Transportation officials call off proposed J-turn projects

- Associated Press

LOGANSPORT, Ind. (AP) — State officials are calling off intersection projects on two highways in northern Indiana after receiving complaints from the public about the unfamiliar designs being proposed.

The Indiana Department of Transportation had shared proposals for six J-turn intersections over the past few months, the Pharos-Tribune reported. The proposals were for U.S. 24, which is part of the Hoosier Heartland Highway linking Fort Wayne and Lafayette, and U.S. 31, the main route between Indianapolis and South Bend.

The J-turns would have featured two dedicated lanes along the median that drivers could use for turning onto U.S. 31. The department said a J-turn keeps vehicles from crossing all four lanes of highway at once. Vehicles instead have to merge into a "safe lane" and then make a U-turn before merging back onto the highway.

The department had planned to begin construction in 2018, but many residents opposed the projects.

Rep. Bill Friend, who opposed the projects, joined Sen. Randy Head, R-Logansport, in announcing Tuesday that the transportation department decided to cancel the projects.

"This announcement comes after several conversations with local officials, INDOT and the governor's office," said Friend, a Republican from Macy. "Ultimately, it came down to the public. They came out, voiced their concerns and let INDOT know how J-turns could impact our community. I want to thank INDOT for their willingness to listen to our concerns."

Friend previously opposed the projects. He said the plans could make the highway more dangerous because large vehicles would have to cross over two lanes of traffic,

make a sharp U-turn and then accelerate to join traffic moving at speeds of 70 mph or more.

Department spokesman Doug Moats confirmed the cancellation of the plans. He said the department will keep an "open dialogue with residents, business, owners and local officials while keeping all options on the table for improving safety and mobility in the long-term."