



6100 Southport Road
Portage, Indiana 46368
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www.nirpc.org

MEETING OF THE FULL COMMISSION NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

December 18, 2025 at 9:00 A.M.

NIRPC Lake Michigan Room, 6100 Southport Road, Portage

- 1.0 Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance – Wendy Mis, Munster Clerk-Treasurer, NIRPC Chair
- 2.0 New Appointments to the Commission - Dave Hollenbeck, Attorney
- 3.0 Roll Call – Candice Eklund, Executive Assistant
- 4.0 Public Comment on Current Agenda Items
The Chair will recognize audience members who have signed up to comment on agenda items below. Time is limited to 3 minutes per commenter.
- 5.0 Approval of the Minutes of the September 18, 2025, Executive Board Meeting (pp. 1-3)
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval
- 6.0 **LEADERSHIP** – Wendy Mis, Munster Clerk-Treasurer (pp. 4-18)
 - 6.1 Resolution #25-17: Calendar Year 2026 Budget (pp. 6-17)
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval
 - 6.2 2026 NIRPC Commission Meeting Dates (p. 18)
- 7.0 **TRANSPORTATION** – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor (pp. 19-31)
 - 7.1 Resolution #25-18: FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments 26-03.1 & 26-03.5, *Charles Bradsky* (pp. 27-31)
 - [FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program](#)
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval
 - 7.2 INDOT - Matt Deitchley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner
- 8.0 **ECONOMY & PLACE** – George Topoll, Union Township (pp. 32-40)
 - 8.1 Resolution 25-13: Cooperative Agreement with the Fort Wayne Housing Authority to Participate in the Hoosier Homes Homebuyer Assistance Program: *Heather Presley-Cowen, Hoosier Homes Program* (pp. 36-40)
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval
- 9.0 **ENVIRONMENT** - Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor (pp. 41-46)
- 10.0 Other Business
- 11.0 Announcements
- 12.0 Adjournment: The next meeting on January 15, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., will be a Full Commission.

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
Minutes of the September 18, 2025, Executive Board Meeting

Call to Order

Vice Chair Austin Bonta called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointments to the Commission of Eddie Melton (City of Gary) and John Schoon (Town of Kouts).

Roll Call - Taken by Candice Eklund

Present

The 10 Commissioners on the Executive Board in attendance are listed below:

- Austin Bonta, City of Portage
- Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor
- Denise Ebert, Town of Wanatah
- Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor
- Robert Ordway, Governor Appointee
- Courtney Parthun, City of La Porte
- David Phelps, Town of Beverly Shores
- Lisa Rosenkranz, Town of LaCrosse
- Tom Schmitt, Town of Schererville
- Jim Ton, Town of Chesterton

Adam Parkhouse, representing INDOT, was also present

Absent

- Wendy Mis, Town of Munster

The seven other Commissioners present at the meeting are listed below:

- Jenny Beier, Town of Schneider
- Bob Carnahan, Town of Cedar Lake
- John Matwyszyn, La Porte County Surveyor
- Eddie Melton, City of Gary
- John Schoon, Town of Kouts
- Mary Tanis Town of Dyer
- George Topoll, Union Township

Hebron, Kingsbury, Lowell, and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Mitch Barloga, Flor Baum, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the August 21, 2025, Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by Jim Ton.

Leadership – Ty Warner, Executive Director

The Leadership Committee recommended the two contracts below to the Commission.

- Drive Clean Indiana (DCI) Contract: Kathy Luther reported that this contract allows DCI to share funding with the NWI communities to provide technical support related to transportation and electric vehicle initiatives. Additionally, the Ride & Drive event, sponsored by DCI and Go Electric Vehicle Indiana (GOEVIN), will be held in the NIRPC parking lot after the meeting, featuring 15 electric vehicles available for test drives. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board approved the DCI contract.

- **Marquette Greenway Contract:** Mitch Barloga reported that this contract with Lochmueller Group is for engineering services in the City of Gary for the Marquette Greenway West Gary phase from Cline Avenue to Bridge Street. This contract supplements a previous contract executed earlier this year for a smaller study on a route analysis and encompasses engineering services over the next two years. A funding shortfall of \$1.5 million is required to fully compensate Lochmueller Group. NIRPC will seek construction funding to cover this deficit for this segment. The agreement has been reviewed and approved by Attorney Dave Hollenbeck. A formal written notice from the engineering firm is required before initiating work on this phase. The final execution of the contract is pending signature from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which is subject to legal review and approval of Amendment #2, and INDOT issuing a purchase order. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board approved the Marquette Greenway contract.

Transportation – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor

Kevin Breitzke reported the Transportation Committee met on September 9, 2025. During their meeting, the committee heard three presentations: 1) Bi-State Climate Action Plan: Kathy Luther updated on the bi-state climate comprehensive action plan transportation working group. A plan draft is expected to be completed by December 2025, 2) Trail Counting Program: Mitch Barloga presented on NIRPC’s trail counting initiatives. Currently, NIRPC has deployed 20 traffic trail counters in Lake and Porter Counties, along with 30 eco-counters installed in La Porte, Lake, and Porter Counties, 3) Charles Bradsky shared updates on NIRPC’s Road Safety Audit (RSA) program. The second round of audits is scheduled for July 2026. NIRPC has funding to support nine RSAs out of the 15 applications received. Additionally, Kevin noted that the Road to Zero workshop will be held on September 26 at Indiana University Northwest. The next meeting is scheduled for October 7, 2025.

INDOT – Adam Parkhouse

Adam Parkhouse reported that the next round of Community Crossings will accept applications from October 1-31, 2025. INDOT is beginning to focus on the winter months and is performing truck inspections. The construction project at I-94 and Ripley Street is to reconfigure the interchange for safety reasons.

Economy & Place – George Topoll, Union Township

George Topoll reported that discussions were held regarding the Hoosier Homes program at the last meeting. Also, NIRPC staff on the Economic Development District initiatives continue to promote the EDA Disaster Supplemental Grant opportunities available to Lake County. Communities interested in improving their economic conditions are encouraged to contact Denarie Kane at dkane@nirpc.org. Also, conversations are ongoing to advance the work identified in the updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). At the next meeting, scheduled on October 8, further discussions will take place regarding the Hoosier Homebuyers Assistance Program, which is sponsored and administered by the Fort Wayne Housing Authority.

Environment – Bill Emerson

Bill Emerson reported that the next Environment meeting is scheduled for November 6.

Carl Lisek, Executive Director, Drive Clean Indiana (DCI), provided an update on their contract work for NIRPC, noting DCI is the designated representative of the U.S. Department of Energy’s Clean Cities and Communities program in Indiana. Originally established 26 years ago as South Shore Clean Cities, the organization rebranded to DCI three years ago when it became the statewide coalition. DCI operates under the Vehicle Technologies Office of the Department of Energy, and its goal is to expand fuel choices and promote clean transportation initiatives. Mr. Lisek emphasized that DCI is eager to collaborate with any community pursuing transportation-related projects. In 2024, DCI helped secure over \$75 million in grants for Indiana. The GOEVIN (Go Electric Vehicle Indiana) was also highlighted, which is led by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), through which DCI supports utilities in promoting electric vehicle adoption. In partnership with INDOT, IDEM, and other state agencies, DCI is working to deliver a unified message about electric transportation and available funding opportunities through the GOEVIN program. Recently, 18 DC fast chargers and 18 Level II chargers were awarded through the GOEVIN

program. Municipalities interested in installing Level II charging stations are encouraged to contact DCI at [Contact Drive Clean Indiana](#). Lastly, Mr. Lisek noted that a non-federal grant opportunity of up to \$10 million is anticipated by the end of the year.

Other Business

Bob Carnahan noted the next Leadership Committee meeting is scheduled for October 7 at 8:30 a.m.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan relayed announcements of various events in Cedar Lake.

Robert Ordway announced he has taken over handling federal affairs on behalf of Governor Braun, who is in Washington, D.C. As a resident of the region, Mr. Ordway understands our regional needs and recognizes the importance of developing a comprehensive grant strategy. If a Northwest Indiana community has specific needs or projects that could benefit from federal appropriations, he encouraged communities to contact him, as he may be able to assist in identifying available funding opportunities.

There were discussions on the impacts of Indiana State Bill 1 (SB1). David Phelps shared that Senator Pol's office sent a report detailing how SB1 affects taxing districts within District 4. He suggested reviewing the report because the impacts are significant for some communities. In response to the growing concerns, Mayor Bonta announced that the City of Portage will be scheduling a public presentation titled "How do Taxes Work for Indiana" to provide a better understanding of the upcoming changes. All will be welcome to attend.

Hearing no other business, Austin Bonta adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m. The next meeting will be an Executive Board meeting on October 16, 2025.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [September 18, 2025 Commission Meeting](#).

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

September 16, 2025 / NIRPC Dune Room – 8:30 a.m.

Members present

Denise Ebert, Wendy Mis, Bob Carnahan

Staff and others present

George Topoll, David Hollenbeck, Ty Warner, Talaya Jones, Meredith Stilwell, Lisa Todd, Darin Sherman, Mitch Barloga

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Wendy Mis called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

July 8, 2025, Leadership Committee meeting minutes were presented. The minutes were approved on a motion by Denise Ebert, seconded by Bob Carnahan, and with no opposition.

Review of Financial Status – June 2025 Budget vs Actual

The June 2025 financials, bank reconciliations for the NIRPC general fund, CARES funds, and Marquette Greenway accounts, and expense and revenue reports for the NIRPC general and CARES funds were provided electronically for review before the meeting. The reports were also provided in the Committee meeting packet.

Year-to-date, June 30, 2025, total expenditures were \$4,865,646, of the \$20,218,721 budgeted. Total General Fund revenue for the period was \$1,541,524 of the \$5,632,731 budgeted.

Total NIRPC CARES fund expenditures year-to-date, June 30, 2025, were \$369,296 of the \$272,569 budgeted. Total CARES revenue collected for the period was \$371,311 of the \$235,800 budgeted.

Approval of Claims Registers – June 2025

The June 2025 General Fund claims totaling \$1,468,124.26 were presented to the Committee. The claims of \$1,468,124.26 were approved by a motion from Bob Carnahan, seconded by Denise Ebert, with no opposition.

The June 2025 Marquette Greenway claims totaling \$12,768.41 were then presented for approval. The CARES fund claims of \$12,768.41 were approved on a motion by Bob Carnahan, seconded by Denise Ebert, and with no opposition.

Review of Financial Status – July 2025 Budget vs Actual

The July 2025 financials, bank reconciliations for the NIRPC general fund, CARES funds, and Marquette Greenway accounts, and expense and revenue reports for the NIRPC general and CARES funds were provided electronically for review before the meeting. The reports were also provided in the Committee meeting packet.

Year-to-date, July 31, 2025, total expenditures were \$5,188,144 of the \$20,218,721 budgeted. Total General Fund revenue for the period was \$2,086,677 of the \$5,632,731 budgeted.

Total NIRPC CARES fund expenditures year-to-date, May 31, 2025, were \$369,311 of the \$272,569 budgeted. Total CARES revenue collected for the period was \$371,186 of the \$235,008 budgeted.

Approval of General Claims Register – July 2025

The July 2025 General Fund claims totaling \$303,266.05 to the Committee. The claims of \$303,266.05 were approved by a motion from Bob Carnahan, seconded by Denise Ebert, with no opposition.

RLF Management Plan update

Denarie Kane presented an update to the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Management Plan, noting that the plan was originally adopted in 2020, amended in 2021, and requires updates every five years.

As the governing body for the RLF, the Leadership Committee has the authority to adopt changes without NIRPC Board approval. Denarie explained that introductory pages of the plan will remain unchanged until the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document is finalized.

She also clarified that the Leadership Committee is responsible for appointing RLF Board members. The Committee may either appoint members directly or delegate that responsibility to the Leadership Committee Chair. It was decided that the Chair will serve as the appointing authority.

Following discussion, the Committee approved the RLF Management Plan update on a motion by Bob Carnahan, seconded by Denise Ebert, with no opposition.

Marquette Greenway Contract (pending legal review and approval of amendment #2 from FHWA)

Mitch Barloga presented the contract for the Marquette Greenway project covering the west Gary segment from Cline Avenue to Bridge Street. The contract total is not to exceed \$2,792,240, with \$1,262,000 already secured and \$1,529,000 still pending.

It was emphasized that even if the contract is recommended and approved, NIRPC must issue written authorization before any funds beyond the secured \$1,262,000 can be spent.

A favorable recommendation to the NIRPC Board is being sought, contingent on three conditions:

1. Approval of Amendment #2 from FHWA
2. Completion of legal review
3. Receipt of an executed Purchase Order from INDOT

During discussion, Dave Hollenbeck noted that progress should not be hindered. The Committee voted to recommend the contract to the NIRPC Board with the stated contingencies, following a motion by Bob Carnahan, seconded by Denise Ebert, with no opposition

Drive Clean Indiana Contract

Talaya Jones presented the Drive Clean Indiana (DCI) contract totaling \$438,000, noting that it is the same contract previously approved. The funding includes \$350,400 in federal CMAQ funds, with the remaining 20% provided as matching funds by DCI. NIRPC acts as the pass-through agency for the federal funds to DCI.

Ty Warner informed the Committee that Carl Lisek from DCI will provide an update at the upcoming Executive Board meeting.

The Committee gave the DCI contract a favorable recommendation to the NIRPC Board for approval, following a motion by Bob Carnahan, seconded by Denise Ebert, with no opposition.

Personnel updates

Ty reported that Ishan Parek filled the Technical Assistant position.

Other Business

Ty reported that the 2024 audit is wrapping up.

Due to the second Tuesday in October falling right after the Columbus Day holiday, the next Leadership meeting will be held the first Tuesday, October 7, 2025.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 am.



RESOLUTION 25-17

A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPTING THE YEAR 2026 APPROPRIATION BUDGETS FOR THE COMMISSION'S GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS

Date: December 18 ,2025

WHEREAS, a budget is required for governmental funds; and

WHEREAS, it is anticipated that sufficient revenues and other financing sources will be available to support the budgets herein proposed; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the Commission, as a whole, to approve the appropriations budget of the Commission;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission adopt as its Year 2026 budget for the General Fund for the budget identified in Attachment A to this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission adopt as its Year 2026 budget for the Transit Capital Projects Funds the budget identified in Attachment B to this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission adopt as its Year 2026 budget for the Transit Operating Projects Funds the budget identified in Attachment C to this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission adopt as its Year 2026 budget for the Revolving Loan Funds the budget identified in Attachment D to this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Leadership Committee of the Commission be designated to oversee the administration of these budgets within the framework of more detailed budget guidelines it might establish.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission this 18th day of December 2025.

Wendy Mis
Chairperson

ATTEST:

Denise Ebert
Secretary

2026 BUDGET

12/18/2025

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

2026 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS BUDGET

PERSONNEL - SALARIES	1,667,465
PERSONNEL - FRINGE BENEFITS	711,709
OCCUPANCY	311,500
EQUIPMENT SERVICE/MAINTENANCE	95,500
DEPARTMENTAL	159,685
CONTRACTUAL	3,233,830
CAPITAL OUTLAYS - Equipment & Furniture	20,000
TOTAL FUND BUDGET	6,199,689

ATTACHMENT B

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

2026 TRANSIT CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND APPROPRIATIONS BUDGET

CAPITAL OUTLAYS - TRANSIT EQUIPMENT	3,126,052
CARES ACT 2020 CAPITAL OUTLAYS - TRANSIT EQUIPMENT	30,979
TOTAL FUND BUDGET	3,157,031

ATTACHMENT C

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

2026 TRANSIT OPERATING PROJECTS FUND APPROPRIATIONS BUDGET

OTHER SERVICES AND CHARGES	6,493,079
TOTAL FUND BUDGET	6,493,079

ATTACHMENT D

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

2026 REVOLVING LOAN FUND APPROPRIATIONS BUDGET

OTHER SERVICES AND CHARGES- LAPORTE COUNTY	80,000
OTHER SERVICES AND CHARGES- CARES	25,000
TOTAL FUND BUDGET	105,000

TOTAL BUDGET OF **15,954,799**

NIRPC FY 2026 Budget

	<u>FY 2025 Budget</u>	<u>FY 2026 Budget</u>	<u>Change %</u>
REVENUES			
COUNTY APPROPRIATIONS	674,527	800,019	
FEDERAL AGENCIES	2,150,000	4,258,821	
STATE AGENCIES	2,584,603	950,000	
LOCAL AGENCIES	178,851	163,850	
INTEREST INCOME	44,750	27,000	
TOTAL REVENUES	5,632,731	6,199,690	9%
EXPENDITURES			
SALARY	1,600,938	1,667,465	4%
FRINGE BENEFITS			
FICA CONTRIBUTIONS	122,472	127,561	
WORKERS COMPENSATION	5,000	4,000	
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION	4,000	2,000	
PERF CONTRIBUTIONS	200,300	208,122	
HEALTH INSURANCE	294,794	304,368	
LIFE & DISABILITY INSURANCE	26,000	22,000	
ICMA CONTRIBUTIONS	27,034	28,659	
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	18,000	15,000	
	697,599	711,709	2%
OCCUPANCY			
OFFICE LEASE	240,000	247,000	
PROPERTY INSURANCE	15,000	7,500	
BUILDING MAINTENANCE	20,000	20,000	
UTILITIES	34,000	37,000	
	309,000	311,500	1%
EQUIPMENT SERVICE/MAINTENANCE			
COPIER LEASING/MAINTENANCE	5,000	10,000	
COMPUTER SERVICE	49,000	51,000	
TELEPHONE & INTERNET SERVICE / MAIN.	17,000	20,000	
CYBER INSURANCE	10,000	11,000	
OTHER EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	2,500	3,500	
	83,500	95,500	13%
DEPARTMENTAL			
COMMISSION/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	32,000	28,000	
PLANNING	49,126	55,870	
SUBGRANTEE MANAGEMENT	4,000	6,000	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS	11,315	11,315	
ALLOCATED FUNCTIONS	32,000	38,000	
ENVIRONMENTAL/P4CA PROMOTIONS	13,750	13,750	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT TRAVEL	-	2,000	
GENERAL USE SUPPLIES	3,750	4,750	
	145,941	159,685	9%
CONTRACTUAL			
LEGAL SERVICES	27,000	27,000	
AUDIT & ACCOUNTING	30,000	28,000	
TRANSIT OVERSIGHT	13,000	13,000	
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRACTS	515,000	475,000	
PLANNING	971,753	929,830	
PLANNING- Marquette Greenway Project	1,150,000	1,700,000	
BOARD DEVELOPMENT	2,000	2,000	
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	2,000	2,000	
E-TIP	55,000	57,000	
	2,765,753	3,233,830	14%
FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT	30,000	20,000	-50%
TOTAL EXPENSES	5,632,731	6,199,689	9%
FUND BALANCE - ENDING	(1)	0	

NIRPC FY 2026 Revenue Detail

COUNTY APPROPRIATIONS

LAKE COUNTY	508,674
PORTER COUNTY	176,680
LA PORTE COUNTY	114,665
TOTAL	800,019

FEDERAL AGENCIES

FTA OVERSIGHT	360,000
CARES FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINIS- FIXED ASSET	20,000
USDA FOREST SVC	118,589
IDEM -INVASIVE TREES	28,589
EPA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE	40,000
INDOT PL 2024	366,149
INDOT PL 2025	1,169,370
INDOT PL 2026	788,124
RAISE (FHWA)	800,000
CLIMATE POLLUTION REDUCTION GRANT	24,000
EDA PARTNERSHIP GRANT- Salaries	70,000
STBG	46,000
HSIP	68,000
CMAQ 2026	360,000
TOTAL	4,258,821

STATE AGENCIES

INDOT- TRAFFIC AREA COUNTING	50,000
READI	550,000
INDOT- EARMARK FUNDS	350,000
TOTAL	950,000

LOCAL AGENCIES

LOCAL AGENCIES	152,850
PARTNERS for CLEAN AIR	11,000
TOTAL	163,850

NON-GOVERNMENTAL

INTEREST INCOME

BANK INTEREST INCOME	25,000
RLF INTEREST INCOME	2,000
TOTAL FY 2025 REVENUE	6,199,690

NIRPC FY 2026 Budget

	Grant	Federal	Req. Match	Total
Support Vehicle	2016-033	57,122	14,280	71,402
Support Vehicles	2017-027	87,054	12,076	99,130
Rehab/Renovate - Admin Facility	2017-028	19,200	4,800	24,000
Commuter Bus	2018-026	30,633	7,658	38,291
Commuter Bus	2018-026	3,500	875	4,375
Replace Staff Computers	2019-029	80,000	20,000	100,000
Associated Transit Improv	2019-029	220,000	55,000	275,000
Support Equipment	2019-029	5,200	1,300	6,500
Office Computer Equipment	2019-029	743	186	929
Office Computer Equipment	2019-029	5,200	1,300	6,500
2 Vehicle Replacement- Propone	2019-029	140,800	35,200	176,000
Replacement Vehicle	2019-029	83,953	37,375	121,328
Replace 1 Vehicle	2019-030	48,000	12,000	60,000
Replace Bus Stop Signs	2019-030	37,106	9,277	46,383
Transit Improvements	2019-030	81,539	20,385	101,924
2 Vehicle Replacement	2022-022	18,760	4,690	23,450
2 Vehicle Replacement	2024-014	23,246	5,812	29,058
Vehicle Replacement	2024-004	64,176	16,044	80,220
2 Vehicle Replacement	2024-009	227,565	56,891	284,456
5 Vehicle Replacement	2024-009	306,423	76,606	383,029
Commuter Bus	2022-020	267,824	66,956	334,780
Commuter Bus	2022-020	337,438	84,359	421,797
	TOTAL	<u>2,145,482</u>	<u>543,070</u>	<u>2,688,552</u>
				-
	TOTAL BUDGET			<u>2,688,552</u>

CY 2026 CARES ACT 2020 TRANSIT CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND				
	Grant	Project	Total	Federal Funds
ECT	CARES Act 2020-014	Support Equipment	\$ 30,979	\$ 30,979
TOTAL BUDGET			<u>\$ 30,979</u>	<u>\$ 30,979</u>

CY 2026 TRANSIT OPERATING PROJECTS FUND

	Federal	Req. Match	Total
City of East Chicago 2025			
Existing Grants	1,596,354	865,982	2,462,336
City of LaPorte 2025			
Existing Grants	583,067	583,067	1,166,134
City of Valparaiso 2025			
Existing Grants	2,265,538	4,227,198	6,492,736
North Township 2025			
Existing Grants	404,818	394,002	798,820
Opportunity Enterprises 2025			
Existing Grants	172,063	36,579	208,642
Porter County Community Services 2025			
Operating Assistance (Enhanced Mobility)	89,802	89,802	179,604
Existing Grants	74,441	71,503	145,944
Lake County Community Services 2025			
Enhanced Mobility	250,394	250,394	500,788
Existing Grants	514,919	491,587	1,006,506
PMTF Funds (NT,SLCS,PCCS, OE & CV)			
Public Mass Transportation Fund	541,683		541,683
TOTAL	6,493,079	7,010,114	13,503,193

LaPorte RLF 2026 Administration Budget

Per RLF Management Plan 50% of interest can be used for Administrative Cost

CASH ON HAND	80,000
RLF INTEREST INCOME	
CLOSING CHARGES	
TOTAL REVENUES	-
 EXPENDITURES	
SALARY	
FRINGE BENEFITS ALLOC	-
INDIRECT COST ALLOC	-
	-
DEPARTMENTAL	
TRAVEL	2,000
GENERAL USE SUPPLIES	
	2,000
CONTRACTUAL	
RETURN OF NON AWARD FUNDS	78,000
	78,000
 TOTAL EXPENSES	 80,000
 FUND BALANCE - ENDING	 -

CY 2026 RECOVER NWI REVOLVING LOAN FUND

	2025 Budget	2026 Budget
New Loans	22,000	25,000
TOTAL	<u>22,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>
TOTAL BUDGET		<u>25,000</u>

CARES ACT RLF 2026 Administration Budget

Per RLF Management Plan 50% of interest can be used for Administrative Cost

REVENUES	
RLF INTEREST INCOME	2,000
CLOSING CHARGES	1,000
TOTAL REVENUES	<u>3,000</u>
EXPENDITURES	
SALARY	
FRINGE BENEFITS ALLOC	-
INDIRECT COST ALLOC	-
	<u>-</u>
DEPARTMENTAL	
COMMUNICATION	
GENERAL USE SUPPLIES- AF Loan	
CONTRACTUAL	
CARES RLF SERVICES	3,000
	<u>3,000</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	3,000
FUND BALANCE - ENDING	<u><u>-</u></u>



2026 NIRPC Commission Meeting Dates

January 15	Full Commission
February 19	Executive Board
March 19	Executive Board
April 16	Full Commission
May 21	Executive Board
June 18	Executive Board
July 16	Full Commission
August 20	Executive Board
September 17	Executive Board
November 19	Full Commission

Confirm meetings at www.NIRPC.org or see postings outside NIRPC's offices at 6100 Southport Road in Portage for updates.

Transportation Committee
NIRPC Lake Michigan Room
August 5, 2025
Minutes

Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Voting members in attendance were Kevin Breitzke (Porter County), Jeff Huet (Schererville), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), Dean Button (Hammond), Max Rehlander (Valparaiso), Kay Nelson (Forum), David Wright (GPTC), and Kelly Wenger (NICTD).

Jake Dammarell, Daniela Martin (Valparaiso), George Topoll (Union Township), Jenny Monroe, Scott Sandstrom, Melody Panos (INDOT), Noelle Bayer (INDOT), Alex Metz, Beth Shrader, Ryan Lisek (DCI), Katlyn Fine (Forum), Elizabeth Bengel, and Terry Martin were also present.

NIRPC staff present were Tom Vander Woude, Grace Benninger, Stephen Hughes, Scott Weber, Mitch Barloga, Meredith Stilwell, and Flor Baum.

On a motion by Kay Nelson, seconded by Dean Button, the committee approved the minutes from the May 6th meeting.

Planning

Grace Benninger spoke on the 2025 1st and 2nd quarter Safety, Travel Time Reliability, Freight, and Congestion Performance Measures. The Transportation Committee reviewed federally required safety and congestion performance measures, including interstate and truck travel time reliability and annual hours of peak excessive delay per capita, using interactive maps and metrics for 2024 and 2025. The committee discussed metrics for measuring delays and timing, reviewed crash data from 2024-2025, and examined data on vulnerable roadway users, with some noting errors in the data during beta testing.

Stephen Hughes presented Resolution 25-15, which proposed a technical amendment to NIRPC's Public Participation Plan, *Engage NWI*. Originally adopted in August 2019, the plan outlines NIRPC's approach to public engagement in accordance with federal requirements under 23 CFR 450.316. The amendment reflected minor updates to account for the new committee structure adopted in June 2024 and the change in social media branding from Twitter to "X," including instructions on locating NIRPC on that platform. No substantive changes were made to the document's content, timelines, or engagement process.

As a technical amendment, the change requires approval by the Commissioners but does not necessitate the full public comment process that will be undertaken during a more comprehensive future update.

On a motion by Kelly Wenger, seconded by Mark O'Dell, the Transportation Committee recommended Resolution 25-15 to the Executive Board. No questions or comments were raised, and the motion passed unanimously.

Scott Weber presented Resolution 25-16, a technical amendment to the *NWI 2050+* long-range transportation plan. Federal regulations (23 CFR 450.324(f)(11)) require an MTP to demonstrate fiscal constraint by including a financial plan and project listing. While *NWI 2050+* had already been found to demonstrate fiscal constraint in its April 17, 2024, air quality conformity approval, INDOT

and FHWA provided feedback recommending that the plan include a more explicit financial appendix with detailed funding sources, fiscal constraint tables, and project costs.

The financial plan outlines formula and discretionary funding sources, including federal highway programs such as STBG, HSIP, CMAQ, and TA; transit programs such as Sections 5307, 5337, 5310, and 5339; and discretionary programs such as BUILD, MEGA, and RCE. Fiscal constraint tables and project listings were largely drawn from the already adopted FY 2026–2030 TIP, with projects shown by year of expenditure and urbanized area. The plan also includes financial analysis tables for Northwest Indiana, Valparaiso, and Michigan City urbanized areas, as well as assessments of local government financial capacity.

The committee discussed revenue and cost projections, noting that the fiscally constrained plan showed \$251 million in revenues for 2024–2033, with \$200 million already secured and an additional \$55 million anticipated for 2034–2050. Costs were estimated at \$43.78 million for the latter period, leaving sufficient reserve capacity to cover operations and maintenance (O&M). Local sponsors were found to have adequate budgetary authority to meet O&M obligations after fulfilling federal match requirements, with \$105 million available in Northwest Indiana and \$18.8 million in Michigan City.

The committee reviewed the timeline and financial feasibility of regionally significant projects expected by 2030 and 2035, including the US 20 center turn lane, Kennedy Avenue added travel lanes, Monon corridor transit service, and I-80/94 flex lane projects. The Northwest Indiana/Valparaiso-Shorewood urban area project list is fiscally constrained, but it was noted that the approximately \$100 million La Porte City Connector in the Michigan City urbanized area may exceed anticipated revenues. Since reserves from Group I funds could potentially be loaned to Group II, though, the overall MTP is fiscally constrained.

Scott Weber emphasized that the amendment did not request additional funding but demonstrated to federal partners the methodology and formulas used to ensure fiscal constraint. The long-range plan would continue to be updated every four years, with financial projections revised five years ahead to ensure flexibility and affordability for future updates. The amendment provided transparency and compliance while maintaining capacity to incorporate additional projects as communities advanced them.

On motion by Dean Button, seconded by David Wright, the Transportation Committee recommended adoption of Resolution 25-16 to the Full Commission. No opposition or comments were raised, and the motion passed unanimously.

Programming

Stephen Hughes presented Resolution 25-14: FY 2026–2030 TIP Amendment 26-02. The Transportation Committee discussed the proposed amendments and reviewed the public comment report. The amendments were released for a 21-day public comment period from July 1 through July 22, 2025. They were posted on NIRPC’s website and social media platforms and distributed through press releases, with links provided for public review. No comments were received during this period. The amendments were also forwarded to the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) on June 24, 2025. No questions or concerns were raised, and the ICG provided concurrence for the projects on July 1, 2025.

The committee reviewed updates to 220 projects using federal highway and transit funds. The list included both projects exempt and projects non-exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process. Amendment 26-02.1 covered 101 highway projects funded by FHWA that were exempt from conformity requirements. Amendment 26-02.2 included 5 FHWA-funded projects subject to conformity. Highway project types included right-of-way acquisition, bridge improvements, ADA sidewalk construction, pavement rehabilitation, added turn lanes, corridor and intersection upgrades, safety projects, small structure replacements, and trail enhancements. Amendment 26-02.5 contained 114 FTA-funded transit projects exempt from conformity, including operating assistance for complementary paratransit, preventive maintenance, planning and oversight, capital projects, and new initiatives.

The committee noted that separating the amendments would allow INDOT to process exempt projects more quickly, ensuring timely project delivery. Members supported the resolution, emphasizing the importance of updating the TIP to reflect current needs and costs.

On motion by Dean Button, seconded by Jeff Huet, the Transportation Committee recommended adoption of Resolution 25-14 as presented to the Commission. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports from Planning Partners

Ryan Lisek of Drive Clean Indiana discussed funding awards for electric vehicle charging stations, clean diesel projects, and educational initiatives. \$3.3 million in Go EVIN funding was awarded for publicly accessible fast and level two charging stations at various locations, including travel centers, convention centers, and car dealerships. Various funding awards and opportunities were announced, including \$740,000 for diesel replacements and up to \$10 million for clean diesel and electric vehicle funding. Ryan reported updates on various projects, including electric vehicle deliveries, scholarship awards, and recognition for clean air initiatives in Lake and Porter counties. The Midwest ZEV project has \$25,000 in funding for schools interested in building an electric go-kart and participating in a one-year curriculum, with additional events like a National Drive Electric Week EV ride and drive planned.

Tom Vander Woude provided staff updates on various projects:

Lake County can apply for EDA FY2025 disaster supplemental grant funding for economic development projects, such as infrastructure and utilities, to increase economic resiliency, not just disaster recovery.

He reported that the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration are conducting the quadrennial certification review of NIRPC's planning process and are seeking public feedback on the transportation planning process in Northwestern Indiana through August 26. Everyone is encouraged to fill out a comment form, which will be sent out via Constant Contact. After reviewing documentation and public comments, the FTA will issue a report by the end of the year with commendations, recommendations, and possible corrective actions.

Tom reported that NIRPC received 15 road safety audit applications and will review and prioritize review them and contact sponsors in two weeks regarding funding for 9-10 projects.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m. The next TC meeting is slated for September 9 at the NIRPC building.

References

[YouTube recording of 8/5/2025 TC meeting](#)



[Drive Clean Indiana](#)



[TIP Amendments 26-02.1, 26-02.2 and 26-02.5](#)



Transportation Committee
NIRPC Lake Michigan Room
September 9, 2025
Minutes

Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The voting members in attendance were Kevin Breitzke, Dean Button (Hammond), Kay Nelson (Forum), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), Mary Tanis (Dyer), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Max Rehlander (Valparaiso), and David Wright (GPTC).

Also in attendance were George Topoll, Ryan Lisek (DCI), Eric Wolverton, Jake Dammarell, Doug Ross (Post Tribune), Beth Shrader (SEH), Danielle Martin (Valparaiso), Julio Arichavala (East Chicago), Scott Pruitt, Melody Panos (INDOT), and Noelle Bayer (INDOT).

NIRPC staff present: Tom Vander Woude, Meredith Stilwell, Kathy Luther, Eman Ibrahim, Charles Bradsky, Mitch Barloga, Grace Benninger, Ishan Parekh, and Scott Weber.

On a motion by Mary Tanis, seconded by Mark O'Dell, the committee approved the minutes from the August 5th meeting.

Planning

Kathy Luther gave an update on the Bi-State Regional Climate Plan Transportation Sector. The Transportation Working Group met on June 26, 2025, to discuss progress on the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the greater Chicago area. The project, developed through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program, is a partnership between the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, CMAP, and NIRPC. Deliverables included the Priority Climate Action Plan, the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, and a status report, with the final plan to be completed by December 1, 2025.

The working group reviewed the regional greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. In 2020, economy-wide emissions totaled 152 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT CO₂e). Industry accounted for 80% of emissions, while buildings contributed 11%. The region adopted a target of reducing gross GHG emissions 80–85% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels, aligning with CMAP, the City of Chicago, and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. Between 2005 and 2020, emissions dropped 20% (39 MMT CO₂e), leaving an additional 65% reduction needed by 2050.

Scenarios for reaching reduction goals were modeled, including a current policy scenario, a state and local implementation scenario, and a full plan implementation scenario. Results showed that the current policy scenario would not be sufficient to meet targets, while state, local, and full plan implementation could achieve reductions of 61% and 85%, respectively, by 2050.

The transportation sector was highlighted as a critical component of emissions reductions. In 2020, passenger cars and trucks accounted for 61% of transportation emissions, and freight trucks accounted for 19%. Emissions had already decreased 29% between 2005

and 2020, largely due to federal fuel economy standards and increased adoption of electric vehicles.

Modeling results for the transportation sector showed:

- By 2035, emissions reductions under current policy would rely heavily on light-duty EV adoption, though freight emissions would remain largely unchanged.
- With additional state and local policies, reductions would be achieved through accelerated EV adoption, transit investment, and electrification of off-road equipment.
- By 2050, full plan implementation assumed 88% of the light-duty fleet would be electric, with major progress in electrifying freight trucks, transit, and off-road equipment. Aviation would remain a challenge, requiring federal action and technological advances.

Key takeaways emphasized that passenger cars and trucks are the largest contributors to transportation emissions, while freight remains harder to decarbonize. Reaching 100% EV sales by 2035 was deemed critical to meeting 2050 goals, along with quicker turnover of vehicle fleets. State and local action could address most emissions reductions, but federal leadership was especially necessary for aviation.

The group also discussed implementation considerations, including identifying critical strategies, barriers, and actors needed for success. Public engagement was highlighted as essential, and members were encouraged to share the climate questionnaire available in English and Spanish. Additional outreach efforts included a partner social media toolkit and upcoming workshops.

Next steps included incorporating feedback on transportation modeling results, vetting benefits analysis with the equity working group, continuing public engagement, and finalizing modeling and analysis with the steering committee. A draft plan was expected to be presented in fall 2025.

The Transportation Committee discussed the need for a transition plan to address emissions control and greenhouse gas issues, emphasizing individual responsibility for vehicle emissions and the importance of collective action. Committee members discussed the need to understand and address barriers to electric vehicle adoption, including infrastructure and charging time, in order to compete with gas-powered vehicles. Northwest Indiana is being targeted by Indianapolis and Illinois and is burdened with emissions controls that are hard on residents, but it can work towards improvement. The longevity of new engines is uncertain, with concerns about their durability, replacement frequency, and increasing material costs. For more information, contact Kathy at kluther@nirpc.org.

Mitch Barloga presented an update on trail counting efforts in Northwest Indiana. He emphasized the importance of trail usage data for understanding patterns, justifying resources, supporting advocacy and funding, guiding planning and management, assessing economic impacts, monitoring conditions, and identifying infrastructure needs.

Barloga reviewed the first generation of trail counters deployed in Lake and Porter Counties. These 20 units were difficult to use, required specialized equipment for data transfer, and were subject to vandalism and insect damage. To address these challenges, NIRPC dedicated federal funds in 2022 to purchase upgraded counters. Thirty new counters were obtained with an 80% federal match, consisting of pole-mounted and post-mounted models. Eighteen entities, including one nonprofit, participated. The new counters track both directions, use Bluetooth for simple data collection, and feature a three-year battery life.

Since 2023, 30 Eco Counters have been distributed across NIRPC's three counties, covering 41 cities and towns. This year, deployment included Wicker Park and Valpo Fairgrounds, with additional installations on regional trails in Crown Point, Portage Ameriplex, EL at Wicker Park North, LaPorte Stone Lake, and Valpo Rogers Lakewood. A case study from Crown Point demonstrated the counters' effectiveness in monitoring both northbound and southbound flows, providing valuable insights into trail use.

Looking ahead, Barloga reported that new federal funding is expected within the next one to two years. This funding will allow for additional purchases of counters, priced at approximately \$3,000 each. NIRPC also plans to develop a public data dashboard on its website and deploy TrafX counters selectively to refine existing counts. The Transportation Committee discussed transitioning to new eco-counters, analyzed trail usage data, and plans to seek federal funding to install more counters to track usage. The committee discussed potential partnerships with non-profits and private sector entities to fund transportation projects, with Local Planning Agencies (LPAs) possibly covering 20% of costs.

The presentation concluded with Barloga's encouragement for continued community support of trail monitoring initiatives. Contact Mitch Barloga at mbarloga@nirpc.org for more information.

Charles Bradsky gave an update on the Road Safety Audit Program. The committee discussed funding for local transportation projects, with a 20% match required, and explored potential sources, including general funds, park departments, and partnerships with federal and local agencies. NIRPC is conducting a second-phase road safety audit, coordinated with Corradino LLC and INDOT, and has selected 11 intersections and three corridors from 9 LPAs, with field checks and traffic counts scheduled to begin by the month's end. The committee discussed next steps for transportation projects, including submitting recommendations to the county for unincorporated areas and planning road safety audits in specific locations. For more information, contact Charles at cbradsky@nirpc.org.

Programming

Nothing to report.

Reports for Planning Partners

Ryan Lisek (DCI) reported on various funding awards and updates, including \$3.3 million for 18 electric vehicle charging station projects, a grant for propane garbage trucks in Whiting, and upcoming Indiana clean diesel funding and electric vehicle infrastructure projects. The Midwest ZEV program is conducting a survey, available via QR code, to identify infrastructure needs for zero-emission trucks along the I80 corridor, with related events

including National Drive Electric Week and the Crossroads Clean Energy and Transportation Forum.

Staff Announcements

Tom Vander Woude covered announcements, including a rescheduled November meeting now set for December 2nd, and upcoming events such as a stakeholder breakfast and a statewide work truck group meeting. Ishan Parekh, NIRPC's new geo transportation technical assistant, will conduct traffic counts during warm months and work on GIS and data analysis projects during colder months. Ishan's contact info is iparekh@nirpc.org. NIRPC is partnering with Health by Design to host an Indiana Road to Zero Academy workshop on September 26 at IU, focusing on Vision Zero principles to improve road safety.

Hearing no further business, the committee meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting is slated for December 2, 2025, at the NIRPC offices.

References

- [YouTube recording of 9/9/2025 TC meeting](#)



- [Comprehensive CAP for Greater Chicago – partner social media kit](#)



- [Drive Clean Indiana website](#)





Public Comment Report

Amendments #26-03.1 and 26-03.5 to the FY 2026 - 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Transportation Committee

December 2, 2025

Amendments #26-03.1 and 26-03.5 of the FY 2026 - 2030 Transportation Improvement Program was released for a 21-day public comment period which began on October 27, 2025, and ended on November 17, 2025. Amendment 26-03 includes the following:

- 26-03.1 contains highway projects using FHWA (highway) funds that are exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process.
- 26-03.5 contains transit projects only using FTA (transit) funds and that are exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process.

The amendments were made available for viewing at www.nirpc.org and press releases with links were posted on several social media sites.

One comment was received from the City Engineer of Hammond. The comment was concerning one project (two des numbers – 1801907 & 1900833) which is the Local Trax project in Hammond. The statement is:

“This project is key to the vitality of Hammond. It’s unfortunate that the project had fell off the TIP/STIP as it is preventing INDOT/Hammond from obtaining approval of the NEPA document. Thank you for prioritizing the project.”

This comment does not require a revision to the projects or the amendment.

NIRPC staff also sent the amendments to the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) on October 20, 2025. There were no questions or comments concerning the list of projects on any of the amendments. FHWA sent to NIRPC on 10/21/2025 the following comment:

“Although the nonexempt projects referenced below were included in a previous Air Quality Conformity Determination Report (Feb 15, 2024), my understanding is that since NIRPC has not transitioned to MOVES4 or MOVES5, conformity determinations cannot rely on a previous emissions analysis. We can revisit those projects once NIRPC has transitioned to a later MOVES model and the related air quality conformity issues have been resolved.

“Regarding the exempt projects noted below, FHWA has reviewed, and we concur the projects are exempt based on the descriptions/information provided.”

EPA and IDEM likewise emphasized FHWA comments (10/21/2025) with

“Yes Erica is correct, as per section C. ‘Use of MOVES5 for Regional Emissions Analyses During the Grace Period ‘ of the notice (attached) only MOVES4 or 5 can be used at this time to perform an air quality analysis for non-exempt projects.” – EPA

“ What he said.” – IDEM

Because of this, Amendment 26-03.2 and the four non-exempt projects in it are not included in this resolution (Resolution 26-18)

Concurrence was given for these projects on this amendment by the other members of the ICG on October 28, 2025.

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Committee

From: Charles Bradsky, Transportation Projects Manager

Date: December 2, 2025

Re: TIP Amendments #26-03.1; 26-03.5

Action Requested: Recommendation to the Full Commission/Executive Board to adopt Resolution 25-18 approving TIP Amendments #26-03.1 and 26-03.5

The NIRPC Executive Board adopted the Fiscal Years 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) on May 15, 2025. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) approved the TIP on July 2 and August 28, 2025, respectively.

Since the adoption of the FY 2026-2030 TIP, project sponsors have proposed new projects and changes to existing projects, which must be reflected in NIRPC's TIP and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Changes in the TIP are the first step in this process.

The attached resolution 25-18 contains two TIP amendments, a highway project amendment and a transit amendment. Because these project types are reviewed differently by INDOT, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Federal Transit Administration, dividing them into separate amendments will allow each to be approved in the quickest, most efficient manner. The two amendments are:

- 26-03.1 contains highway projects using FHWA (highway) funds and that are exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process (48 projects).
- 26-03.5 contains transit projects only using FTA (transit) funds and that are exempt from the Air Quality Conformity process (20 projects).

Amendment #26.03.1 contains:

For INDOT – 21 Projects:

- 4 Bridge Projects,
 - 2 New Bridge Projects (carry over from previous TIP)
 - 1 Bridge Replacement (adding a significant amount of funds)
 - 1 Bridge Maintenance Projects (adding a significant amount of funds)
- 6 Pavement/Roadway Rehabilitation Projects
 - 3 Maintenance Projects adding a significant amount of funds
 - 1 Maintenance Project adding a phase
 - 2 Safety Projects
 - 1 Adding a significant amount of funds

- 1 new Project
- 1 Sign Project – Repair/Replacement – district wide; new project
- 2 Trail Projects in the National Park (new projects)
- 2 Intersection Modifications
 - 2 Safety Projects with no or limited amount of added turn lanes (added phase)
- 4 Small Structure Repair/Lining/Replacements
 - 3 New projects
 - 1 Project adding a significant amount of funds
- 2 Other Type Projects
 - 1 Non-Roadway Project – Purchase Safety software – New project
 - 1 Safety project (delete – moving to another MPO’s TIP)

For locally sponsored projects – 27 Projects for the municipalities of Cedar Lake (3), Crown Point (2), Dyer (1), East Chicago (1), Gary (1), Highland (1), Hobart (1), La Porte (1), La Porte County (1), Lake County (1), Lowell (1), Merrillville (1), Munster (1), New Chicago (1), Portage (2), Porter (1), Valparaiso (4), Whiting (1), Winfield (2):

- 4 ADA sidewalk/pedestrian projects
 - 3 new projects
 - 1 increased funding
- 2 Trail Projects
 - 1 carrying over from previous TIP
 - 1 delete project
- 2 Bridge Projects
 - 1 Replacement Project (new project)
 - 1 Bridge Inspection Project (new project)
- 4 Intersection Modification (Roundabout) Projects
 - 1 New project (carry over from previous TIP)
 - 1 Project adding a Phase
 - 2 Projects adding a significant amount of funding
- 1 Roadway Rehabilitation Project (adding a significant amount of funds)
- 14 Other Type projects (new projects)
 - 13 Zero/Low Emission Vehicle Purchase
 - 1 Non-Roadway (Landscaping) Project

Amendment 26-03.5 contains 20 projects for transit operators:

- 1 Project for Operating Assistance/Complementary Paratransit (increased funding amounts)
- 7 Projects for Operating Assistance
 - 1 New Projects
 - 6 Projects increased funding amounts
- 6 Preventative Maintenance Projects
 - 5 Projects increased funding amounts
 - 1 New Projects
- 6 Capital Projects
 - 1 Vehicle Replacement with technical corrections
 - 5 Other type projects
 - 3 New Projects
 - 2 Projects with technical corrections

Recommendation

NIRPC staff requests a Transportation Committee recommendation to the Full Commission/Executive Board to adopt Resolution 25-18 approving TIP Amendments #26-03.1 and 26-03.5.

Economy & Place Committee
July 9, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Chairman George Topoll began the Economy & Place Committee meeting with the pledge of allegiance and introductions.

Voting members present were George Topoll (Union Township), John Matwyszyn (LPC Surveyor), Lois Whittaker (BCCNWI), Jen Trowbridge (NWCAC), Joe Wszolek (NWIRA), and Andy Vasquez (Porter County).

Celena Green (ERC) was also present.

NIRPC staff present were Eman Ibrahim (committee lead), Denarie Kane (committee lead), Kathy Luther, Meredith Stillwell (technical assistance), and Flor Baum (administrative support).

On motion by Joe Wszolek, seconded by Andy Vasquez, the minutes of April 4, 2025, were approved as presented.

Economy

Celena Green, Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellow, presented on brownfields and quantum opportunities for redevelopment in Northwest Indiana. She explained that the International Economic Development Corporation and the U.S. Economic Development Administration partnered to create the ERC Fellowship, with 65 ERC fellows currently serving with local host organizations across 44 states and territories. There is a total of three fellows in Northwest Indiana, hosted by NIRPC, the City of Gary, and Michigan City EDC, respectively. Celena's 2.5-year fellowship began in February 2024 at no cost to NIRPC.

The project aims to identify and prioritize eight brownfield sites within the Quantum Fiber Corridor to support economic growth, workforce resiliency, and quality of place goals by overcoming barriers to redevelopment. To date, preliminary GIS mapping has been completed, narrowing 443 parcels down to 42 properties in northern Lake County communities such as Gary, Hammond, East Chicago, and Lake Station. Candidate sites were evaluated based on size, environmental concerns, community input, zoning, infrastructure, and proximity to assets such as the I-90 Toll Road.

The committee discussed redevelopment challenges, including ambiguous ownership, limited municipal staffing, developer hesitancy, community opposition, and financing barriers. Opportunities included policy updates, capacity building, inclusive planning, expanding engagement with lenders, growing Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), and mobilizing resources through partnerships and funding proposals. Members emphasized the importance of learning from successful brownfield redevelopment efforts elsewhere to inform strategies in Northwest Indiana. The committee noted that the project was finalizing a shortlist of eight priority sites for redevelopment while continuing to engage stakeholders and community members. They also discussed the opportunity to attend the National Brownfield Summit in Chicago from August 5–8, which was expected to draw about 1,500 participants and include site visits and experiential activities. For information, contact Celena at cgreen@economicrecoverycorps.org.

Denarie Kane spoke about the EDA's FY 2025 Disaster Supplemental Grant Program. Lake County eligible applicants are encouraged to compete for a portion of \$1.45 billion in disaster recovery funding due to severe storms, tornados, etc which occurred in March 2023 and resulted in a federal disaster declaration. There are two funding paths - a readiness path for non-construction projects to

be completed in 12-18 months and an implementation path for construction and non-construction projects with a four-year completion time. Both funding options are aimed at improving the local economy beyond pre-disaster levels. NIRPC staff is reaching out to local commissioners, non-profits, and educational institutions to acquaint them with this funding opportunity and brainstorm potential application ideas. The federal government will provide 80% of funding needed which is a more favorable match ratio compared to traditional EDA funding at 60%. Please contact Denarie at dkane@nirpc.org for more information. Kathy Luther shared that NIRPC conducted an assessment of hazards and disasters in watershed areas and provided a report that can help communities in need of funding for resilience projects.

Place

Eman Ibrahim provided an update on Land Use & Housing, giving a snapshot of housing affordability and recommendations for future development in various communities. She emphasized the need to focus on creating housing for low- and middle-income residents. Data showed a shortage of 12,000 units for those earning up to \$25,000 annually and 1,700 units for households making between \$50,000 and \$150,000 annually.

The committee discussed best practices for middle- and high-density housing, including zoning and policy changes, infill development, and infrastructure upgrades tailored to both older and newer suburban communities. Members noted that Indiana lacked accessory dwelling unit (ADU) ordinances, unlike Illinois, which is considering state legislation to prohibit municipalities from banning ADUs. ADUs could help older communities by encouraging infill development and increasing density. The committee also considered incentives for small developers and streamlined processes to support affordable, higher-density housing in infill areas with existing infrastructure.

The discussion included strategies to incentivize builders, such as density bonuses and innovative partnerships with developers, lenders, and stakeholders to increase affordable housing options without reducing profits. Committee members emphasized the importance of unified housing strategies and reliable data to address complex housing issues, noting that challenges such as tax sale properties and investor interests often hinder progress. Effective community development required a long-term master plan with informed zoning decisions to address growth, density, traffic, and infrastructure needs. Infrastructure planning—covering sewer, water, and internet—was noted as critical for meeting current and future needs, particularly in emerging areas. The DNR was conducting a water supply study on the Kankakee River basin, with a public meeting held in March, and members encouraged community participation and awareness.

Eman also provided an update on the Sensible Tools Handbook. Two successful workshops were held, engaging about 40 attendees, including planners, elected officials, and environmentalists. The first workshop covered the role of public planning officials, zoning basics, and ethical considerations. The second focused on community planning to enhance green infrastructure through assessments of planning and zoning ordinances. Participants shared observations and recommendations, and the committee expressed interest in continuing the workshops annually.

NIRPC identified high-priority infill development areas based on underutilized land, proximity to infrastructure, and zoning compatibility. Infill opportunities were tied to future planning and transportation funding. The analysis revealed 618 available building and vacant sites in Northwest Indiana, including 391 vacant buildings and 227 vacant parcels, with Hammond and Munster showing significant redevelopment potential. The committee emphasized strategies such as zoning reform, streamlined permitting, and public-private partnerships to encourage redevelopment and economic growth.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) was highlighted as a regional priority. NIRPC identified TOD areas, including neighborhoods within a 15-minute walk radius, targeting redevelopment of deteriorating or vacant properties, particularly in lower-income communities. Hammond was noted as a leader in infill efforts, with \$50 million in ARPA investments in infrastructure, and projects such as Jacob Square, the Banc redevelopment, and the reuse of former hospital and school sites into housing, retail, and mixed-use developments.

The committee also discussed innovative housing and workforce solutions, citing Cincinnati's prohibition of investor-bought properties and Tennessee's initiatives to attract residents. Members noted that creative approaches to housing design, such as buildings with internal water reuse systems, could be part of future strategies, though public acceptance may be challenging.

Lastly, Eman described the NIRPC Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, which would provide funding to local governments, nonprofits, and public agencies for projects addressing corridor urbanism, transit- and trail-oriented development, redevelopment in built-up areas, and housing variety. Other eligible projects included comprehensive and housing plans, TOD plans and ordinances, zoning updates, streetscaping, safety action plans, and more. For more information on these agenda items, please contact Eman at ebrahim@nirpc.org.

The Economy & Place Committee discussed upcoming events, including a housing symposium, a conference on AI for non-profits, and a peer learning cohort on electrical load growth.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, the meeting ended at 11:37 a.m. The next Economy & Place meeting is slated for October 8th at the NIRPC building.

References

[YouTube Livestream of 7/9/2025 Meeting](#)



[Brownfield Mapping Results](#)



[National Brownfields Training Conference](#)



[EDA FY2025 Disaster Supplemental Grant Program](#)





RESOLUTION 25-13

A RESOLUTION TO ENTER INTO A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE FORT WAYNE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HOOSIER HOMES HOMEBUYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

December 18, 2025

WHEREAS, the **Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)** has been formed under IC 36-7-7.6 “to institute and maintain a comprehensive planning and programming process for transportation, economic development, and environmental policy and provide a coordinative management process” for the counties of Lake, Porter, and La Porte in Indiana (collectively, the “Counties”); and

WHEREAS, NIRPC is an Economic Development District designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration; and

WHEREAS, NIRPC’s officially adopted Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) includes a goal to “collaborate with and support other regional organizations to improve the affordability/availability of housing for all income levels” in order to improve Quality of Place and attract a skilled workforce; and

WHEREAS, the Fort Wayne Housing Authority (“FWHA”) sponsors and administers its own homeownership initiative (“Hoosier Homes Homebuyer Assistance Program” or “Program”) to provide competitive HUD, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac eligible mortgage loans and down payment and closing cost assistance towards the purchase of existing and newly constructed homes within its eligible Counties for the benefit of qualified homebuyers; and

WHEREAS, FWHA has invited NIRPC to participate in its Hoosier Homes Program as a participant on behalf of its member Counties; and

WHEREAS, NIRPC has the full legal authority to enter into an intergovernmental cooperative agreement with FWHA, and NIRPC desires to authorize FWHA to take such actions as may be necessary or convenient to make the Program available within its member Counties; and

WHEREAS, NIRPC desires to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with FWHA, with the condition that the Program does not create an administrative or fiscal obligation to NIRPC or its member Counties; and

WHEREAS, it is the recommendation of the NIRPC Board of Commissioners to approve NIRPC’s participation in the Hoosier Homes Homebuyer Assistance Program on behalf of its member Counties;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION that the Commission hereby authorizes and directs its representatives to execute and deliver the Cooperative Agreement attached hereto and to take such other actions as may be necessary or convenient to carry out and give effect to NIRPC's participation in the Hoosier Homes Homebuyer Assistance Program.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission this 18TH day of December 2025.

Wendy Mis
Chairperson

ATTEST:

Denise Ebert
Secretary

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

THIS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT (this “Agreement”), is by and between the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (“NIRPC”), a federally designated Economic Development District, and the **Fort Wayne Housing Authority** (“FWHA”), an instrumentality of government duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Indiana;

RECITALS:

WHEREAS, NIRPC seeks to stimulate economic development, the quality of life and the quality of place, which includes but is not limited to expanding the availability of safe and affordable housing options to qualified borrowers within its participating member county jurisdictions (Lake, Porter, and La Porte; collectively, the “Counties”); and

WHEREAS, the Fort Wayne Housing Authority (“FWHA”) sponsors and administers its own homeownership initiative (“Hoosier Homes Homebuyer Assistance Program” or “Program”) to provide competitive HUD, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac eligible mortgage loans and down payment and closing cost assistance towards the purchase of existing and newly constructed homes within its participating member counties for the benefit of qualified homebuyers, and

WHEREAS, FWHA has invited NIRPC to participate in its Hoosier Homes Homebuyer Assistance Program as a participant on behalf of its member Counties; and

WHEREAS, NIRPC has the full legal authority to enter into an intergovernmental cooperative agreement with FWHA, and NIRPC desires to authorize FWHA to take such actions as may be necessary or convenient to make the Program available on its behalf within its member Counties; and

WHEREAS, NIRPC desires to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with FWHA, with the condition that the Program does not create an administrative or fiscal obligation to NIRPC or its member Counties; and

WHEREAS, it is the recommendation of the NIRPC Board of Commissioners to approve NIRPC’s participation in the Program on behalf of its member counties.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants and undertakings set forth herein, NIRPC and FWHA hereby agree as follows:

Section 1. NIRPC hereby authorizes FWHA to offer the Program within the boundaries of its member Counties.

Section 2. FWHA hereby agrees to provide the Program within the Counties and to abide by each of the terms and conditions of this Agreement in connection with the Program. FWHA agrees to make the Program available to qualified borrowers on behalf of the Counties for the origination of home mortgages within the jurisdictions of the Counties.

Section 3. The Parties may terminate this Agreement at any time; provided, however, that no such termination will be effective with respect to then-current Program participants. In the event that the Program is terminated, this Agreement, and all duties, obligations and rights of FWHA and NIRPC hereunder, shall terminate.

Section 4. NIRPC's participation in the Program pursuant to this Agreement shall not be construed as creating or constituting a general obligation or multiple fiscal year direct or indirect indebtedness or other financial obligation whatsoever of NIRPC or its member Counties nor a mandatory payment obligation of NIRPC or its member Counties.

Section 6. Both parties shall observe and comply with the applicable laws, ordinances, regulations and codes of the Federal, State, and other local government agencies which may in any manner affect the performance of this Agreement.

Section 7. All notices required pursuant to this Agreement shall be in writing and addressed to the parties at their respective addresses set forth below. All such notices shall be deemed duly given if hand delivered or if deposited in the United States mail, postage prepaid, registered or certified, return receipt requested. Notice as provided herein does not waive service of summons or process.

If to NIRPC:

Attn: Ty Warner AICP, Executive Director
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission
6100 Southport Rd
Portage, IN 46368

If to FWHA:

Attn: George Guy, Executive Director
Fort Wayne Housing Authority
Attention: Executive Director
7315 Hanna Street
Fort Wayne, IN 46816

[Signatures on the following pages]

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, FWHA and NIRPC caused this Agreement to be executed and be effective as of _____, 2025.

**NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL
PLANNING COMMISSION**

Wendy Mis, Chair

ATTEST:

Denise Ebert, Secretary

Fort Wayne Housing Authority

By _____
George Guy, Executive Director

Environment Committee
Lake Michigan Room
May 1, 2025
Minutes

Bill Emerson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bill Emerson, Mallorie Medellin (IDEM), Joe Exl (LMCP), Katherine Balkema (LMCP), Thomas Black (Highland), Kathy Sipple (Earth Charter), Ryan Lisek (DCI), Lori Hunt (Westville), Reggie Korthals (MS4), George Topoll (Union Township), Katie Hobgood, Linda Pompeii (Potawattomie Park), Jenna Ambriosa (DCI), Connie Wachala (HNS), Jenny Dimitroff (TPSC), Victoria Wittig (NWI UWFP), Rahim Evans (IDEM), Michele Munday Pariso (IDEM), and Beth Shrader were in attendance.

NIRPC staff present were Kathy Luther, Jen Birchfield, Tom Vander Woude, Meredith Stilwell, and Flor Baum.

The February 27, 2025 meeting minutes were approved on motion by Reggie Korthals and seconded by Tim Kingsland.

Environmental Project Updates

This spring, NIRPC successfully distributed 289 trees through its Community Tree Program and initiated an invasive tree replacement effort, with plans for another tree distribution in the fall. Additionally, two workshops were conducted focusing on planning tools and green infrastructure. These sessions aim to build capacity and understanding, particularly among nonprofessional members of community boards, with more workshops planned for future scheduling near. The committee discussed the need for an additional event designed for municipal sustainability, to help clarify their roles and promote collaboration. It was suggested that the event be held in the evening to accommodate the schedules of volunteer members. Furthermore, the committee explored the idea of developing a "road show" to present sustainability topics to various community groups, allowing the content to be customized based on each group's specific interests and needs.

Partners for Clean Air Update

Mallorie Medellin (IDEM) gave an informational presentation on "What is PCA and why everybody should be a Partner." Mallorie is a senior manager at IDEM's Northwest regional office, overseeing the compliance and technical assistance program, which provides free environmental compliance counseling. PCA, established in the mid-90s as a voluntary partnership under the Clean Air Act, aims to educate businesses, government entities, and communities about environmental actions they can take to improve air quality. It currently operates across various regions. Efforts to improve air quality in Northwest Indiana focus on engaging diverse stakeholders in concrete actions like energy conservation, emissions reduction, and organizational policies. Energy conservation and emissions reduction can be achieved through simple actions like switching to LED lights and implementing organizational policies such as remote work and carpooling, alongside larger initiatives like sustainability plans and carbon neutrality pledges. The organization offers scholarships for high school seniors pursuing education in clean air and public health, focusing on expanding support for trade school students, and has awarded over \$32,500 to date. There is a focus on promoting air quality improvement actions, educating members on opportunities to reduce emissions, and disseminating ozone action day alerts to encourage behaviors that mitigate ozone levels. Efforts are underway to promote energy conservation, air quality education, and community

engagement through various outreach events and partnerships, particularly focusing on middle school science projects and local initiatives. A grant program is being developed to support teachers and community groups in environmental initiatives, alongside efforts to engage schools through citizen science and an anti-idling campaign, while fostering partnerships and educational opportunities within the community.

Mallorie emphasized the importance of community engagement and education in environmental initiatives, particularly regarding air quality and ozone action days, while expressing a desire to revitalize membership and outreach efforts. Efforts are underway to improve air and water sustainability through industry collaboration, focusing on reducing emissions and promoting environmentally friendly practices. Mallorie spoke on the importance of cooperation between environmental organizations, community groups, and researchers to address sustainability challenges, highlighting legal limitations on remote meeting participation. Challenges in managing environmental impacts from contractors and vehicle emissions testing, particularly affecting low-income individuals, were discussed, highlighting the need for better communication and support. The discussion highlighted the need for financial support for low-income individuals facing environmental challenges and emphasized the importance of collective action alongside industry particularly in addressing air quality issues. Community members can engage in advocacy regarding consent decrees and industry impacts by monitoring case dockets and participating in public comment opportunities when available. You can sign up for updates on environmental issues, receiving numerous daily notifications about changes and opportunities for public comment.

New Business

Bill Emerson spoke on Resolution 25-12: A Resolution supporting NWI Environmental Initiatives. The committee discussed funding challenges due to recent EPA grant cancellations, which may impact their environmental initiatives and ongoing projects. The committee aims to reaffirm its commitment to enhancing environmental quality in Indiana through various initiatives, including air quality improvement and environmental justice, and plans to present this resolution for endorsement at the next commission meeting on May 15th. Upcoming brownfield grants will be announced soon, while existing funding sources for climate planning and environmental justice initiatives remain stable. The discussion emphasizes the importance of addressing air quality and greenhouse gas reduction commitments without specifically mentioning electric vehicles, while also noting changes in project language and community benefits due to political shifts. On motion by Reggie Korthals, seconded by George Topoll, the Environment Committee approved recommending Res 25-12 to the Commission, clarifying their status as subgrantees of EPA grants.

Reports from Planning Partners

Ryan Lisek (DCI) reported on Green Fleets. New funding for electric vehicle charging stations and ongoing projects to reduce emissions were discussed, alongside upcoming events and initiatives promoting clean energy in Northwest Indiana.

Katherine Balkema reported on the Lake Michigan Coastal Program. The 2026 budget will mirror 2025, but specific details and federal grant information remain uncertain, with an application deadline in early October. The Great Lakes coastal resiliency study is progressing, and stakeholder input will be crucial. Meanwhile, the draft 309 document for coastal program enhancement, focusing on coastal hazards, has been submitted for review.

Announcement

Announcements were made.

Adjournment

The Next Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for August 7, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in the NIRPC building. Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

References

1. EC Meeting Agenda



2. YouTube Meeting Recording



3. Partners for Clean Air



Environment Committee
Lake Michigan Room
August 7, 2025
Minutes

Chairman Bill Emerson called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

In attendance were Bill Emerson, Lori Hunt (Westville), Kathy Sipple (ECI), Thomas Black (Highland), Reggie Korthals (MS4), Jeni Orsburn (DNR), Ryan Lisek (DCI), Brenda Scott-Henry (Gary), Jenny Beier (Schneider), and Nancy Moldenhauer.

Katherine Balkema (DNR), John Matwyshyn (LPCS), Michele Munday Pariso (IDEM), Nicole Messacar (IDEM), George Topoll (Union Township), and Rahim Evans (IDEM) were also in attendance.

NIRPC staff were Jennifer Birchfield, Flor Baum, and Candice Eklund.

On motion by Reggie Korthals, seconded by Brenda Scott-Henry, the May 1 meeting minutes were approved.

Kathy Sipple (Earth Charter Indiana) spoke on the proposed structure and communication improvements for the NWI Region Resilience. Highlighted is the importance of staff support and sustainability commissions for environmental initiatives, citing Gary as a successful example, and proposes hosting more frequent regional events and mini climate leadership summits to foster collaboration and communication among stakeholders. The website nwiregionresilience.org lists local groups dedicated to sustainability, encouraging viewers to suggest additions. The aim is to create a platform to connect people with local environmental groups and facilitate involvement by providing administrative support and gathering information on needs and gaps in various communities.

Local communities in rural areas are working together to address invasive species and sustainability initiatives through education, collaboration, and shared best practices. Rural areas face an increasing problem with invasive species due to newcomers' lack of understanding, and local support and expertise are needed to address this issue.

The Northwest Indiana storm water advisory group is working to educate municipalities on water quality attainment on a watershed basis, and efforts are being made to make resources and meeting information more accessible and regularly updated. The goal is to document and facilitate connections between cities, such as Highland and Valparaiso, to share best practices and solutions on sustainability initiatives. Kathy emphasized the importance of sharing existing work and collaborating with community members to efficiently complete tasks, such as mapping and obtaining letters of support, to address issues like greenhouse gas emissions and air quality. Kathy concluded by proposing a collaborative approach to sustainability initiatives, suggesting an overlay structure with community representation. She expressed openness to discussions about ensuring active participation and potential voting rights for sustainability commissions.

Jen Birchfield led the Discussion of Community Climate Impacts and Priorities for the Climate Action Plan for the Chicago Metropolitan Area. The climate action plan for the Chicago metropolitan area focuses on community climate impacts, priorities, and co-benefits, and input is sought from all participants. Northwest Indiana aims to reach net zero emissions by 2050 through a plan developed by CAP, Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus, and NIPRC, outlining necessary actions for public, private, and

nonprofit sectors. The greenhouse gas inventory analyzed energy consumption at both community-wide and municipal levels, considering factors such as building types, including residential, institutional, and municipal buildings. The Chicago region is developing a new climate action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, focusing on strategies such as electric vehicles, renewable energy, and clean industry practices, and seeking public input on community impacts, barriers, and priorities. The committee shared personal experiences and observations of climate change effects, including increased extreme heat, flooding, air quality alerts, and changes in seasonal patterns affecting daily life and local ecosystems. Climate change impacts in local communities include reduced food access, increased health problems, financial burdens from flood repairs and energy costs, and changes in daily life, such as reduced outdoor activities and worsening allergies. It was discussed that climate change is causing severe weather events, straining city resources, and increasing electricity demands, leading to power outages and surging energy bills that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Severe wet weather events and climate change are increasing costs for city cleanups and affecting leisure activities, such as travel and outdoor recreation, due to factors like tree maintenance and extreme weather conditions. Jen noted an increase in severe weather events and powerful winds causing property damage and disruptions, which were not adequately accounted for in their initial climate resilience planning. The grid has struggled to keep up with increasing electricity demands due to population growth, new technologies, and extreme weather events, causing frequent power outages and affecting various organizations and individuals. To address increasing electricity demand, particularly from data centers and emerging technologies, it's crucial to reduce energy load and demand at individual facilities and communities through on-site renewable energy solutions. Forced transition to green energy without a balanced approach, including natural gas and other sources, is causing substantial energy bill increases that disproportionately affect low-income individuals, such as senior citizens. It was also discussed that many Hoosiers struggle to pay bills, especially after sudden significant increases in economic plans, leading to an expected surge in requests for assistance.

The committee discussed upgrading to renewable energy, creating walkable cities, and addressing nuclear waste as crucial for combating climate change, but it requires careful planning and investment. Upgrading electric appliances and renewable energy sources can be a significant financial burden, especially for older homes with outdated electrical infrastructure. A research report found that going solar was cheaper for a corporation than any other scenario, including coal, even with environmental regulations factored out. Due to limited storage capacity, natural gas is necessary to supplement renewables during peak times. Still, as battery technology improves, a 100% renewable track may be possible, making a renewed focus on nuclear power plants a concerning development. Nuclear power has the potential to solve climate change, but it requires a safe and effective plan for managing nuclear waste, which is a significant concern. To create a walking and biking culture in cities, opportunities such as secure bike paths and interconnecting trails need to be maximized, and relatively cost-effective solutions like crossings at major highways should be considered. Biking paths may not be a practical solution to climate change impacts on transportation, as people may not want to ride bikes in hot weather and must deal with being sweaty and uncomfortable.

There were discussions on local initiatives focused on promoting sustainability, improving recycling, and increasing environmental awareness to address climate change and community challenges. Promoting native plant gardening and improving recycling systems, potentially through grants and community-wide initiatives, can help address climate change and sustainability issues at the local level. Lake County lacks a recycling program, but community grants and programs, such as the Clean Community Program and Partners for Clean Air, offer resources and recognition for environmental initiatives. The committee discussed ways to increase financial incentives for homeowners to go solar, including private entity-sponsored low-interest loans, and discussed the

potential impact of a Senate bill eliminating vehicle emissions testing. Through a workshop exercise, the organization engaged in small initiatives to promote environmental awareness and sought public feedback on priority areas, including health, quality of life, and transportation options.

Ryan Lisek reported from Drive Clean Indiana. Ryan shared news on climate change, stating the US government officials acknowledged climate change is real and man-made, but are reconsidering emission requirements, prompting a call to voice opinions at an upcoming public hearing. Indiana announced over \$3.3 million in funding for publicly accessible electric vehicle charging projects and awarded grants for alternative fuel projects, including propane garbage trucks and clean diesel replacements. Electric vehicle awareness efforts are underway in Indiana, with events and education initiatives promoting cost savings and accurate information about EVs. A National Drive Electric Week event will be held on September 18th, featuring a presentation and ride-and-drive to discuss electric vehicle costs and showcase the new level three DC fast chargers. Indiana has \$10 million in clean diesel funding available, and public charging stations have measures to prevent users from blocking ports for extended periods, with fees for idling and limited ports available at most locations. Porter County residents can participate in countywide comprehensive planning processes by visiting elevateportercounty.com and taking a survey.

Announcements were made.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m. The next Environment Committee meeting is slated for November 6, 2025, at the NIPRC offices.