May 24, 2022

Hon. Kyle W. Allen, Sr.
Hon. Michael C. Repay
Hon. Jerry Tippy
Lake County Board of Commissioners
2293 North Main Street
Crown Point, IN 46307

Dear Commissioners Allen, Repay, and Tippy:

Under IC 14-13-9-18(a)(2) and (b)(7), the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission’s (“the Commission”), in furtherance of its authority to implement drainage and flood control activities within the channels of the Kankakee River, directs the removal of Bridge #36, also known as State Line Bridge, from its exclusive easement on the Kankakee River. The Commission stands ready to support and assist Lake County in the removal, demolition, or relocation of this ongoing hazard to public safety.

The Commission’s forty-year work plan adopted under IC 14-13-9-18(a)(1) specifically calls for the removal of State Line Bridge. Not only is the structure palpably unsafe for even foot traffic, it presents a direct impediment to effective flood mitigation and a barrier to navigation.

The bridge has not been open to vehicular traffic since the 20th Century, and serves no purpose for commerce, transportation, or emergency response vehicles. It does, however, act as a magnet for heavy debris and logjams during frequent flood events. Given its overall condition and close proximity to the ordinary high-water mark, large wood trapped by the bridge substantially aggravates flood conditions through the entire Kankakee River Basin.

In 2021 alone, the Commission removed heavy debris on three separate occasions at significant expense. Unfortunately, because floodwaters surround the bridge during flood events, the emergency removal of logjams is impossible at the very moment it is most necessary. Moreover, amid extreme water levels, the bridge itself is a barrier to the egress of floodwater. Under such conditions, there is a risk of the bridge becoming dangerously dislodged from its current location.
With the exception of emergency responses, under IC 14-13-9-18(c) a county must obtain authorization from the Commission before performing any work within its exclusive easement. The Commission intends to authorize work on State Line Bridge only as it pertains to removal, demolition, relocation, or minor repairs of immediate safety hazards such as holes in its surface. Specific authorization requests will take into account financial feasibility for both Lake County and the Commission.

Lake County is a key and valued partner to the Commission. For that reason, the Commission knows that county officials fully understand the risks that State Line Bridge poses to residents, property, and commerce throughout Northwest Indiana. This directive is intended to further the alignment of our shared objectives, and to advance the public interest and safety of those we mutually serve.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (219) 861-7999. On behalf of the Commission, I remain grateful for your partnership.

Sincerely,

Scott D. Pelath
Executive Director