

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
Minutes of the May 21, 2026, Executive Board Meeting

Call to Order

Chair Austin Bonta called the meeting to order at 9:03 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 Justin Albright (Town of Hebron).

Roll Call - Taken by Candice Eklund

Present

The 9 Commissioners on the Executive Board in attendance are listed below:

- Austin Bonta, City of Portage
- Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor
- Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor
- Anthony Ferraro, Governor's Appointee
- Joe Haney, La Porte County Commissioner
- Courtney Parthun, City of La Porte
- David Phelps, Town of Beverly Shores
- Tom Schmitt, Town of Schererville
- Jim Ton, Town of Chesterton

Absent

- Denise Ebert, Town of Wanatah
- Wendy Mis, Town of Munster

The 7 other Commissioners present at the meeting are listed below:

- Jenny Beier, Town of Schneider
- Jim Burge, Town of Porter
- Bob Carnahan, Town of Cedar Lake
- Lori Latham, City of Gary
- Annette Ludwig, Town of Dyer
- John Matwyshyn, La Porte County Surveyor
- George Topoll, Union Township

Matt Deitchley, representing INDOT, was also present.

Kingsbury and Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Talaya Jones, Tom Vander Woude, Charles Bradsky, Denarie Kane, Meredith Stilwell, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the April 16 Full Commission meeting were approved on motion by Tom Schmitt and seconded by Joe Haney.

Leadership – Austin Bonta, Mayor of Portage

Talaya Jones of NIRPC presented the 2025 year-end financial summary. The total revenue collected in 2025 was \$10,081,794,29, with 61% coming from federal agencies. Total expenditures for 2025 were \$10,256,824.37, with just under 66% allocated to transit agency funds, representing the seven subrecipients managed by NIRPC. Kevin Breitzke noted that \$674,000 was appropriated from Lake, La Porte, and Porter Counties. Ty Warner added that in 2024, a legislative change to NIRPC's enabling statute was enacted to right-size local appropriations received from these counties. He explained that the rate of \$0.70 per capita, which had remained unchanged since 1993, had not been increased since that time. He expressed appreciation for the strong support from all three county councils, noting their unanimous approval of the legislation.

Transportation – Kevin Breitcke, Porter County Surveyor

Kevin Breitcke reported that the Transportation Committee met on May 5, 2026, where staff reported an update on the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), regional profile performance measures for highways, transit, and freight, and performance measures for the active transportation network. The next Transportation Committee meeting is scheduled for August 4, 2026.

The Transportation Committee recommended the resolution below to the Executive Board.

- **Resolution #26-08:** FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Amendment 26-06.1. The public comment period was held from April 6 through April 27. No comments were received from the public or the Interagency Consultation Group. Tom Schmitt asked about the scope of the project for DES #2300709; Charles will provide it to him after the meeting. On motion by Tom Schmitt and seconded by Bill Emerson, the Executive Board approved Resolution #26-08.

Mitch Barloga presented an original South Shore poster that NIRPC recently received from the Friends of the Marquette Greenway group. Christina Knowski is an environmental artist who assisted in creating the poster. Copies of the poster are available at the Indiana Dunes Visitor Center.

Tom Vander Woude presented an update on the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), outlining progress to date, the project timeline, and upcoming expectations. He noted that the MTP is one of NIRPC's core planning documents required of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The plan is a 20-year vision for regional development, identifies project selection for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and provides direction for the region's air quality emissions budget. Key updates to the plan will include incorporating new data, increasing public engagement, updating performance measures, refining technical components, identifying implementation with local governments, and updating the list of significant projects. Preliminary public engagements have begun and are expected to expand throughout the summer; a detailed schedule will be released in the next few weeks. The MTP will be completed by June 2027, when it will be presented to the Commission for adoption. The current plan expires in 2028.

A brief recess was taken to allow Commissioners to participate in an exercise to provide input on a preference table display board for the *NWI 2050+*. Commissioners identified their priority areas on the board that they believe NIRPC should focus on as it updates the MTP. This activity is also used at public engagements.

Gorge Topoll asked if NIRPC staff would be willing to attend a Township Board meeting to discuss the MTP, review the process, and provide feedback. Tom said NIRPC would be happy to do that and extended the offer to any municipality.

INDOT – Matt Deitchley

Matt Deitchley reported on concerns INDOT received during the recent heavy rainstorm that caused isolated flooding on I-80/94, noting that the issue was resolved quickly. He also shared that the Flex Road project will be starting this year, including the installation of fiber-optic lines. The project will take place over the next three years to improve mobility and safety. Matt noted that the Operation Road Wise program, hosted by Indiana LTAP, will be held on June 23 in Plymouth and will focus on improving road safety.

Kevin Breitcke asked whether INDOT anticipates increased enforcement in work zones. Matt said there are currently work zone safety cameras at select locations across the state, with only four active sites at any given time due to strict legislative stipulations. It is anticipated that one of those cameras will be in our area from time to time this summer. He noted that these cameras have dramatically reduced traffic speeds in those areas, which is a great benefit. In addition to camera enforcement, INDOT partners with the Indiana State Police (ISP) and local law enforcement to support enforcement efforts. Anthony Ferraro added that once Governor Braun took office, he organized ISP and brought forth a renewed commitment to traffic safety. In addition to the efforts to improve traffic safety numbers, there has been an increase in the interdiction of illegal activities and noted collaboration with federal partners (Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)) to support enforcement activities, adding that Indiana State Police Superintendent Anthony Scott was doing a fantastic job.

Economy & Place – George Topoll, Union Township

George Topoll reported that the Economy & Place committee has not met since the last Commission meeting. The next Economy & Place meeting is scheduled for July 8.

Environment – Bill Emerson

Bill Emerson reported that the Environment Committee met on May 7 at Purdue University Calumet in Hammond and thanked George Topoll for Chairing the meeting in his absence. The committee provided feedback on environmental performance measures for the MTP 2050 update. Celena Green, NIRPC Economic Recovery Core Fellow, presented on best practices and tools to help communities plan for and manage potential data center sites that benefit local needs and priorities. The next Environment meeting is scheduled for August 6.

Other Business

No other business was discussed

Announcements

Bob Carnahan (Cedar Lake) and George Topoll (Union Township) relayed announcements of various events.

Denarie Kane, NIRPC, shared information about the State of Indiana's recently announced [Keep IN](#) program introduced by Governor Braun. This program is for small business owners who want to sell their businesses. Nationally, about 92% of small businesses close rather than sell or transfer ownership. Most Indiana businesses are owned by people aged 55 or older; these businesses account for 10% of the state's economic output. Northwest Indiana is one of three pilot areas where small business owners can access free services to help with this transition. Ms. Kane asked that Commissioners refer business owners facing this situation to her so she can connect them with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) for assistance with securing a buyer or preparing a succession plan.

Hearing no other business, Austin Bonta adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m. The next meeting will be an Executive Board meeting on June 18, 2026. The remaining Full Commission meetings for 2026 are scheduled for July 17 and November 10.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [May 21, 2026 Commission Meeting](#).