



COMPLETING THE VISION II



WEST GARY PHASE



FY 2024 RAISE Project Description

February 28, 2024

I. Project Description

Completing the Vision II: The Marquette Greenway – West Gary Phase represents the continuing effort to complete the Marquette Greenway, a regional, non-motorized facility which will span 60-miles in length along the “South Shore” region of Lake Michigan from Calumet Park in Chicago, Illinois, eastward through the heart of Northwest Indiana, and into downtown New Buffalo, Michigan.

Residents of the South Shore region have long desired to have an uninterrupted trail connecting these three states, providing access to a wide variety of destinations along the lakefront. The enormous work of planning this corridor has been a collaborative effort for over a decade. In 2005, the Greenway became a focal point in the landmark *Marquette Plan: Indiana’s Lakeshore Reinvestment Strategy* document and has carried forward as a top priority today. The route was further identified and promoted with the *Marquette Greenway Poster Plan* in 2009, and again identified as a priority in the *Marquette Action Plan* in 2017.

The Marquette Greenway will represent an unparalleled multi-use trail experience, traversing through a geographically and socio-economically diverse landscape. It will connect a population of 192,600 residents within a mile and a half of the trail (including 60,000 who are employed within the corridor), to recreational facilities, scenic landscapes, and economic opportunities.

However, connections to the Marquette Greenway are not simply local in nature. Connections to the trail are extensive and cross multiple state boundaries, linking with the 530-mile Grand Illinois Trail from the west; the Burnham Greenway, Erie-Lackawanna Trail, and Dunes-Kankakee Trail from the south; and the Harbor Country Trail network from the east. Taken together, these additional connections link to a population base of well over nine million people.

As of February 2024, thirty-four (46) miles of the Marquette Greenway have either already been built or have received funding. The remaining fourteen (14) miles exist in the cities of Gary and Portage, and the Indiana Dunes National Park. This RAISE grant application has been proposed to complete the 3.7 miles on the west side of Gary with a total federal request of \$21.2 million.



II. Previous RAISE Grant Award

In December of 2021, NIRPC was awarded \$17.8 million in FY 2021 RAISE funds for our first application, “Completing the Vision – The Marquette Greenway.” This award was \$5.2 million less than our original ask of \$23.1 million since the application included costs associated with design, engineering and construction of the trail within the Indiana Dunes National Park. There was confusion upon the initial application of the National Park’s eligibility, which was eventually determined upon award.

Ahead of the announcement, NIRPC was not afforded a pre-award meeting with the FHWA. Because of this, NIRPC began negotiations on the grant agreement without sufficient local match since most of this was tied to the National Park’s segments. With the local match removed, it became onerous for the

other municipalities identified in the grant (Gary, Portage, Ogden Dunes, Burns Harbor, Porter County, Town of Porter, Michigan City and New Buffalo Township, MI) to provide their local share. Thus, during the balance of 2022, NIRPC, under the advice of the FHWA in Indianapolis, began to change the scope of the grant in order to make this affordable for the entities.

During this period, NIRPC was able to have two major elements of the scope removed and funded with Next Level Trails (Indiana DNR) funding. This included projects in Porter County and shared segment of the trail between Burns Harbor and Porter. Furthermore, NIRPC used our own STBG Group 2 funding towards the engineering and ROW acquisitions in Michigan City. NIRPC also secured \$3 million in state READI funds to help offset the local match obligations in Indiana. The end result was keeping the grant award intact and applying this to the revised scope. It also assumed covering significant cost increases in construction due to inflationary pressures.

At the beginning of 2023, NIRPC entered discussions with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) on becoming the pass-through entity for the RAISE funds. This further delayed grant agreement proceedings as all parties needed to submit new paperwork. Finally, the draft grant agreement was forwarded to the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) in July of 2023. However, OST returned comments stating that since the scope of the original grant was reduced, so would the award. This caused significant distress since the revised scope was agreed upon by FHWA staff before submission.

The OST ruling meant further delays in the grant agreement preparation. After numerous back-and-forth negotiations with all parties, it was determined that due to the September 2024 obligation deadline for the grant, there wasn't enough time to prepare the proper documents for the construction phases in both Gary and Portage. Thus, these two components were removed from the scope as well, leaving the final agreed upon budget as follows:

| Revised Component | Application Component | Entity | Project Detail | Completion | Design/Engineering | Right-of-Way | Construction (plus 15% Contingency) | Construction Inspection | NEW RAISE Share | PHASE | NEW Local Share | Other Share (READI) | PHASE | REVISED Balanced TOTAL |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | Gary | Restore 400' railroad bridge | 12/1/2027 | \$180,494 | \$100,000 | \$1,729,731 | \$225,617 | \$106,491 | Design | | \$74,003 | Design | \$180,494 |
| 2 | 3 | Gary | 3.9 mi trail | 12/1/2027 | \$356,400 | | \$3,795,000 | \$445,500 | \$210,276 | Design | | \$146,124 | Design | \$356,400 |
| | 4 | | 300' bridge & abutment | | \$475,200 | | \$5,060,000 | \$594,000 | \$280,368 | Design | | \$194,832 | Design | \$475,200 |
| 3 | 9 | Portage | 1.5 mi trail | 12/1/2026 | \$181,764 | | \$1,935,450 | \$227,205 | \$107,241 | Design | | \$74,523 | Design | \$181,764 |
| | 10 | | 575' Boardwalk Trail | | \$47,312 | | \$503,786 | \$59,140 | \$27,914 | Design | | \$19,398 | Design | \$47,312 |
| | 11 | | 230' new bike/ped bridge | | \$182,952 | | \$1,948,100 | \$228,690 | \$107,942 | Design | | \$75,010 | Design | \$182,952 |
| 4 | 15 | Michigan City | 3.4 mi trail | 12/1/2027 | | | \$5,732,089 | \$781,649 | \$3,843,105 | CN & CE | \$1,234,523 | \$1,436,110 | CN & CE | \$6,513,738 |
| 5 | 16 | New Buffalo Township | 0.4 mi trail + 0.3 mi shared route | 12/1/2027 | \$120,000 | | \$1,033,266 | \$121,296 | \$976,062 | CN & CE | \$298,500 | | CN & CE | \$1,274,562 |
| Project Totals | | | | | \$1,544,122 | \$100,000 | \$21,737,422 | \$2,683,098 | \$5,659,399 | | \$1,533,023 | \$2,020,000 | | \$9,212,422 |
| | | | | | | | | | | Fed: 61% | Local: 39% | | | |

The original award of \$17.9 million was now reduced to \$5.7 million in order to salvage at least a portion of the award to cover design services in Gary, Portage and New Buffalo Township, with construction and construction inspection services in both Michigan City and New Buffalo Township. With this new budget and scope agreed to, OST and NIRPC executed the grant agreement in December of 2023. This current application has been developed with updated construction numbers in Gary to aid with the successful completion of this critical link in the Marquette Greenway

III. Project Location & Scope of Work

The **Marquette Greenway: West Gary Phase** will be constructed starting approximately 460 feet east of Cline Avenue, and proceeding east to Bridge Street, approximately 3.75 miles in length. It will commence on the western termini at the end of the funded segment in the City of Hammond, within the landholdings of The Nature Conservancy. From there, the trail will proceed under Cline Avenue at an existing overpass, then utilizing an abandoned but legal roadway south to the Indiana Toll Road.

At this point a bridge will be constructed to clear both the Indiana Toll Road and South Shore Line (property of the Northern Indiana Commuter Rail District, or NICTD) commuter rail tracks, being designed with the correct clearances required by both facilities. The bridge will be accessed by ADA-compliant ramps on either side. On the south side of the NICTD tracks, a ramp will be constructed due east and land between the NICTD tracks and the existing businesses to the south, all within the NICTD right-of-way. The trail will continue east until another bridge (with proper ADA-compliant ramps) is required to clear the Canadian National tracks.

Upon landing on the east side of the railroad tracks, the trail will proceed eastward, staying on the NICTD ROW. There is a sliver of TNC property just west of Hobart St. approximately 200 feet in width which will be required for the trail's construction. Proceeding east, the trail will eventually be constructed on the 2nd Avenue public ROW, with the roadway being turned into a one-way street with the trail being separated on the north side.

This alignment continues to the Gary/Chicago Airport NICTD station where NIRPC and the City of Gary will work with NICTD on potentially moving parking spaces to the north of the tracks to accommodate safe passage of the trail. Continuing across Clark Road, the trail will proceed under 4th Avenue in the NICTD ROW, and meet up with the Industrial Highway ROW, where the trail will continue on the southern and western side of the road until reaching 4th Avenue.

At 4th Avenue, the roadway lanes will be reduced (road diet) to allow for a separated trail facility to be located on the north side of the ROW. This will allow the trail to safely cross the Norfolk Southern tracks and continue east to Bridge Street. At Bridge Street, the trail will become a sidepath on the west side of the ROW, proceeding north until it meets the eastern terminus of the project just across the road from the existing section of the Greenway.

NIRPC expects most of the right-of-way needed for this project to be provided either through easement or on public land. There is the potential of seven properties that will need to be acquired, and these costs have been included in the budget.



Project eastern termini at existing trailhead at Bridge Street



MARQUETTE GREENWAY - GARY WEST PROPOSED ROUTE

VI. Demographics

Within 1.5 miles of the portions of the **Marquette Greenway - West Gary Phase** proposed in this application is a population of roughly 10,000. While the entirety of the population of Northwestern Indiana is very economically and socially diverse, the populations that will be the most affected by this proposed project are largely low-income minority groups, in great need of investment within their communities. Unlike other communities along the Marquette Greenway corridor, these communities have the fewest resources to invest in trail infrastructure improvements and are the most likely to be marginalized. The tables below indicate how the proposed RAISE project area has a greater concentration of minority populations than the overall NIRPC region.

| | RAISE 24 Project Area | Lake County | NIRPC Region |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Non-Minority | 8.01% | 42.03% | 54.37% |
| Minority | 91.99% | 57.97% | 45.63% |
| Non-Hispanic or Latino Origin | 81.07% | 80.73% | 84.25% |
| Hispanic or Latino Origin | 18.93% | 19.27% | 15.75% |

| | RAISE Project Area | Lake County | NIRPC Region |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Black or African American | 69.30% | 33.61% | 24.51% |
| White | 8.01% | 42.03% | 54.37% |
| Asian | 0.45% | 1.26% | 1.18% |
| Two or More Races | 2.72% | 3.30% | 3.62% |
| Other | 0.44% | 0.37% | 0.39% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 18.93% | 19.27% | 15.75% |

| | RAISE Project Area | Lake County | NIRPC Region |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Median Household Income | \$40,902 | \$64,249 | \$68,617 |
| Households in Poverty | 29.31% | 19.11% | 17.13% |
| Households with No Vehicle Available | 15.37% | 10.77% | 8.61% |