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Interchange? Intersection? What is a Diverging Diamond?

Learn more about the differences and how a diverging diamond interchange improves safety and traffic flow.

Do you know the difference between an interchange and an intersection? While many people use the terms interchangeably, they are quite different. The biggest being interchanges have one road passing over another.

There are many types of interchange designs, and one that is becoming more common across Indiana is the diverging diamond interchange (DDI).

A DDI is a proven innovative solution to improve safety for all forms of travel, typically at a much lower cost than traditional interchange designs. Indiana is seeing the benefits of the DDI at interchanges like Campus Parkway and Interstate 69 in Noblesville, Worthsville Road and Interstate 65 near Greenwood, and other nearby locations of I-65 and SR 267 and I-65 and County Road 550 South in Boone County.

“We’ve seen the diverging diamond used at several interchanges throughout the state with great success,” said INDOT West Central public relations director Blake Dollier. “Creating safe traffic flow for all modes of travel is at the heart of INDOT’s mission.”

Because it offers numerous safety and traffic flow benefits, INDOT and its design partner American Structurepoint are exploring the DDI for the new U.S. 52 and I-65 interchange, a state- and federally-funded project designed to improve the level of service near Lebanon.

“With issues related to direct access and traffic flow, the diverging diamond concept is an innovative solution for the U.S. and I-65 project,” said American Structurepoint Project Manager Ken Olson. “We’ve analyzed several concepts, and the diverging diamond offers several benefits to help us improve the level of service at this interchange.”

The diverging diamond is considered safer because all left turns occur without drivers needing to cross opposing traffic (see attached graphic). One evaluation of a DDI examined crash data and found that left-turn crashes were completely eliminated, and total crashes were reduced by 46%.¹

Since fewer lanes are needed, the diverging diamond typically costs less than a traditional interchange. Since the DDI has a smaller project footprint, less right-of-way is needed, which means fewer impacts to nearby areas.

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52@65 is a state- and federally-funded Indiana Department of Transportation project designed to improve the level of service of the I-65 interchange at US 52 in Lebanon, Indiana. In addition to providing immediate benefits to the community, this project – which is currently in the design phase – will allow the region to handle future connectivity and access requirements.

ⁱ <https://ntlrepository.blob.core.windows.net/lib/36000/36000/36038/or11012.pdf>