

Engage NWI

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's
Public Participation Plan – Adopted August 15, 2019 by Resolution 19-24
Amended August 21, 2025 by Resolution 25-15
Amended March 19, 2026 by Resolution 25-04

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About Engage NWI

Engage NWI is the federally required “Public Participation Plan” that enables Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) staff to ensure that it is meeting all federal requirements for public participation, but more importantly, a guide that enables the public to engage with regional planning. **Engage NWI** promotes a meaningful exchange of ideas, identification of regional issues and solutions, as well as advancing initiatives to achieve the vision for Northwestern Indiana (NWI).

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Council of Governments (COG) for NWI, has the responsibility to conduct economic development, environmental, and transportation planning for Lake, LaPorte and Porter Counties. **Engage NWI** is required of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) to fulfill the regulations governing public participation (**23 CFR 450.316**).

Engage NWI is laid out in a question and answer format to assist NWI’s general public and stakeholders, and NIRPC’s regional planners to understand:

- ▶ How the general public and stakeholders can most effectively connect with regional planning – **Page 3**
- ▶ What is regional planning? **Page 4-5**
- ▶ When/where is the public engaged in regional planning? **Page 6-7**
- ▶ Why is public participation important to regional planning? **Page 7-8**
- ▶ Who is and should be involved in public participation? **Page 8-10**
- ▶ How is public participation conducted? **Page 11-13**
- ▶ The technical requirements of public participation **Page 14-16**

How to follow regional planning activities and find participation opportunities:

- ▶ **Website:** in.gov/nirpc
 - ▶ Sign-up for emails and newsletters here
 - ▶ Follow our calendar for events and meetings
 - ▶ Find NIRPC’s latest plans and updates
- ▶ **YouTube:** youtube.com/user/NIRPCPlanning
 - ▶ For livestreamed Commission and Committee meetings if you cannot or do not want to attend in-person
- ▶ **Facebook:** facebook.com/nirpcmpo
 - ▶ Like NIRPC’s Facebook page to follow planning activities and learn about engagement opportunities.
- ▶ **X:** x.com/NIRPC
 - ▶ Follow NIRPC’s X feed to hear the latest news and learn about engagement opportunities.
- ▶ **Instagram:** instagram.com/regionMPO
 - ▶ Follow NIRPC’s Instagram page to see what is going on in the region and learn about NIRPC’s work.

- ▶ **LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/company/nirpc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nirpc)
 - ▶ Connect with NIRPC's LinkedIn page to learn about NIRPC's work and other planning partners.
- ▶ **RTIP:** <https://rtip.nirpc.org/>
 - ▶ The Regional Transportation Improvement Program is NIRPC's online database of funded transportation investments throughout the region. Amendments are posted on RTIP when available for public comment.
- ▶ **Direct mail:**
 - To be added to our direct mail list, please send a request for newsletters:
Public Participation Planner
6100 Southport Road
Portage, IN 46368





What is regional planning?

Regional planning in NWI is conducted by NIRPC regional planners. NIRPC is charged in state law to focus on economic development, the environment, and transportation planning. NIRPC provides a regional forum to discuss issues, opportunities, problems, challenges, and concerns of member communities, the general public, and stakeholders. Regional planners work planning initiatives each year that will hopefully advance NWI towards achieving the visions laid out in the adopted long-range plan of the Commission, the *NWI 2050+ Plan*.

It is important to note that while regional planners may provide guidance on best practices, policy, zoning, transportation investments, economic development, or the environment, they do not make or enforce local ordinances or policies, as NIRPC is not charged with this mandate, nor given authority to do so, in state or federal law. In order to affect change locally, participation efforts by the general public and stakeholders must be geared towards local, state or federal government. Regional planners often may not lobby under federal law, rather may only educate or guide elected officials.

For regional transportation planning, NIRPC must follow the federally required "3C" transportation planning process. The "3C" transportation planning process requires cooperation among all levels of government, comprehensive consideration of many planning factors, and be a continuously evaluated planning process. Planning is carried out following contemporary federal transportation planning requirements of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Persons with Limited English Proficiency Executive Order 13166, the Clean Air Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and their predecessor acts. *Engage NWI* reflects all such requirements, especially those of [23 CFR 450.316](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-450/subpart-316), the regulation that governs public participation.

Regional planners at NIRPC are responsible for the following:

-  *Economic development, environmental, and transportation planning*
-  *Technical assistance on planning best practices, and governance*
-  *Providing a forum for regional issues identification and problem solving*
-  *Facilitation of the prioritization of transportation investments for NWI*

Public participation and transit

Transit is an important travel option for many residents in the region, and many instances the only travel option for some residents. Transit in NWI consistently is rated by the public as a primary concern for our regional transportation system. The *NWI 2050+ Plan* and the *2018 Coordinated Transit Plan* demonstrate those issues and concerns.

The Federal Transit Administration allows a transit operator to rely on the MPO's Public Participation Plan for the Transportation Improvement Program. For transit operators to be compliant with Federal "Program of Projects" requirements, transit operators may utilize the public participation efforts of regional planners. Projects need to be published in sufficient detail, and the users of these projects should be provided an opportunity to examine the proposed program and submit comments. Transit Operators therefore must assist NIRPC with public participation efforts, including advertising and inviting the public to engagement opportunities.

When/where is the public engaged in regional planning?

There are three core MPO planning documents out of which all other regional planning activities are derived:

- ▶ **Long-Range Plan (LRP)** – The LRP sets the vision for NWI and focuses on economic development, the environment, and transportation. The LRP is updated every four years and is amended from time to time. The development of the MTP takes approximately one to two years and engagement opportunities are provided throughout its development to shape the vision, goals, and priorities of the Plan.
- ▶ **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** – The TIP is updated every two years and amended four times per year. The TIP includes transportation

investments for the next five years made by communities, transit operators, and the Indiana Department of Transportation. The development of the TIP involves all the towns, cities, counties, and transit operators of NWI and must be consistent with the *NWI 2050+ Plan*. Direct engagement with municipalities and transit operators is the most effective way for the public to influence the projects each applicant submits to NIRPC for funding.

- ▶ **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)** – The UPWP is updated every two years and amended in between generally once. The UPWP contains all the planning activities required by the Federal Highway and Transit Administrations in addition to planning activities identified by the *NWI 2050+ Plan*. The planning tasks are conducted by the regional planners at NIRPC. Each UPWP task includes a public participation goal appropriate for the task: Inform, Consult, Involve, or Collaborate. **See page 12 for details on goals.**

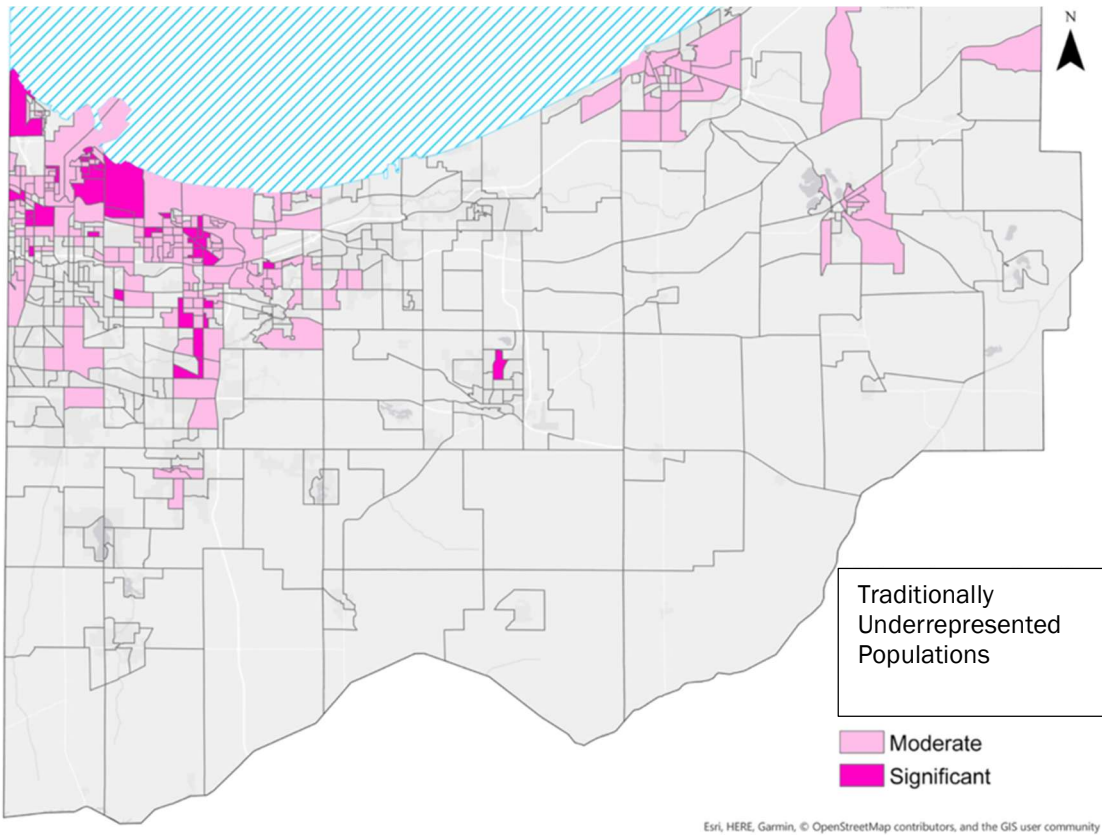
Understanding the core planning activities of NIRPC will help to connect interested individuals on when and where to engage in regional planning.

Engage NWI emphasizes that for effective regional planning, engagement should occur where people are, and early in the process. Input will be solicited from the general public and stakeholders when active engagement methods are utilized (described on Page 13), close to where the general public are already gathering and while plans are in development so that input can shape the outcome which is deliberated at the Commission. Every attempt will be made to hold active engagement activities throughout the region, balanced where transit is available and for the rest of the region, through a variety of creative means while plans are in development. The Commission will determine where and when to hold its meetings and those of its advisory committees.

Why is public participation critical to regional planning?

Engage NWI stresses the need for the general public and stakeholders to engage in regional planning to identify regional challenges, problems, and opportunities. Regional planners need to listen to voices of the general public and stakeholders to gain a diversity of input – especially from those traditionally underrepresented in planning processes – and hear potential solutions or to shape planning processes and achieve desired outcomes. The map on Page 7 represents the places in NWI that should be emphasized in engagement efforts. These places include higher than regionally average areas of minorities, low-income individuals, limited-English proficiency individuals, zero-car households, veterans, individuals over sixty-five years of age, and individuals with disabilities. Regional planners need input early in the process so that final plans can reflect a balance of priorities and interests heard from all over the NWI.

Engage NWI stresses the importance that additional effort be made to invite individuals that reside in such areas to participate in regional planning efforts to give voice to communities who have traditionally been under-represented.



Strategies to engage with emphasized places in NWI

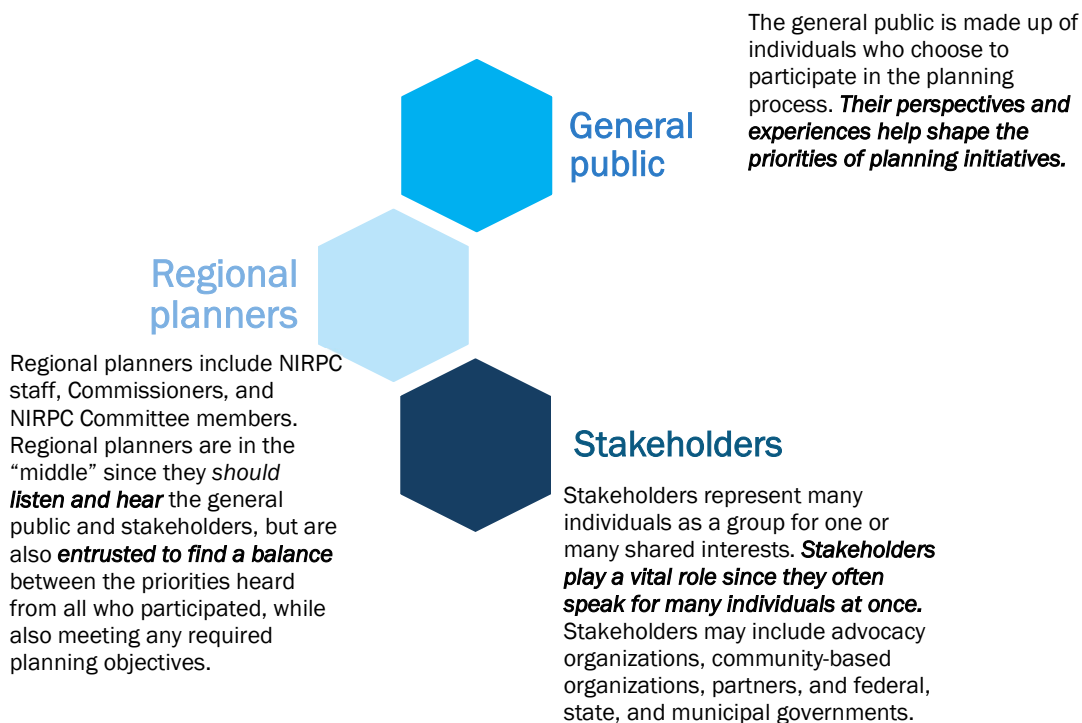
- ▶ **One-on-Ones** – depending on the planning activity, regional planners may make face-to-face contact with community-based organizations, neighborhood leaders, faith-based organizations, elected officials, and other important stakeholders that can connect regional planners to residents and businesses that have been underrepresented in regional planning activities. Such interactions are called “*Out and Abouts*” in *Engage NWI* and are described on Page 13.
- ▶ **Targeted formal engagement** – depending on the planning activity, regional planners may ensure that some of the formal meetings or “*Pop-Up Events*,” described on Page 13, are held in these emphasized places to make participation convenient, especially if community residents rely on limited public transit.

Who is and should be involved in public participation?

Engage NWI focuses upon “regional planners,” “the general public,” and “stakeholders” as three critical groups involved in public engagement. Each plays a unique and important role in the planning process. Regional planners at NIRPC seek to undertake various planning initiatives that need to be shaped by public input. The general public includes individuals and businesses that represent themselves in the planning process, while stakeholders represent “grouped” interests, needs, or desires in the outcome of a planning process. The perspectives, experience, and expertise from the general public, or stakeholders, is not only welcomed, but necessary in the planning process.

Shaped by their personal experiences, regional planners do not know and cannot see every detail of every issue in every community. Therefore, *Engage NWI* stresses the need for regional planners to listen to the general public and stakeholders as a duty, but also for the general public and stakeholders to share their perspectives, experiences, and expertise as regional citizens.

For *Engage NWI* to be effective, NIRPC, as the regional planners, will inform the general public and stakeholders of every opportunity to participate through the channels described on Page 3; however, the general public and stakeholders have the freedom to take advantage of the opportunity to play their part and actively engage in shaping their region.



About the regional planners - NIRPC

Regional planning and coordination came to Northwestern Indiana in 1965 when enabling legislation was passed by the Indiana General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor. The first state law called for a transportation planning commission, which was inspired by the 1962 Federal Highway Act. The state law has since been amended to create what is known today as the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, a three-county council of governments. In 2007, NIRPC's Executive Board membership expanded, and weighted voting was added.

NIRPC's governing body is the Commission composed of 53 county, municipal, and some township elected officials and a Gubernatorial appointment. The Commission membership is established in state statute and is required to meet in full at least four times per year and at a minimum statutorily responsible for the hiring of the Executive Director, adopting bylaws, electing officers, and annual budget appropriations. A smaller Executive Board is annually elected by and from the full Commission membership and takes on the routine business of NIRPC. The Commission has established several committees to make advice and assist in conducting its business. Please check NIRPC.org for updates on the committee structure and membership.

All Commission and committee business related to transportation planning and investment decision-making must adhere to *Engage NWI*. Planning for economic development and the environment may adhere to *Engage NWI* or the specific requirements of grants funding those activities in question. Noticing for Commission and Committee meetings will follow Indiana Open Door Law.

Commission	Full Commission <i>Meets four times per year or</i>
	Executive Board <i>Meets approximately six times per year</i>
Advisory Committees	Economy and Place
	Environment
	Leadership
	Transportation

Last revised August 2025 / Any future changes to committee structure made by the Commission will be reflected in **Engage NWI** as a technical amendment.

How is public participation conducted?

Engage NWI lays out on Page 12 the engagement goals, the promise made by *Engage NWI* associated with that goal, engagement methods associated with each goal, and the when the goal will be chosen for each planning task. Then all the technical requirements of *Engage NWI* are laid out (Page 14-16). Input from the general public and stakeholders early in the process is critical to shaping the final outcomes of each plan. With a diversity of perspectives in a region as large as NWI, it will be up to regional planners to find a balance between competing priorities and interests for the region. Before plan adoption by the Commission, the plan will be put out for a formal comment period, if required.

Techniques to invite participation

Engage NWI outlines methods to ensure regional planning is conducted with participation always at mind from the beginning of planning processes. Each planning task undertaken will identify a participation goal appropriate for that task (Page 12) and then planners will employ the methods that goal requires. It is expected that most tasks will be on the more participatory end of the spectrum.

However, no matter which type of participation goal that is required, participation will be possible in formats that are inclusive. *All meeting locations will be compliant with the ADA and requests for reasonable accommodations taken upon request within 72 hours of a formal meeting to ensure participation those who may need alternate formats of materials – including language translation, foreign, American Sign Language, or braille.*

Active participation methods				
Does the task require?	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Engage NWI goal:	Provide public with objective information and assist their understanding of regional challenges, options, opportunities, or solutions.	Obtain feedback on regional planning tasks, analyses, or prior to policy making.	Work directly with public and stakeholders throughout planning process to ensure concerns and ideas are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the public and stakeholders in every aspect of the planning process from project scoping through adoption of plans or policies.
Engage NWI promise	Keep general public and stakeholders informed.	Keep public informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and ideas, and provide public with report on how input shaped outcomes.	Work with public and stakeholders to ensure goals and ideas are directly reflected in planning work as much as possible and report on how input shaped outcomes.	Work with public and stakeholders to inform planning work from start at project scoping to understand issues, generate solutions, and incorporate feedback to shape outcomes.
Involvement methods / tools may include:	Website, social media, newsletters, multi-language publications, press releases, mailings, live streaming, white papers, or fact sheets.	Activities listed in “Inform” plus surveys, comment forms, webinars, or formal meetings	Activities listed in “Consult” plus focus groups, targeted outreach to meet people where they are such as “Out and Abouts,” or “Pop-up Events”	Activities listed in “Involve” plus task forces, charrettes, keypad polling, and working groups
When goal will be selected:	The “Inform” level of participation will be used for technical documents, but the methods will be used frequently to communicate regularly with the public	The “Consult” level of participation will be used less frequently, but the methods will be used when needed	The “Involve” method will be used frequently and the methods as well	The “Collaborate” method will be used frequently with major planning processes

Examples of active engagement

Some types of active and in-person engagement will be conducted by employing the following:

- ▶ **“Out and Abouts”** – regional planners meeting face-to-face to invite interest in planning activities, events or to solicit direct feedback
- ▶ **“Pop-up Events”** – regional planners sharing information / asking for feedback at other organization’s events
- ▶ **Formal meetings** – advertised open houses or public hearings – **timely notice per *Engage NWI* for all public meetings listed in the table to the right will be two weeks prior to the meeting.**
- ▶ **Task force / working groups** – invited and targeted participation of subject matter experts at the discretion of the NIRPC Executive Director

Effectiveness of methods and evaluation

From time to time the strategies and methods contained within *Engage NWI* will be reviewed for their effectiveness. The principal measure for effectiveness of *Engage NWI* will be:

- ▶ The frequency in which planning activities are conducted with the “Involve” or “Collaborate” goal of active participation methods described on Page 12 – should be at least 50% of activities; and
- ▶ How aggressively regional planners have made attempts to invite participation from the general public and stakeholders throughout the planning process. Opportunities include advertising, “*Out and Abouts,*” “*Pop-Up Events,*” social media or newsletter content, etc.

A summary of public participation efforts by regional planners will be published in the “Performance Report” recommended in the *NWI 2050 Plan*.

Technical aspects of public participation:

Public comment periods and public meeting requirements Core planning documents	Minimum comment period by law	Engage NWI comment length policy	Engage NWI formal meeting policy
Long-range plan (<i>new adoption</i>)	Not specified in federal law	30 days	Required
Long-range plan <i>Policy/Project amendment</i>		21 days	Not required
Long-range plan <i>Modification / Technical amendment</i>		None	Not required
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (<i>new adoption</i>)		30 days	Required
TIP <i>amendment</i>		21 days	Not required
TIP <i>modification / technical amendment</i>		None	Not required
Air Quality Conformity		30 days	Required
Unified Planning Work Program (<i>new or amendment</i>)	None	Not required	
Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (<i>new or amendment</i>)	21 days	Not required	
Public Participation Plan (<i>new or amendment</i>)	45 days	45 days	Not required
Other planning and policy documents			
Regional and sub-regional modal, corridor, development, or environment plans/policies	Not specified in federal law	21 days	Not required
Technical documents required to fulfill federal requirements		None	Not required

Amendments and modifications

Amendment:

- ▶ An Amendment is a revision to a metropolitan transportation plan or TIP that involves a major change to a project included in a metropolitan transportation plan or TIP including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes or changing the number of stations in the case of fixed guideway transit projects). Changes to projects that are included only for illustrative purposes do not require an amendment.
- ▶ Interagency Consultation Group review on *all* TIP amendments and a redetermination of fiscal constraint is required. **Twenty-one-day comment period required.**
- ▶ Must be approved by Commission or Executive Board. **Public comment opportunity is available at the meeting.**
- ▶ A list of the specific changes to a project in the TIP that require an Amendment are included in the most recently adopted version of the TIP and are incorporated here by reference.

Administrative Modification:

- ▶ An Administrative Modification is a minor revision to a metropolitan transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates.
- ▶ Modifications are made by NIRPC staff at the request of project sponsor subject to regulation and funding availability.
- ▶ A redetermination of fiscal constraint is required.
- ▶ A list of the specific changes to a project in the TIP that may be completed as an Administrative Modification is included in the most recently adopted version of the TIP and are incorporated here by reference.

Technical Amendment:

- ▶ Changes to technical information that does impact policy or programmed projects, e.g.: performance targets, data updates, asset information.
- ▶ Must be approved by Commission or Executive Board. **Public comment opportunity is available at the meeting.**

Emergency Amendment:

- ▶ NIRPC Executive Director authorizes a TIP amendment without public process or Commission if:
 - ▶ **1)** public well-being or safety is at risk; or
 - ▶ **2)** lapse or loss of federal funds is at risk.
- ▶ A redetermination of fiscal constraint is required.

Path to address public comments

Comments received during a comment period will be reported to the Commission via a “Public Comment Report.” The Report will be made available on the NIRPC website and included with draft plans before adoption. The Report will constitute the formal response to comments and will contain the following: **1)** the original comment, as received; **2)** a recommendation by staff on how the final plan may address the substance of the comment; and **3)** a notation on whether or not the recommendation is a major or minor revision.

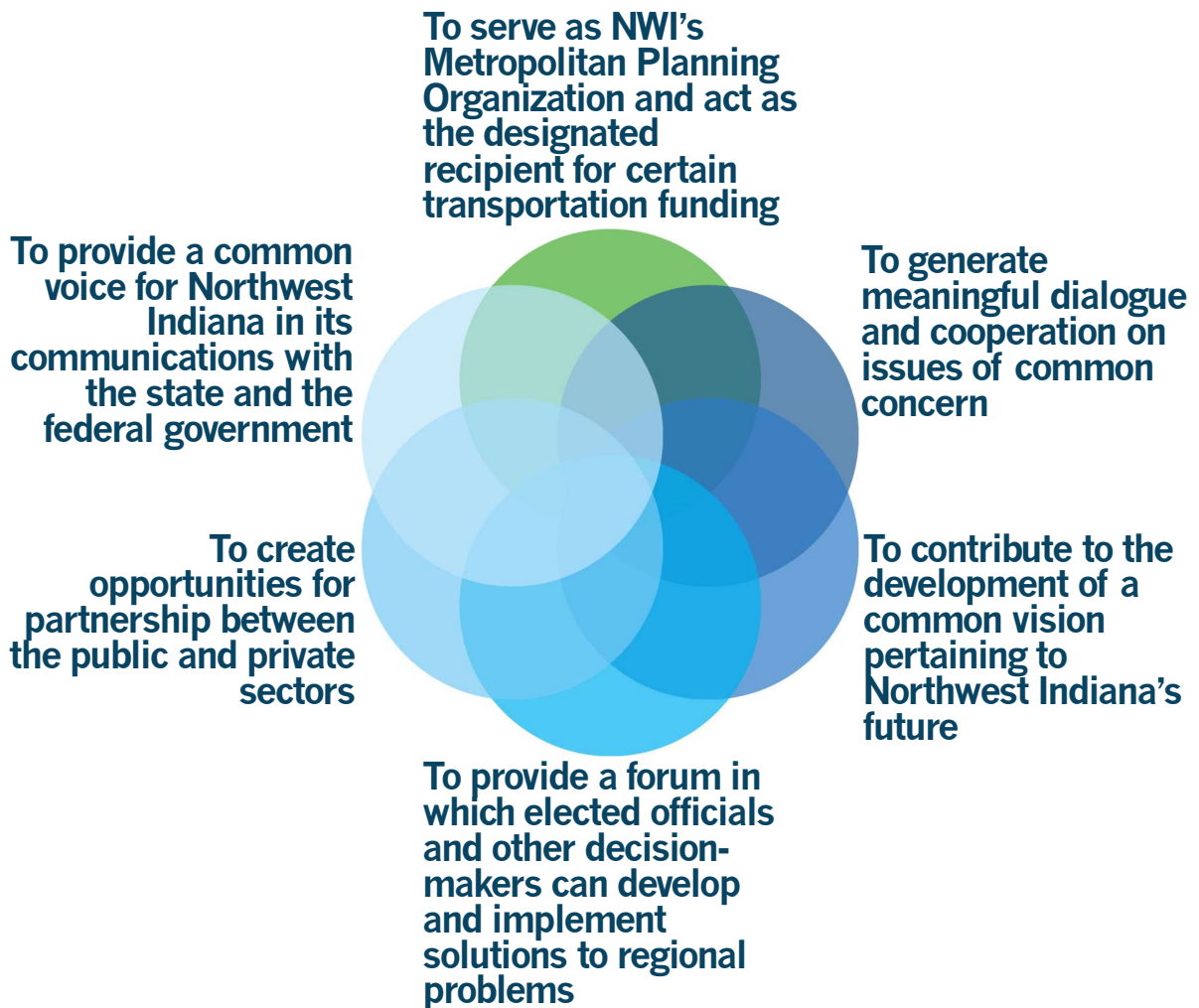
Any such recommendation to revise a draft plan that proposes: **1)** Policy revisions; **2)** Adds a project not previously subjected to public review; or **3)** deletes a project subjected to public review, will be considered a major revision and will trigger an additional public comment period. All other recommendations will be regarded as minor revisions representing comments that are more general. Advisory Committee(s) or the Commission will consider recommendations at their discretion.

Public Comment Period (per *Engage NWI* policy)

Recommended major revisions?		Recommended minor revisions?
The commission may accept or modify major revisions and start new full comment period	The Commission may reject major revisions and adopt the plan	The Commission may accept, reject, or modify minor revisions and adopt the plan
Second Public Comment Period (per <i>Engage NWI</i> policy)		
The Commission may accept, reject, or modify major revisions and adopt the plan. <i>Public engagement ends.</i>		

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NIRPC's Role in the Region



For more information:

Visit:

www.nirpc.org

Contact:

Public Participation Planner at comments@nirpc.org
or 219-763-6060

Request alternative formats of plans or meeting materials:

nirpc@nirpc.org or 219-763-6060

[BEGIN AMENDMENT]

Appendix A: Procedures and Strategies to Engage Interested Parties, Including Traditionally Underserved Populations

Regulatory Basis

- 23 CFR 450.316 states that an MPO shall *describe explicit procedures [and] strategies used to provide interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan planning process.*
- 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(viii) specifically states that MPO should pay special regard and make efforts to seek out and consider the *needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.*

Identifying Traditionally Underserved Populations

Traditionally underserved populations may include people of racial or ethnic minorities, people with low incomes, individuals with limited English proficiency, those who live in zero-car households, veterans, individuals over 65 years of age, and individuals with disabilities.

At the beginning of each planning process, NIRPC develops maps using the latest available data at the most granular level available to identify the locations of traditionally underserved populations within the planning area. These are described as “emphasized places” in Engage NWI.

Providing Notice of Opportunities

NIRPC will make efforts to seek out the needs of traditionally underserved populations by providing notice in advance of all public meetings and providing notice for opportunities to be involved in the planning processes. Timely notice per Engage NWI for all public meetings will be two weeks prior to the meeting. Indiana public access law requires public notice of date, time, and place of any Commission or Executive Board meetings at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. The type and extent of notice varies depending on the type of opportunity. NIRPC provides more extensive and direct notice for opportunities that require more involvement and/or collaboration. These are described in the table below.

Activity	Email*	Press	Physical posting	Website**	Social media	Enhanced notice	Direct engagement with partners	Pop-up events
Commission and Committee meetings	Email notice to the NIRPC mailing list.	Meeting calendar provided to the press at the beginning of the year.	Posted on the exterior door of NIRPC's building before meetings.	Posted in advance with links to meeting materials and the YouTube stream.	Posted with links to meeting materials and the YouTube stream.	=	=	=
Development of a new MTP or TIP	Email notice to the NIRPC mailing list.	Press releases to newspapers with comment period and meeting information.	=	Posted with comment contact information, meeting details, and a link to the draft plan.	Posted with a link to the website posting for the plan; posts may be boosted to encourage participation.	May include flyers posted in public places, such as public libraries, and distributed to partners including transit operators.	NIRPC will reach out directly to partner organizations, stakeholders, and community representatives that are not already represented on committees.	May include outreach at community events during major planning processes.
Amendments to an MTP or TIP; Public Participation Plan (new or amendment); Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (new or amendment)	Email notice to the NIRPC mailing list.	Press releases sent to newspapers with comment period and meeting information	=	Posted on the NIRPC website with links to supporting documents.	Posted on NIRPC social media accounts; posts may be boosted to encourage participation.	May include flyers posted in public places, such as public libraries, and distributed to partners including transit operators.	NIRPC will reach out directly to partner organizations, stakeholders, and community representatives that are not already represented on committees.	=
Air Quality Conformity Determination Report	Email notice to the NIRPC mailing list.	Press releases sent to newspapers with comment period and meeting information	=	Posted on the NIRPC website with a link to supporting documents.	Posted on NIRPC social media accounts.	=	=	=

* NIRPC Email List

NIRPC maintains a list of email addresses of elected officials, local government employees, and other individuals who request to receive emails that will alert them to meetings and

participation opportunities. Interested parties may sign up for the NIRPC email list on meeting attendance sign-in sheets and on the NIRPC website or by request.

The emails sent to this list include information on how to use TTY and how to request materials in alternative formats.

**Website

NIRPC posts meeting materials and participation opportunities on its website. Commission and Committee meeting materials are posted prior (generally one week) to the meeting. The meeting dates are posted near the beginning of the calendar year when the calendar of meetings is adopted by the Commission and committees. Materials subject to a formal public comment period will be posted to the website at the beginning of the public comment period.

The NIRPC website includes a language translation function which translates materials to multiple languages.

NIRPC Strategies for Outreach to Traditionally Underserved Populations

As described in *Engage NWI*, NIRPC will use methods to ensure regional planning is conducted with participation in mind from the beginning of planning processes. Each planning task undertaken will identify a participation goal appropriate for that task and then planners will employ the methods that goal requires. It is expected that most tasks will be at the more participatory end of the spectrum. NIRPC staff will document public outreach activities and evaluate the outreach methods used over time.

The following strategies are used most frequently by NIRPC to conduct outreach to traditionally underserved populations. In most instances, NIRPC will utilize multiple strategies to reach a broader, more diverse range of community members.

Open House

Open House style meetings provide opportunities to inform the public and consult the public on plans in an informal, comfortable environment.

Open houses reach people of all walks of life and allow the public to attend at their convenience. Tools such as dot voting, formal presentations, and other active participation methods described in *Engage NWI* may be used at an open house.

Location

- Geographically dispersed
 - Generally, one in each county in NIRPC's planning area
 - In an area identified as having a higher than average traditionally underserved population.
- Publicly accessible
 - Locations for open houses will be places that are regularly open to the public.
- Transit accessible
 - Where it is available, meetings will be held at locations accessible by fixed route transit. Where fixed route transit is not available, meetings will be held at locations accessible by demand response transit.
- ADA accessible
 - Locations for open houses will be accessible to people with disabilities.

Types of Planning Activities

- Open houses are used during major planning processes such as the development an MTP, TIP, or corridor study
- At least one formal meeting is required during the formal public comment period prior to the adoption of new MTP, TIP, or Air Quality Conformity Determination. This meeting may be an open house.

Time of day

Open house meetings will be held at times when the public is generally available, late afternoon to evening on weekdays.

Tools used

Surveys, comment cards, dot voting, presentations, facilitated discussion, and other active participation methods may be used in an open house.

Pop-Up Event

Pop-up events involve NIRPC staff attending other organizations' events to meet people where they are. This reaches people who might not otherwise hear about NIRPC planning activities.

Location

- Events where staff might participate in a pop-up are scheduled across the region.

- NIRPC will participate in pop-ups in areas with above average concentrations of traditionally underserved populations.
- Accessibility
 - These events are in publicly accessible locations and so will generally be ADA accessible.

Types of Planning Activities

Pop-ups may be used as part of major planning processes such as the development an MTP or corridor study.

Time of day

Pop-ups generally take place on weekends or evenings.

Tools used

Many of the tools used for open houses also work for pop-ups but additional tools that are appropriate include games, quizzes, or other techniques that catch the interest of members of the public passing by.

Task Forces/Working Groups

- Task forces or working groups are used to collaborate with subject matter experts.
- The reach of task forces or working groups is limited to an invitation-only group that can offer information in greater detail than what the general public can offer.
- Task forces will be used at NIRPC discretion when specific, technical, and detailed input is required from subject matter specialists, which may include representatives from traditionally underserved populations.

Location

- These meetings can take place at NIRPC offices or in communities specifically impacted by the plans, provided that the location is accessible to the members of the task force or working group.
- Even though task forces and working groups do not include the general public, meetings should be held in ADA accessible locations whenever possible.

Time of Day

These meetings can frequently take place during the workday or in the evening, depending on the makeup of the task force or working group.

Tools Used

Various collaborative tools can be used with task force or working group.

Online Surveys

- Online surveys are used to gather information that addresses preferences and information that is not already available through public data sources.
- Online surveys allow the public and stakeholders, without access to transportation or limited availability, to participate in the planning process from their home or elsewhere without having to travel to a NIRPC meeting.
- An online survey can be distributed via links through email, websites, or social media as well as via QR codes that can be distributed on transit vehicles, at local government offices, and at other public locations such as libraries, human service agencies, or senior centers but can be taken anywhere.
- NIRPC uses an accessible web platform for online surveys.
- Surveys are used for many projects including MTP, TIP, and neighborhood plans.
- Online surveys also will be made available to the public in a printed format.

Strategy Selection Criteria

For each planning activity, NIRPC staff will determine appropriate public participation strategies based on the following factors.

- Type of plan or action (new plan, amendment, air quality conformity determination, etc.)
- Geographic scope and populations affected.
- Presence of above-average concentrations of traditionally underserved populations.
- Level of anticipated public interest or potential controversy.
- Statutory or regulatory requirements for meetings or comment periods.

Link Between Traditionally Underserved Populations and Strategy Choice

When analysis identifies concentrations of traditionally underserved populations, NIRPC will incorporate enhanced or targeted engagement strategies, which may include additional open houses or pop-up events in those areas, outreach through trusted community organizations that may have relationships with underserved populations, placement of survey materials in non-digital locations, or transit-based outreach.

Meeting Location Guidelines

Meeting locations will be chosen based on the following guidelines.

- Meetings will generally take place within a project's planning area
- Public meetings will be held in ADA accessible facilities.
- Priority will be given to locations that are accessible by fixed-route transit.
- Consideration of the adequacy of parking will be given in selection of meeting locations.
- Priority will be given to facilities with ADA compliant restroom facilities.

[END AMENDMENT]