

the regional view

the newsletter of the northwestern indiana regional planning commission

Fall 2012 Issue

NIRPC Board Names New Executive Director

Tyson Warner will start January 1, 2013 as NIRPC's fourth Executive Director

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) unanimously appointed Tyson (Ty) Warner of the Flint Hills Regional Council to succeed John Swanson as its next Executive Director. Following an executive session in its office in Portage on October 29, 2012, the full Commission voted 34-0 to approve the two-year contract for Warner's services commencing on January 1, 2013. Warner will serve as the fourth NIRPC executive director in the organization's forty-seven year history.

Warner previously served as the Planning Director of the Will County Land Use Department in Joliet, Illinois from 1997 – 2006. In 2006, he was named as the Director of Planning for the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, which was subsequently merged into the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. He left the Chicago regional planning agency in 2010 to become the inaugural Executive Director of the Flint Hills Regional Council, which serves the Fort Riley, Kansas area. Warner received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from Wheaton College in 1988 and a Master of Urban Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1995.

Following Swanson's retirement announcement in March of this year, NIRPC Chair Geof Benson of




Tyson Warner, NIRPC's new Executive Director

Beverly Shores appointed an Executive Director Search Committee, which was led by Ken Layton, La Porte County Commission Chairman. An executive search firm, The Mercer Group was engaged to work with the committee in its recruitment, screening and evaluation activities. Approximately two hundred and fifty applications were received, but Warner was the unanimous recommendation of the Search Committee for the Executive Director post. Layton remarked, "Ty matches up exceptionally well with the planning and leadership skills we were looking for in our new director. Northwest Indiana and NIRPC will be the beneficiaries of his outstanding qualifications."

Chairman Benson also lauded the appointment. "We were

looking for someone who could advance NIRPC's agenda in the areas of transportation, land use, environment, economic development and social equity, and Ty Warner is a solid choice to move us in that direction."

Warner was the recipient of the 2009 Distinguished Service Award from the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association "for exemplary commitment to the planning profession." He currently serves as a member of the Executive Directors Council of the National Association of Regional Councils. He is married and has one daughter. 

2012 NIRPC Executive Board

Chairman.....	Geof Benson <i>Beverly Shores Town Council</i>
Vice-Chairman.....	David Uran <i>Mayor of Crown Point</i>
Treasurer.....	Brian Snedecor <i>Mayor of Hobart</i>
Secretary.....	Blair Milo <i>Mayor of La Porte</i>
Executive Board.....	Roosevelt Allen, Jr. <i>Lake County Commission</i>
Executive Board.....	Thomas M. McDermott, Jr. <i>Mayor of Hammond</i>
Executive Board.....	Nancy Adams <i>Porter County Commission</i>
Executive Board.....	Jim Ton <i>Chesterton Town Council</i>
Executive Board.....	Ken Layton <i>LaPorte County Commission</i>
Executive Board.....	Robert Schaefer <i>Long Beach Town Council</i>
Executive Board.....	Chester Dobis <i>Indiana State Representative</i>

Executive Director.....**John Swanson**
NIRPC

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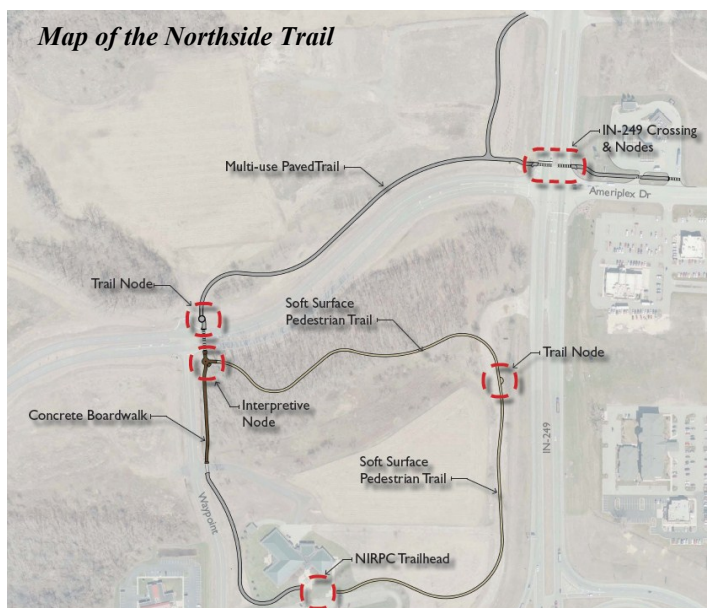
Ground Broken for Portage's Northside Trail

NIRPC Office will be trailhead for the newest section of the Marquette Greenway



The first shovelfuls of dirt are thrown at the groundbreaking for the Northside Trail at NIRPC on October 23, 2012.

On October 23, officials from Portage, NIRPC and Congressman Peter Visclosky's office held a groundbreaking ceremony for the 1.3 mile Portage Northside Trail network. The project will create a loop trail around the NIRPC office, and a critical link east to SR 249 into the Amerplex development, where Bass Pro Shops are located. The trail will be multi-surfaced and include 0.6 miles of paved trail, 0.5 miles of soft-surface pedestrian trail and 400 feet of pre-cast boardwalk over a drainage ditch. The project will also include preservation of existing stream habitat, an additional 3 acres of native prairie and the planting of over 200 trees. The project will serve as a critical link in the 3-state Marquette Greenway system, and will provide safety measures for those crossing SR 249. The project is expected to be completed by late November, with landscaping to finish next spring.



Changes Ahead with New Federal Transportation Bill

By: Bill Brown & Belinda Petroskey

MAP-21 provides the authorization for the USDOT to continue collecting 18.4 cents per gallon tax on gasoline, which provides the primary source of revenue into the Highway Trust Fund. The authorization provides this money to the highway and transit programs provided by states, local governments and transit agencies. The act changes some of the formulas used to distribute the money and some of the programs that the funds facilitate.

MAP-21 eliminates most discretionary programs and earmarks. The Bridge, Interstate Maintenance and National Highway System (NHS) are consolidated into National Highway Performance Program.

The act expands NHS Routes to include all principal arterials and intermodal connectors. This adds Ridge Road and other similar roads under local jurisdiction to the National Highway System. For this program, the act requires an asset management Plan, with goals established at the national level, and targets for condition and performance established at the state level.

Eligibility for funding under the Surface Transportation Program (STP) is expanded to all public roads for safety and bridge projects, not just collectors and arterials as in the past. The STP is also available for transportation enhancements, recreational trails, Safe Routes to Schools and truck parking facilities.

The act doubles the size of the Highway Safety Improvement Program, and maintains a set-aside for rail-highway grade crossings. The act also adds a requirement for regular updates of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

MAP-21 requires performance plans to include air quality and congestion measures for access to Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. A portion of CMAQ funds must be used to reduce fine particle emissions. The act also clarifies the eligibility for the use of CMAQ funds for facilities serving electric or natural gas-fueled vehicles and expands the authority to use these funds for transit operations. The act requires a study to assess the outcomes of CMAQ funding.

The Transportation Alternatives (TA) program includes most of the old Transportation Enhancement program, recreational trails and Safe Routes to Schools. Half of the program is suballocated and half of the program can be transferred to other programs at the states' discretion.

MAP-21 places a higher emphasis on performance management. Goals are set at the national level, targets are set at the state level and metropolitan transportation plans must describe how the MPO will use the program and project selection to help achieve the targets. States must report to the USDOT on progress toward meeting the targets. If the NHS falls below the established thresholds, some corrective actions are to be anticipated.

As with SAFETEA-LU and prior authorizations, the MPOs serving populations over 200,000 select all projects

not on NHS. Projects on the NHS are to be selected by the states with cooperation of the MPO.


What's New for Public Transit in MAP-21

MAP-21 makes several important changes in transit programs and planning requirements that will impact northwest Indiana bus and rail public transportation. The role of transit operators is strengthened by calling for their inclusion on MPO boards. For NIRPC, this will trigger a change in our state enabling statute. This will add at least one agency to the NIRPC board and may impact the weighted voting structure that we now have.

Another important change is the direct funding of projects that were previously funded under the Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedoms programs. Eligible activities under the JARC program are now included as options under the Section 5307 program. The New Freedom program is now in the Section 5310 program, which now provides operating as well as capital assistance for transit service for elderly and disabled. While the JARC changes do not entail additional funds, the Section 5310 program will now include the New Freedom funds as a direct distribution of dedicated funds to large and small urban areas and to the state for rural areas.

Section 5329 establishes a new comprehensive framework to oversee the safety of public transportation nationwide. FTA will be required to develop safety performance criteria for all modes of public transportation and safety performance standards for vehicles not regulated by other Federal agencies. FTA must develop a public transportation safety certification training program for individuals involved in transit safety. All recipients of FTA funding must develop agency safety plans that include performance targets, strategies and staff training. These new measures and targets must be incorporated into the MPO and statewide TIPs.

The largest of FTA's grant programs, Section 5307, is the source of most of the funds that support public transit in the region. An important change in this program is the eligibility of operating expenses for operators with no more than 100 buses. This means GPTC, East Chicago and Michigan City may use Section 5307 funds for operating. This will now allow them to cover expenses such as drivers' salaries that are not currently covered.

MAP-21 also includes changes in the MPO and states' multimodal transportation planning requirements. Both are now required to establish performance targets that address national performance measures issued by FTA and FHWA. TIPs must now include a description of the progress anticipated in meeting the performance measures as a result of implementing the TIP. Five years after MAP-21, the U.S. DOT will report to Congress on the effectiveness of performance-based planning and assess the technical capacity of MPOs in smaller areas to undertake performance-based planning. 

New Commission Charged with Lakefront Redevelopment


By: Jody Melton

In 1985 the Indiana General Assembly created the Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission (LMMDC) to spur marina development in Northwest Indiana. In 2001 the Indiana General Assembly created the Lake Michigan Shoreline Development Commission to prepare a master plan for the development and redevelopment of Indiana's Lake Michigan Watershed. Both commissions were dissolved and the Indiana General Assembly created the Lake Michigan Marina and Shoreline Development Commission (LMMSDC) in 2011.

LMMSDC is charged with developing a comprehensive environmental master plan for redevelopment and development within the Lake Michigan corridor. Upon completion, the Commission will make decisions on environmental grants and monitor the implementation of the master plan.

The Commission has sixteen voting members: the six mayors of the lakefront cities; two representatives from different steel companies owning Lake Michigan shoreline; one representative from BP; one representative from NIPSCO; one representative for Burns Harbor, Chesterton and Porter; one representative for Beverly Shores, Dune Acres, and Ogden Dunes; one Democrat and one Republican from both the Indiana House and the Indiana Senate from districts within the corridor.

The non-voting members of this Commission include: one representative from each of the following: the Indiana Departments of Environmental Management, Natural Resources, and Department of Transportation, the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor, the Lake County South Shore Convention & Visitors Authority, the LaPorte County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and the Porter County Convention, Recreation and Visitors Commission.

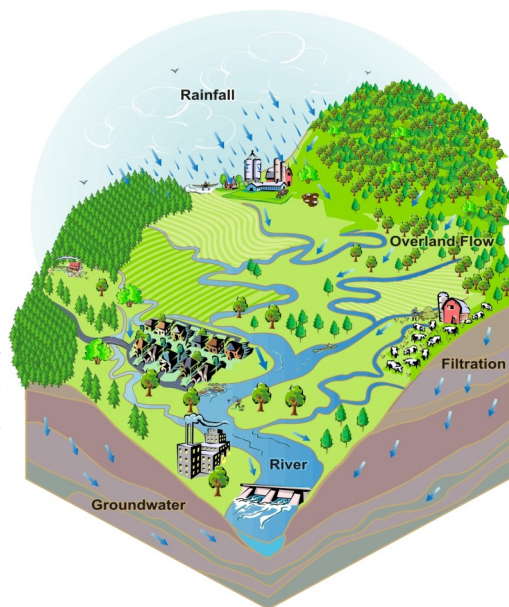
The 23 member Commission has held three meetings since May 2012. Currently, they are working with NIRPC, the Coastal Shoreline Program of IDNR, and other entities to identify information needed to begin the process of creating the master plan to which it is obligated. 

Jody Melton is the Executive Director of the Kankakee River Basin Commission and the Project Director for the LMMSDC. He can be reached by email at jmelton@nirpc.org, or by phone at 219-763-6060, ext. 115.


The Northwest Indiana Watershed Management Boom

By: Joe Exl

Our region has come a long way in dealing with nonpoint source pollution (NPS) issues in a short period of time. A little more than ten years ago, Northwest Indiana



did not have a single state-approved watershed management plan (WMP). Today we have six, with another in the early stages of development. Combined, these watersheds account for a 371mi² area or roughly 25% of Northwest Indiana. While WMPs only currently exist in the Lake Michigan drainage, that is rapidly changing, too, with groups expressing interest in WMP development in the Kankakee sub-basin, specifically the Singleton Ditch watershed in Lake County and the Mill Creek-Kankakee River watershed in LaPorte County.

Using a watershed approach has so many benefits, especially in a climate in which many communities and organizations have to deal with limited resources. Addressing NPS is too difficult for any one single group or organization to deal with on its own effectively. Our most successful WMPs, those that have moved into implementation, each have common elements in play: diverse stakeholder participation, willingness to collaborate, and ability to leverage various resources, including financial, knowledge, and equipment. The Salt Creek and Trail Creek watersheds provide us with prime examples of what can be accomplished. While there are subtle differences between the two watersheds and the stakeholders leading the charge, each share these characteristics. Hopefully, this boom will continue to roll. 

Joe Exl is NIRPC's Senior Water Planner. He can be reached at jexl@nirpc.org, or by phone at 219-763-6060, ext. 137.

By: Hubert Morgan

NIRPC's Public Participation Plan (PPP) 2012 opened for public comment on October 9, 2012. The PPP describes how NIRPC will engage the residents and stakeholders of northwest Indiana based on the unprecedented outreach NIRPC used for the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan. The PPP will be updated every four years. The last plan was written in 2007, and unlike most transportation plans, which require a minimum 30-day public comment period, the PPP requires a minimum 45-day public comment period.

With the assistance of the Public Participation Task Force, composed of stakeholders and citizens from Lake, LaPorte and Porter Counties, the mission statement, goals, objectives and techniques were revised. The Task Force also suggested the use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, and strongly encouraged the engagement of Northwest Indiana youth in NIRPC's planning initiatives.


The new PPP includes a section on how NIRPC will engage the public about the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Minor standard amendments to the TIP will have a minimum 5-day public comment period, and major standard amendments will have a minimum 30-day comment period. The outcome of this new process is to provide insight to the residents of the region on what municipalities and projects NIRPC spends its transportation dollars, as well as ensuring that the projects are updated regularly on its website.

The PPP also has a new chapters dedicated to designing and evaluating the public participation pro-

cess. NIRPC will work with stakeholders to discuss, build consensus and prioritize action items to recommend to the NIRPC Board.

Internally, NIRPC staff will also evaluate the techniques they used to inform the public, and will constantly strive to reach as many of the residents of the region as possible through multiple techniques. After meetings are held, reports will be sent to the participants, posted to NIRPC's website, and on social media to reveal what participants discussed at the meeting.

The PPP represents the course of action NIRPC aspires to for future planning projects and initiatives. The public, along with our commissioners and committee members, provide invaluable information that leads to better planning and strengthens the quality of life in Northwest Indiana. NIRPC hopes that you take the time to review the PPP, and provide suggestions to help NIRPC improve the plan.

Also, please feel free to share information about NIRPC with your family and friends. We have three Facebook pages that people can visit: *Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)*, *INvolve Northwest Indiana*, and *Splash*. NIRPC's website, www.nirpc.org, is regularly updated with new content and information about our regularly scheduled meetings and other events hosted by us. 

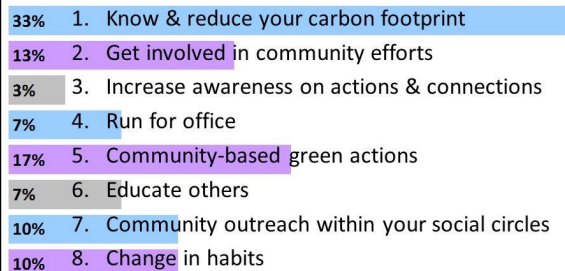
Hubert Morgan is NIRPC's Public Involvement Coordinator. Email: hmorgan@nirpc.org. Search *Involve Northwest Indiana* to connect on Facebook.



Top: Youths participate in a keypad polling exercise as part of a youth workshop in Hammond.

Bottom: An example of a keypad polling slide.

What is the most important action step that YOU can take to minimize the effects of climate change?




Meet the Commissioner . . .



Commissioner Nancy Adams represents the Porter County Commission and is a member of NIRPC's Executive Board, as well as the chair of the Pathway to 2040 Implementation Committee and a member of the Transportation Policy Committee.

Born and raised in Chaska, Minnesota, she moved to the region to study business at Valparaiso University. During her sophomore year, she began working at Strongbow Inn, and it was during this time that she met her husband. They still work together every day.

Commissioner Adams was elected to the Porter County Commission in 2011. In addition to being president of the Porter County Plan Commission, she is also part of other boards and committees, such as the Northwest Indiana Economic Development District, Community Corrections Board, and the Child Protection Board.

She currently lives in Valparaiso with her husband and three children, ages 24, 22, and 18. A self-described thrill seeker, Commissioner Adams recently went skydiving in Phoenix. She has helped raise over \$150,000 for the fight against multiple sclerosis, including a 500 mile bike-a-thon. 


Meet the NIRPC Staff . . .

John Swanson was appointed as NIRPC's third executive director in August, 2004. As such, he directs the overall planning and operating activities of NIRPC.



Mr. Swanson was born and raised in Chicago and continued to live there after earning his undergraduate degree from DePaul University and his masters' degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. From 1973 to 2003, he worked at the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), starting as a project review coordinator and retiring as Deputy Director.

Mr. Swanson is now a resident of Beverly Shores with Mary Kay, his wife of 42 years. They have four grown children and six grandchildren. As a "closet Parrothead," he enjoys attending Jimmy Buffett concerts. He is also an avid collector of beach glass, a hobby he loves sharing with his grandchildren.


Earlier this year, Mr. Swanson announced that he will be retiring at the end of the year. As far as post-retirement plans, he plans to continue to live in the region and hopes to stay professionally active. Mr. Swanson will also continue volunteering with the church and advocacy groups. 

NIRPC's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

By: Eman Ibrahim

This Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is an attempt to focus financial planning resources and staff where they will be the most effective in responding to significant local and regional issues, and resolving area-wide problems. The UPWP is based on state and federal transportation planning requirements, regional priorities, and annual emphasis areas. In addition to these requirements, NIRPC developed its long and short-range planning and programming in response to the implementation of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan and NIRPC's Vision and Strategic Directions.

The UPWP balances the available resources, long and short-range planning and programming; special studies; data gathering, analysis and dissemination; computer modeling; public involvement; and program administration. It also describes other planning, administrative and program offerings by NIRPC in its role as a council of governments. It includes all environmental and economic development planning, as well as transit administration, which includes sub-grantee oversight, grant administration and procurement. In addition, it includes additional significant planning projects by other agencies, especially any studies and plans supported with federal funds.

The UPWP covers the period beginning July 1, 2013 and ending June 30, 2014 with a total budget of \$3,615,795 for FY2013 and \$3,891,372 for FY2014. Funds for completing the work elements in the UPWP come from the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Indiana Department of Transportation, grants, and other state and local resources. 

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