

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
Minutes of the September 18, 2025, Executive Board Meeting

Call to Order

Vice Chair Austin Bonta called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointments to the Commission of Eddie Melton (City of Gary) and John Schoon (Town of Kouts).

Roll Call - Taken by Candice Eklund

Present

The 10 Commissioners on the Executive Board in attendance are listed below:

- Austin Bonta, City of Portage
- Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor
- Denise Ebert, Town of Wanatah
- Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor
- Robert Ordway, Governor Appointee
- Courtney Parthun, City of La Porte
- David Phelps, Town of Beverly Shores
- Lisa Rosenkranz, Town of LaCrosse
- Tom Schmitt, Town of Schererville
- Jim Ton, Town of Chesterton

Adam Parkhouse, representing INDOT, was also present

Absent

- Wendy Mis, Town of Munster

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

- Jenny Beier, Town of Schneider
- Bob Carnahan, Town of Cedar Lake
- John Matwyszyn, La Porte County Surveyor
- Eddie Melton, City of Gary
- John Schoon, Town of Kouts
- Mary Tanis Town of Dyer
- George Topoll, Union Township

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

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Mitch Barloga, Flor Baum, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the August 21, 2025, Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Jim Ton.

Leadership – Ty Warner, Executive Director

The Leadership Committee recommended the two contracts below to the Commission.

- Drive Clean Indiana (DCI) Contract: Kathy Luther reported that this contract allows DCI to share funding with the NWI communities to provide technical support related to transportation and electric vehicle initiatives. Additionally, the Ride & Drive event, sponsored by DCI and Go Electric Vehicle Indiana (GOEVIN), will be held in the NIRPC parking lot after the meeting, featuring 15 electric vehicles available for test drives. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board approved the DCI contract.

- **Marquette Greenway Contract:** Mitch Barloga reported that this contract with Lochmueller Group is for engineering services in the City of Gary for the Marquette Greenway West Gary phase from Cline Avenue to Bridge Street. This contract supplements a previous contract executed earlier this year for a smaller study on a route analysis and encompasses engineering services over the next two years. A funding shortfall of \$1.5 million is required to fully compensate Lochmueller Group. NIRPC will seek construction funding to cover this deficit for this segment. The agreement has been reviewed and approved by Attorney Dave Hollenbeck. A formal written notice from the engineering firm is required before initiating work on this phase. The final execution of the contract is pending signature from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which is subject to legal review and approval of Amendment #2, and INDOT issuing a purchase order. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board approved the Marquette Greenway contract.

Transportation – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor

Kevin Breitzke reported the Transportation Committee met on September 9, 2025. During their meeting, the committee heard three presentations: 1) Bi-State Climate Action Plan: Kathy Luther updated on the bi-state climate comprehensive action plan transportation working group. A plan draft is expected to be completed by December 2025, 2) Trail Counting Program: Mitch Barloga presented on NIRPC's trail counting initiatives. Currently, NIRPC has deployed 20 traffic trail counters in Lake and Porter Counties, along with 30 eco-counters installed in La Porte, Lake, and Porter Counties, 3) Charles Bradsky shared updates on NIRPC's Road Safety Audit (RSA) program. The second round of audits is scheduled for July 2026. NIRPC has funding to support nine RSAs out of the 15 applications received. Additionally, Kevin noted that the Road to Zero workshop will be held on September 26 at Indiana University Northwest. The next meeting is scheduled for October 7, 2025.

INDOT – Adam Parkhouse

Adam Parkhouse reported that the next round of Community Crossings will accept applications from October 1-31, 2025. INDOT is beginning to focus on the winter months and is performing truck inspections. The construction project at I-94 and Ripley Street is to reconfigure the interchange for safety reasons.

Economy & Place – George Topoll, Union Township

George Topoll reported that discussions were held regarding the Hoosier Homes program at the last meeting. Also, NIRPC staff on the Economic Development District initiatives continue to promote the EDA Disaster Supplemental Grant opportunities available to Lake County. Communities interested in improving their economic conditions are encouraged to contact Denarie Kane at dkane@nirpc.org. Also, conversations are ongoing to advance the work identified in the updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). At the next meeting, scheduled on October 8, further discussions will take place regarding the Hoosier Homebuyers Assistance Program, which is sponsored and administered by the Fort Wayne Housing Authority.

Environment – Bill Emerson

Bill Emerson reported that the next Environment meeting is scheduled for November 6.

Carl Lisek, Executive Director, Drive Clean Indiana (DCI), provided an update on their contract work for NIRPC, noting DCI is the designated representative of the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities and Communities program in Indiana. Originally established 26 years ago as South Shore Clean Cities, the organization rebranded to DCI three years ago when it became the statewide coalition. DCI operates under the Vehicle Technologies Office of the Department of Energy, and its goal is to expand fuel choices and promote clean transportation initiatives. Mr. Lisek emphasized that DCI is eager to collaborate with any community pursuing transportation-related projects. In 2024, DCI helped secure over \$75 million in grants for Indiana. The GOEVIN (Go Electric Vehicle Indiana) was also highlighted, which is led by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), through which DCI supports utilities in promoting electric vehicle adoption. In partnership with INDOT, IDEM, and other state agencies, DCI is working to deliver a unified message about electric transportation and available funding opportunities through the

GOEVIN program. Recently, 18 DC fast chargers and 18 Level II chargers were awarded through the GOEVIN program. Municipalities interested in installing Level II charging stations are encouraged to contact DCI at [Contact Drive Clean Indiana](#). Lastly, Mr. Lisek noted that a non-federal grant opportunity of up to \$10 million is anticipated by the end of the year.

Other Business

Bob Carnahan noted the next Leadership Committee meeting is scheduled for October 7 at 8:30 a.m.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan relayed announcements of various events in Cedar Lake.

Robert Ordway announced he has taken over handling federal affairs on behalf of Governor Braun, who is in Washington, D.C. As a resident of the region, Mr. Ordway understands our regional needs and recognizes the importance of developing a comprehensive grant strategy. If a Northwest Indiana community has specific needs or projects that could benefit from federal appropriations, he encouraged communities to contact him, as he may be able to assist in identifying available funding opportunities.

There were discussions on the impacts of Indiana State Bill 1 (SB1). David Phelps shared that Senator Pol's office sent a report detailing how SB1 affects taxing districts within District 4. He suggested reviewing the report because the impacts are significant for some communities. In response to the growing concerns, Mayor Bonta announced that the City of Portage will be scheduling a public presentation titled "How do Taxes Work for Indiana" to provide a better understanding of the upcoming changes. All will be welcome to attend.

Hearing no other business, Austin Bonta adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m. The next meeting will be an Executive Board meeting on October 16, 2025.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [September 18, 2025 Commission Meeting](#).