

## Public Comment Report

### **NWI 2050+**

The draft *NWI 2050+* was released for a 30-day public comment period beginning April 5, 2023. A draft of the document was made available at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org). NIRPC held four public meetings:

- April 5, 2023 at the Dean & Barbara White Community Center, Merrillville, IN
- April 10, 2023 at Purdue University Northwest, Hammond, IN
- April 12, 2023 at Michigan City Public Library, Michigan City, IN
- April 13, 2023 at Porter County Government Center, Valparaiso, IN

Comments were also accepted through email at [comments@nirpc.org](mailto:comments@nirpc.org) and through mail at 6100 Southport Rd., Portage, IN 46368.

The comments and responses to the draft are listed below. An update will also be provided at the NIRPC Commission meeting on July 20, 2023.

### **NWI 2050+ Plan Draft Comments & Responses**

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**Commenter:** Susan MiHalo, The Nature Conservancy

**Comment:** p. 387 and 393: Low-impact conservation design techniques are sometimes just as important in cities/urban areas as they are in rural areas. Whoever prepared this document certainly does not understand the inherent biodiversity of the area, including the dunes, dune and swale habitat and oak savanna habitat that are globally rare, not to mention that rare and endangered species that need to be protected in northern Lake County in places like East Chicago and Gary.

The items addressed on page 390 are great but seem to be buried in the document. Once those lands are developed, there is no turning back!

p. 400: What about the Grand Calumet River as an environmental corridor? It's completely overlooked! Meanwhile, it is what connects our dune and swale habitat, creating landscape-scale conservation in the area. So much more could be done too! Please feel free to contact us if you desire more information.

**Response:** On p 393, at the end of the Conservation Development section, the following was added "Even within existing cities and suburbs, conservation development should be considered for redevelopment and in-fill projects so that significant natural resources are protected. Many urban and suburban communities in NWI contain significant natural resources and rare habitat types that should be protected."

The addition of Figure 3.1. Environmental Focus Areas from Calumet Conservation Action Plan incorporates the Grand Calumet River as an environmental corridor and the Indiana Dunes ecosystems.

**Significant Comment?** Yes  
**Need to Modify?** Yes

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**Commenter:** David Wright (GPTC)

**Comment:** Table 7-2 on page 485 still has 2020 data though our notes stated almost unanimous support for using 2019 data.

**Response:** The use of 2019 data was agreed on and will be used in the final document.

**Significant Comment?** No

**Need to Modify?** Yes

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**Commenter:** David Wright (GPTC)

**Comment:** The statement that there are only two regional routes (p. 496) needs context. Why would, for instance, the Lakeshore Connection not be included here? It serves the central business districts of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago and connects to Pace. While Burr/Lake Ridge is also a main regional route, most of its mileage is in Gary so I am OK with that. And the Lakeshore South, Merrillville Shuttle and US30 Shuttles are all feeders in nature, though they serve multiple communities. Was a definition considered for “regional routes”

**Response:** The text has been revised to indicate that there are several regional routes but that the study focused on the two (South Shore Connect and Broadway Metro Express (BMX).)

**Significant Comment?** No

**Need to Modify?** Yes