

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC- Lake Michigan Room

December 1, 2016

Members/Guests: Geof Benson, Deb Backhus, Bill Emerson Jr., Beth Jacobson, Lauri Keagle, Jennifer Gadzala, George Topoll, Kevin Breitzke, Nicole Barker, Richard Morrisroe, Ellen Kapitan, Jan Bapst, George Malis, Kris Krouse

NIRPC Staff: Kathy Luther, Meredith Stilwell

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order at 9:04 am with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

Approval of November 3, 2016 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Deb Backhus and second by Bill Emerson Jr., the October 6, 2016 EMPC meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Presentations:

a. NICTD Double Track – Environmental Aspects - *Nicole Barker, NICTD*

NICTD is looking to complete a project to double track a 16 mile gap of currently single track railroad between Gary and Michigan City. The project will include improvements at five stations and installation of four new bridges. There are many single track challenges and double tracking would decrease travel times as well as increasing service, safety and economic benefits, improving reliability and more competitive travel options. The current projected cost for the double tracking is \$290 million. Michigan City will have speed, safety and station improvements and some property acquisitions and relocations will be necessary. In the first 20 years the projected economic impact includes increased jobs, new daily riders and an anticipated total tax generation of over \$606 million. The proposed timeline projects the environmental assessment and public hearings to occur 2017, design and engineering to be finished in 2018, construction to begin in 2019 and operations to begin in October of 2020. A 50% local match is required when funding is needed and NICTD needs help asking for money. More information regarding the project can be found at www.doubletrack-nwi.com.

NIRPC Business:

a. **Greenways and Blueways 2020 Public Comment Report Review** – *Kathy Luther, NIRPC*

Many comments were received during the 30 day comment period for the Greenways and Blueways 2020 draft report which ended on November 21. NIRPC's Public Participation Plan states that if any significant comments are made, which would require a change to the document text, a new public comment period must begin on the document once said changes are made. Kathy reviewed the comment report with the group. A new draft document will be put out for public comment once the changes have been made, most likely early 2017. Chairman Benson commented that it's great that NIRPC has the public comment and is listening to them and changing things.

Public Comment:

Chairman Benson told attendees about Wiki Watershed, a free, educational tool used to teach kids how to model watersheds, but can be used by others as well. It is supposed to eventually allow users to monitor their watershed.

Announcements:

- South Shore Clean Cities Annual meeting will be held February 14, 2017 at Blue Chip Casino.
- The Deep River Portage Burns Waterway Watershed Management Plan has been IDEM and EPA nine-listed approved.

Meeting adjourned at 10:11 a.m.