

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
Minutes of the May 15, 2025 Full Commission Meeting

Call to Order

Chair Wendy Mis called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointment to the Commission of Lori Latham (City of Gary).

Roll Call—Taken by Candice Eklund. As a note, 26 commissioners were present during the roll call; 27 Commissioners are needed to fulfill a quorum of the Full Commission. The meeting of the Executive Board was then called to order at 9:09 a.m. Five additional Commissioners arrived after the roll call, allowing the meeting to convert to a meeting of the Full Commission.

Present

The 31 Commissioners present at the meeting are listed below:

- Kyle Allen, Lake County Commissioner
- Jenny Beier, Town of Schneider
- Thomas Black, Town of Highland
- Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor
- James Burge, Town of Porter
- Robert Carnahan, Town of Cedar Lake
- Daina Dumbrys, Town of Michiana Shores
- Denise Ebert, Town of Wanatah
- Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor
- Keesha Hardaway, Town of Merrillville
- Christian Hendron, Porter Township Trustee
- Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, City of East Chicago
- Lori Hunt, Town of Westville
- Peter Land, City of Crown Point
- Lori Latham, City of Gary
- John Matwyshyn, La Porte County Surveyor
- Jack McGraw – Town of Burns Harbor
- Wendy Mis, Town of Munster
- Edward Morales, Porter County Commissioner
- Randall Niemeyer, Lake County Council
- Courtney Parthun, City of La Porte
- David Phelps, Town of Beverly Shores
- Linda Pompeii, Town of Pottawattomie Park
- Warren Schacht, Town of Trail Creek
- Tom Schmitt, Town of Schererville
- Steve Spebar, City of Whiting
- Gerald Swets, Town of St. John
- Mary Tanis, Town of Dyer
- Jim Ton, Town of Chesterton
- George Topoll, Union Township
- Andy Vasquez, Porter County Council

A representative from INDOT was unable to attend.

Absent

The 19 Commissioners absent from the meeting are listed below:

- Duane Arndt, Town of Kingsford Heights
- Austin Bonta, City of Portage
- Bill Carroll, City of Lake Station
- Tim Clayton, Town of Winfield
- Jon Costas, City of Valparaiso
- Connie Gramarossa, La Porte County Commissioner
- Bonnie Hawksworth, Town of Dune Acres
- Josh Huddlestun, City of Hobart
- Justin Kiel, La Porte County Council
- Scott Kingan, Town of Ogden Dunes
- Colleen Lane, Town of Long Beach
- Tom McDermott, City of Hammond
- Angie Nelson Deutch, City of Michigan City
- Jim Pressel, Governor Appointee
- Lisa Rosenkranz, Town of LaCrosse
- Rick Ryfa, Town of Griffith
- Sharon Szvedo, Town of New Chicago
- CJ Wittmer, Town of Kouts
- John Yelkich, Town of Lowell

Hebron, Kingsbury, and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Tom Vander Woude, Kathy Luther, Denarie Kane, Mitch Barloga, Scott Weber, Charles Bradsky, Meredith Stilwell, Flor Baum, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Public Comment - There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 20, 2025, Full Commission meeting were approved on motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Jim Ton.

Leadership – Wendy Mis, Munster Clerk-Treasurer

Ty Warner and Wendy Mis recognized Flor Baum's five-year milestone service at NIRPC.

Wendy Mis reported that the Leadership Committee met on May 13 and voted to recommend the two items below to the Commission for approval.

- **Resolution #25-07: Authorizing the Submittal of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) FY 2025 Partnership Planning Grant Application to Administer the Economic Development District.** Ty Warner added this annual resolution is required from the EDA each time this application is submitted. On motion by Gerald Swets and seconded by Jim Ton, the Full Commission approved Resolution #25-07.
- **Marquette Greenway Supplemental Agreement #2.** Mitch Barloga presented the second amendment to the Marquette Greenway Supplemental agreement, which increases the contract amount from \$764,600 to \$960,755. The adjustment reflects additional costs related to engineering, utility, and railroad coordination and right-of-way services in Michigan City. The Leadership Committee recommended proceeding with the amendment, contingent upon approval of a RAISE grant amendment from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and a Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) grant amendment from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. On motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by James Burge, the Full Commission approved the second amendment to the Marquette Greenway Supplemental agreement contract.

Transportation – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor

Kevin Breitzke reported the Transportation Committee met on May 6, 2025, and heard a presentation on INDOT's US 30 West PEL study for safety and mobility. The next Transportation Committee is scheduled for August 5, 2025.

The Transportation Committee recommended the four resolutions below to the Commission.

- **Resolution #25-08: FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).** Tom Vander Woude presented the FY 2026 UPWP, which is the required one-year update to the FY 2025-2026 UPWP. The UPWP is a federally required document by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) that outlines how NIRPC will allocate its federal funding. The UPWP serves three primary purposes: provides an approved work plan for NIRPC staff, outlines planning tasks for the upcoming fiscal year, and functions as a financial planning tool linking staff activities to funding sources.

Due to significant changes at the federal level, the USDOT has shifted its focus on many areas and advised NIRPC to remove all references to Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs). Additionally, references to rescinded Executive Orders are being removed, including the order related to Environmental Justice, which was previously a significant component of NIRPC's planning. Instead, NIRPC will now reference civil rights legislation in its planning. Additionally, references to climate change and greenhouse gas emissions will be removed from the UPWP. Lori Latham inquired whether these changes were required based on guidance from the Indiana Division of the FHWA and Region 5 of the FTA. Tom confirmed that NIRPC had received formal communications from USDOT stating that all contracts and grant agreements must comply with current federal standards. He added that NIRPC is also a council of governments that conducts activities using funding not documented in the UPWP. There will continue to be an environmental component to the work at NIRPC, but the work specifically focused on greenhouse gas and climate change will not be funded through the UPWP, though it can potentially be funded from other sources.

Ty added that these advisements are not unique to NIRPC and that NIRPC is in communication with other MPOs nationwide. Following a robust discussion, Randall Niemeyer stated that his experience on President Trump's DOT transition team was that their focus has not shifted from results, and that

the changes are more about terminology than substance. He said the Commission should remain focused on the objective because there have been many good projects that have had good results for the entire region. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Kyle Allen, the Full Commission approved resolution #25-08.

Tom Vander Woude briefly introduced the three resolutions below, requiring a vote today. Resolutions 25-09, approval of the Air Quality Conformity Report, which demonstrates that a proposed transportation plan will not cause or contribute to violations of air quality standards in a nonattainment or maintenance area; 25-10, MTP Amendment #2, which is the minimum 20-year plan for the improvement, maintenance, and operation of the transportation system; and 25-11, adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program, which is a 5-year plan for the use of federal transportation funds in the NIRPC metropolitan planning area. He stated that all three documents were made available for public review and comment during a formal public comment period in accordance with NIRPC's adopted Public Participation Plan, and NIRPC held three public meetings, one each in Lake County, Porter County, and La Porte County. He said that no public comments were received, but some agency comments were received and responded to, and that the details are listed in the individual public comment reports for each resolution.

- **Resolution #25-09: Air Quality Conformity Determination Report.** Scott Weber presented this report, which NIRPC is required to produce because the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated portions of NW Indiana as nonattainment for ozone. The Clean Air Act requires the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Metropolitan Transportation Plan to demonstrate this conformity. NIRPC collaborated with the Interagency Consultation Group to fulfill the Indiana conformity requirements. The report shows that implementing regionally significant, non-exempt projects does not cause or contribute to Ozone precursor emissions (NO_x and VOC) at or above motor vehicle emissions budgets in State Implementation Plan (SIP). On motion by Mary Tanis and seconded by George Topoll, the Full Commission approved Resolution #25-09.
- **Resolution #25-10: NWI 2050+ Amendment #2.** Scott Weber presented the proposed amendment to NWI 2050+, NIRPC's long-range transportation plan, originally adopted in 2023. The amendment updates a section of the text to reference the just adopted Air Quality Conformity Determination Report, dated May 15, 2025, which is necessary to ensure consistency between the NWI 2050+ and the upcoming FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Since the new TIP includes regionally significant, non-exempt projects that are either new or have changed in scope from the current NWI 2050+ plan, the amendment must be adopted before TIP approval. On motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by Jim Ton, the Full Commission approved Resolution #25-10.
- **Resolution #25-11: FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).** Charles Bradsky reported that this is NIRPC's short-range plan for programming federal highway and transit funds over the next five years. The presentation described the various project funding categories, the three urbanized areas, transit projects, and how the new TIP is fiscally constrained. On motion by Tom Schmitt and seconded by George Topoll, the Full Commission approved Resolution #25-11.

Economy & Place – George Topoll

George Topoll thanked NIRPC staff and all involved in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy process. The committee met on April 4th and offered suggestions after reviewing the draft CEDS, which was also posted for a 30-day public comment period. The public comments received are included in the CEDS appendix.

Resolution #25-06: 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Annie Porter-Cruz, Community and Regional Development Specialist with the Purdue Center for Regional Development, presented on the CEDS document and discussed what is happening strategically across the Midwest and the Great Lakes states. There have been significant investments at the federal level in Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois to establish US National Centers of Excellence to increase national security. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted, where they had four stakeholder collaborations and focused on Industry and Industry Clusters, Talent and Workforce, and Quality of Living.

The committee identified three core goals to be included in the CEDS, with metrics identified to track progress.

- Economic Diversification and Innovation
- Workforce Resiliency
- Quality of Place

The metrics align with NIRPC's capacity to generate and monitor relevant data, including indicators that track the health of targeted industrial clusters.

Denarie Kane reported on the public comments received during the public comment period, adding that the comments received did not result in significant changes to the CEDS document. On motion by George Topoll and seconded by Andy Vasquez, the Full Commission approved the CEDS as presented with the contingency that minor edits, as needed for clarity, may still be made before submission to the EDA for approval, but no substantive changes will be made.

ENVIRONMENT – Bill Emerson

Bill Emerson began by announcing that Reggie Korthals, Executive Director of the Indiana MS4 Partnership, will be retiring this year. Reggie was recently honored with an award recognizing her 17 years of dedicated service to the statewide organization. She described her work as an educator as a rewarding, enjoyable, and meaningful journey.

Bill Emerson reported the Environment Committee met on May 1st and heard updates from some of their local partners, including IDEM. The Environment Committee recommended the resolution below.

Resolution #25-12, Affirming NIRPC's Environmental Commitment and Planning for Grant Cancellations. The resolution acknowledges the federal EPA environmental grants that are being cancelled. There have been 400 grants cancelled as of May 1, 2025. NIRPC supports three initiatives: Transportation, Economic Development, and Environment. Mr. Emerson said the Commission has always supported the Environment Committee and the environment locally and feels the Commission should reaffirm its commitment at this time, especially in light of the current environmental regulations and funding. David Phelps asked if the 400 cancelled grants affect NIRPC. One is the Environmental Justice capacity building grant that allows NIRPC to build a re-grant program. On motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Lori Latham, the Full Commission approved Resolution #25-12. The next meeting is scheduled on August 7 at 10:00 a.m.

Other Business

Robert Carnahan reported that it was National Police Week. It is celebrated on May 15 each year.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan relayed announcements of events in Cedar Lake.

Kevin Breitzke thanked NIRPC staff for the improved video and sound system recordings of their committee meetings on YouTube.

Ty Warner thanked the Commissioners for attending and approving the items requiring a vote. NIRPC staff work very hard to condense the meeting materials and presentations, but they do err on the side of transparency for clarification. Everything that was voted on today is a federal requirement in order for communities around the NIRPC table to receive federal funding for transportation projects and economic development funding through the EDA.

Hearing no other business, Wendy Mis adjourned the meeting at 10:53 a.m. The next meeting will be a full Commission meeting on August 21, 2025.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [Full Commission Meeting 5-15-25 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-15-25)