



6100 Southport Road  
Portage, Indiana 46368  
(219) 763-6060  
[www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org)

## MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

February 20, 2025 at 9:00 A.M.

NIRPC Lake Michigan Room, 6100 Southport Road, Portage

- 1.0 Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance – Wendy Mis, Munster Clerk-Treasurer, NIRPC Chair
- 2.0 New Appointments to the Commission - Dave Hollenbeck, Attorney
- 3.0 Roll Call – Candice Eklund, Executive Assistant
- 4.0 Public Comment on Current Agenda Items  
*The Chair will recognize audience members who have signed up to comment on agenda items below.  
Time is limited to 3 minutes per commenter.*
- 5.0 Approval of the Minutes of the January 16, 2025, Full Commission Meeting (pp. 1-4)  
**ACTION REQUESTED: Approval**
- 6.0 **LEADERSHIP** – Wendy Mis, Munster Clerk-Treasurer (pp. 5-6)
- 7.0 **TRANSPORTATION** – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor (pp. 7-29)
  - 7.1 Public Comment Report for Resolution #25-03: Adoption of the Air Quality Conformity Determination for NWI 2050+ Amendment #1 and the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment #24-05, *Tom Vander Woude will report on agenda items 7.1 - 7.6 (p. 9)*  
**ACTION REQUESTED: Informational**
  - 7.2 Resolution #25-02: Adoption of Air Quality Determination, (pp. 10-13)
    - [Conformity Determination Report Link](#)**ACTION REQUESTED: Adoption**
  - 7.3 Public Comment Report for Resolution #25-03: Adoption of NWI 2050+ Amendment #1 (p. 14)  
**ACTION REQUESTED: Informational**
  - 7.4 Resolution #25-03: Adoption of NWI 2050+ Amendment #1 (pp. 15-18)  
**ACTION REQUESTED: Adoption**
  - 7.5 Public Comment Report for Resolution #25-04: FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #24-05 (p. 19)  
**ACTION REQUESTED: Informational**
  - 7.6 Resolution #25-04: TIP Amendment #24-05 (pp. 20-25)  
**ACTION REQUESTED: Approval**
  - 7.7 Resolution #25-05: Designating NIRPC as the Recipient for FTA Funds in Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area, *Stephen Hughes* (pp. 26-29)  
**ACTION REQUESTED: Approval**
  - 7.8 INDOT - Matt Deitchley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner
- 8.0 **ECONOMY & PLACE** – George Topoll, Union Township (pp. 30-31)

9.0 **ENVIRONMENT** – Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor

10.0 Other Business

11.0 Announcements

12.0 Adjournment

The next meeting on March 20, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. will be an Executive Board meeting.

**NIRPC Full Commission Meeting**  
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN  
Minutes of the January 16, 2025 Full Commission Meeting

**Call to Order**

Chair Tom Dermody called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

**New Appointments to the Commission**

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointments to the Commission of Nicole Migliorini (Town of Burns Harbor), Courtney Parthun (City of La Porte), Edward Morales (Porter County Commissioner), and Christian Hendron, (Porter Township Trustee).

**Roll Call** - Taken by Candice Eklund

**Present**

The 32 Commissioners present at the meeting are listed below:

- Jenny Beier, Town of Schneider
- Thomas Black, Town of Highland
- Austin Bonta, City of Portage
- Robert Carnahan, Town of Cedar Lake
- Daina Dumbrys, Town of Michiana Shores
- Denise Ebert, Town of Wanatah
- Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor
- Connie Gramarossa, La Porte County Commissioner
- Keesha Hardaway, Town of Merrillville
- Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, City of East Chicago
- Josh Huddlestun, City of Hobart
- Lori Hunt, Town of Westville
- Justin Kiel, La Porte County Council
- Scott Kingan, Town of Ogden Dunes
- John Matwyshyn, La Porte County surveyor
- Nicole Migliorini, Town of Burns Harbor
- Wendy Mis, Town of Munster
- Edward Morales, Porter County Commissioner
- Angie Nelson Deutch, City of Michigan City
- David Phelps, Town of Beverly Shores
- Linda Pompeii, Town of Pottawattomie Park
- Lisa Rosenkranz, Town of LaCrosse
- Rick Ryfa, Town of Griffith
- Warren Schacht, Town of Trail Creek
- Tom Schmitt, Town of Schererville
- Steve Spebar, City of Whiting
- Sharon Szwedo, Town of New Chicago
- Mary Tanis, Town of Dyer
- Jim Ton, Town of Chesterton
- George Topoll, Union Township
- Andy Vasquez, Porter County Council
- John Yelkich, Town of Lowell

Matt Deitchley, representing INDOT, was also present

**Absent**

The 18 Commissioners absent at the meeting are listed below:

- Kyle Allen, Lake County Commissioner
- Duane Arndt, Town of Kingsford Heights
- Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor
- James Burge, Town of Porter
- Bill Carroll, City of Lake Station
- Tim Clayton, Town of Winfield
- Jon Costas, City of Valparaiso
- Jonathan Haley, Town of Long Beach
- Bonnie Hawksworth, Town of Dune Acres
- Christian Hendron, Porter Township Trustee
- Peter Land, City of Crown Point
- Eddie Melton, City of Gary
- Tom McDermott, City of Hammond
- Randall Niemeyer, Lake County Council
- Courtney Parthun, City of La Porte
- Jim Pressel, Governor Appointee
- Gerald Swets, Town of St. John
- CJ Wittmer, Town of Kouts

Hebron, Kingsbury, and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Talaya Jones, Charles Bradsky, Denarie Kane, Flor Baum, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the December 5, 2024, Full Commission meeting were approved on motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by Angie Nelson Deutch.

### **Leadership** – Ty Warner, Executive Director

**Presentation of Norman E. Tufford Award:** The Norman Tufford Award was initiated in 2011 by NIRPC's former executive director, John Swanson. This award recognizes Commissioners and NIRPC staff who have done extraordinary work in public service associated with NIRPC. Mr. Swanson presented the award to this year's recipient, Don Ensign, saying Don served at NIRPC for 13 years and was a member of the Executive Board and various other committees. Don was on the Hebron Town Council for 16 years, 12 as Council President, President of the Porter County Aging and Community Services, and the Vice-President of the Hebron Park District and Veteran's Memorial Parkway Community. Governor Holcomb honored Don with the prestigious Sagamore of the Wabash Award in 2020. Ty and John congratulated Mr. Ensign and thanked him for his years of service. Warner added that even in retirement, Don cares about his community and has stayed engaged with NIRPC. Don said he was honored to have worked with John and Ty, adding it was always a pleasure to be involved with NIRPC and the contacts that could be made at the Commission meetings.

**Election of Officers and Executive Board:** Self-introductions were made by the Commissioners before the proposed slate of officers for 2025 was discussed. Ty Warner said the nominating committee included Tom Dermody, Wendy Mis, and himself. All of the nominees were contacted before the meeting and agreed to serve on NIRPC's Executive Board this year. No additional nominations were made. On motion by Tom Schmitt and seconded by Justin Kiel, the Full Commission voted to adopt the 2025 slate as presented.

Wendy Mis, Clerk-Treasurer from Munster, was elected Chair for 2025. Austin Bonta, Mayor of Portage, was elected Vice Chair. Denise Ebert, Clerk-Treasurer from Wanatah, was elected Secretary, and David Phelps, Town Council President from Beverly Shores, was elected Treasurer.

Members elected to the Executive Board included Tom Schmitt (Schererville) and Bill Emerson (County Surveyor), representing Lake County; Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Rosenkranz (LaCrosse) and Clerk-Treasurer Courtney Parthun, representing La Porte County; and Kevin Breitzke (County Surveyor) and Councilman James Ton (Chesterton), representing Porter County. Jim Pressel, the Governor's appointee, has not managed to be present and requests have been made of the Governor that he be replaced on the Commission, with no response thus far.

With the approval of this year's new slate of officers, the gavel was exchanged from Mayor Dermody to Wendy Mis. Ty Warner stated that Mayor Dermody is a man of action and follows through on initiatives to completion. One example is when the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) attended a commission meeting because Mayor Dermody led the discussion with them when he heard the concerns of some of the communities with their audits. The meeting went very well and resulted in a positive outcome. Ty thanked Mayor Dermody for his service and presented him with the gavel plaque award. Mayor Dermody thanked everyone, saying it was an honor to serve as Chair of NIRPC last year, and asked the communities to continue doing what's best for the residents.

Ty Warner presented the perfect attendance awards, which have become a tradition at NIRPC. Certificates were awarded for attending all Commission meetings in 2024 or all four Full Commission meetings (if not on the Executive Board). The Commissioners who attended all Commission meetings were Bob Carnahan, Tom Schmitt, James Ton, Lisa Rosenkranz, and George Topoll. Jenny Beier, Austin Bonta, and Edward Morales were recognized for attending all Full Commission meetings.

Wendy Mis reported that the Leadership Committee met this morning to discuss the two items below, which are being recommended to the Full Commission for approval. Discussions also took place on this session's legislative initiative update for the federal and state governments

- Proposed 2025 Budget Amendments #1-3 Transfers Within Categories. The 2025 budget was approved at the Full Commission meeting last month, but new information has since been obtained. On

motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by Jim Ton, the Full Commission approved the 2025 budget amendments.

- **New Three-Year Executive Director Employment Agreement.** Wendy Mis reported three differences in this contract from previous contracts: A three-year agreement with three years of projected rate increases at 5% yearly, participation in the Lambda Alpha International Land Economics Society, and a sabbatical in 2026. On motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by Austin Bonta, the Full Commission approved the three-year Executive Director employment agreement. It was noted that the Leadership Committee will form a group to discuss and formulate the specifics of the sabbatical. Andy Vasquez asked how long the sabbatical would be, and Wendy Mis stated it could be up to 10 weeks, but they would know for sure after further discussion with the Leadership Committee. Wendy concluded by saying Ty is doing a good job, and this contract amendment is doing what can be done to keep him employed at NIRPC longer.

#### **Transportation – Jim Ton, Porter County Surveyor**

Jim Ton reported the Transportation Committee met on January 7, 2025, and heard a presentation from NIRPC staff on the status of the Marquette Greenway Trail initiative. The trail is a 60-mile trail that stretches from Chicago to New Buffalo, Michigan. Currently, portions of the trail in Gary, Portage, and Michigan City are being implemented using RAISE grant funding. NIRPC was also awarded a \$20 million Lily Endowment Grant to design and implement connections between the trail, South Shore stations, and local communities. The next Transportation Committee is scheduled for February 4, 2025.

Resolution #25-01: Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #24-02.1, 24-04.2, and #24-04.5. Charles Bradsky reported there were no comments received during the public comment period from the public or from the Interagency Consultation Group. The three amendments include projects for transit, air quality non-exempt, and exempt, totaling 150 projects. On motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by Tom Schmitt, Resolution #25-01 was approved by the Full Commission.

#### **INDOT - Matt Deitchley**

Matt Deitchley reported that Mike Braun was sworn in as the new Governor of Indiana on January 13, 2025, resulting in structural changes at INDOT. Ken Abernathy is now the Commissioner of INDOT, and Matthew Ubelhor is now the Secretary of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The first call for Community Crossings applications for 2025 is open and will close on January 31, 2025. The maximum award will continue to be \$1.5 million for this calendar year. In 2024, \$340 million in statewide matching funds for Community Crossings were distributed. The Broadway Corridor study, which NIRPC also participated in, will wrap up this week, and preliminary findings will be distributed soon.

#### **Economy & Place – Denarie Kane**

##### **Economic Development District Report**

Ms. Kane reported the Economy and Place Committee met on January 8 and provided housing data, including wages needed to rent a two-bedroom home, average median income, and the increased density per acre recommended to meet the projected 2050 housing unit demand. In addition, a preliminary overview of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was presented. The committee decided Fintech, Quantum Communications, Decarbonization, Energy, and Bio-Tech industry clusters should be included in the CEDS. It will contain recommendations related to machinery and primary metals manufacturing and pharmaceutical research and manufacturing. Two special Committee meetings are scheduled for January 29 and February 14 at NIRPC to discuss the CEDS goals and plan. Ty noted the CEDS will be voted on at the Executive Board meeting on March 20, 2025, for final approval.

#### **Presentation: Miah Michaelsen, Executive Director, Indiana Art Commission**

Ty Warner introduced Miah Michaelsen, Executive Director of the Indiana Arts Commission. He said he was grateful she accepted his invitation to present today on arts and culture, which also syncs up with the IGNITE project the NWI Forum manages. The presentation “Why Arts and Creativity Belong in Every Community” included a section on how this makes the residents more attached to their communities, including making them more likely to stay, volunteer, be civically engaged, and be philanthropic. Beautiful pictures were presented and shown from several states depicting how art has enhanced their communities' beauty, adding

that arts, heritage, and history drive 68% of tourism. To view the presentation, click [HERE](#). Ms. Michaelson also provided information on the two grant programs below:

- **Arts Project Support (APS)** grants provide awards up to \$4,000. No matching funds are required. The guidelines can be found [HERE](#). The informational webinar dates are January 28, 2025, 10:00 a.m. ET ([Register to attend](#)) and January 29, 2025, 6:00 p.m. ET ([Register to attend](#)).
- **Creative Convergence Workshop and Early Action Grant Program** award a \$10,000 early action grant for participating communities. The application opens in 2025.

You can email Miah Michaelson at [mmichaelson@iac.in.gov](mailto:mmichaelson@iac.in.gov) for additional information.

#### **ENVIRONMENT – Bill Emerson**

Bill Emerson announced the next Environment Committee meeting is February 6 at 10:00 a.m. He encouraged those interested in water, air, land use, and environmental issues to attend.

#### **Other Business**

No other business was reported.

#### **Announcements**

Bob Carnahan and Mayor Angie Nelson Deutch announced various open job openings within their communities.

Hearing no other business, Wendy Mis adjourned the meeting at 10:14 a.m. The next meeting will be an Executive Board meeting on February 20, 2025.

*The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [Full Commission Meeting 1-16-25 \(youtube.com\)](#)*

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

November 12, 2024 / NIRPC Dune Room – 8:30 a.m.

Members present

Bob Carnahan, Denise Ebert, Edward Morales, Gerald Swets, Wendy Mis

Staff and others present

George Topoll, Talaya Jones, Meredith Stilwell

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Wendy Mis called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the October 15, 2024, Leadership Committee meeting were presented. On a motion by Bob Carnahan, second by Gerald Swets, and with no opposition, the minutes were approved.

Review of Financial Status – September 2024 Budget vs Actual

Talaya Jones presented the September 2024 bank reconciliations for the NIRPC general account, the CARES Revolving Loan Fund account, the La Porte Revolving Loan Fund account, and the Marquette Greenway account.

Talaya presented the general fund financial reports, year to date, September 2024, mentioning that the Marquette Greenway project is coming along slowly and claims for project management have just started to be paid out. Total expenditures for the period ending September 30, 2024, were \$6,157,542 of the \$17,774,554 budgeted.

Total general fund revenue for the period was \$1,915,600 of the \$4,333,880 budgeted. It was mentioned that the Marquette Greenway project has not yet been expended and reimbursements are received quarterly. Next year's county appropriations increase was also noted.

Talaya presented the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Securities (CARES) Act financial reports, year to date, September 2024. Total NIRPC CARES fund expenditures for the period ending September 30, 2024, was \$60,519 of the \$644,000 budgeted. Total CARES revenue collected for the period was \$64,728 of the \$78,000 budgeted.

Approval of Claims Registers – September 2024

Talaya presented the September 2024 General Fund claims totaling \$545,425.09 to the Committee. On a motion by Bob Carnahan, second by Edward Morales, and with no opposition, the General Fund register of claims for \$545,425.09 was approved.

Talaya presented the September 2024 CARES claims totaling \$1,373.95 to the Committee for approval. Talaya noted that NIRPC that there is maybe about \$500k left out of \$7m in this fund. On a motion by Bob Carnahan, second by Denise Ebert, and no opposition, the CARES register of claims for \$1,373.95 was approved.

Drive Clean Indiana Contract

Talaya presented the contract between NIRPC and Drive Clean Indiana for Air Quality Education. The contract is for \$450K with \$360k federal funding, with Drive Clean Indiana providing the local share. The contract runs from July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2025. The contract was late coming to the Committee and is retroactive to July because that's when NIRPC receives state planning funds. The contract has been reviewed by Attorney Hollenbeck. On a motion by Bob Carnahan, second by Edward Morales, and with no opposition, the contract was favorably recommended to the NIRPC Executive Board for approval.

#### NIRPC Resolution 24-14: FY 2025 Budget

Talaya presented Resolution 24-14 and the 2025 NIRPC budget for a favorable recommendation to the NIRPC Full Commission for approval. The budget had not changed from the preliminary budget presentation at the October 15 meeting. Discussion was held regarding the insurance renewal rate NIRPC received for 2025. The increase was very large, and other options were investigated by NIRPC's insurance brokerage firm. Some numbers had just been received on the Friday before this Committee meeting on Tuesday. Since the numbers had time to be adjusted and therefore the salary component of the Executive Director's contract was unable to be completed, Chairwoman Mis tabled the budget and Executive Director contract portions of the agenda. Having a December meeting directly before the Full Commission meeting on December 5, 2024 was discussed, during which the budget and contract could be addressed. Bob Carnahan's questions regarding the budget were answered.

#### Personnel updates

None.

#### Other Business

Drive Clean Indiana React meeting regarding alternate fuels is being held November 19 and 20.

#### Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Transportation Committee  
NIRPC Lake Michigan Room  
YouTube Recording:  
[https://www.youtube.com/live/x3DeZAx\\_3v4?si=aAr4tU49jArj4Fme](https://www.youtube.com/live/x3DeZAx_3v4?si=aAr4tU49jArj4Fme)  
January 7, 2025  
Minutes

Acting Chairman Tom Schmitt called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County), Dean Button (Hammond), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), Mary Tanis (Dyer), Max Rehlander (Valparaiso), Bob Thompson (V-Line), George Topoll (Union Township), Kelly Wenger (NICTD), David Phelps (Beverly Shores), Austin Bonta (Portage), and David Wright (GPTC) were present.

Liz Benge, Bailey Tambers, Andy Hansen, Ryan Lisek (DCI), Jeff Huett, Terry Martin, and Chris Murphy were also present.

NIRPC staff present were Tom Vander Woude, Grace Benninger, Stephen Hughes, Charles Bradsky, Scott Weber, Mitch Barloga, Meredith Stilwell, and Flor Baum.

On a motion by Dean Button, second by Bob Thompson, the Transportation Committee (TC) approved the November 12, 2024 meeting minutes, as presented.

There were no public comments.

#### Planning

Mitch Barloga presented on the Marquette Greenway Update. The Marquette Greenway spans 60 mi of trail from South Chicago, NWI, and into New Buffalo, MI, along Lake Michigan. There has been approximately \$115M in investments for the 44 segments that have been built. Many of these grants were awarded by NIRPC using Federal Highway funds through their competitive programs. A large amount of land needed for the Greenway is publicly owned. Significant property donations have been secured, with expected easements granted by NIPSCO and the South Shore Line. There are challenges in developing the 3.7 mi segment in the West Gary proposed route. A bridge over the toll road would have to be rehabbed, and a new bridge over a Canadian national track would have to be built, along with road dieting. Improvements in downtown Gary build on concurrent efforts by the city to establish Gary as the western gateway to the Indiana Dunes National Park. A map of proposed activities was presented. In Michigan City, the development of a Cultural Trail along Pine Street will connect the new Franklin at 11<sup>th</sup> Street Station, downtown Michigan City, the Marquette Greenway, a new \$260M public-private partnership 14-story SoLa mixed-use development, other redevelopment opportunities, and the proposed Discover Hub. For more information, contact Mitch Barloga at [mbarlog@nrpc.org](mailto:mbarlog@nrpc.org).

#### Programming

Charles Bradsky spoke on Resolution 25-01: FY 2024-2028, TIP Amendment #04.1, 24-02.2, and 24-04.5. The NIRPC Executive Board adopted the *NWI 2050+* Plan and the Fiscal Year 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) on July 20, 2023. INDOT and USDOT approved the MTP and the TIP on June 6th, 2024.

Since adopting the FY 2024-2028 TIP, project sponsors have proposed new projects and changes to existing projects, which must be reflected in the NIRPC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Changes in the TIP are the first step in this process. This resolution contains three TIP amendments. Projects have been divided into three amendments to expedite their inclusion in the STIP.

- 24-04.1 contains projects using FHWA (highway) funds exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process (136 projects).
- 24-04.2 contains projects using FHWA (highway) funds and that are not exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process (2 projects).
- 24-04.5 contains transit projects only using FTA (transit) funds exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process.

Amendments #24-04.1 and 24-04.2 contain 42 locally sponsored projects and 95 INDOT projects. Amendment 24-04.5 has 12 projects for procuring capital items for the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), and two projects are for Operating Assistance for NIRPC to support our sub-recipient transit providers.

On motion by Dean Button, seconded by George Topoll, the TC approved recommending Res 25-01 to the Commission.

#### Staff Updates & Reports from Planning Partners

Staff noted that the following proxies were appointed to the committee by their commission member: Bob Thompson for the City of Valparaiso, Jeff Huett for the Town of Schererville, Mark O'Dell for the Town of Chesterton. The TC 2025 schedule was presented.

Ryan Lisek reported on Drive Clean Indiana. For up-to-date information, visit [www.drivecleanindiana.org](http://www.drivecleanindiana.org).

#### Announcements

Announcements were made.

#### Adjournment

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

The next Transportation Committee meeting is slated for February 4, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in the NIRPC building.



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## Public Comment Report

### Air Quality Conformity Determination Report for *NWI 2050+* Amendment No. 1 and 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment No. 24-05

#### Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission Transportation Committee Meeting

February 4, 2025

The Air Quality Conformity Determination Report for *NWI 2050+* Amendment No. 1 and the 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment No. 24-05 were released for a 30-day public comment period which began on December 24, 2024, and ended January 23, 2025. The document was made available at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org). No comments from the public were received during this comment period on the document.

NIRPC did not receive any comments from members of the Interagency Consultation Group on Air Quality (ICG) during the 7-day informal comment period between December 20, 2024, and December 30, 2024. According to the September 2022 *Indiana Air Quality Conformity Interagency Consultation Group Guidance*, no response from the ICG member agencies can be interpreted as concurrence.

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation Committee

**From:** Scott Weber, Planner - Data Analytics and Transportation Modeling

**Date:** February 4, 2025

**Re:** Air Quality Conformity Determination Report

**Action Requested:** Recommendation to adopt Resolution 25-02

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Adoption of Resolution 25-02 will approve the Air Quality Conformity Determination Report for *NWI 2050+* Amendment No. 1 and the Fiscal Years 2024 to 2028 Transportation Improvement Program (FY 2024 to 2028 TIP) Amendment No. 24-05. The NIRPC Executive Board adopted *NWI 2050+* and the Fiscal Years 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program on July 20, 2023. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) formally approved the Air Quality Conformity Determination for *NWI 2050+* and the FY 2024 to 2028 TIP on April 17, 2024. Since then, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has formally requested that NIRPC amend *NWI 2050+* and the FY 2024 to 2028 TIP to include the regionally significant, non-exempt I-80/94 FlexRoad project, a roughly \$245.6 million project to improve mobility on I-80/94 (Borman Expressway) between IL-394 and I-65. *NWI 2050+* Amendment No. 1 and the FY 2024 to 2028 TIP Amendment No. 24-05, to be presented for recommendation by the Transportation Committee today, include the I-80/94 FlexRoad project. However, since the I-80/94 FlexRoad project is a regionally significant, non-exempt project, the Air Quality Conformity for *NWI 2050+* Amendment No. 1 and the FY 2024 to 2028 TIP Amendment No. 24-05 must be redetermined.

The Air Quality Conformity Determination Report attached to Resolution 25-02 shows that *NWI 2050+* Amendment No. 1 and the FY 2024-2028 TIP Amendment No. 24-05 comply with the Clean Air Act Section 176(c), stipulating that implementing the non-exempt, regionally significant projects conforms to the US EPA-approved Indiana State Implementation Plan (SIP). This means that implementing the non-exempt, regionally significant projects will not cause or contribute to exceedances of the ozone precursors (NO<sub>x</sub> and VOC) as regulated in the Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets in the SIP. NIRPC staff's work in modeling the on-road mobile source NO<sub>x</sub> and VOC emissions projected to result from implementing the non-exempt, regionally significant projects in *NWI 2050+* Amendment No. 1 and the FY 2024-2028 TIP Amendment No. 24-05 is overseen by NIRPC's Interagency Consultation Group on Air Quality (ICG). The ICG consists of NIRPC, INDOT, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), US EPA, FHWA, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The ICG has been involved in overseeing and reviewing drafts of the Air Quality Determination Report since November 2024.

The Air Quality Conformity Determination Report was made available for a 30-day public comment period from December 24, 2024, through January 23, 2025. This was in accordance with *Engage*

NWI, NIRPC's Public Participation Plan. A public meeting was held on January 16, 2025. There were no comments received.

The following table summarizes the model results of on-road mobile source emissions expected to result from implementing NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 and the FY 2024-2028 TIP Amendment No. 24-05 compared with the Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets in the Indiana SIP in the required model years.

<b>Year:</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2050</b>
<b>NOx Budget</b>	28.41	28.41	28.41	16.68	16.68	6.53	6.10	6.10	6.10
<b>NOx Emissions</b>	24.70	18.77	9.99	9.16	7.51	5.08	5.11	4.85	4.89
<b>VOC Budget</b>	11.02	11.02	11.02	6.85	6.85	2.47	2.90	2.90	2.90
<b>VOC Emission</b>	9.58	8.03	3.50	3.29	3.72	2.02	2.42	2.13	1.95

As is clear in the above table, which is also found in Table 5.9 on p. 14 of the Air Quality Conformity Determination Report, on-road mobile source ozone precursor emissions of NOx and VOC expected to result from implementing NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 and the FY 2024-2028 TIP Amendment No. 24-05 are at or below the Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets in the Indiana SIP. Therefore, NIRPC staff recommends the Transportation Committee forward to the NIRPC Executive Board a recommendation to adopt Resolution 25-02.



## RESOLUTION 25-02

### **A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MAKING THE AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY DETERMINATION FOR NWI 2050+ AMENDMENT NO. 1 AND THE 2024 TO 2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AMENDMENT NO. 24-05 WITH RESPECT TO OZONE**

February 20, 2025

**WHEREAS**, Northwest Indiana's citizens require a safe, efficient, effective, resource-conserving regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility and contributes to improving the quality of life in Northwest Indiana; and

**WHEREAS**, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as "the Commission", being designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lake, Porter and LaPorte County area, has established a regional, comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) transportation planning process to develop the unified planning work program, a transportation plan, and a transportation improvement program to facilitate federal funding for communities, counties, and transit operators, and to provide technical assistance and expertise to regional transportation interests; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission performs the above activities to satisfy requirements of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (PL 117-58), applicable portions of all prior federal transportation program authorizing legislation, as well as other federal, state, and local laws mandating or authorizing transportation planning activities; and

**WHEREAS**, the implementation of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone; and

**WHEREAS**, Lake and Porter Counties have been designated as a nonattainment area with respect to the 2008 "8-hour" standard for ozone; Portions of Lake and Porter Counties have been designated as a nonattainment area with respect to the 2015 "8-hour" standard for ozone; and LaPorte County has been designated as a maintenance area with respect to the 1997 "8-hour" standard for ozone; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Transportation Conformity Rule in 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93 requires all Transportation Conformity non-exempt and regionally significant projects included in a Metropolitan Planning Organization's transportation improvement program to be referenced to that Metropolitan Planning Organization's transportation plan; and

**WHEREAS**, *NWI 2050+* is the Metropolitan Planning Organization's transportation plan and the 2024 to 2028 Transportation Improvement Program is the Metropolitan Planning Organization's transportation improvement program; and

**WHEREAS**, *NWI 2050+* Amendment 1 and the 2024 to 2024 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment 24-05 were subjected to public comment in the manner prescribed by the 2019 Public Participation Plan, ENGAGE NWI; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission's Interagency Consultation Group on Air Quality comprised of the Commission, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, and the Indiana Department of Transportation reviewed the Air Quality Conformity Determination Report and recommended its adoption by the Commission; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission has solicited public comment on the Air Quality Conformity Determination Report between December 24, 2024 and January 23, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission's Transportation Committee recommended Resolution 25-02 to the Commission for adoption

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission hereby adopts the Air Quality Conformity Determination for *NWI 2050+* Amendment 1 and the 2024 to 2028 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment 24-05 with respect to ozone.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission this twentieth day of February, 2025.

---

Wendy Mis  
Chairperson

ATTEST:

---

Denise Ebert  
Secretary



6100 Southport Road  
Portage, Indiana 46368  
(219) 763-6060  
[www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org)

## Public Comment Report

### *NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1*

### Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

### Transportation Committee Meeting

February 4, 2025

*NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1* was released for a 30-day public comment period which began on December 24, 2024, and ended January 23, 2025. The document was made available at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org). No comments from the public were received during this comment period.

NIRPC did not receive any comments from members of the Interagency Consultation Group on Air Quality (ICG) during the 7-day informal comment period between December 20, 2024, and December 30, 2024. According to the September 2022 *Indiana Air Quality Conformity Interagency Consultation Group Guidance*, no response from the ICG member agencies can be interpreted as concurrence.

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation Committee

**From:** Scott Weber, Planner - Data Analytics and Transportation Modeling

**Date:** February 4, 2025

**Re:** NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1

**Action Requested:** Recommendation to adopt Resolution 25-03

---

Adoption of Resolution 25-03 will approve NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) requires that Metropolitan Transportation Plans (i.e. NWI 2050+) include at a minimum all major transportation facilities and regionally significant projects. One such project that has been prioritized and granted funding since the adoption of NWI 2050+ in July 2023 is the I-80/94 FlexRoad project. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has formally requested that NIRPC amend NWI 2050+ and the FY 2024 to 2028 TIP to include the regionally significant, air quality conformity non-exempt I-80/94 FlexRoad project, a roughly \$245.6 million project to improve mobility on I-80/94 (Borman Expressway) between IL-394 and I-65. NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 as shown in this packet includes the I-80/94 FlexRoad project.

The following is a brief summary of some of the major elements of the I-80/94 FlexRoad project:

- 14 mile stretch of I-80/94 from IL-394 in Illinois to I-65
- Dynamic shoulder lane on the inside shoulders that can be used during rush hours/congested periods
- Variable speed limits
- Ramp metering
- Lane control and queue warning systems using simplified overhead signs
- Reconfiguration of SR 53 (Broadway) interchange by converting northbound SR 53 to eastbound I-80/94 to a loop ramp

INDOT and USDOT cannot approve NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 until USDOT approves the Air Quality Conformity Determination, an action the Transportation Committee will help advance by recommending Resolution 25-02. The need to first approve the Air Quality Conformity Determination Report is why Resolution 25-02 appears before this Resolution 25-03. Also, NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 incorporates the I-80/94 FlexRoad project by reference to the updated Air Quality Conformity Determination Report.

NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 was posted on the NIRPC website on December 24, 2024, and was made available for a 30-day public comment period from December 24, 2024, through January 23, 2025, in accordance with *Engage NWI*, NIRPC's Public Participation Plan. A public meeting was held on January 16, 2025. There were no comments received. Therefore, NIRPC staff recommends the Transportation Committee forward to the NIRPC Executive Board a recommendation to adopt Resolution 25-03.



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## NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1

NWI 2050+ is the long-range plan for Northwest Indiana that builds on the main themes of NWI 2050 envisioning a Region that is connected, renewed, united, and vibrant. NWI 2050+ takes a deeper dive into several topics of importance to Northwest Indiana including roadways, transit, freight traffic, active transportation networks, land use patterns, and climate change. The final draft was approved by the NIRPC Executive Board at their meeting held July 20, 2023. The NWI 2050+ document can be viewed at the following link: [NWI-2050-Plus-Final-Adopted.pdf](#).

NWI 2050+ Amendment #1 adds the I-80/94 FlexRoad Project to NWI 2050+. The I-80/94 FlexRoad Project is a proposed 14-mile Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) project that seeks to improve traffic flow and safety along Indiana's busiest interstate corridor. The project spans from IL-394 in Illinois to I-65 in Indiana. The Indiana portion of the project is expected to cost \$245.4 million in inflation-adjusted 2026 dollars. More detailed information about the project can be found at the project website at: <https://indianaflexroad.com/>.

NWI 2050+ Amendment #1 adds the I-80/94 FlexRoad Project by reference to NWI 2050+ by making the following change to NWI 2050+:

Page Number	Original Text	Amended Text ( <i>changes in italics</i> )
10	The short-range and the long-range elements of the "Purpose Driven Planning" sections of NWI 2050+ as well as the Air Quality Conformity Report include descriptions and cost estimates.	The short-range and the long-range elements of the "Purpose Driven Planning" sections of NWI 2050+ as well as the Air Quality Conformity Report, <i>as most recently dated on February 20, 2025,</i> include descriptions and cost estimates.



## RESOLUTION 25-03

### A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION AMENDING *NWI 2050+* AMENDMENT NO. 1 February 20, 2025

**WHEREAS**, Northwest Indiana's citizens require a safe, efficient, effective, resource-conserving regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility and contributes to improving the quality of life in Northwest Indiana; and

**WHEREAS**, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as "the Commission", being designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lake, Porter and LaPorte County area, has established a regional, comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) transportation planning process to develop the unified planning work program, a transportation plan, and a transportation improvement program to facilitate federal funding for communities, counties, and transit operators, and to provide technical assistance and expertise to regional transportation interests; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission performs the above activities to satisfy requirements of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (PL 117-58), applicable portions of all prior federal transportation program authorizing legislation, as well as other federal, state, and local laws mandating or authorizing transportation planning activities; and

**WHEREAS**, *NWI 2050+* is a product of a multi-modal, 3-C transportation planning process, compatible with regional goals and objectives and socio-economic and demographic factors; and

**WHEREAS**, *NWI 2050+* is fiscally constrained, and is consistent with the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality; and

**WHEREAS**, *NWI 2050+* is developed by the Commission in coordination and cooperation with local elected and appointed highway and transit officials, special interest and service organizations, including users of public transit, the Indiana Department of Transportation, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Federal Transit Administration, and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency; and

**WHEREAS**, the changes to *NWI 2050+* brought about by this amendment were reviewed by the Air Quality Conformity Task Force's Interagency Consultation Group (ICG); and

**WHEREAS**, the changes to *NWI 2050+* brought about by this amendment were subjected to public comment in the manner prescribed by the 2019 Public Participation Plan, ENGAGE NWI; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission's Transportation Committee recommended Resolution 25-03 to the Commission for adoption.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission hereby amends *NWI 2050+* by making the changes as shown on the attachment to this resolution.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission this twentieth day of February, 2025.

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Wendy Mis  
Chairperson

ATTEST:

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Denise Ebert  
Secretary



## **Public Comment Report**

### **Amendment #24-05 to the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

#### **Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission Transportation Committee**

**February 4, 2024**

Amendment #24-05 of the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program was released for a 30-day public comment period which began on December 24, 2024, and ended on January 23, 2025. Amendment 24-05 includes one project: the INDOT ITS Traffic Management project titled 80/94 FlexRoad.

The amendment was made available for viewing at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org) and press releases with links were posted on several social media sites.

No comments have been received during the public comment period.

NIRPC staff reached out to the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG), met virtually to discuss the project on December 19<sup>th</sup>, and followed up with a written letter to the ICG on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. There were no written comments concerning the project or the amendment.

Concurrence was given for the project by members of the ICG on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024.



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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation Committee

**From:** Charles Bradsky, Transportation Projects Manager

**Date:** January 16, 2025

**Re:** TIP Amendment #24-05

**Action Requested:** Recommendation to adopt Resolution 25-04

---

The NIRPC Executive Board adopted *NWI 2050+* and the Fiscal Years 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) on July 20, 2023. INDOT and USDOT approved both the MTP and the TIP on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Since the adoption of the FY 2024-2028 TIP, project sponsors have proposed new projects and changes to existing projects, which must be reflected in the NIRPC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Changes in the TIP are the first step in this process. This resolution contains one TIP amendment, which is the addition of one project: the 80/94 FlexRoad. The project will improve 19 miles of interstate from the I-65 interchange in Indiana to the I-294/I-80 and I-94 interchange in Illinois by implementing eight Transportation systems Management and Operations (TSMO) strategies. TSMO strategies include ramp metering, dynamic shoulder lanes, variable speed limits, queue warning signs, event management, improved signage, improvements to the Broadway/I-65 interchange, and dynamic lane control. The project's goals are to reduce congestion and increase the efficiency of the highway without expanding its footprint. It is funded in part by a \$127 million Federal Mega grant.



## **RESOLUTION 25-04**

### **A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION AMENDING THE FY 2024-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR LAKE, PORTER, AND LAPORTE COUNTIES, INDIANA AMENDMENT NO. 24-05 February 20, 2025**

**WHEREAS**, Northwest Indiana's citizens require a safe, efficient, effective, resource-conserving regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility and contributes to improving the quality of life in Northwest Indiana; and

**WHEREAS**, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as "the Commission", being designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lake, Porter and LaPorte County area, has established a regional, comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) transportation planning process to develop the unified planning work program, a transportation plan, and a transportation improvement program to facilitate federal funding for communities, counties, and transit operators, and to provide technical assistance and expertise to regional transportation interests; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission performs the above activities to satisfy requirements of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (PL 117-58), applicable portions of all prior federal transportation program authorizing legislation, as well as other federal, state, and local laws mandating or authorizing transportation planning activities; and

**WHEREAS**, the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program is a product of a multi-modal, 3-C transportation planning process, compatible with regional goals and objectives and socio-economic and demographic factors used to form the NWI 2050+ Metropolitan Transportation Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program is an implementation of NWI 2050+ , is fiscally constrained, and is consistent with the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality; and

**WHEREAS**, the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program is developed by the Commission in coordination and cooperation with local elected and appointed highway and transit officials, special interest and service organizations, including users of public transit, the Indiana Department of Transportation, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Federal Transit Administration, and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency; and

**WHEREAS**, the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program brought about by this amendment were reviewed by the Air Quality Conformity Task Force's Interagency Consultation Group (ICG); and

**WHEREAS**, the changes to the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program brought about by this amendment were subjected to public comment in the manner prescribed by the 2019 Public Participation Plan, *ENGAGE NWI*; and

**WHEREAS**, the Transportation Committee has recommended that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission make these changes to the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission hereby amends the FY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program by adding the new projects and making other changes as shown on the attachment to this resolution.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission this twentieth day of February, 2025.

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Wendy Mis  
Chairperson

ATTEST:

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Denise Ebert  
Secretary

1901643		(Ver 4) 24-05		STATUS Programmed		FEDERAL	
Title:		ITS Traffic Management		Route:		I- 94	
Description:		ITS Traffic Management Systems Project on I-80/I-94 From the I-294/I-80 & I-94 Interchange in Illinois to the I-65 Interchange in Indiana such as hard shoulder running, ramp metering, variable speed limits, lane control and special purpose lanes.					
Project Type:		Its Traffic Management Systems		AQ Exempt:		Non-Exempt	
County:		Lake		Limits:		From I-294/I80 & I-94 Interchange IL to I-65 Interchange IN of Distance (mile) 19 Milepost begins at 0 ends at 12	
Narrative:		Federal Special = FHWA Mega grant/INDOT mobility construction FY2026 -2027, Added CN and CE; State Match in FY26 is Illinois DOT match.					
FED FY	REVENUE SOURCE	PE	RW	CN	CE	TOTAL	
2025	NHPP Interstate	\$5,120,310	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,120,310	
2025	State Match	\$568,923	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$568,923	
2026	Federal Special	\$0	\$0	\$93,150,000	\$0	\$93,150,000	
2026	NHPP Interstate	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$18,709,705	\$18,709,705	
2026	State Match	\$0	\$0	\$27,500,000	\$0	\$27,500,000	
2027	Federal Special	\$0	\$0	\$34,334,669	\$0	\$34,334,669	
2027	NHPP Interstate	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$7,057,800	\$7,057,800	
2027	State Match	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$784,200	\$784,200	
2028	NHPP Interstate	\$0	\$0	\$39,868,078	\$0	\$39,868,078	
2028	State Match	\$0	\$0	\$4,429,453	\$0	\$4,429,453	
<2024	Prior	\$13,958,785	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$13,958,785	
2024-2028 TOTAL		\$5,689,233	\$0	\$199,282,200	\$26,551,705	\$231,523,138	
ALL YEARS TOTAL		\$19,648,018	\$0	\$199,282,200	\$26,551,705	\$245,481,923	
Region: Northwestern MPO		Lead Agency: INDOT					

Previously Approved Version						
1901643 (Ver 3) 24-00						
Title:	ITS Traffic Management				Route: N/A	
Description:	ITS Traffic Management Systems Project on I-80 from the Illinois State Line to I-65 such as hard shoulder running, ramp metering, variable speed limits, lane control and special purpose lanes.					
Project Type:	Its Traffic Management Systems		AQ Exempt:		Exempt	
County:	Lake		Limits:		District: LaPorte	
Narrative:	Revised funding amounts and categories for 2022-26 TIP.					
FED FY	REVENUE SOURCE	PE	RW	CN	CE	TOTAL
2024	NHPP Interstate	\$0	\$0	\$27,000,000	\$0	\$27,000,000
2024	State Match	\$0	\$0	\$3,000,000	\$0	\$3,000,000
<2024	Prior	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000,000
2024-2028 TOTAL		\$0	\$0	\$30,000,000	\$0	\$30,000,000
ALL YEARS TOTAL		\$5,000,000	\$0	\$30,000,000	\$0	\$35,000,000
Region: Northwestern MPO			Lead Agency: INDOT			

Northwestern MPO TIP SUMMARY BY LEAD AGENCY

	Prior	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	Beyond	Total
INDOT	\$18,958,785	\$30,000,000	\$5,689,233	\$139,359,705	\$42,176,669	\$44,297,531	\$0	\$0	\$280,481,923
TOTAL	\$18,958,785	\$30,000,000	\$5,689,233	\$139,359,705	\$42,176,669	\$44,297,531	\$0	\$0	\$280,481,923

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation Committee

**From:** Stephen Hughes, Public Transit and Engagement Planner

**Date:** February 4, 2025

**Re:** Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area FTA Funds

**Action Requested:** Recommendation to adopt Resolution 25-05

---

Adoption of Resolution 25-05 will request the Governor of Indiana designate NIRPC as the recipient of FTA 5307 funds for the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area (UA).

NIRPC administers the FTA funds for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties and is the direct recipient of funds for seven subrecipients: East Chicago Public Transit, North Township Dial-A-Ride, South Lake County Community Services, Opportunity Enterprises, Porter County Aging and Community Services, the City of LaPorte TransPorte, and Valpo Transit. In that capacity, NIRPC handles procurement, grant writing, oversight, and reimbursement, among other items on behalf of the subrecipient transit operators.

When the 2020 Census was completed, the U.S. Census Bureau removed an area that includes the City of Valparaiso and Shorewood Forest from the Chicago UA and designated it as a new, separate UA. For NIRPC to continue to function as the direct recipient of FTA funds in this new UA, the Governor must make that designation by means of a letter.

This letter would result in no real change to the operations in the Urban Area or to NIRPC, since NIRPC had been the direct recipient for Valpo Transit when it was within the Chicago UA. NIRPC has the staff and experience to continue to provide these services on behalf of the transit operators in the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area.

Jon Costas, Mayor of Valparaiso, has provided a letter requesting that NIRPC continue to administer these funds in support of this resolution.

NIRPC staff has prepared a draft letter for the Governor's signature. Upon Commission adoption of Resolution 25-05, NIRPC staff will forward it, with the attached letter, to INDOT to facilitate its execution.



## **RESOLUTION 25-05**

### **A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION REQUESTING THAT THE GOVERNOR OF INDIANA DESIGNATE NIRPC AS THE RECIPIENT OF FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION SECTION 5307 FORMULA FUNDS FOR THE VALPARAISO-SHOREWOOD FOREST URBAN AREA**

**February 20, 2025**

**WHEREAS**, the citizens of Northwest Indiana require a safe, efficient and effective regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility and contributes to improving the quality of life in the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as "the Commission" is the designated metropolitan planning organization for the Lake, LaPorte, and Porter Counties of Indiana; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission is a direct recipient of Federal Transit Administration grant funds as defined by 49 U.S.C. section 5307 for the Indiana portions of the Chicago Urban Area and the Michigan City-LaPorte Urban Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2020 United States Census separated the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area from the Chicago Urban Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission had been the direct recipient of 5307 funds for the transit operators within the area that is now the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor of the City of Valparaiso, which operates transit service in the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area as Valpo Transit, has requested that the Commission remain the direct recipient of 5307 funds for Valpo Transit, and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission has the staff necessary to administer Section 5307 funds on behalf of the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission that the Commission officially requests that the Governor designate the Commission as the recipient of Federal Transit Administration Formula Funds provided by 49 U.S.C. section 5307 for the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission this 20<sup>th</sup> day of February 2025.

---

Wendy Mis  
Chairperson

ATTEST:

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Denise Ebert, Secretary

January 16, 2025

Mr. Ty Warner, AICP  
NIRPC  
6100 Southport Rd.  
Portage, IN 46368


Dear Ty,

The City of Valparaiso and Valparaiso Transit are requesting that the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) remain as the designated recipient of the FTA funds. The request is that NIRPC be the designated recipient of the funds for the recently created Valparaiso Shorewood Forest Urban Area. NIRPC will remain responsible for tasks such as:

- Procurement
- Program oversight
- Transit Asset Management Plan
- NIRPC ownership of vehicles
- Grant Management and reimbursements

This is a general list of duties and functions that NIRPC undertakes for Valparaiso Transit. In short, we are requesting that NIRPC continue their functions as they have in the past for Valparaiso Transit.

Sincerely,



Mayor Jon Costas  
City of Valparaiso

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**Our City...Our Values**

Honestly Accountable • Surprisingly Responsive • Boldly Proactive  
Creatively Frugal • Respectfully Compassionate

---

[Date], 2025

Ms. Kelley Brookins  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration, Region V  
200 West Adams Street, Suite 320  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Ms. Brookins:

The Federal Transit Administration permits the Governor of Indiana to designate an agency to administer the FTA Formula Programs authorized by Title 49, United States Code, Section 5307 in Urban Areas of the state. The transit operators in the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area, which is under 200,000 in population, along with the Board of Commissioners of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), have requested that I designate NIRPC as the direct recipient of these federal funds. NIRPC has been administering federal transit funds since the 1970s and has the legal, financial and staffing capabilities to receive and administer federal funds.

In accordance with this request and in recognition of NIRPC's qualifications, with this letter, I hereby designate NIRPC to be the direct recipient of these Section 5307 funds within the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area.

NIRPC is looking forward to working with the Federal Transit Administration in the administration of these Section 5307 funds.

Sincerely,

Michael Braun  
Governor of Indiana

## **Economy & Place Committee**

NIRPC Lake Michigan Room

YouTube Recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/ISCFdUfKqWM?si=Aq1t4kFepxUoNWT9>

January 8, 2025

### Minutes

Chairman George Topoll called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

In attendance were members George Topoll (Union Township), Lois Whittaker (BCCNWI), Judith Cardenas (NWISBDC), Gary Johnson (Society of Innovators), John Yelkich (Town of Lowell), Susan Utterback (CWI), and Heather Ennis (Forum).

Also present were consultants from Purdue's Center for Regional Development (PCRD) - Annie Cruz-Porter and Hyewon Shin. The virtual presenter was Indraneel Kumar from (PCRD).

In addition Shaun Sahlhoff (Valparaiso University), Elizabeth Hibshman (Indiana University student), and David Phelps (Town of Beverly Shores) were at the meeting.

Staff present were Denarie Kane, Eman Ibrahim, Tom Vander Woude, Flor Baum, and Meredith Stilwell.

On motion by John Yelkich, second by George Topoll, the October 9, 2024, minutes were approved.

Eman Ibrahim presented the housing update. Eman defined the area median income (AMI). It is the midpoint of a region's income distribution, meaning half the households earn more and half earn less. The AMI was established for each community by HUD and used to determine eligibility for affordable housing programs. It has set income limits for housing assistance in a specific geographic area. "Low-income" housing is typically affordable to households earning between 60%- 80% AMI with mortgage assistance, and "Middle-income" refers to 80-120% AMI. The median family income for the Gary MSA in 2023 was \$75,625, and the median family income for the Michigan City-La Porte MSA in 2023 was \$62,868. In Indiana, The Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,148. The State housing wage average is \$22.07 per hour. However, the average wage for someone renting (30% of the state population) is \$17.92 per hour. A renter would have to work 122 hours per week at a minimum wage of \$7.25 to afford a 2-bedroom rental home. Housing costs were discussed. In Gary Metro, for FY 24, the wage necessary to afford a 2-bedroom home is \$24.12 per hour, and \$19.54 per hour in Michigan City/ LaPorte Metro. A 2-bedroom rental costs \$1,254/mo. In Gary Metro, and \$1,016/mo. In Michigan City/ LaPorte Metro.

The current density of housing units is 1.97 du/acre. The required density is about 5 du/acre, and the required housing units by 2050 are 50,000. In February 2024, there were 336 new construction homes, and the median list price was \$432,555. Older homes were sold at the median price of \$249,900. The current new construction listed for sale includes approximately 840 units. The vacancy rate was also discussed. In 2022, the NWI vacancy rate is about 10%, 32,920 units. Lake County's City of Gary has a vacancy rate of 28%. LaPorte County's Union Mills, Long Beach, and Michiana Shores have a vacancy rate of over 42%. Porter County's Boone Grove has a vacancy rate of 44%. Eman will present the Housing Snapshot and recommendations at the next regular meeting. For more information, contact Eman at [eibrahim@nirpc.org](mailto:eibrahim@nirpc.org).

Denarie Kane briefly recapped what has been accomplished thus far on the update to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). She reported on the industry clusters identified for closer examination by the working group at their two meetings. Annie Cruz-Porter presented an overview of the SWOT analysis, which revealed the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These have been categorized as local/regional, state, national, or global on the graphic summaries prepared. Annie made brief remarks about the industry clusters identified as star or mature due to the location quotient and the aspirational clusters recommended by the working group. Specific information on the activities related to the quantum (aspirational) cluster was shared based on PCRD's research into Indiana's efforts, and those of other states.

Indraneel Kumar from PCRD next presented information from the in-depth examinations prepared for the three star clusters (Chemicals, Glass and Ceramics, and Machinery Manufacturing). He also presented information about the mature cluster (Primary Metals Manufacturing) that included the following:

- 1) 11 key economic indicators,
- 2) description by 3-digit NAICS code and their respective 2023 job numbers,
- 3) a shift-share analysis that identified underperforming and overperforming industries,
- 4) a leakage analysis that showed estimated dollar input per million with percentage inside and economic leakage outside the region,
- 5) top occupations, which included educational requirements and median hourly earnings, and
- 6) worker demographics (2023) by age, race, and sex.

Indraneel explained the 2020-2024 job postings with the top industries and companies identified. Lastly, he summarized the key findings shown in the US industry Economic Outlooks prepared for the three star clusters and the mature cluster. (To view these presentations, visit the NIRPC website under the Economy & Place Committee.)

The committee discussed matters related to the current situation of the region's steel industry, the Indiana pharmaceutical industry, Indiana's Heartland BioWorks Hub, Illinois Bloch Tech Hub, and regional industries related to machinery manufacturing.

Gary Johnson motioned to ratify the cluster recommendations of the working group and include the four items in the CEDS, seconded by Lois Whitaker. The motion was approved.

- 1) CEDS is to incorporate aspirational clusters such as Fintech, Quantum Communications, Decarbonization, Energy, and Bio Tech.
- 2) CEDS is to be consistent with the decline in the Primary Metals Manufacturing cluster.
- 3) CEDS is to incorporate recommendations to strengthen the Machinery Manufacturing cluster.
- 4) Due to the overlap between the Chemicals cluster and the Glass & Ceramics cluster, the CEDS will consider this to be a single cluster focusing on industry sectors related to pharmaceutical research and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m. The next Economy & Place meeting is slated for January 29, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.