

Economy & Place Committee
April 8, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Chairman George Topoll began the Economy & Place Committee meeting with the pledge of allegiance and introductions.

Voting members: George Topoll, John Matwyshyn, Joe Wszolek, Gary Johnson.

Guests attending: Michele Murday Pariso, David Wellman, Erica Dombey.

NIRPC staff: Eman Ibrahim, Tom Vander Woude, Stephen Hughes, Grace Benninger, Kathy Luther, Scott Weber, Meredith Stilwell.

On motion by Joe Wsolek, seconded by Gary Johnson, October 8, 2025, minutes were approved with the correction of the misspelling.

Presentation: 2026 NWI RDA Development Catalyst Grant

Dave Wellman, Director of Communications for the Regional Development Authority (RDA), presented an overview of the newly launched Development Catalyst Grant. The RDA is committing \$250,000 to the program, with individual grants ranging from \$15,000 to \$75,000. The funding is intended to help local governments in Lake and Porter counties develop the tools, plans, and frameworks needed to attract high-quality development, expand the local tax base, and align local priorities with the region's long-term vision.

All cities, towns, townships, and county governments in Lake and Porter counties are eligible to apply. Joint applications from multiple jurisdictions are encouraged and will receive preference during the evaluation process. Eligible activities include policy and regulatory updates, marketing and recruitment materials, technical studies and analysis, and procurement tools. Funded projects must directly support development outcomes that expand the local tax base.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Tom Vander Woude presented an update on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which maintains the vision, goals, organization, and 2050 horizon of the existing **NWI 2050+** plan while incorporating updated data, performance measures, and public and stakeholder input

The update includes refreshed socioeconomic forecasts, financial planning, air quality conformity, and a focus on implementation actions and regionally significant projects across active transportation, environment, freight, land use and housing, highways, and transit.

A draft timeline spanning **Q1 2026 through Q2 2027** was reviewed, outlining phased work on regional performance analysis, public engagement, project identification and evaluation, financial constraint, and plan development, culminating in public comment and final plan adoption.

Staff members Eman Ibrahim, Grace Benniner, Scott Weber, and Kathy Luther gave presentations on their respective areas: Land Use & Housing, Demographics, Transportation, and Environment. As the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is currently in the review and analysis phase, with several components still under development, committee feedback was requested. This feedback will be used to further refine and update the MTP in advance of public engagement and comment.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m. The next Economy & Place Committee meeting is scheduled for July 8, 2026, at the NIRPC offices.