



The Regional View

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What's New in Regional Planning for Northwestern Indiana?

NIRPC Chairman becomes new President of National Association of Regional Councils



Geof Benson, Beverly Shores Councilman and current Chairman of NIRPC, was named the new President of the National Association of Regional Councils during NARC's 52nd Annual Conference & Exhibition in Orlando, FL in June. Geof has an active history at NARC, having previously represented District VI (Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) on the NARC Board while serving as chair of NARC's Environmental Committee. Geof follows Dave Shafer, Clerk-Treasurer of Munster and NIRPC Commissioner, who served as NARC President in 2012/2013. Through their leadership, northwest Indiana has had a significant influence in championing the benefits of regional collaboration nationwide. NIRPC congratulates Geof for his outstanding commitment to regional planning both here and nationally!

Providing even more national leadership from northwest Indiana, Blair Milo, Indiana's Secretary of Career Connections & Talent, was a keynote speaker at this national conference. Prior to taking on this newly-created cabinet position with the State of Indiana, Blair was a NARC Board member while Mayor of La Porte, and a past NIRPC Chair.

NIRPC Receives National Award for Greenways+Blueways Plan

At the NARC Annual Conference & Exhibition in Orlando, NIRPC received the **2018 Medium Metro Achievement Award** for the [Greenways+Blueways 2020 Plan](#) during NARC's Gala Awards Dinner. The *Greenways+Blueways 2020 Plan* highlights the benefits and relationships of both environmental and non-motorized transportation planning through three main topics: conservation, recreation, and transportation. Accepting the award were NIRPC Commissioners and NARC Board members



Geof Benson, Dave Shafer, and Justin Kiel (councilman from LaCrosse), with NIRPC Executive Director Ty Warner. The award was presented by Bob Dallari, Commissioner of Seminole County, FL and immediate past chair of NARC. The award-winning [Greenways + Blueways 2020 Plan](#) can be downloaded from NIRPC's website and will be available in libraries throughout the region.

Midwest Connect Hyperloop

NIRPC Chairman Geof Benson and Executive Director Ty Warner recently traveled to the Mojave Desert to join other MPOs and Federal transportation officials on a visit to [Hyperloop One's](#) test facility. (Hyperloop is a high-speed transportation concept conveying passengers or freight by means of a sealed, frictionless tube.)



Our colleagues at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission ([MORPC](#)) have been spearheading the [Midwest Connect Initiative](#), linking Chicago to Columbus, OH and Pittsburgh, PA by means of hyperloop technology. The corridor was selected for further study by Hyperloop One as one of 10 corridors worldwide (one of four in the U.S.) from a global competition involving over 2500 applications. See this piece from [Chicago Tonight](#) for more.

2050 Long-Range Plan Update



*By Dominique Edwards
Public Participation Planner*

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2050 Plan meetings, social media polls, and online survey. We are pleased to share with you the results of the feedback that we received. Below, you will find a link to the 2050 Plan Page as well as a breakdown of all of the feedback, survey results, and revisions that were presented to the public in April and May.

NIRPC staff will be recommending that critical paths be identified to achieve the vision statements for Northwestern Indiana in 2050. Learn

more [here](#).

Again, we want to thank each and every one of you that participated in the 2050 plan meetings during our initial round of public engagement and we hope that you continue to work with NIRPC during our planning process!

Click [here](#) for upcoming 2050 Plan updates, events and more.

Summer Pop-Up Event Series

For the next round of public engagement, NIRPC will be located at various events across the region such as farmer's markets, music festivals and more! Join us for our Pop-Up Event Series to learn more about the 2050 Plan, participate in an activity, grab a few goodies, and join our mailing list! We look forward to seeing you all!

Will you join NIRPC at a Summer Pop-up event near you?

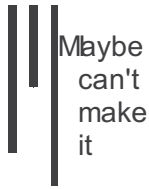
LOCATION

Across the Region

DATE AND TIME

08/10/18 7:30pm-09/01/18 9:30pm

NIRPC will be at various events across the region this summer. Look out for us at your local farmers markets, music fests and more!



Statewide Featured News



INDOT I-65 Northwest Indiana Expansion Project

The I-65 Northwest Indiana Expansion Project is INDOT's initiative to improve traffic flow and add capacity on I-65 from State Road 2 (S.R. 2) to U.S. 30 in Newton and Lake Counties.

The project will add one travel lane in each direction on this approximately 13-mile stretch of I-65. Additionally, the northbound and southbound bridges over the Kankakee River will be replaced to accommodate future expansion of the I-65 corridor.

The project also includes resurfacing the overpasses at 93rd, 113th, 137th and 153rd avenues and main line bridge work at 109th Avenue, U.S. 231 and S.R. 2

This expansion project is broken down into three segments:

I-65 from U.S. 231 to just south of U.S. 30

A new outside shoulder will be constructed and the existing lanes will be restriped to accommodate three lanes in each direction.

I-65 just south of S.R. 2 to U.S. 231

Resurfacing of the existing lanes and shoulder will occur, and a third lane and inside shoulder will be constructed in the median.

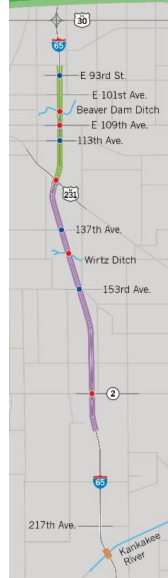
Kankakee River Bridges

The dual northbound and southbound bridges will be reconstructed. In 2017, only southbound traffic will be affected, with two lanes maintained.

For more information and a link to this article, click here: [I-65 Northwest Indiana Expansion Project](#)



I-65 Northwest Indiana Expansion Project



- A new shoulder will be constructed and the existing lanes restriped to accommodate three lanes in each direction on I-65 from U.S. 231 to just south of U.S. 30.
- The outside shoulder and existing lanes will be resurfaced and a third lane and inside shoulder will be constructed in the median on I-65 just south of S.R. 2 to U.S. 231.
- Mainline I-65 bridge work will include structure widening and/or resurfacing.
- Crossing overpasses will have rehab and/or resurfacing (short-term closures will occur).
- Northbound and southbound I-65 bridges over the Kankakee River will be replaced.

www.I-65Northwest.com



IARC Announces Selection of New Executive Director

The Indiana Association of Regional Councils (IARC) has announced the selection of Brian Long as the organization's new Executive Director. IARC, of which NIRPC is a member, is a statewide association of 15 regional planning organizations that promotes regional strategies and solutions to address local issues while assisting local governments in achieving those solutions.

Brian, whose career includes the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns (now Aim -- Accelerating Indiana's Municipalities), will be working with the Board of Directors and individual members to develop and implement new programs and initiatives to grow and improve IARC while assisting the individual members with providing and broadening their services to the local governments in their regions. For more information about IARC, click [here](#)

Agency News

Marquette Action Plan Receives Astounding Number of Public Comments

*By Gabrielle Biciunas
Long-Range Planner*

Northwest Indiana's Lake Michigan shoreline is the region's gem. It boasts beautiful and important natural space, vibrant communities, and vital industries. The Marquette Plan is a comprehensive and collaborative common



vision for guiding future decision-making across all of Indiana's Lake Michigan shoreline. This comprehensive vision is intended to create a lasting legacy that looks at each community individually and collectively, addressing both community-specific needs and broader regional objectives in order to reclaim Indiana's lakefront as a livable lakefront.

While the first iterations of the Marquette Plan highlighted individual and collective efforts to advance the goal of a livable and accessible lakefront, the **Marquette Action Plan (MAP)** aims to build on those plans by identifying specific steps to make the lakefront more accessible. The MAP identifies land across Northwest Indiana's shoreline that may feasibly be transformed into new publicly-accessible areas for conservation, recreation, amenities, and livable communities. The Plan defines different categories of access across the lakefront and identifies a means for accommodating those different uses on a region-wide level. The goal of the plan is to also explore opportunities to acquire parcels for redevelopment as open space, recreation, conservation land, mixed use development and define different tiers of access throughout the region's sub areas.

The MAP is broken up into three sections focusing on regional approaches to access, where specific improvements could be made, and ways to fund and maintain these improvements. The MAP focuses on eight regional themes as a means to improve lakefront access: accessibility for all; pedestrian and bicycle access; canoe and kayak access; fishing access; parking access; public transit; planning and tourism coordination.

The Marquette Plan's main vision is to increase public shoreline access from approximately 33% to over 75%, and to provide a 1000 ft minimum setback for new development. Since the beginning of the Marquette Plan, 76% of that goal has been achieved.

The MAP is written to be a reference for communities, advocates, and residents throughout the Northwest Indiana region and to push the needle a little closer to the vision of an open and accessible lakefront for all. Funding for this project was provided in part by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Lake Michigan Coastal Program, and the Regional Development Authority.

For more information and a link to the Marquette Action Plan Public Comment Report, click [here](#).



Deep River Dam Feasibility Study

By Joe Exl
Senior Water Resource Planner

Nationwide there is an emerging trend to remove or modify dams that no longer serve their original purpose and/or have become too costly or problematic to maintain. In June 2017, NIRPC contracted with Flatland Resources, LLC to complete a feasibility study to evaluate the potential removal or modification of a deteriorating low head dam located on Deep River near Liverpool Road in Lake Station. The dam was built sometime during the 1930's for recreational

purposes and has created an impoundment that extends upstream nearly six and a half miles. An estimated one million cubic yards of sediment have accumulated behind the dam since its construction.

The feasibility study evaluated four different options including no action, complete dam removal, construction of a fish ladder, and modifying the existing dam to include a rock riffle structure. Based on the environmental and social impacts associated with each option, the rock riffle structure was selected as the preferred option. "The next step to make this a reality is to complete an engineering study" says Joe Exl, a Senior Water Resource Planner at NIRPC. "Our intent is to seek grant funding again from the Department of Natural Resources' Lake & River Enhancement Program and Lake Michigan Coastal Program for engineering design and permitting. We are hopeful that the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission, as the new owner of the dam, will provide a letter of support for this phase of the project." NIRPC was able to leverage grant funding from both programs so that almost no local match was required to complete the feasibility study.

The recommended action would provide fish passage and increase in-stream habitat diversity; improve recreational access and safety along the river; maintain the existing community identity; and be a potential economic driver. Deep River within this reach is identified as a high priority blueway

Partnership and Community Program Spotlight

Partnership with Valparaiso University Data Science Class Produces Successful Results

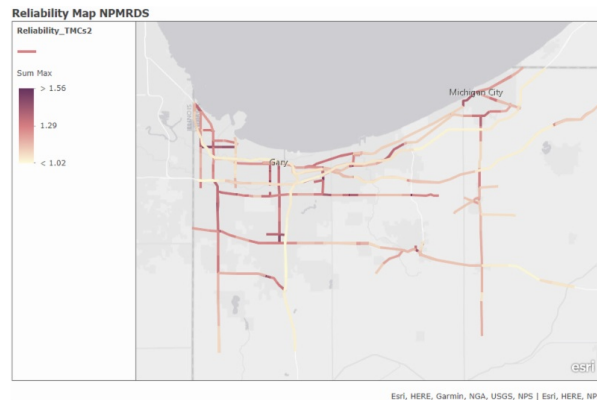
By Scott Weber
Transportation Planner/Analyst

NIRPC concluded its partnership with the Valparaiso University Data Science 151 Class in May. Students, with assistance from NIRPC staff, analyzed travel time probe data that was collected via cell phones and in-vehicle GPS devices. Students produced a baseline report about travel time reliability and congestion of traffic across the region. This report has been very helpful in better positioning how NIRPC sets performance targets on reliability and congestion.

Students put their Python computer language skills to the test, which dramatically improved the efficiency of the process. Previously, NIRPC has relied on SQL language, to analyze and interpret this type of data. NIRPC staff also took the opportunity to teach students how to use Geographic Information System (GIS). This new skill set, allowed students to map out where the unreliable and congested areas in Northwest Indiana are. Upon completion of this project, the Surface Transportation Committee learned of the results at the June 5, 2018 meeting.

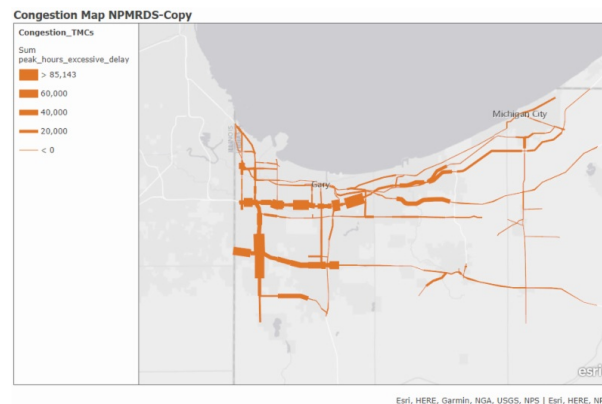
For more information on this research, please reach out to Scott Weber, Transportation Planner/Analyst at sweber@nirpc.org

2017 Northwest Indiana Traffic Time Reliability Map



In this map, you can observe the results of the traffic time reliability analysis across Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties. Darker colors indicate roads with less reliability and lighter colors indicate roads with more reliability.

2017 Northwest Indiana Traffic Congestion Map



In this map, you can observe the results of the traffic congestion analysis across Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties. Thicker lines indicate roads with more congestion and thinner lines indicate roads with less congestion.

Project Lightning Bug

By Rachel Veronesi
Environmental Educator

This summer, [Northwest Indiana Clean Air](#) is starting a bicycle safety and air quality education initiative, Project Lightning Bug! The project entails giving away 3,000 FREE bike lights and handing out air quality education materials at public events such as night rides, safety villages, bike rodeos, and the like.

Project Lightning Bug will be at the following events/programs this year:

Tuesday and Thursdays Now through

August 9th (bike safety lights will be available June 26th) - Hammond Police

Department Safety Village - 10am-2pm at the Hammond Civic Center, Hammond, IN,

www.facebook.com/events/944622495697172/

*Accepting Donations - new and used bike; Contact Officer Pat Vicari at (219) 712-0182

Now through October 27th - Miller Spotlight Take Bike the Streets Build-A-Bike, Saturdays from 12-2pm and Wednesday 6-7pm (June-August) at 6300 Old Miller Ave Gary, IN,

www.facebook.com/events/389943414839759/

*Accepting donations during event dates and times - new and used bikes, bike parts, and bike tools

August 7th - Tri-Town Safety Village and Schererville Police Department Night Out Against Crime from 6-9pm at Redar Park Schererville, IN, www.facebook.com/events/189813221733451/

AND Tri-Town Safety Village Safety Classes throughout the school year, www.safetyvillage.us/ and www.schererville.org/events/national-night-out-2018/

August 11th - WHAM Night Ride, The PAV (The Pavilion at Wolf Lake), 2324 Calumet Ave, Hammond, IN, www.facebook.com/events/171606433508840/

August 17th - City of La Porte Parks & Recreation Night Ride, Civic Auditorium, La Porte, IN, www.facebook.com/events/889808691223019/

August 25th - City of Valpo Parks Night Ride, Butterfield Family Pavilion, Valparaiso, IN, www.facebook.com/events/1657994817647057/

For more information about these events, please visit the event section on Northwest Indiana Clean Air's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pg/NwiCleanAir/events/.

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.

If a community group, organization, or city is interested in partnering on this initiative, please contact Kathy Luther, Chief of Staff, at kluther@nirpc.org.



Brought to you by
Northwest Indiana Clean Air
a
Northwestern Indiana
Regional Planning Commission
clean air initiative



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.



Professional Development Spotlight

Urban Climate Action Network Conference

By Dominique Edwards
Public Participation Planner



On the week of July 9th, I represented NIRPC at the inaugural Urban Climate Action Network (UCAN) Conference. UCAN is a national youth corps that was developed by the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland, in partnership with the American Planning Association (APA), the Antarctic and Southern Ocean

Coalition (ASOC) and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE). UCAN empowers teens concerned about climate change within their communities to take action to make their communities better places to live, work and play.

High School aged students, sponsored by an organization and under the supervision of their adult leader, were encouraged to apply earlier this year. The three-year program, empowers youth to learn about climate change and to take action in their communities. This years' groups were from Samoana High School Parent Teacher Association in Pago Pago, American Samoa; Parks and People Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland; Coppin Memorial AME Church in Chicago, Illinois; Carter Tabernacle CME Church in Orlando, Florida; and Kickapoo High School Science Club in Powhattan, Kansas.

During the week, the youth worked closely with and discussed current climate science challenges with science professionals, built leadership and practical skills, and explored careers in conservation science, urban planning, communications, civic engagement and more.

I was invited as one of the keynote speakers and talked to the group of 30 students and mentors about the impacts of climate change on urban environments, the importance of civic engagement, and provided technical assistance and mentoring throughout the week as they developed their climate action plans. Additional planning professionals, such as David Rouse, Managing Director of Research and Advisory Services of the APA, Silvia Vargas, Commissioner of the American Institute of Certified Planners, Kristin Baja, Climate Resilience Officer of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network, and Abby Cocke, Environmental Planner from the City of Baltimore's Office of Sustainability were among a number of professionals that provided mentoring and technical assistance to the youth as well. Students also took a tour to observe sustainability initiatives in Baltimore's Inner Harbor and West Baltimore. Students had the opportunity to meet with professionals, activists, and community leaders working to revitalize Baltimore via community gardens, urban farms, and additional green infrastructure projects.

Following the student's time in Baltimore, the teams will return to their respective cities with the skills needed to create action plans addressing the real problems their communities face. In addition, over the course of the three-year program, all five teams will have access to a technical expert from the APA and will be eligible for small grants to help turn their plans into reality, providing them the opportunity to bring about meaningful change. Environmental issues that these teens are attempting to tackle are water quality and conservation, turning vacant lots into community green spaces, neighborhood clean-ups, and air quality education. To end the conference on an even higher note, students heard a motivational closing speech from Dr. Mamie Parker, former Assistant Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Dr. Parker led an inspiring and incredibly motivating speech that was enjoyed by all.

In 2019, three additional teams will be selected from various cities across the country to join the inaugural teams, further expanding the program's reach and providing the opportunity for participants to collaborate and share insight with like-minded teens.

Photo courtesy of National Aquarium.

NIRPC Staff Highlights

New Regional Planner, Administrative Assistant and Summer Interns Join NIRPC Staff

NIRPC is proud to announce that we have five new team members! NIRPC would like to welcome Peter Kimball, Regional Planner, Candice Eklund Administrative Assistant, Nathan Pasyk, Transportation Intern, Nick Vojvodich, Planning Intern, and Glen Wells, Accounting Intern. We are excited to welcome these talented and passionate individuals to help make Northwestern Indiana even better!



Peter Kimball
Regional Planner/Policy Analyst



Candice Eklund
Administrative Assistant



Nathan Pasyk
Transportation Intern



Nick Vojvodich
Transportation Intern



Glen Wells
Accounting Intern

