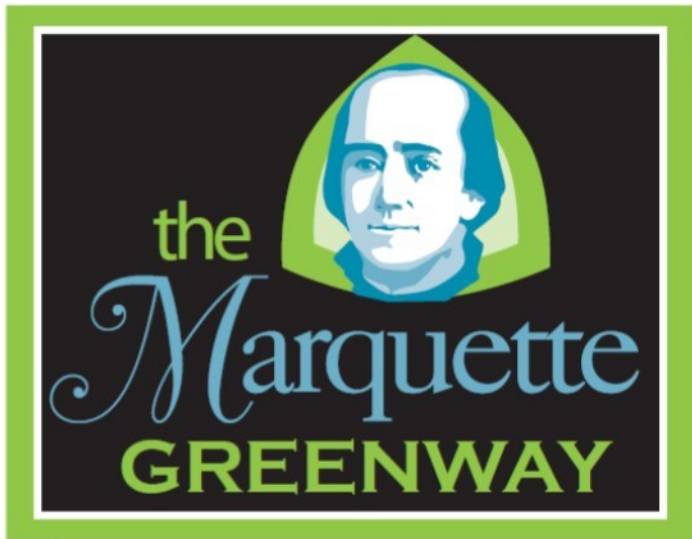




# COMPLETING THE VISION II



# WEST GARY PHASE



FY 2024 RAISE Project Readiness

February 28, 2024



## II. Environmental Risk Assessment

### *Required Approvals*

#### NEPA status:

- NEPA is not underway, but part of the approved RAISE 21 funding.
- Based on the corridor terrain, it is likely that a Categorical Exclusion will be required.

#### Reviews, approvals, and permits by other Federal and State Agencies:

- Engineering, design and environmental services under the RAISE 21 were executed by grant agreement with OST in December of 2023 (document has been attached).
- Project traverses through a small sliver (approximately 200') which is owned by The Nature Conservancy. They are in support of the project via attached letter.

#### Environmental studies or other documents:

- No documents pertaining to these issues have been produced to date.

#### Discussions with appropriate DOT:

- INDOT is acting as the pass-through for the RAISE 21 funds and will be letting the projects on behalf of NIRPC. They are fully engaged with NIRPC on this application, and their letter of support has been attached.

#### Rights of Way Plans:

- Up to seven (7) parcels will need to be acquired by the City of Gary for this project. These parcels are currently vacant, minor in size and only represent less than 5% of the total project area.
- Twenty (20) parcels are owned by the Northern Indiana Commuter District, or NICTD. NIRPC has received support regarding easements on their properties to allow construction of the Greenway.
- Four (4) parcels are owned by the City of Gary.
- All property acquisition will be completed in a timely manner in accordance with 49 CFR part 24, 23 CFR part 710, and other applicable legal requirements.

#### Public Engagement:

The Marquette Greenway concept has been actively pursued by a number of governmental and not-for-profit entities over the last decade. In 2009, The Marquette Greenway Poster Plan was released as part of the Burnham Centennial celebration. As part of the plan's development, NIRPC hosted several public forums throughout the trail corridor gauging interest in the concept from both private and public stakeholders alike. Results to build the facility were overwhelmingly positive, and the project has been sustained as a priority status in subsequent regional plans, including NIRPC's *NWI 2050 Plan*, and the *Greenways+Blueways 2020 Plan*.

### ***State and Local Approvals***

#### Schedule for anticipated receipt of approvals:

- PE: 10% is anticipated in 2024, 40% in 2025 and 2026 and 10% in 2027
- ROW: anticipated in 2026
- CN & CE: 50% complete in 2027 and 50% complete in 2028
- Project management for CN: 50% in 2027 and 50% in 2028

#### Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State & Local Planning:

- NIRPC has included the RAISE 21 project in our Transportation Improvement Program. INDOT Designation numbers 2300711 (RAISE grant) and 2400062 (Gary design).

### ***Assessment of Project Risks & Mitigation Strategies***

NIRPC has a long and successful record of working with member communities, as well as other public and private entities, in Northwest Indiana and our neighboring regions. These engagements have included policy preparation, plan development, and project management. NIRPC engages regularly with federal FHWA and FTA funding as administered through INDOT and is uniquely qualified to assist the City of Gary with their segment of the Marquette Greenway project. Please refer to our webpage for a listing of collaborative plans and projects at: <https://nirpc.org/raise-grant/>

#### Sponsor Experience:

- NIRPC serves as the Northwestern Indiana Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and has successfully partnered with its member communities on building a regional trail network of approximately 150 miles and providing a federal investment of over \$60 million towards network development since 1993.
- NIRPC maintains strong lines of communication with neighboring MPO's in Illinois and Michigan, and who have committed to aiding with the project.
- NIRPC operates as the chief planning agency for regional trail development and communicates regularly with all member municipalities on network expansion, including education on facility operations and maintenance.
- NIRPC was awarded a RAISE grant in FY 2021 to begin work to finish the Marquette Greenway. This award has laid the foundation for this application request.
- NIRPC has engaged the services of Butler, Fairman & Seufert, Inc. (BFS) to serve as our project managers for all RAISE awarded components of the Greenway. They will facilitate oversight of consultants and contractors throughout the process, and work directly with INDOT and FHWA on proper compliance with federal contract and procurement requirements. To this end, BFS has extensive experience with federal-aid projects in Indiana and is pre-qualified by INDOT.