

Transportation Committee
NIRPC Lake Michigan Room
September 9, 2025
Minutes

Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The voting members in attendance were Kevin Breitzke, Dean Button (Hammond), Kay Nelson (Forum), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), Mary Tanis (Dyer), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Max Rehlander (Valparaiso), and David Wright (GPTC).

Also in attendance were George Topoll, Ryan Lisek (DCI), Eric Wolverton, Jake Dammarell, Doug Ross (Post Tribune), Beth Shrader (SEH), Danielle Martin (Valparaiso), Julio Arichavala (East Chicago), Scott Pruitt, Melody Panos (INDOT), and Noelle Bayer (INDOT).

NIRPC staff present: Tom Vander Woude, Meredith Stilwell, Kathy Luther, Eman Ibrahim, Charles Bradsky, Mitch Barloga, Grace Benninger, Ishan Parekh, and Scott Weber.

On a motion by Mary Tanis, seconded by Mark O'Dell, the committee approved the minutes from the August 5th meeting.

Planning

Kathy Luther gave an update on the Bi-State Regional Climate Plan Transportation Sector. The Transportation Working Group met on June 26, 2025, to discuss progress on the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the greater Chicago area. The project, developed through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program, is a partnership between the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, CMAP, and NIRPC. Deliverables included the Priority Climate Action Plan, the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, and a status report, with the final plan to be completed by December 1, 2025.

The working group reviewed the regional greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. In 2020, economy-wide emissions totaled 152 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT CO₂e). Industry accounted for 80% of emissions, while buildings contributed 11%. The region adopted a target of reducing gross GHG emissions 80–85% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels, aligning with CMAP, the City of Chicago, and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. Between 2005 and 2020, emissions dropped 20% (39 MMT CO₂e), leaving an additional 65% reduction needed by 2050.

Scenarios for reaching reduction goals were modeled, including a current policy scenario, a state and local implementation scenario, and a full plan implementation scenario. Results showed that the current policy scenario would not be sufficient to meet targets, while state, local, and full plan implementation could achieve reductions of 61% and 85%, respectively, by 2050.

The transportation sector was highlighted as a critical component of emissions reductions. In 2020, passenger cars and trucks accounted for 61% of transportation emissions, and freight trucks accounted for 19%. Emissions had already decreased 29% between 2005

and 2020, largely due to federal fuel economy standards and increased adoption of electric vehicles.

Modeling results for the transportation sector showed:

- By 2035, emissions reductions under current policy would rely heavily on light-duty EV adoption, though freight emissions would remain largely unchanged.
- With additional state and local policies, reductions would be achieved through accelerated EV adoption, transit investment, and electrification of off-road equipment.
- By 2050, full plan implementation assumed 88% of the light-duty fleet would be electric, with major progress in electrifying freight trucks, transit, and off-road equipment. Aviation would remain a challenge, requiring federal action and technological advances.

Key takeaways emphasized that passenger cars and trucks are the largest contributors to transportation emissions, while freight remains harder to decarbonize. Reaching 100% EV sales by 2035 was deemed critical to meeting 2050 goals, along with quicker turnover of vehicle fleets. State and local action could address most emissions reductions, but federal leadership was especially necessary for aviation.

The group also discussed implementation considerations, including identifying critical strategies, barriers, and actors needed for success. Public engagement was highlighted as essential, and members were encouraged to share the climate questionnaire available in English and Spanish. Additional outreach efforts included a partner social media toolkit and upcoming workshops.

Next steps included incorporating feedback on transportation modeling results, vetting benefits analysis with the equity working group, continuing public engagement, and finalizing modeling and analysis with the steering committee. A draft plan was expected to be presented in fall 2025.

The Transportation Committee discussed the need for a transition plan to address emissions control and greenhouse gas issues, emphasizing individual responsibility for vehicle emissions and the importance of collective action. Committee members discussed the need to understand and address barriers to electric vehicle adoption, including infrastructure and charging time, in order to compete with gas-powered vehicles. Northwest Indiana is being targeted by Indianapolis and Illinois and is burdened with emissions controls that are hard on residents, but it can work towards improvement. The longevity of new engines is uncertain, with concerns about their durability, replacement frequency, and increasing material costs. For more information, contact Kathy at kluther@nirpc.org.

Mitch Barloga presented an update on trail counting efforts in Northwest Indiana. He emphasized the importance of trail usage data for understanding patterns, justifying resources, supporting advocacy and funding, guiding planning and management, assessing economic impacts, monitoring conditions, and identifying infrastructure needs.

Barloga reviewed the first generation of trail counters deployed in Lake and Porter Counties. These 20 units were difficult to use, required specialized equipment for data transfer, and were subject to vandalism and insect damage. To address these challenges, NIRPC dedicated federal funds in 2022 to purchase upgraded counters. Thirty new counters were obtained with an 80% federal match, consisting of pole-mounted and post-mounted models. Eighteen entities, including one nonprofit, participated. The new counters track both directions, use Bluetooth for simple data collection, and feature a three-year battery life.

Since 2023, 30 Eco Counters have been distributed across NIRPC's three counties, covering 41 cities and towns. This year, deployment included Wicker Park and Valpo Fairgrounds, with additional installations on regional trails in Crown Point, Portage Ameriplex, EL at Wicker Park North, LaPorte Stone Lake, and Valpo Rogers Lakewood. A case study from Crown Point demonstrated the counters' effectiveness in monitoring both northbound and southbound flows, providing valuable insights into trail use.

Looking ahead, Barloga reported that new federal funding is expected within the next one to two years. This funding will allow for additional purchases of counters, priced at approximately \$3,000 each. NIRPC also plans to develop a public data dashboard on its website and deploy TrafX counters selectively to refine existing counts. The Transportation Committee discussed transitioning to new eco-counters, analyzed trail usage data, and plans to seek federal funding to install more counters to track usage. The committee discussed potential partnerships with non-profits and private sector entities to fund transportation projects, with Local Planning Agencies (LPAs) possibly covering 20% of costs.

The presentation concluded with Barloga's encouragement for continued community support of trail monitoring initiatives. Contact Mitch Barloga at mbarloga@nirpc.org for more information.

Charles Bradsky gave an update on the Road Safety Audit Program. The committee discussed funding for local transportation projects, with a 20% match required, and explored potential sources, including general funds, park departments, and partnerships with federal and local agencies. NIRPC is conducting a second-phase road safety audit, coordinated with Corradino LLC and INDOT, and has selected 11 intersections and three corridors from 9 LPAs, with field checks and traffic counts scheduled to begin by the month's end. The committee discussed next steps for transportation projects, including submitting recommendations to the county for unincorporated areas and planning road safety audits in specific locations. For more information, contact Charles at cbradsky@nirpc.org.

Programming

Nothing to report.

Reports for Planning Partners

Ryan Lisek (DCI) reported on various funding awards and updates, including \$3.3 million for 18 electric vehicle charging station projects, a grant for propane garbage trucks in Whiting, and upcoming Indiana clean diesel funding and electric vehicle infrastructure projects. The Midwest ZEV program is conducting a survey, available via QR code, to identify infrastructure needs for zero-emission trucks along the I80 corridor, with related events

including National Drive Electric Week and the Crossroads Clean Energy and Transportation Forum.

Staff Announcements

Tom Vander Woude covered announcements, including a rescheduled November meeting now set for December 2nd, and upcoming events such as a stakeholder breakfast and a statewide work truck group meeting. Ishan Parekh, NIRPC's new geo transportation technical assistant, will conduct traffic counts during warm months and work on GIS and data analysis projects during colder months. Ishan's contact info is iparekh@nirpc.org. NIRPC is partnering with Health by Design to host an Indiana Road to Zero Academy workshop on September 26 at IU, focusing on Vision Zero principles to improve road safety.

Hearing no further business, the committee meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting is slated for December 2, 2025, at the NIRPC offices.

References

- [YouTube recording of 9/9/2025 TC meeting](#)



- [Comprehensive CAP for Greater Chicago – partner social media kit](#)



- [Drive Clean Indiana website](#)

