

Surface Transportation Committee

Lake Michigan Room

YouTube Recording:

<https://youtu.be/uzEDWucKxx8?si=6Bsv3HMcfOHOApCH>

August 29, 2023

Minutes

Kevin Breitzke called the Surface Transportation Committee (STC) meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

In attendance were Kevin Breitzke, Gerald Swets (St. John), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), Dean Button (Hammond), Jeff Huet (Schererville), David Wright (GPTC), George Topoll (Union Township), and Angela Strotman (DCI).

NIRPC staff present were Scott Weber, Tom Vander Woude, Kevin Polette, and Flor Baum.

On motion by Gerald Swets, second by Dean Button, the STC voted to approve the 2023 minutes as presented.

There were no public comments.

Transformational Projects and Federal Discretionary Grant Awards Updates

Dean Button and Jeff Huet spoke on transformational projects and federal discretionary grant awards updates. The City of Hammond's Governor's Parkway Railroad Overpass Project was awarded \$7M by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant for construction. The new grade separation of Governors Parkway over Norfolk Southern Railroad corridor, beginning from 173rd Street to 169th Street, along Parrish Avenue. will eliminate two points where local roads intersect with railroad tracks. Delays have been through the NEPA process. Currently, there is ongoing communication regarding the FRA wanting to reevaluate the NEPA document under their standards. Letting is slated for the fall of 2024. Consultant procurement will model INDOTs procedures. The Town of Schererville was awarded \$8.4M for a railroad overpass on Kennedy Av, which is Ph I of the project to extend the road south to US 30. NEPA was approved by the time Schererville got the federal rail. There are plans to take some of the fill needed for the project from Hartsdale Pond (county-owned and adjacent to the project) as part of a regulated drain. Schererville went through the economic engineering process for a bridge submittal that was estimated to cost \$9M (pre Covid) for the Trax project. However, the cost of the project is now expected to cost \$18M. A TIP was set up in 2000 for the Kennedy Corridor. The cost of the bridge is 3x the cost that was originally expected. Ph I, II, and III will be funded. However, financing may be required for Ph IV. Scott announced that the Reconnecting Communities Grant award deadline is September 28. For more information, please contact Scott at sweber@nirpc.org.

E-commerce in NW Indiana Phase 2 Projects Updates

Scott spoke on e-commerce in NW Indiana Ph II Projects Updates. Ph I was a project for the E-commerce in NWI report and was adopted by the Commission in 2020. It is a regional plan about how the Region can best prepare for investments in e-commerce. Ph II is looking more at the local level for e-commerce preparedness. NIRPC staff looked at e-commerce trends and impacts on land use, transportation network, and traffic. Local impact analysis on urban land use planning and freight movement were also taken into consideration. Additional project outcomes looked at potential locations for warehouses and distribution centers and travel demand around existing and future e-commerce facilities. NIRPC staff came up with a set of recommendations to NWI municipalities on how best to anticipate e-commerce impacts, mitigate their effects, and benefit

from the opportunities presented by e-commerce. Recommendations for Ph I were discussed. Diversifying the workforce to meet the future logistics job demand, increasing and prioritizing funding to improve urban freight movement, and continuing to raise the Region's profile as a thriving place to do business. Create loading zones on high-traffic roads to make it easier for delivery drivers to find space and access buildings without impeding other road users. Demand for warehouse and distribution centers that exceed 250,000 square feet is growing in secondary major distribution and population hubs. e-commerce Ph II strategies involve exploring new tax structures to address expected issues with the decrease in property tax revenue because of the closure of brick-and-mortar retail. Since online shopping will continue to grow, local governments should find other ways to sustain local public services. A second strategy is to develop and expand warehouse floor space and distribution centers to accommodate the growth of e-commerce. There is also a plan to repurpose big box retail and large surface parking to turn into distribution centers, logistics hubs, and supply chains. The e-commerce recommendations are to redevelop blighted sites, which is especially vital for inner-ring communities that have no land available to grow their tax base. Local governments should establish redevelopment plans that provide solutions to repurpose vacant major retail within Northwest Indiana. NIRPC recommendations include transforming vacant space into shared creative workspaces and community gathering places; provide coworking space, opportunities for artists to exhibit and sell their work, revenue-sharing deals, and active programming open to the community. The parking recommendation was noted as being redesigned for other use. However, various e-commerce companies require larger sites to accommodate employee parking because they hire intensive labor forces for picking and packing to fill online orders. Of the five subarea plans, Gary has been completed. The key planning objectives ensure efficient modes of transportation and safety. Diversity of the business landscape in Gary and the Region. Stimulate private investment and maximize transportation, distribution, and logistic (TDL) business presence. Additional objectives include establishing a distinct atmosphere along major corridors and unsure Gary can leverage the benefits of e-commerce. The Gary Subarea Plan – Priority Sites were shared. For the Ph II Subarea Plan selection process, the first candidate area is cluster 3, Burns Harbor/Portage area. Cluster 3 has land availability. The Region is highly developed, especially in the northwest corner closer to Chicago, and runs out of vacant or developable land. The Burns Harbor/Portage cluster is less congested and has access to five interchanges. Cluster 3 also has proximity to the Port of Indiana and US Steel. The second candidate is Cluster 2, Winfield/Crown Point area. Cluster 2 is next to I-65 and it provides north-south connectivity and is less congested. The shift-share analysis also showed that the transportation and warehousing industry is more important to Lake County's economy than Indiana in general.

NIRPC Travel Demand Model Update Completion Report

Scott presented the NIRPC Travel Demand Model update and completion report. Cambridge Systematics (CS), with Corradino Group as a subcontractor, was selected and under contract by November 2021 due to meeting the criteria in the RFP in addition to their experience working with NIRPC's model in the past, as well as CMAP's and INDOT's statewide travel demand models. CS updated the trip generation and adjusted the TAZ structure. Two additional TAZs were added that split off the existing TAZs due to growth and logical connectivity. Due to the Census Block Group geography changes, the geometry was slightly adjusted. Cambridge Systematics applied their Quick Response Freight Manual to the NIRPC Travel Demand Model. Older models from the 90s fractionalized the model control totals. NIRPC staff will continue to update the truck portion of the travel demand model. CS upgraded the Trip Distribution and Assignment Performance. This has improved Python code that streamlines model runtime. Malfunctioning and extraneous code loops were eliminated. The Air Quality Conformity tools and scripts were also upgraded. CS updated calibration, validation, and final models. Calibration used INDOT counts on a variety of segments and functional classifications. Validation is within the NCHRP-recommended thresholds for various urban/rural and functional

classifications. Final Delivered models were: 2019 (base), 2020, 2025, 2030, 2035, 2040, and 2050 (horizon). For further information, please contact Scott.

2023 2nd Quarter Safety, Travel Time Reliability (TTR), Freight, and Congestion Update

Scott spoke on the 2023 Safety and Travel Time Reliability (TTR), Truck Travel Time Reliability (TTTR) and Congestion updates for the 2nd quarter. There were 5,964 total collisions for the 2nd quarter, of which 1,128 resulted in injuries, and 23 resulted in fatalities. Cumulative collision data for Lake, Porter, and La Porte County were displayed. The TTR has lowered to 86.6% YTD, which is 6.4% below the 93% TTR 2023 target. Traffic congestion is due to I-80/94 Westbound. The Non-Interstate TTR is at 98.6% YTD, which is 5.6% above the 93% 2023 target. TTTR was at 1.30, which was .02 below the 2023 1.32 target. For more information, please contact Scott Weber.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:24 a.m. The next STC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the NIRPC building.