



Annual Report

2020

# 2020 Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

## LAKE COUNTY

Cedar Lake  
Crown Point  
Dyer  
East Chicago  
Gary  
Griffith  
Hammond  
Highland  
Hobart  
Lake County Commission  
Lake County Council  
Lake County Surveyor  
Lake Station  
Lowell  
Merrillville  
Munster  
New Chicago  
Schererville  
Schneider  
St. John  
Whiting  
Winfield

Robert Carnahan  
Andrew Kyres  
Mary Tanis  
Anthony Copeland  
Jerome Prince  
Rick Ryfa  
Tom McDermott, Jr.  
Michael Griffin  
Brian Snedecor  
Kyle Allen, Sr.  
Charlie Brown  
Bill Emerson  
Bill Carroll  
John Yelkich  
Richard Hardaway  
Wendy Mis  
Sharon Szwedo  
Tom Schmitt  
Jack Jeralds  
Gerald Swets  
Steve Spebar  
Jon Derwinski  
David Anderson

## PORTER COUNTY

Beverly Shores  
Burns Harbor  
Chesterton  
Dune Acres  
Hebron  
Kouts  
Ogden Dunes  
Portage  
Porter  
Porter County Commission  
Porter County Council  
Porter County Surveyor  
Porter Township  
Union Township  
Valparaiso

### OFFICERS

Chairperson  
Vice-Chairperson  
Treasurer  
Secretary

Immediate Past Chairperson

Governor of Indiana Appointee

Geof Benson  
Eric Hull  
James Ton  
Jeannette Bapst  
David Peeler  
Tim Jones  
Carolyn Saxton  
Sue Lynch  
Greg Stinson  
Jim Biggs  
Jeff Larson  
Kevin Breitzke  
Edward Morales  
George Topoll  
Matt Murphy

Michael Griffin  
George Topoll  
Richard Hardaway  
Justin Kiel

Diane Noll

Ed Soliday

## LAPORTE COUNTY

Kingsbury  
Kingsford Heights  
LaCrosse  
LaPorte  
LaPorte County Commission  
LaPorte County Council  
LaPorte County Surveyor  
Long Beach  
Michiana Shores  
Michigan City  
Pottawattomie Park  
Trail Creek  
Wanatah  
Westville

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

Tom Dermody  
Sheila Matias  
Tom McDermott, Jr.  
Greg Stinson  
Mary Tanis  
James G. Ton

Mark Ritter  
Duane Arndt  
Justin Kiel  
Tom Dermody  
Sheila Matias  
Mike Rosenbaum  
Anthony Hendricks  
Robert Lemay  
Daina Dumbrys  
Duane Parry  
Janet Beck  
Joshleen Denham  
Diane Noll  
Lori Mercer

## CONTACT

NIRPC  
6100 Southport Rd.  
Portage, Indiana 46368-6409

(219) 763-6060  
Nirpc@nirpc.org

## STAFF

Executive Director  
Chief of Staff /  
Director of Environmental  
Programs  
Chief Financial Officer  
Economic Development  
District Coordinator  
Office Manager

Ty Warner, AICP  
Kathy Luther  
  
Talaya Jones  
Gabrielle Biciunas  
  
Meredith Stilwell

Mitch Barloga, AICP  
Flor Baum  
Charles Bradsky  
Lucas Ecklund-Baker  
Candice Eklund  
Joe Exl  
Allen Hammond  
Eman Ibrahim  
Denarie Kane

Peter Kimball  
Stephanie Kuziela  
Marisol Manley  
Kevin Polette  
John Smith  
Lisa Todd  
Scott Weber

Dear Stakeholders,

A worldwide pandemic was not in any of the region's plans. No sooner was a new slate of NIRPC officers and a new Executive Board elected for 2020 than the entire Northwest Indiana region was thrown into a completely unanticipated scenario of remote work and virtual meetings in response to COVID-19. Fortunately, NIRPC staff and commissioners proved resilient and adaptable to these challenging circumstances. Not only did NIRPC continue to carry out its planning and programming responsibilities throughout the pandemic, but the agency even launched a \$45 million Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to program new and needed transportation infrastructure in future years, when the region presumably moves beyond coronavirus. A study of E-Commerce (that is, buying and selling through online retail), while initiated prior to the outbreak, could not have been more timely for addressing how the region's residents would accelerate online buying habits amidst restricting social contact, and positioned the region to take advantage of these trends into the future. And NIRPC's designation as an Economic Development District just prior to 2020 could not have been timelier as the U.S. Economic Development Administration allocated CARES Act funds to NIRPC to assist with pandemic recovery. This was right on the heels of the Federal Transit Administration allocating CARES Act funds to Northwest Indiana's transit operators to support services to the region's transit-reliant residents, for which NIRPC staff mobilized quickly to distribute these funds almost as soon as they became available. In short: the region proved itself resilient. All the more important, then, is the funding the NIRPC EDD is receiving from the EDA to create a resiliency plan for the region to address future disruptions. While we don't know all that 2021 will bring as I write these words, the collaborative framework NIRPC has built over 50 years, heavily relied upon in the pandemic of 2020, continues to serve the region well for this and any future scenario. It is with this outlook of resiliency and adaptability that this 2020 Annual Report is submitted with continued optimism for the future of Northwest Indiana.

Sincerely,

Ty Warner, AICP

## Letter from Executive Director Ty Warner, AICP

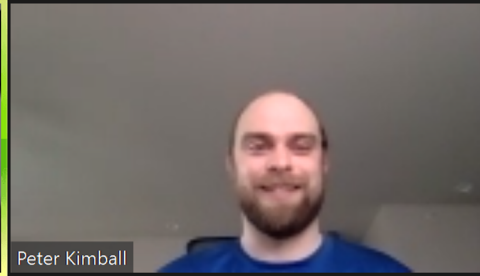




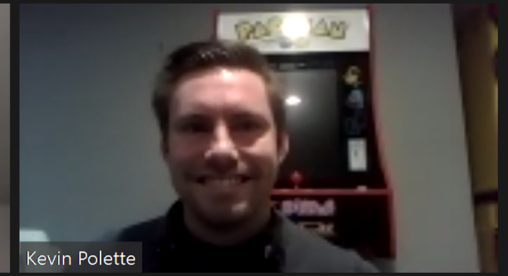
Meredith Stilwell



Ty Warner



Peter Kimball



Kevin Polette



Lisa Todd



dkane



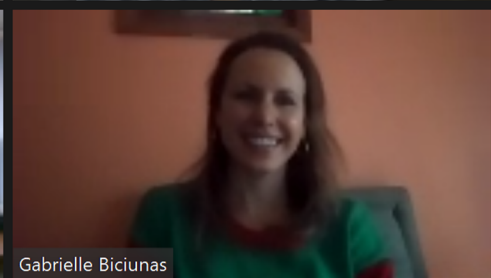
Candice Eklund



Scott Weber



Lucas Ecklund-Baker



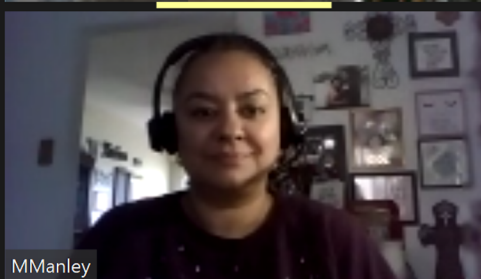
Gabrielle Biciunas



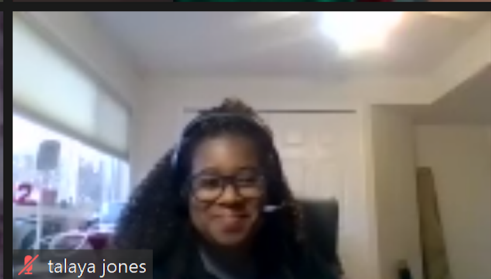
Mitch Barloga



cbradsky-NIRPC



MManley



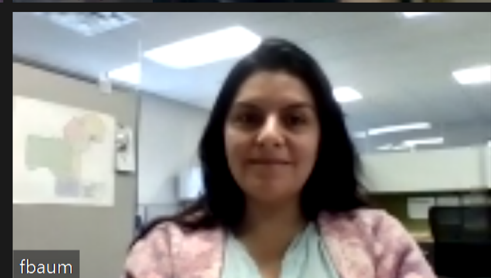
talaya jones



eibrahim



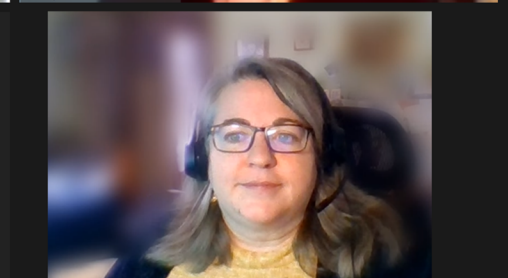
Stephanie Kuziela



fbaum



Joe Exl





The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) is the Council of Governments (COG) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties in Northwest Indiana, designated in Indiana state law in 1965. Working collaboratively across the region, NIRPC coordinates regional comprehensive planning and programming for transportation, economic development, and environmental policy.

NIRPC, functioning as an MPO, is the designated coordinator of federal transportation funds. NIRPC is also the designated Economic Development

District (EDD).

As a Council of Governments, NIRPC serves as a forum for Northwest Indiana elected officials to address regional issues. The Commission consists of 53 commissioners, representing 41 communities and nearly 800,000 people. NIRPC serves as a liaison between communities in Northwest Indiana and regional, federal, and state authorities, translating public policies and collective regional goals into actionable plans and recommendations for such pressing areas as transportation, land use, environmental health, quality of life, economic stability, and future development.

## Mission

NIRPC provides a forum that enables the citizens of Northwest Indiana to address regional issues relating to transportation, the environment, and economic development.

NIRPC has a six-fold mission:

- To serve as Northwest Indiana's metropolitan planning organization and act as the designated recipient for certain transportation funding;
- To generate meaningful dialogue and cooperation on issues of common concern;
- To contribute to the development of a common vision pertaining to Northwest Indiana's future;
- To provide a forum in which elected officials and other decision-makers can develop and implement solutions to regional problems;
- To create opportunities for partnership between the public and private sectors; and
- To provide a common voice for Northwest Indiana in its communications with the state and the federal government.

This mission is achieved through the performance of seven core functions:

- The identification and framing of issues of concern;
- Advocacy;
- The identification of potential funding sources and the pursuit of funding;
- Project planning, plan implementation, programming, and coordination;
- Participation in partnerships;
- Sub-grantee administration; and
- The direct provision of technical services, data, and other resources.

**NWI 2050:** NWI 2050 is the overarching, long-range plan for Lake, Porter, and Laporte Counties. All projects must align with NWI 2050 for approval and funding through NIRPC.

The fundamental vision of NWI 2050 is encapsulated in four statements to describe the future of Northwest Indiana:

**Connected:** A Connected NWI brings the region together and provides access to opportunities with a robust multimodal transportation network and its harmonious interaction with land uses and the environment.

**Renewed:** A Renewed NWI serves to focus resources in a manner that enables the entire region to become economically competitive and successful.

**United:** A United NWI seeks to preserve and encourage the region's diversity, promotes affordable and accessible housing across the region, and works together for the outcomes enjoyed by all.

**Vibrant:** A Vibrant NWI creates desirable places to live, work, and play. It promotes active lifestyles and sustainable environment, and creates an authentic character of place where people enjoy spending time in the region and where they can achieve prosperity.

Long-Range Plan  
20-30 Years



Short-Range Plans  
2-5 Years

### **Engage NWI: NIRPC's Public Participation Plan**

This easily-accessible document outlines how NIRPC will engage in outreach to stakeholders throughout Northwest Indiana to invite access into the planning and programming process and uphold a level of transparency.

### **Invest NWI: NIRPC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

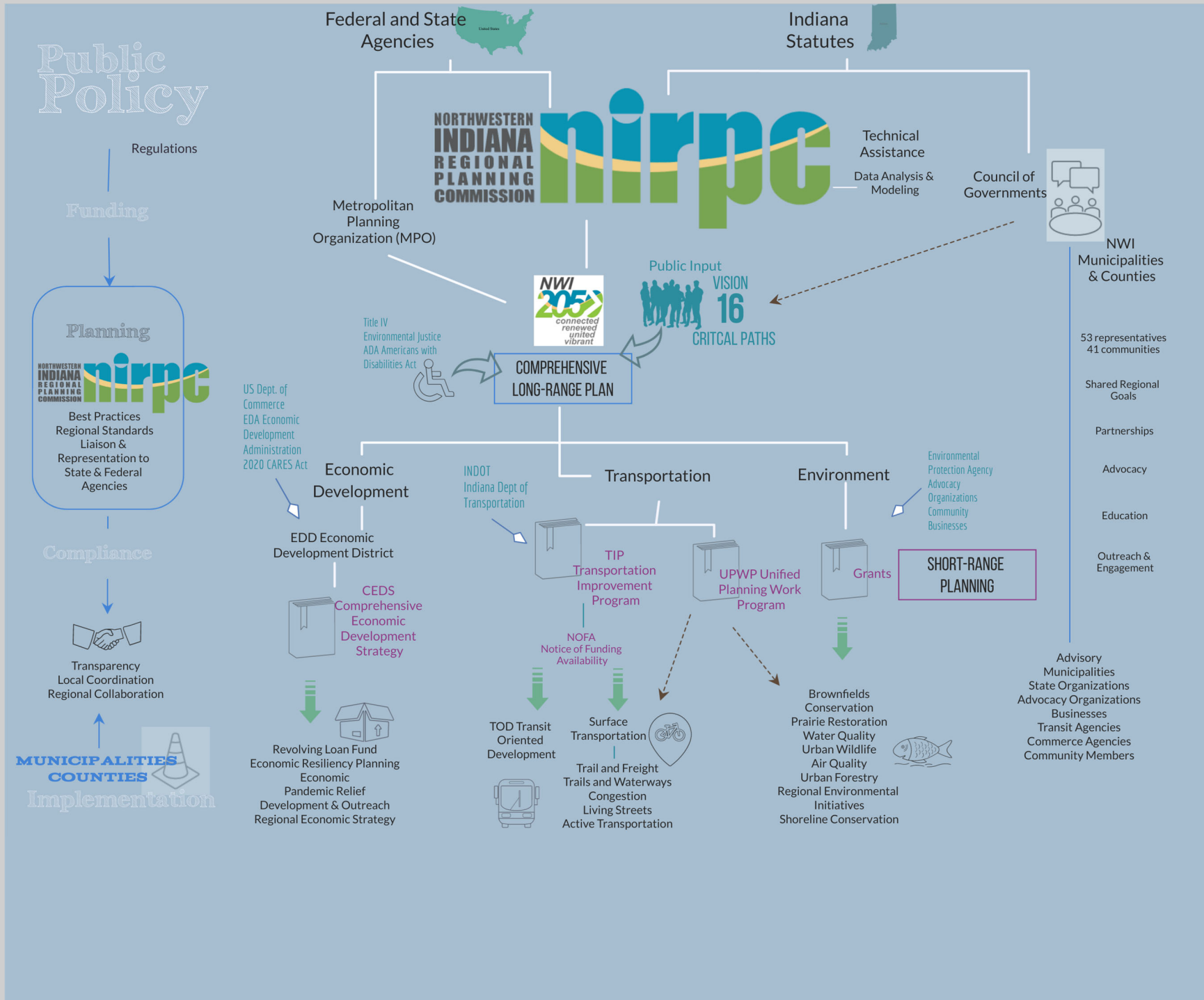
Federal and state transportation and transit funding is approved through the TIP. The scoring process for approvals aligns with NWI 2050. INDOT funds and projects in the region are administered through the TIP.

### **Plan NWI: NIRPC's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

The UPWP consists of programs in transportation, active transportation, economic development, environment and air quality, quality of life, land use, and outreach. These projects are funded through grants and state-mandated revenue from member counties and municipalities.

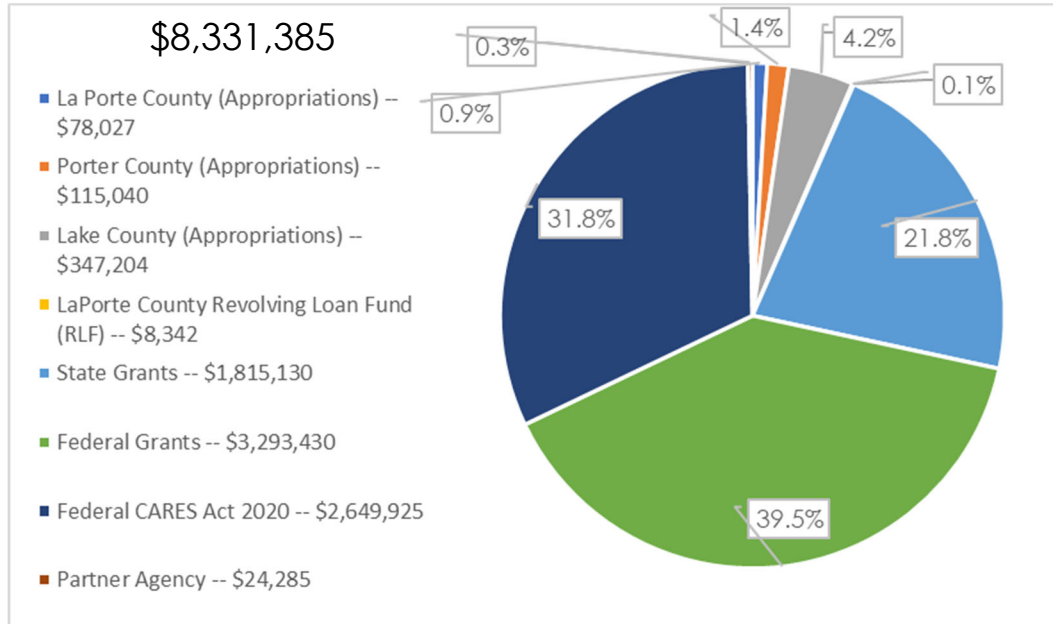
### **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

NIRPC maintains and implements the CEDS, a five-year strategy-driven plan for regional economic development to guide the economic growth of Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties. The CEDS helps the region maintain its designation as a District and represents the confluence of local public and private interests and is intended to be a roadmap to a bright future in Northwest Indiana. It works in tandem with *Ignite the Region: A Regional Strategy for Economic Transformation*, the recent regional economic strategy developed with multiple economic development partners.



# 2020 NIRPC Budget

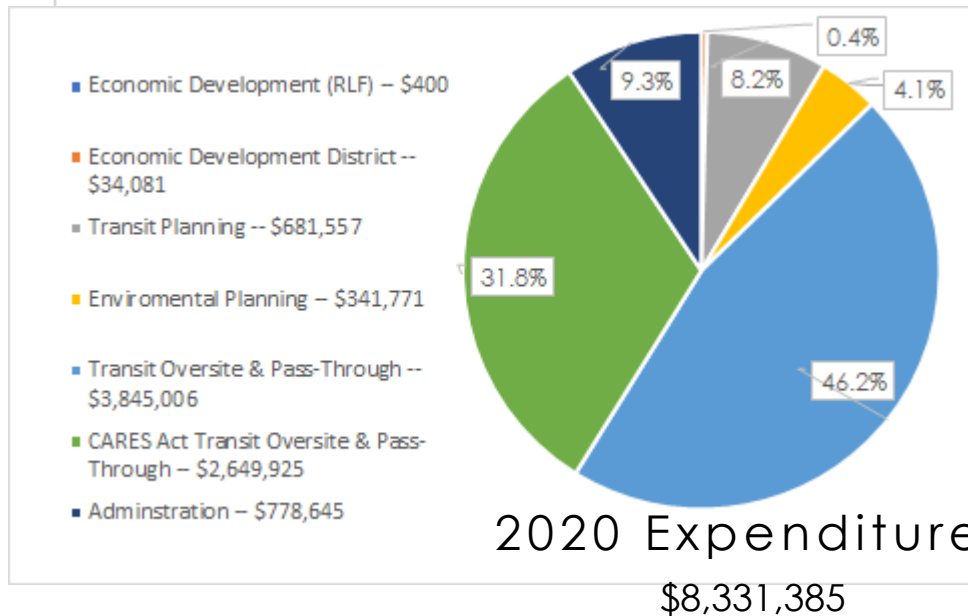
## 2020 Revenue



NIRPC's 2020 revenue is comprised of seven revenue sources. These are **county appropriations** from Lake, LaPorte, and Porter Counties - received per statute and used as local share for grants; revenue from the **LaPorte County Revolving Loan Fund** - a loan program managed by NIRPC on behalf of LaPorte County for eligible businesses; revenue from **partner agencies** - including the Kankakee River Yellow River Basin Development Commission and Shared Ethics Advisory Commission; grants from the **State** level; and grants from the **Federal** level.

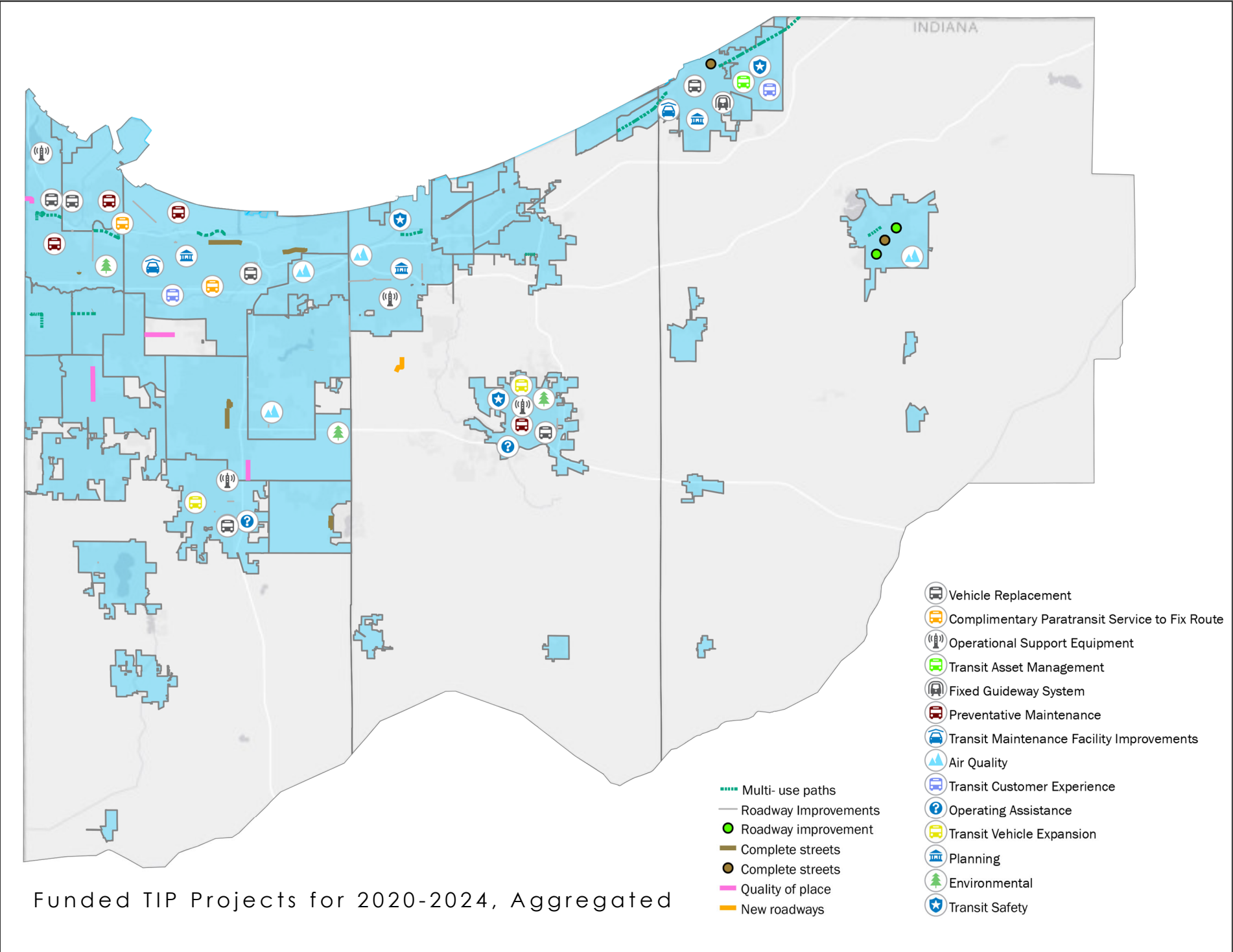
The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act is a \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill passed in March, 2020, in response to the coronavirus pandemic. As the Economic Development District administrator, NIRPC received \$847,822 for the creation of a new regional Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and other pandemic recovery activities, including an Economic Resiliency Plan for the region. NIRPC received \$6,369,454 on behalf of transit sub-recipients throughout the region.

In order to access grants to fund its activities benefiting Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties, NIRPC relies on the 70 cents per capita amount it receives from each of those counties for local share to match those grants, as provided in Indiana Code 36-7-7.6-18. This amount has not been changed since 1992 and has never been adjusted for inflation. In 2019, the Commission passed Resolution 19-06 -- re-affirmed in Resolution 19-27 -- asking the Indiana General Assembly to adjust this per capita amount to current dollars.



NIRPC's 2020 program expenditures is comprised of five categories. These include planning activities involving **transportation**; **administration** expenditures- including all operating costs for NIRPC; the **LaPorte Revolving Loan Fund**; **environmental planning** - focused on improving land, water quality, and air quality in Northwest Indiana; and **transit oversight and pass-through** - consisting of salaries and funds to seven sub-recipients for operating costs, preventative maintenance, paratransit, capital cost of contracting, and purchases of buses.





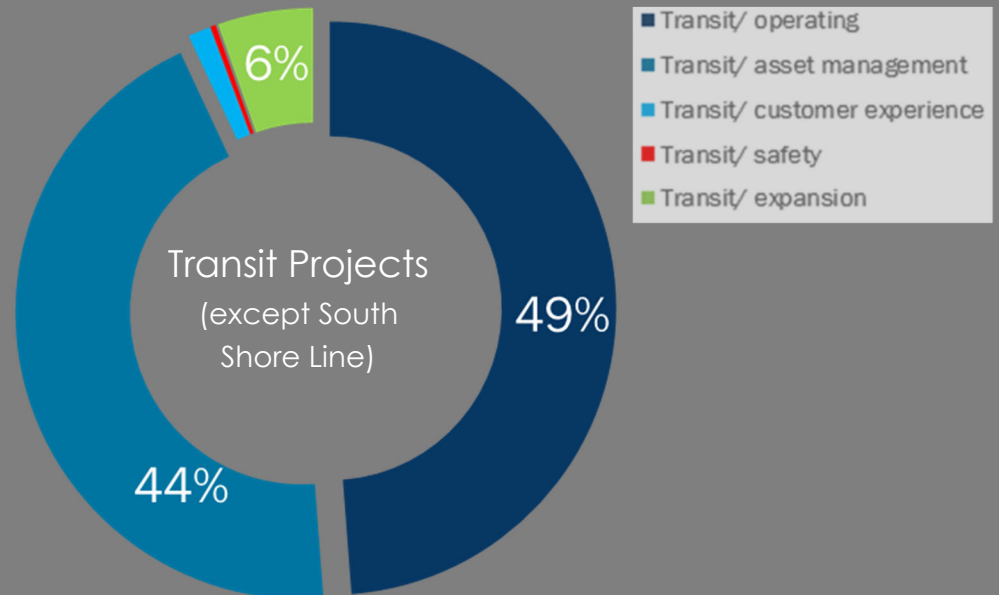
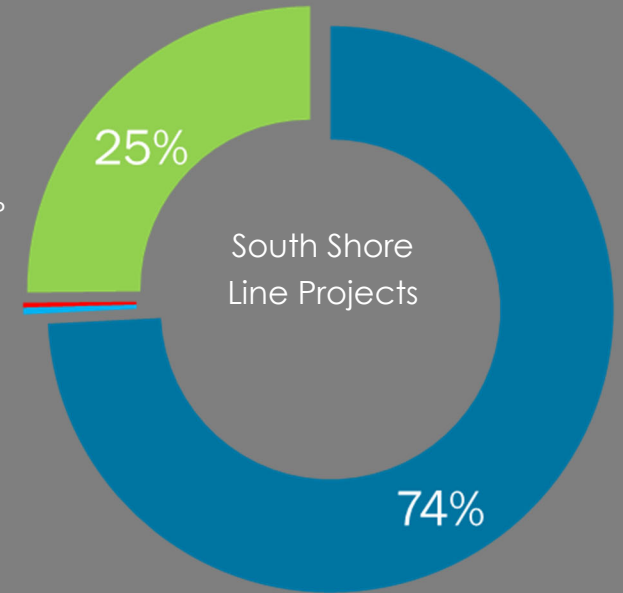
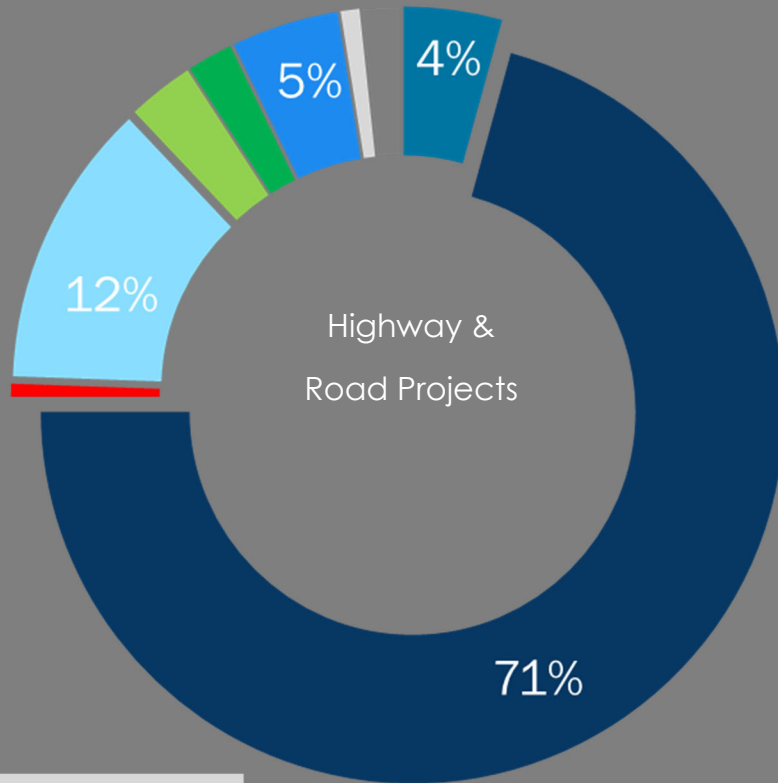
# Municipal Distribution of Funding for TIP Projects in Northwest Indiana

	Number of Projects	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Burns Harbor	1	\$ -	\$ 1,247,421	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,247,421
Cedar Lake	1	\$ -	\$ 626,903	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 626,903
Chesterton	1	\$ -	\$ 105,469	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,477,000	\$ 1,582,469
Crown Point	4	\$ 1,450,990	\$ 1,265,000	\$ 1,165,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,501,081
DNR	2	\$ 135,000	\$ 370,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 791,000
East Chicago	3	\$ 4,948,786	\$ 3,285,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,387,506
Gary	7	\$ 1,468,140	\$ 4,893,660	\$ 896,000	\$ 3,750,000	\$ 375,000	\$ 15,271,620
Hammond	7	\$ 12,425,000	\$ 2,529,250	\$ -	\$ 6,532,500	\$ 4,333,000	\$ 28,321,995
Highland	1	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 350,000	\$ -	\$ 350,000
Hobart	6	\$ 1,683,600	\$ 8,596,250	\$ -	\$ 3,740,500	\$ 1,924,833	\$ 16,617,423
Kouts	1	\$ 20,800	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 88,494
La Porte	14	\$ 619,100	\$ 1,575,000	\$ 1,010,000	\$ 1,131,250	\$ 437,500	\$ 6,939,872
LaCrosse	1	\$ 25,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 251,431
Lake County	8	\$ 4,297,145	\$ 11,019,500	\$ 1,380,000	\$ 1,380,000	\$ 3,307,400	\$ 24,431,748
Lake Station	1	\$ 568,004	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 568,004
LaPorte County	6	\$ 363,025	\$ 1,335,524	\$ 1,009,240	\$ 1,137,916	\$ 8,308	\$ 4,543,211
Lowell	2	\$ 919,035	\$ -	\$ 548,500	\$ -	\$ 3,599,863	\$ 5,067,398
Merrillville	4	\$ 49,623	\$ 5,290,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,177,275	\$ 11,947,805
Michigan City	9	\$ 2,282,615	\$ 1,014,761	\$ 1,294,000	\$ 287,500	\$ 1,820,000	\$ 6,698,876
Munster	2	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 980,100	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,123,100
Portage	6	\$ 2,966,651	\$ 4,469,450	\$ 203,000	\$ 15,435,000	\$ 2,756,741	\$ 29,398,550
Porter County	10	\$ 828,161	\$ 1,996,520	\$ 1,611,000	\$ 2,706,743	\$ 6,180,000	\$ 14,053,679
Schererville	3	\$ -	\$ 5,508,090	\$ 75,000	\$ 430,500	\$ 10,248,384	\$ 16,810,638
Valparaiso	6	\$ 11,206,312	\$ 3,953,125	\$ 26,250	\$ 350,000	\$ 1,750,000	\$ 21,606,779
Winfield	1	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 488,800	\$ -	\$ 488,800
INDOT	230	\$ 112,529,522	\$ 123,305,294	\$ 76,352,924	\$ 64,001,124	\$ 6,420,939	\$ 407,122,585
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>\$ 158,786,509</b>	<b>\$ 182,386,217</b>	<b>\$ 86,551,014</b>	<b>\$ 101,721,833</b>	<b>\$ 45,816,243</b>	<b>\$ 630,838,388</b>

	Number of Projects	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
ECT	16	\$ 1,095,053	\$ 1,442,278	\$ 990,515	\$ 1,001,209	\$ 1,012,224	\$ 5,541,279
GPTC	38	\$ 9,236,615	\$ 8,739,538	\$ 8,066,853	\$ 9,986,536	\$ 10,006,465	\$ 46,036,007
MCT	8	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 2,069,000	\$ 2,620,000	\$ 1,575,000	\$ 2,265,026	\$ 10,029,026
South Shore Line	93	\$ 436,399,226	\$ 303,600,824	\$ 32,805,316	\$ 33,380,316	\$ 32,124,316	\$ 838,309,998
North Township	16	\$ 723,650	\$ 598,440	\$ 648,750	\$ 652,570	\$ 656,575	\$ 3,279,985
OE	11	\$ 321,500	\$ 318,700	\$ 322,500	\$ 326,400	\$ 330,300	\$ 1,619,400
PCACS	23	\$ 533,000	\$ 390,000	\$ 390,000	\$ 530,000	\$ 390,000	\$ 2,398,872
LCSS	27	\$ 981,378	\$ 1,021,878	\$ 1,110,078	\$ 1,287,582	\$ 1,309,318	\$ 5,710,234
TransPorte	10	\$ 836,000	\$ 773,200	\$ 1,258,664	\$ 698,357	\$ 1,116,324	\$ 4,682,545
Valparaiso Transit	19	\$ 3,948,375	\$ 7,920,875	\$ 3,730,875	\$ 4,380,875	\$ 4,380,875	\$ 25,546,875
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>\$ 455,574,797</b>	<b>\$ 326,874,733</b>	<b>\$ 51,943,551</b>	<b>\$ 53,818,845</b>	<b>\$ 53,591,423</b>	<b>\$ 943,154,221</b>

# TIP Project Fund Distribution 2020-2024

Nearly \$1.5 billion combined local, state, and federal transportation funding will be invested from the TIP between 2020 and 2024.



- Multi-use paths
- Roadway improvement
- Planning
- Quality of place
- Complete streets
- Environment
- New roadways
- Air quality
- Other

- Transit/ operating
- Transit/ asset management
- Transit/ customer experience
- Transit/ safety
- Transit/ expansion

# Transportation

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), NIRPC manages federal transportation funds and acts as an intermediary between local communities and federal and state entities. Significant passenger, commuter, commercial, and freight traffic pass through Northwest Indiana. Access to the region's natural trails and destinations contributes to the health and quality of life in the region. Planning considerations, like traffic movement, congestion, last-mile access, environmental impact, and access to public resources make transportation a critical responsibility for NIRPC. *NWI 2050* covers surface transportation, infrastructure, transit, and active transportation.

## ADA Bus Inventory

NIRPC staff members and transit operators collaborated to make regional bus systems more accessible. This project will assist in making bus systems -- in particular bus stops -- more accessible for individuals with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires that design, construction, and additions are to be made in new and existing construction to adhere to federal requirements for the ADA.

NIRPC staff members traveled throughout the region documenting and assessing each stop to develop an inventory of all bus stops. NIRPC and the transit operators then worked together to find solutions in taking steps to help with ADA compliance. This community-wide effort to improve the transit system will ensure Northwest Indiana is a better community for all residents.

This data will assist transit operators in mapping and measuring the accessibility of their bus stops and will be shared with municipalities to assist in the development of their federally-required ADA Transition Plans. These plans are an important part

of ensuring that municipalities can transition into complying with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

Additionally, NIRPC has secured funding to assist communities with projects related to the implementation of their locally-developed ADA Transition Plans.

During the Fall 2020 NOFA, communities utilized data from the bus inventory to apply for NIRPC funding to implement improvements to make communities accessible.

Currently, data is being compiled and analyzed. Community leaders and ADA Coordinators should expect access to the data after the start of the New Year.

## Living Streets

As communities design new facilities and update existing roadways, NIRPC's Living Streets program, previously Complete Streets, advises policy and best practices to encourage road development for all intended users: automobiles, delivery/freight traffic, public transit, bicycle riders, pedestrians, and wildlife.

The Living Streets program incorporates previous programs, Green Streets and Complete Streets. Rain gardens and tree coverage are considered

in these designs, protecting city and personal property. Rain gardens and tree coverage mitigate stormwater runoff and provide passive water control and provide natural filtration of pollutants. A healthier urban forestry environment is closely linked to better air quality, the economics of "curb appeal," and improved quality of life. Communities see the benefit in improved congestion management, increased safety rates, stronger environmental controls, and improved mobility within the municipality.

## Active Transportation

NIRPC sponsored new signage for both the Erie - Lackawanna and Prairie Duneland Trails. The new elements installed under guidelines outlined in the *Unified Wayfinding Plan* include community welcome signs, information kiosks, mile markers, and street signs.

Over 10 miles of new trails were opened in 2020, extending the regional network to over 180 miles. These included a three-mile link in the Pennsy Greenway between Munster and Schererville, and the first mile of the Veterans Memorial Trail in Hebron. Segments of the three-state Marquette Greenway were constructed in Michigan City and Burns Harbor.

As part of the update of the Greenways+Blueways Map, NIRPC contracted with My City Bikes to create the first mobile app of routes in the Region. The project scope was increased to include communities in the south Chicago suburbs with help from the Calumet Collaborative. The map will be printed in early 2021, with the mobile app published online by mid-Spring.

## Coordination with INDOT

Funding for INDOT projects in Northwest Indiana are directed through NIRPC. NIRPC will act as a representative for municipalities within the district, providing consolidated knowledge and leadership with INDOT on state construction projects. The result is an open and transparent process, lower costs, and input on the development of construction projects in their communities.

## Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

NIRPC manages a TOD study of existing NICTD/ South Shore train stations, proposed stations in the Westlake Corridor extension, and several high-traffic bus stations in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. Study recommendations will support designs for vitality and livability in transit station areas and transit corridors. The study preferences investments linking transportation and land use considerations. The analysis will identify opportunities for infrastructure-related expansion and investment within the transit areas. NIRPC and the Regional Development Authority (RDA) coordinate TOD areas studied within this project.

## MOVE NWI Congestion Management Process

NIRPC adopted *MOVE NWI* in September, 2020, as part of the first Congestion Management Process update since 2011. *MOVE NWI* is a data-driven regional plan aimed at reducing congestion in Northwest Indiana. The plan uses strategies derived from *NWI 2050* as well as other stakeholder-led input. The goal of *MOVE NWI* is to proactively steer transportation projects that NIRPC plans or programs toward incorporating strategies that reduce congestion. Examples include flexible work schedules among major employers along corridors, traffic signal coordination, increased transit and non-motorized access.

## Compliance - PTSAP – Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan

A compliance project for fixed route transit agencies moved along amidst COVID-19, to be finalized post-pandemic. NIRPC continues to work with the three largest bus systems to ensure compliance with the ADA and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

## Sensible Tools

The NIRPC *Sensible Tools* guidebook provides city planners with guidance on zoning laws and ordinances, to assist officials as they implement planned development. Work on an updated *Sensible Tools* publication began in 2020 and will cover new issues, such as cellular towers and green energy considerations. The document, when finished, will be distributed to communities throughout Indiana.

# Economic Development

As the designated Economic Development District, NIRPC works with partners and local governments to meet local and regional needs by strategically investing in economic development and infrastructure connectivity projects that support economic growth. NIRPC fosters relationships, networks and partnerships to advance regional economic development to enhance and unify future economic vitality in the region.

## Economic Development District

In 2019, NIRPC was designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) as the Economic Development District (EDD) for Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties. A District brings together private, public and nonprofit sectors in a partnership to provide a coordinated strategy and provide economic development technical assistance. It also serves as a foundation for regional collaboration and cooperative economic planning. In July, 2020, NIRPC received Partnership Planning funds from EDA to administer the District for Economic Development activities.

As a District, NIRPC maintains and implements the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a five-year strategy-driven plan for regional economic development to guide the economic growth of the District. The CEDS helps the region maintain its designation as a District. NIRPC's current CEDS was completed in 2018 and updated every five years.

As a designated District, communities in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties have access to federal funding opportunities for economic development related projects. NIRPC provides assistance to communities seeking EDA funds and ensures projects are consistent with the goals and objectives of the CEDS.

## LaPorte County Revolving Loan Fund

NIRPC continues to administer the LaPorte County Revolving Loan Fund program. As part of the CARES Act, EDA allowed certain policies to be relaxed and waived in order to provide greater flexibility and allow the LaPorte County RLF program to help address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on small businesses. Changes to reflect the flexibilities were updated in the *LaPorte County Management Plan* and adopted by the Commission in September 2020. These flexibilities will remain until May 2021.

## E-commerce in Northwest Indiana

Lake, Porter, and LaPorte county traffic and air quality data show the region is undergoing a significant shift in commerce, traffic, economic patterns, and air quality from the 2020 pandemic.

The NIRPC land use and data analysis team found that retail space has declined and e-commerce, like Amazon, has increased. Traffic patterns have shifted as many work remotely and truck traffic has increased, leading to better air quality.

As part of the analysis, the team made recommendations for land use and existing commercial space to encourage development in the most productive locations.

## CARES Grants

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided the EDA with \$1.5 billion for economic development assistance programs to help communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus. In July, the EDA awarded NIRPC two CARES Act Recovery Assistance grants to assist Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties for economic recovery in responding to economic injury as a result of the pandemic.

NIRPC received \$400,000 from the CARES Act Recovery Assistance Grant to respond to the coronavirus pandemic to address short and long-term economic development impacts through the development of an economic resiliency plan and aid in the economic recovery for future pandemics and disasters. The Plan will serve as a regional guide to prepare and sustain future economic pandemics, disasters and recoveries. NIRPC

used a portion of the funds to strengthen the ability to respond, provide capacity building and technical assistance to local communities, by hiring two new staff members, a communications specialist and an economic development specialist. The grant also allowed NIRPC to purchase new laptops and technology equipment.

NIRPC also received funds from the EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance Grant totaling \$583,000 to capitalize and administer a new Regional Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to make loans available to small businesses in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties that have been impacted by the coronavirus. Financing of \$530,000 will assist businesses in recovering and responding to the impacts of the pandemic while \$53,000 is used for administration of the program. The *Recover NWI Loan Program* will be available early 2021.



# Environment

The NIRPC mission includes stewardship of the unique natural resources found in Northwest Indiana that are critical to the vitality of the region. Natural spaces, like the Indiana dunes national and state parks, and the trail and waterway systems, balance with the region's major industrial infrastructure and transportation network. NIRPC administers programs and grants for industrial and brownfield rehabilitation, conservation, air quality, and urban forestry projects. Public engagement includes education and workshops on vehicle emissions and rain gardens.

NIRPC and South Shore Clean Cities worked toward clean air initiatives through:

- The Green Fleets program, a partnership between NIRPC and SSCC, provided technical support to 24 communities, school districts, and fleet managers submitting grant applications. These grants to secured nearly \$3 million for the region from the IDEM VW Settlement, IOED, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other sources.
- A revamped campaign, "It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air," from EPA and FHWA, featuring a suite of "Region Man" characters on billboards and in radio spots, demonstrating tips to improve our air quality;
- A virtual electric vehicle "Ride and Drive" event, hosted during October, "Elective Vehicle Month;"
- Funding for two Partners for Clean Air scholarships, granted to two NWI high school seniors pursuing degrees in environmental-science related majors;
- The purchase of 900 environmentally-friendly gas cans, protecting both air and water quality and supporting household hazardous waste collection events in Gary, LaPorte County, and Porter County.

## Brownfields

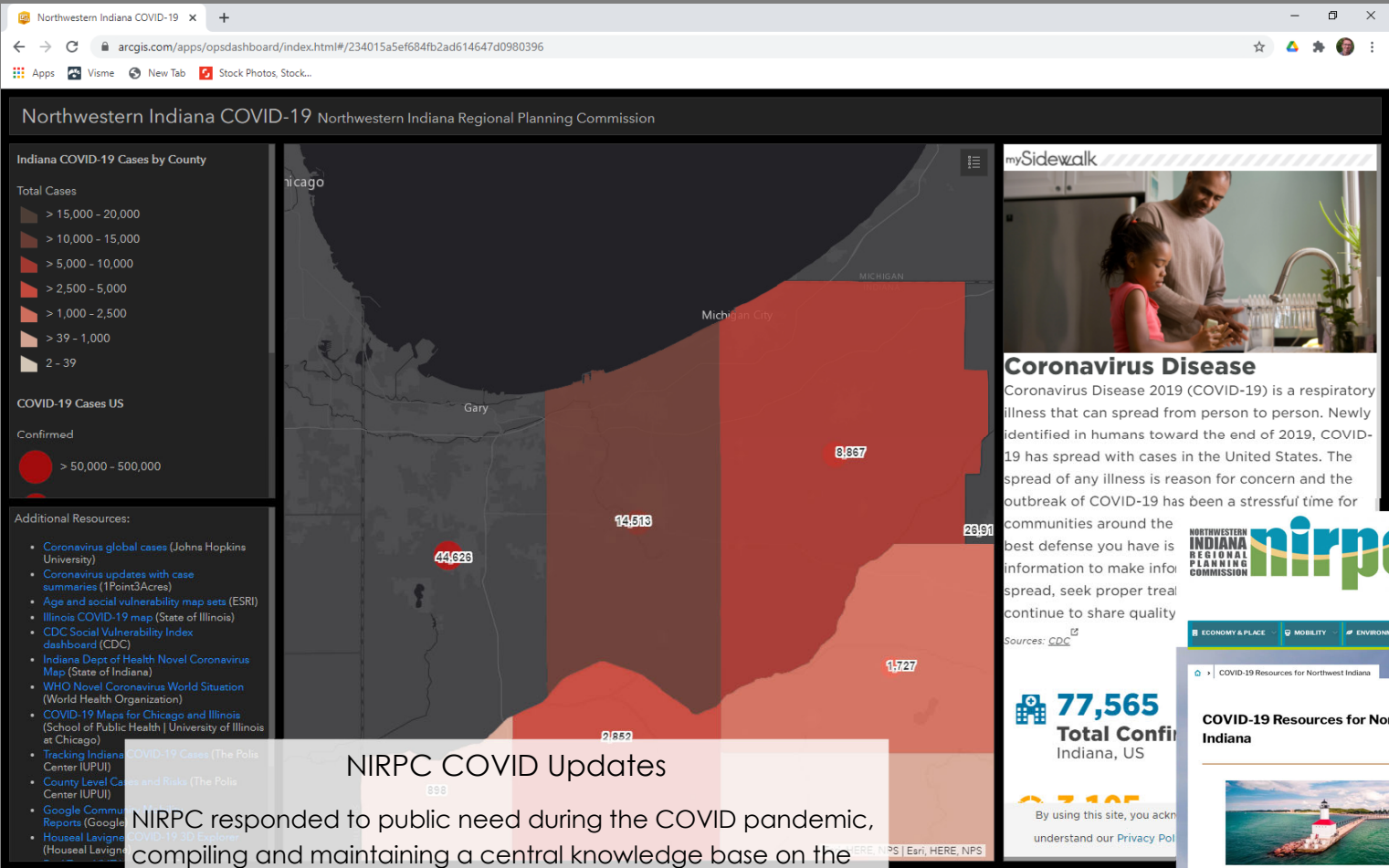
NIRPC, as the grantee for the NWI Greater Brownfield Coalition, which includes NWI Forum and the RDA, completed four Phase I Environmental Assessments. The assessments provide environmental liability protection for both public and private land purchasers and an additional 2 Phase II Environmental Assessments. The project will assist private companies in understanding and reducing environmental risks on properties purchased for redevelopment or job retention.

## Communitree

NIRPC and several conservation organizations distributed 395 native trees in 2020 as part Communitree, an Urban Waters Federal Partnership project with NIRPC. Since 2017, the program has provided a total of 2,380 trees through NIRPC, and more than 6,000 through all organizations, to public and non-profit organizations throughout the Lake Michigan Basin. The forestry program serves as a community investment in canopy diversity, air quality, wildlife preservation and biodiversity, stormwater control, and urban energy conservation. Communitree is a NIRPC program funded through the U.S. Forest Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant.



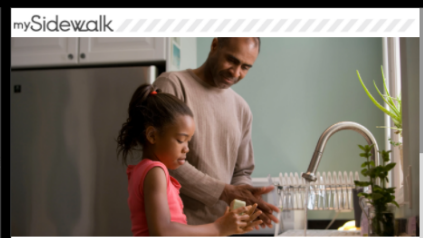




NIRPC responded to public need during the COVID pandemic, compiling and maintaining a central knowledge base on the NIRPC website for local governments, residents, and local businesses.

The NIRPC data team developed this resource to provide information on assistance programs and expertise, including unemployment and emergency prescription information, Indiana state guidance for coronavirus policy development, and Small Business Administration COVID assistance resources.

The team also developed the Northwest Indiana COVID 19 - Dashboard, by customizing data from the John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, to provide accurate case statistics for the three-county region.



**Coronavirus Disease**

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Newly identified in humans toward the end of 2019, COVID-19 has spread with cases in the United States. The spread of any illness is reason for concern and the outbreak of COVID-19 has been a stressful time for communities around the

best defense you have is information to make informed spread, seek proper treatment to share quality

Sources: CDC

**77,565**  
Total Confirmed  
Indiana, US

By using this site, you acknowledge our Privacy Policy

**COVID-19 Resources for Northwest Indiana**

**COVID-19 Resources for Northwest Indiana**

NIRPC is providing this information as a service to Northwest Indiana communities, residents, and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and is not responsible for the accuracy or timeliness of the information provided through these links to other agencies and partner organizations.

**Assistance to Local Governments**

**Governance During Crisis**

Indiana State Board of Accounts: Policy, Guidance and Directives during Coronavirus

Aim (Accelerating Indiana Municipalities) COVID-19 response information

Aim's local examples of COVID-19 policies and actions

**Community Resources**

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) COVID-19 Response Funding Program for Community Development Block Grant Funds

ORCA State and Main Street resources regarding coronavirus (COVID-19)

Main Street America COVID-19 Resources for Communities

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development COVID-19 Information and Resources

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration COVID-19 Resources

**Infrastructure**

INDOT COVID-19 Response

Environmental Protection Agency on COVID-19: Disinfectants, Drinking Water & Wastewater

U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Information & Updates on COVID-19

**QUICK LINKS**

- ABOUT NIRPC
- CONTACT
- EVENTS
- HOT TOPICS/NEWS
- I WANT TO...
- JOB POSTINGS

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- 11 FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING (ZOOM) January 21 @ 8:00 am - 9:00 am IN
- 11 NIRPC FULL COMMISSION / EXECUTIVE BOARD VIRTUAL MEETING (ZOOM) January 21 @ 9:00 am - 11:00 am IN
- 11 TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE LAKE & PORTER COUNTIES VIRTUAL MEETING (ZOOM) January 26 @ 9:00 am - 11:00 pm IN

Indiana Public WiFi Locations

**Assistance to Local Businesses**

**General Information**

NWI Forum COVID-19 Business Resources

**Help for Small Businesses**

Indiana Small Business Development Center COVID-19 Resources

U.S. Small Business Association Assistance in Response to the Coronavirus

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Small Business Guidance & Loan Resources

LaPorte County Revolving loan fund information

generator Emergency Response Program

Northwest Indiana Strong

Back on Track Indiana Small Business Restart Fund

**Help for Employers & Their Employees**

WorkOne Northwest Indiana COVID-19 Community Resource Guide 2020

U.S. Department of Labor: COVID-19 and the American Workplace

OSHA COVID-19 Hazard Recognition, Standards, and Prevention

OSHA Guide on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

U.S. Department of Labor Guidance Coronavirus Resources

**Economic Development Assistance**

Restore Your Economy - COVID-19 Resources for Economic Development

Business

Information

COVID-19

Information for

other

planning

Diseases

isease

COVID-19 with No-

ECONOMY & PLACE ENVIRONMENT MOBILITY STAFF PORTAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

Press release: ow.ly/QV19OC0g27

Indiana Public WiFi Locations

Governor Holcomb... content.governor.gov

Dec 8, 2020

NIRPC @NIRPC

NIRPC celebrates @INHumani... grants awarded to region... organizations and projects, funding programs and partnerships that sponsor humani... programs, exhibitions, workshops, and conversations across the state. ow.ly/Ta8t0CC05Ye @kashoreale

Dec 8, 2020

Hoosier Nonprofits... Indiana Humanities ha... insideindianabusiness...

Dec 8, 2020

NIRPC @NIRPC

Tune in at 11am to 89.1 FM Lakeshore Public Radio's Chris Holt. "Respiratory Breathing" and NIRPC Executive Director Ty Warner discuss the new NIRPC report, "E-commerce in Northwest Indiana."

Read the report: ow.ly/hay750GAMGD

Nov 25, 2020



Northwestern Indiana  
Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)  
6100 Southport Rd.  
Portage, Indiana 46368-6409  
  
(219) 763-6060  
[nirpc@nirpc.org](mailto:nirpc@nirpc.org)