



The Regional View

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Statewide Featured News



Throughout the state, over 900 projects will be under construction along INDOT routes during 2018. These projects will represent a statewide investment of over \$1 billion. As a result, INDOT has developed a new user-friendly, interactive map to guide Hoosiers to find out which projects are planned along INDOT routes in their communities. The new [Next Level Roads Map](#) based tool also includes information on local projects that are receiving federal funding and have received awards through the state's Community Crossings Program.

For more information and a link to this article, click here: [Next Level Roads Indiana](#)

Next Level Roads 2018 Construction Season Begins

More than \$1 billion has been invested in over 900 INDOT projects statewide

Governor Eric J. Holcomb joined Indiana Department of Transportation Commissioner Joe McGuinness as well as other state and local officials to mark the beginning of the 2018 Next Level Roads construction season. Officials broke ground on a \$143 million expansion of Interstate 65 between Columbus and Seymour. This expansion was the kick-off for the 2018 construction year.

2018 Construction Season by the Numbers

- Resurface 2,229 lane miles
- Rehab/replace 613 bridges or culverts
26% increase over 2017
- 47 lane miles added
- Chip seal 1,522 lane miles
- 52 safety improvement projects
29% increase over 2017

More than 900 projects statewide

**2018 total investment of more than
\$1 billion**



Funding Opportunities Available for Local Communities

INDOT Local Trax Matching Grant Program is available to local communities for rail overpass projects. At least \$125 million is available for high-priority railroad safety projects on local roads statewide through the agency's new matching grant program.

For more information and how to apply click here: [INDOT Local Trax Matching Grant Program](#)

The Community Transportation Association (CTAA) along with its partners the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and the Institute for Community Inclusion of the University of Massachusetts-Boston has funding available for local inclusive planning projects. \$35,000 is available for up to 20 organizations for a six-month period.

For more information and how to apply click here: [CTAA Inclusive Planning Projects Grant](#)

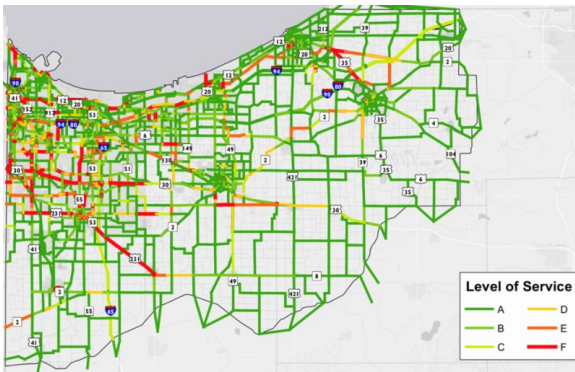
The 2018 AARP Community Challenge has begun! The AARP Community Challenge funds projects that build momentum for local change and to improve livability for all residents. In 2017, the AARP Community Challenge awarded 88 grants.

For more information and how to apply click here: [2018 AARP Community Challenge](#)

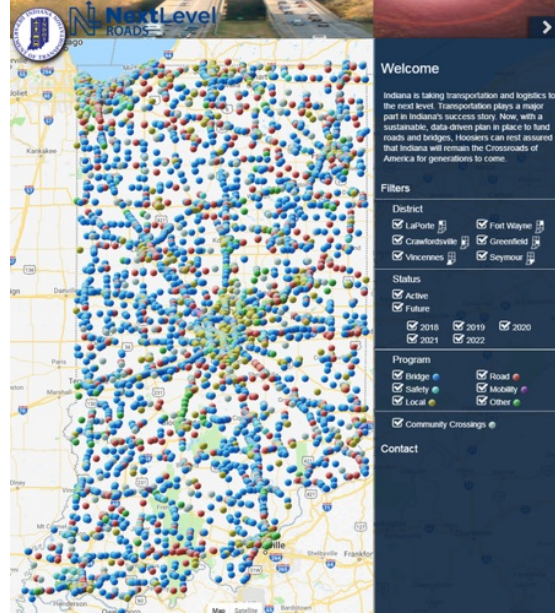
NIRPC 4/19 Full Commission Meeting Highlights

The INDOT LaPorte District as well as NIRPC officials presented at this month's NIRPC Full Commission Meeting. INDOT LaPorte District officials gave a strong presentation on the Next Level Roads projects that will take place all over the state. NIRPC officials spoke in regard to the congestion of vehicular traffic occurring in South Lake County and updates to projects listed in the 2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program. NIRPC officials addressed the congestion management process as well as performance based planning and more.

For additional information on current and future TIP projects, please click here: [2018-2021 TIP](#)



South Lake County experiences congestion as expressed by the "level of service indicator." This data has been taken from the "National Performance Management Research Data Set"



The new INDOT Construction Map assists Hoosiers with identifying current and future projects. This tool has the ability to isolate specific cities, regions, or the entire state.

For more information and a link to the presentations, please click here: [NIRPC 4/19 Full Commission Presentations](#)

What's Happening in Regional Planning for Northwestern Indiana?

2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan Public Meeting Kick-Off



By Trey Wadsworth
Director of Transportation

NIRPC will hold ten public meetings to listen to region residents, businesses, and stakeholders on their ideas and thoughts on what the vision and needs are for 2050. NIRPC is currently developing its next long-range plan to 2050 and the plan will address the environment, economic development, and transportation.

The long-range plan is a core transportation planning document required by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), such as NIRPC. The 2050 Plan will be the official vision document for the MPO identifying investments and strategies to pursue in the future.

The 2050 Plan is expected to be adopted by May 2019. All comments received during this public engagement period will be welcomed as NIRPC staff crafts a new vision, goals and need statements for the NIRPC commission to consider adopting for the 2050 Plan.

For details on meeting locations and times please [click here](#).

Also, please take a moment to do the 2050 Plan Survey. To access the survey, [click here](#).

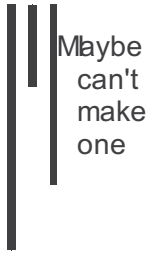
2050 Plan Public Meetings

LOCATION

Lake, Porter, LaPorte Counties

DATE AND TIME

We want to hear from you! Do you plan to come to a 2050 Public Meeting?



Blueways + Greenways 2020 Plan Adopted by NIRPC Executive Board

The Greenways+Blueways 2020 Plan was adopted on March 15, 2018, marking a significant milestone for NIRPC as the first such planning effort at any Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) level nationwide!

[Link to Additional Resources](#)



Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

By James Winters
Transit Planner

NIRPC is kicking-off the planning process for the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan. This "coordinated plan" is a federal requirement in order to receive funding for federal program 5310, "Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities." This federal funding program provides resources for eligible transit operators to improve the mobility for people with disabilities, people who are elderly, and people who are low income. Funding provided by this program can be used to pay for service, purchase new buses and vans, update old equipment, or even manage programming designed to engage with individuals who need mobility support.

A major benefit of this plan is to examine the transportation needs of people in the region in an even broader and more holistic sense. Ultimately, this plan seeks to answer, who in our region need transportation the most, and where do they need to go? NIRPC will use the answers we hear in this planning process to inform our decision-making for transit planning and programming over the next several years.

NIRPC is nearly complete in forming the steering committee that will direct the scope of the coordinated plan and its outreach efforts. The steering committee will be comprised of one transit operator from each county in the NIRPC region, one MPO representative, one representative of the aging community, one representative of the disabled community, one representative of workforce participation, and one member who will speak to regional housing needs. The committee will help write and distribute a survey related to the coordinated plan, determine listening session locations, provide technical oversight of the plan, and ultimately help coordinate plan goals and funding priorities. Listening sessions and the survey will take place this spring and summer, with presentations to the community and the commission later this fall.

Any individual or agency that is interested in attending a listening session, providing input, or distributing surveys should please contact James Winters, NIRPC's Transit Planner. He can be reached at jwinters@nirpc.org.

Partnership and Community Program Spotlight

**Accessible
Workshop for
Recreation Packs**



House

By Mitch Barloga, AICP
Active
Transportation Manager

On March 20th, NIRPC partnered with the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore to help host an all-day Accessibility Guideline Workshop specifically focused on parks and recreation areas. The event took place at NIRPC offices

and brought together over 50 public and private stakeholders throughout all of Northwest Indiana.

The workshop was designed to help participants gain a better understanding of the concept of “program access” and the application of accessibility standards to the unique outdoor recreation opportunities of the region. The training focused on accessibility for people with disabilities such as picnic areas, paddling and fishing facilities, and multi-use trails. Participants also explored the principles of universal design and opportunities to expand design concepts beyond the minimum standards for all visitors.

The workshop was conducted by Jennifer Skulski, who has more than two decades of experience in training and advocating for people with disabilities in parks, recreation and tourism. If you would like to learn more about universal design standards for your own community, either parks-based or anywhere in the built environment, please visit www.universaldesign.ie.

NIRPC Partners with Valparaiso University Data Science 151 Class

By Scott Weber
Transportation Planner/Analyst

This Spring 2018, NIRPC has been partnering with the Valparaiso University Data Science 151 Class, taught by Professor Karl Schmitt. The project that the partnership has focused on has been analyzing travel time probe data that come in via cell phones and in-vehicle GPS devices. Students in the class have been assisting NIRPC by using the project as their required community-based class project. It has been invaluable having NIRPC partner with such eager and constantly learning minds. The result of the project, which wraps up in May, will be a baseline report about how reliable and congested traffic is in the NIRPC Region. The report will be very helpful in better positioning NIRPC to set performance targets on reliability and congestion.



Valparaiso
University



CommuniTree Program

By Joe Exl
Senior Water Resource Planner

This spring is off to exciting start for the CommuniTree program which is going into its second year of existence. CommuniTree, a partnership with the United States Forest Service, Indiana Department of Resources, NIPSCO as well as NIRPC is a participating member. NIRPC received fifteen community applications this winter requesting native trees for the spring planting season. Many of the requests came from first time applicants including a number of

schools. NIRPC has been able to purchase several hundred trees and provided them to communities at no cost since 2017 through a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant from the U.S. Forest Service.

Over 400 trees were picked up by communities on March 21st following a CommuniTree tree planting and care workshop held at NIRPC. The one hundred or so remaining trees that NIRPC had ordered for the spring will be transferred to the Student Conservation Association to be planted and cared for by a number of Lake County communities they are currently working in. NIRPC was awarded additional grant funds earlier this year from the U.S. Forest Service ensuring several hundred additional trees will

be available through CommuniTree over the next two years.

Project Lightning Bug

*By Rachel Veronesi
Environmental Educator*

This summer NIRPC's clean air initiative, Northwest Indiana Clean Air, is starting a bicycle safety and air quality education initiative, Project Lightning Bug. The project entails giving away FREE bike lights and giving out air quality education material at public events such as night rides, safety villages, bike rodeos, and the like.

If a community group, organization, or city is interested in partnering on this initiative, please contact Rachel Veronesi, Environmental Educator, at rveronesi@nirpc.org.

We are looking forward to working with communities in Northwestern Indiana to keep our cyclists safe, get more people enjoying the freedom of two-wheels, and positively impact our air quality in Northwestern Indiana via cycling.



What is Northwest Indiana Clean Air?

NWI Clean air is a partnership between the people and businesses of northwest Indiana to educate and inspire residents to take action to improve our air quality in the region as well as foster a new generation to reduce air pollution and find new ways to do so.

Stay in touch with NWI Clean Air by following them on Facebook and Twitter and signing up for monthly e-newsletters with all the latest air quality tips, news, and events in our region!

Sign up at www.NWICleanAir.com/get-involved.

Follow Northwest Indiana Clean Air on Social Media!



Professional Development Spotlight

Philadelphia National Transit Institute Training

*By James Winters
Transit Planner*

I recently had the opportunity to attend the National Transit Institute's (NTI) course on the "Transportation Planning Process." This was a brand new course that outlines the specific role transit plays in every planning aspect of an MPO. The course was held at the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

While there have been many NTI courses that provide an overview of planning requirements for MPOs, this was the first course that provided the broad framework of federal planning requirements paired with the specific responsibilities of transit planning. Much of the course centered on the development of an internal iterative process of goal and target setting, problem identification, evaluation,

implementation, and monitoring and reporting across several plan types. The incorporation of targets and evaluation methods can help planners identify multiple solutions to the same problem, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposed solutions.

For instance, if a problem in the region is low transit ridership, the MPO and the transit operator can determine they would like to see an increase in transit ridership by 10% within a year. However, seeing the gain in ridership is not necessarily going to be linked to only a single program. The course encouraged planners to take a step back and examine other strategies that can accomplish the same goal. Is the answer a new project? Are maintenance problems increasing the wait time for riders? Can we replace the buses that are currently providing the service? Are there local partnerships we can leverage to encourage additional ridership? Then over time NIRPC and the transit operator will be poised to evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions they used, and start the process over again.

Like many NTI courses, I came away with more questions and more "homework" to review when I returned to NIRPC, however the course was very helpful overall. Program targets, performance metrics, goal setting, and evaluation will be an important asset in our upcoming planning work. Specifically, this method of implementation and evaluation will be valuable to the Comprehensive Long Range Plan, the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan, as well as the everyday management of the TIP.

New Public Participation Planner and GIS Planner Join NIRPC Staff

NIRPC is proud to announce two new team members! Dominique Edwards from Michigan City has come on board as the new Public Participation Planner, and Oscar Castillo from Porter, has joined NIRPC as the new Geographic Information Systems Planner. We are excited to welcome these talented and passionate individuals to help make Northwestern Indiana even better!



Dominique Edwards
Public Participation Planner



Oscar Castillo
Geographic Information Systems Planner

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