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**Contact:** Dave Wellman  
Communications Manager  
219-644-3506  
[dwellman@rda.in.gov](mailto:dwellman@rda.in.gov)

## **RDA Continues to Lead NWI Into the Future**

*RDA works to connect region to jobs in Chicago, bring companies to Northwest Indiana and advance progress at the Gary/Chicago International Airport.*

Crown Point, IN (July 18, 2014) – The Board of Directors of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) continued to focus on jobs and connectivity to Chicago by agreeing to consider funding a transit center in Valparaiso and approving three contracts with private firms that will create more than 400 jobs in Munster, Merrillville and Portage.

“All our initiatives are interrelated,” said RDA President and CEO Bill Hanna. “Whether it’s providing access to Chicago, bringing new companies to Northwest Indiana or building out our infrastructure to accommodate future growth, the goal is to grow the pool of high-paying jobs available to Northwest Indiana residents.”

The Valparaiso transit center builds off of one such success, the ChicaGo Dash commuter bus service, which the RDA helped the city to launch in 2009.

A new transit center is needed, Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas said, because the current facilities are at capacity. When the city created the V-Line and Dash systems, “we took a lot of criticism,” Costas explained. “But we knew if we worked hard and planned well we could be innovative. It’s worked better than we ever imagined and it’s becoming a challenge to keep up.”

The proposed transit center would be built on property currently owned by Von Tobel Lumber & Hardware adjacent to the CSX railroad tracks. Though it would initially focus on buses, this

## **FUTURE ADD 1**

location would also be ideal for commuter trains that may eventually come to the city. “This would be the first true transit-oriented development in the area, and a model for TOD in the region for years to come,” Costas said.

The first phase of development would include the transit center, parking lots, street improvements and stormwater management work. Ultimately, the plan envisions creation of retail and residential space between the CSX and Norfolk Southern rail tracks, as well as connections to Route 30 and to the unincorporated areas south of Route 30. Based on development patterns seen in Valparaiso as the city has invested in downtown improvements over the last several years, the project could create up to 1,000 local jobs.

The Board accepted the plan for funding consideration and instructed RDA staff to work with the City of Valparaiso to refine the scope of the project and generate a final funding proposal.

The Board also approved funding for three job-creation projects with MonoSol, AM Manufacturing and Modern Forge. All three projects had been previously approved by the Board; yesterday’s vote represents approval of final contracts for each deal. Under the contracts, the RDA will provide a combined \$3.975 million to the three companies. In return for these and other state and local incentives, the companies are together investing more than \$105 million and creating approximately 430 jobs in Northwest Indiana.

In other action, the Board approved a \$300,000 grant to South Lake County Community Services (SLCCS) to support bus service in south Lake County. The grant provides a local match for approximately \$1.1 million in federal funds which when combined will assist SLCCS with projects outlined in the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission’s (NIRPC) Transportation Improvement Program.

## **FUTURE ADD 2**

State Rep. Rick Neimeyer, who is also President of the Board of SLCCS, spoke on behalf of the organization. He noted that its core operations served five townships in the southern part of the county, and that it had expanded services northward into communities like Griffith and Hobart after the Regional Bus Authority shut down two years ago. These new funds, he explained, were needed in part to maintain that expanded service.

Finally, the Board approved a request from the Gary/Chicago International Airport to transfer the remaining balance of its RDA grant for the runway expansion project, approximately \$7.2 million, to an escrow account for the relocation of the CSX rail line. In order to meet the Federal Aviation Administration's 2015 deadline for completion of the project, CSX trains need to be relocated to another set of tracks by the fall of this year. Interim Airport Director B.R. Lane told the Board that once this move is complete and a final connector segment built on the new rail line, trains can be shifted to the new line and the old tracks and berm blocking the completion of the runway expansion can be demolished.

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### **About the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority**

Established in 2005 through a bipartisan effort including former Governor Mitchell E. Daniels, Congressman Peter J. Visclosky, key state legislators, and local elected officials, the RDA is quasi-governmental development entity entrusted to make public investment decisions within a regional framework for supporting catalytic infrastructure projects and inducing private sector investment. Years of successful results have made it a trusted and tested partner for growth in Northwest Indiana. For more information, visit [www.rdatransformation.com](http://www.rdatransformation.com) or [www.in.gov/rda](http://www.in.gov/rda)