Description of Right-of-Way

The project will require the purchase of right-of-way. Acquisition information can also be viewed at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/real_estate/. The overall project requires the acquisition of approximately 1.600 acres of permanent right-of-way from residential, commercial, forested, wetland, and institutional properties. The overall project requires approximately 0.006 acre of temporary right-of-way from residential property. Additionally, the project will reacquire property from residential, commercial, and institutional properties. Typical existing right-of-way in Segment 1 is edge of pavement along CR 1100 North. Segment 2 exists within a 60-ft wide corridor and land associated with the Tamarack Subdivision Park which are both owned by the Town of Chesterton. Typical existing right-of-way in Segment 3 is 30 feet wide along Laurel Creek Drive and North CR 100 East.

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Amount (acres)			
Land Use Impacts	Permanent	Temporary	Reacquisition
Residential	0.430	0.006	0.320
Commercial	0.420	0	0.360
Agricultural	0	0	0
Forest	0.130	0	0
Wetlands	0.200	0	0
Other: Institutional	0.420	0	0.180
TOTAL	1.600	0.006	0.860

Maintenance of Traffic

The maintenance of traffic for the project will include temporary lane closures while curb ramps are being constructed adjacent to roadways. Flagging will be utilized to provide roadway access for large construction vehicles. There will also be temporary sidewalk and trail closures throughout the project area. Signage and temporary curb ramps will be utilized for all pedestrian facility closures.

The sidewalk located along CR 1100 North will remain open while the new shared-use path is constructed and connected to it. The end of Westchester-Liberty Trail II, which dead ends at Rail Road, will be closed for approximately five days for the construction of an ADA-compliant curb ramp at the intersection of Rail Road and North CR 100 East. The sidewalk located along the north side of Laurel Drive will be closed for approximately 1 to 3 months for the removal and replacement of the sidewalk with the new shared-use path. An additional route will not be provided for pedestrians at this location as the sidewalk located to the south of Laurel Creek Drive will remain open and will provide access to all the facilities within the area. Additionally, crosswalk pavement markings for a pedestrian detour along Laurel Creek Drive will be utilized. Lastly, a portion of the gravel path located within the Tamarack Subdivision Park, will be closed temporarily for approximately 2 to 4 weeks for the construction of the new shared-use path. Access throughout the park will be maintained as the majority of the gravel path will be unaffected. Signage will be placed at all closures.

Access to all properties will be maintained throughout construction. School corporations and emergency services will be notified of closures prior to construction. The lane restrictions and detours will pose a temporary inconvenience to traveling motorists (including school buses, emergency services, and pedestrians) within the overall project; however, no significant delays are anticipated, and all inconveniences will cease upon project completion.

Environmental Documentation

The INDOT and FHWA have reviewed the CE Level 3 Document prepared by American Structurepoint, Inc. for this project and released the document for public involvement on January 26, 2023. The CE evaluates the impact of the Westchester-Liberty Trail Phase III Project on the natural and human environment. No areas of potentially significant impacts have been identified.

Water Resources

The proposed project area was examined for the presence of wetlands and “waters of the U.S.” Two streams and six wetlands were identified within the project area as potentially regulated resources. It is anticipated that the preferred alternative will impact approximately 152.25 linear feet of streams and 0.20 acre of wetlands. A Section 401 Regional General Permit (RGP) from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and a Section 404 RGP from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be required for impacts to streams and wetlands. Mitigation will likely be needed and will be determined during permitting.

In addition, formal application for a Construction in a Floodway Permit from the IDNR will be required due to the proposed work within the 100-year floodplain of Pope O’Connor Ditch. The proposed project will also require formal approval from the Porter County Drainage Board due to the project crossing Pope O’Conner Ditch, which is a regulated drain.

Terrestrial Habitat

The proposed project area was examined for the presence of terrestrial habitat resources. It is anticipated that the preferred alternative will impact approximately 2.51 acres of terrestrial habitat due to the construction of the new shared-use path. It is anticipated that the clearing of approximately 0.71 acre of trees will be required for the development of the shared-use path throughout the wooded area between CR 1100 North and Laurel Creek Drive. Of the 2.51 acre of terrestrial habitat impact, 1.60 acres is maintained right-of-way, 0.03 acre is emergent wetland, 0.17 acre is forested wetland, and 0.71 acre is trees. Tree removal will occur during bat inactive season (between October 1st and March 31st).

Coordination occurred with US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and a “May Affect Likely to Adversely Affect” determination was received for tree clearing impacts. This project will require mitigation due to the tree clearing impacts. Mitigation will likely be needed and will be determined during permitting.

4(f) Resources

Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966 prohibits the use of certain public and historic lands for federally funded transportation facilities unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative. The law applies to significant publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife/waterfowl refuges, and National Register for Historical Places (NRHP) eligible or listed historic properties regardless of ownership. Lands subject to this law are considered Section 4(f) resources. There are four Section 4(f) resources located within or adjacent to the project area.

Westchester-Liberty Trail I

Westchester-Liberty Trail I is an existing trail corridor section that serves as a general resource to the public and is thus a Section 4(f) resource. This section ends along the south side of CR 1100 North, at the intersection of CR 1100 North and North CR 50 East. In order to provide connectivity between Westchester-Liberty Trail I and the new shared-use path, crosswalks will be added at the intersection. Westchester-Liberty Trail I will not be closed for any time during the construction and no permanent right-of-way will be purchased adjacent to or within Westchester-Liberty Trail I. Therefore, no use is expected.

Westchester-Liberty Trail II

Westchester-Liberty Trail II is an existing trail corridor section that serves as a general resource to the public and is thus a Section 4(f) resource. This section ends along the south side of Rail Road, at the intersection of Rail Road and North CR 100 East. In order to provide connectivity between Westchester-Liberty Trail II and the new shared-use path, a new ADA-compliant curb ramp will be installed at the intersection of North CR 100 East and Rail Road. For this reason, Westchester-Liberty Trail II will be temporarily impacted and closed for approximately 5 days during construction. During the remainder of construction, Westchester-Liberty Trail II will be unaffected by the installation of the new shared-use path. No permanent right-of-way will be

purchased adjacent to or within Westchester-Liberty Trail II. The installation of the ADA-compliant curb ramp at Westchester-Liberty Trail II is considered a transportation enhancement activity and constitutes a no use under Section 4(f). The official with jurisdiction (OWJ), Town of Chesterton, concurred with the transportation enhancement.

Tamarack Subdivision Park

Tamarack Subdivision Park is an existing publicly-owned park and serves as a general resource to the public and is thus a Section 4(f) resource. The Tamarack Subdivision Park is located north of Laurel Creek Drive. There is a four-foot-wide gravel path along the eastern edge of the park that will be temporarily impacted for the construction of the new shared-use path and will be closed for approximately 2 to 4 weeks during construction. All access to the park will be maintained and open to the public during this time. No permanent right-of-way will be purchased adjacent to or within the park. The installation of the new shared-use path will result in connectivity between Westchester-Liberty Trail I and Westchester-Liberty Trail II to the Tamarack Subdivision Park. Therefore, the project is considered a transportation enhancement activity and constitutes a no use under Section 4(f). The official with jurisdiction (OWJ), Town of Chesterton, concurred with the transportation enhancement.

Dunes-Kankakee Trail

The Dunes-Kankakee Trail is a future planned trail that will serve as a general resource to the public and is thus a Section 4(f) resource. The Dunes-Kankakee Trail will be located to the east of the project area, and would connect to Westchester-Liberty Trail II near the intersection Rail Road and SR 49. As the planned trail is located outside of the construction limits, it is not anticipated to be impacted by this project; therefore, no use expected.

Community Impacts

The proposed project will construct an 8-foot-wide shared-use path, connecting Westchester-Liberty Trail I to Westchester-Liberty Trail II, and to existing sidewalks. This project would result in an increase in recreational facilities in the area and is therefore a net benefit for the community. The proposed project will positively impact community cohesion by increasing the availability of shared recreational facilities and connecting existing trails in the surrounding area. The proposed project would also add ADA-compliant facilities throughout the project area, which increases non-motorized accessibility. Traffic will be maintained along the existing roadway during construction. The only potential impacts to motor traffic would be temporary lane closures or restrictions for road markings at trail crossings. The Westchester-Liberty Trail Phase III project meets the town's current Comprehensive Plan, meets the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) *2050 Plan*, and is identified as a High Priority Corridor in the NIRPC's *Greenways and Blueways 2020 Regional Plan, Priority Trail Corridors Map*.

Public Facilities and Services

There is one religious facility, The River Church, adjacent to the project area. Two pipeline segments, associated with Northern Indiana Public Service Co. and Marathon Pipe Line Co., are located within the project area. There will be no impacts to the pipeline segments. Right-of-way will be acquired from the River Church, as noted in the right-of-way table above.

The maintenance of traffic for the project will include temporary lane closures while curb ramps are being constructed adjacent to roadways. Flagging will be utilized to provide roadway access for large construction vehicles. There will also be temporary sidewalk and trail closures throughout the project area. Signage and temporary curb ramps will be utilized for all pedestrian facility closures. Access to all properties will be maintained throughout construction. The lane restrictions and detours will pose a temporary inconvenience to traveling motorists within the overall project; however, no significant delays are anticipated, and all inconveniences will cease upon project completion.

For more information regarding the project plans and potential impacts of the proposed project, please refer to the CE document.

Estimated Cost Summary

The estimated cost for this project is \$1,942,000 which includes preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and construction. Federal and local funding will be used for this project. The project is included in the 2022-2026 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

Project Schedule

Milestone	Expected Dates
Right-of-Way Acquisition Begins	Spring 2023
Anticipated Begin of Construction Date	Spring 2024

