

Transportation Committee
NIRPC Lake Michigan Room
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February 4, 2025

Minutes

Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Kevin Breitzke (Porter County), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), Mary Tanis (Dyer), Max Rehlander (Valparaiso), Bob Thompson (Valpo Transit), George Topoll (Union Township), Kelly Wenger (NICTD), and David Wright (GPTC) were present.

Mike Yacullo (INDOT), Rodney Harris, Scott Pruitt, Alex Olesker, Chris Harris, Chris Nugent, 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 Mary Tanis, second by George Topoll, the Transportation Committee (TC) approved the January 7, 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

There were no public comments.

Planning

Grace Benninger presented the 4th Quarter 2024 Safety, Reliability, Freight, and Congestion update. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) requires states and MPOs (Metropolitan Planning Organizations) to set targets in several national performance areas and track performance measures to determine whether federal transportation investments improve transportation system performance. 6,039 collisions were reported in NWI, of which 1,116 resulted in injuries and 26 fatalities. All vulnerable roadway user collisions were also reported, with Lake County having over 40 collisions and injuries. The 4th Quarter Travel Time Reliability (TTR) on the interstates was 93.4 %, better than the 93% statewide target. Delays are shown on the Borman Expwy, near the Illinois state line. TTR on non-interstate roads was 6.4% above the 93.0% 2024 statewide target. Truck Travel Time Reliability (TTTR) for Interstates target of 1.32 was not met. The Region's score was 1.46. The peak-hour excessive delay per capita target was 4.1h lower than the 15.6h state target. For more information, contact Grace at gbenninger@nirpc.org.

Mike Yacullo (INDOT) presented on the 80/94 FlexRoad Project. This is one of Indiana's busiest interstate corridors that extends 14 mi from IL 394 to I-65. The project will identify the best solutions for the corridor to improve traffic flow and safety. The FlexRoad project will include innovative strategies that work in the existing system. The project is currently in its environmental and latter design stages. Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) is a set of strategies focused on operational improvement that maximizes the efficiency and safety of existing transportation systems. These strategies will maximize the safety

and efficiency of the existing system. Anticipated improvements include combining all TSMO strategies and interchange improvements. Construction is slated to begin in 2026. The anticipated improvements under the TSMO strategies are the following: ramp metering, variable speed limits, dynamic lane control, dynamic shoulder lanes, and improved signage and queue warnings. Additionally, anticipated improvements will combine all TSMO strategies and interchange modifications at Broadway and I-65 South to provide excellent safety and mobility. Added capacity to the main line and an added lane to the exit ramp to southbound I-65 will be an included improvement. Three eastbound I-80/I-94 lanes will allow drivers to exit to I-65 South without changing lanes. Existing fiber optic cables will be replaced with updated fiber optic cables on both sides of the project corridor. Please visit www.indianaflexroad.com for more information.

Scott Weber spoke on Res 25-02, adopting the Air Quality Conformity Determination. 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 on January 23, 2025. NIRPC did not receive any comments from the Interagency Consultation Group on Air Quality (ICG) members. 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. INDOT has 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. 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 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.

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

On motion by Tom Schmitt, second by Mark O'Dell, the TC approved to recommend Res. 25-02 to the Commission.

Scott Weber spoke on Resolution 25-03, the adoption of NWI 2050+ Amendment #1. NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 was released for a 30-day public comment period, which began on December 24, 2024, and ended on January 23, 2025. NIRPC did not receive any comments from members of the Interagency Consultation Group on Air Quality (ICG) during the 7-day informal comment period. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) requires that Metropolitan Transportation Plans include, at a minimum, all major transportation facilities and regionally significant projects. The following is a 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. The need to first approve the Air Quality Conformity Determination Report is why Resolution 25-02 appears before Resolution 25-03. NWI 2050+ Amendment No. 1 incorporates the I-80/94 FlexRoad project by reference to the updated Air Quality Conformity Determination Report.

On motion by Tom Schmitt, second by Mark O'Dell, the TC approved to recommend Res 25-03 to the Commission.

Programming

Charles Bradsky spoke on Resolution 25-04, TIP Amendment No. 24-05. Amendment #24-05 of the FY 2024-2028 TIP 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: INDOT ITS Traffic Management project titled 80/94 FlexRoad. NIRPC staff contacted the ICG, and there were no written comments concerning the project or the amendment. 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). Res 25-04 contains the addition of the 80/94 FlexRoad project. 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.

On motion by George Topoll, second by Max Rehlander, the TC approved to recommend Res 25-04 to the Commission.

Stephen Hughes spoke on Resolution 25-05, designating NIRPC as the recipient for FTA funds in Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest Urban Area (UA). NIRPC administers FTA funds for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties and is the direct recipient of funds for 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. Upon completion of the 2020 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau removed an area that includes the City of Valparaiso and Shorewood Forest from the Chicago UA. It designated it as a new, separate UA. For NIRPC to continue functioning as the direct recipient of FTA funds in this new UA, the Governor must make that designation through a letter. This letter

would not significantly change the UA operations or NIRPC. NIRPC staff has the experience to continue providing these services on behalf of the transit operators in the Valparaiso-Shorewood Forest UA. A letter requesting that NIRPC continue to administer these funds to support this resolution was shared with the committee.

On motion by George Topoll, second by Bob Thompson, the TC approved recommending Res 25-05 to the Commission.

Staff Updates & Reports from Planning Partners

The acceptance of committee appointments was discussed. Dean Button was appointed as the proxy for the City of Hammond. The memo to freeze federal funding was rescinded. House Bill 1461 may impact community crossing grants. NIRPC staff will be following these memos and House Bill 1461 closely.

Ryan Lisek reported on Drive Clean Indiana. For up-to-date information, visit www.drivecleanindiana.org.

Announcements

Announcements were made.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

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