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www.nirpc.org

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

March 19, 2026 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
- 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 February 19, 2026, Executive Board Meeting (pp. 1-4)
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval
- 6.0 **LEADERSHIP** – Wendy Mis, Munster Clerk-Treasurer
 - 6.1 Discussion concerning NIRPC Commissioner attendance
- 7.0 **TRANSPORTATION** – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor (pp. 5-41)
 - 7.1 Resolution #26-04: Amend *Engage NWI, Tom Vander Woude* (pp. 8-32)
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval
 - 7.2 Resolution #26-05: FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program, Amendment 26-05, *Tom Vander Woude* (pp. 33-41)
ACTION REQUESTED: Adoption
 - 7.3 INDOT - Matt Deitchley, La Porte District Deputy Commissioner
- 8.0 **ECONOMY & PLACE** – George Topoll, Union Township Trustee
- 9.0 **ENVIRONMENT** – Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor
- 10.0 Other Business
- 11.0 Announcements
- 12.0 Adjournment
The next meeting on April 16, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. will be a Full Commission meeting. The April agenda will include the election of Officers and the Executive Board for 2026, which requires a quorum of the Full Commission.

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN
Minutes of the February 19, 2026 Full Commission Meeting

Call to Order

Vice Chair Austin Bonta called the meeting to order at 9:23 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

Roll Call—Taken by Meredith Stilwell

Present

The 23 Commissioners present at the meeting are listed below:

- Jim Biggs, Porter County Commissioner
- Austin Bonta, City of Portage
- Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor
- Robert Carnahan, Town of Cedar Lake
- Daina Dumbrys, Town of Michiana Shores
- Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor
- Joe Haney, La Porte County Commissioner
- Christian Hendron, Porter Township Trustee
- Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, City of East Chicago
- Scott Kingan, Town of Ogden Dunes
- Peter Land, City of Crown Point
- Colleen Lane, Town of Long Beach
- Annette Ludwig, Town of Dyer
- John Matwyshyn, La Porte County Surveyor
- Jack McGraw, Town of Burns Harbor
- Eddie Melton, City of Gary
- Angie Nelson Deutch, City of Michigan City
- David Phelps, Town of Beverly Shores
- Warren Schacht, Town of Trail Creek
- Tom Schmitt, Town of Schererville
- Steve Spebar, City of Whiting
- James Ton, Town of Chesterton
- George Topoll, Union Township

Absent

The 26 Commissioners absent from the meeting are listed below:

- Kyle Allen, Lake County Commissioner
- Duane Arndt, Town of Kingsford Heights *
- Jenny Beier, Town of Schneider
- Thomas Black, Town of Highland
- James Burge, Town of Porter
- Bill Carroll, City of Lake Station *
- Larry Colley, Town of Pottawattomie Park
- Jon Costas, City of Valparaiso
- Jon Derwinski, Town of Winfield
- Daina Dumbrys, Town of Michiana Shores
- Denise Ebert, Town of Wanatah
- Keesha Hardaway, Town of Merrillville
- Bonnie Hawksworth, Town of Dune Acres *
- Josh Huddlestun, City of Hobart
- Lori Hunt, Town of Westville
- Justin Kiel, La Porte County Council
- Tom McDermott, City of Hammond *
- Wendy Mis, Town of Munster
- Randall Niemeyer, Lake County Council
- Robert Ordway, Indiana Federal Affairs
- Courtney Parthun, City of La Porte
- Lisa Rosenkranz, Town of LaCrosse
- Rick Ryfa, Town of Griffith *
- John Schoon, Town of Kouts
- Gerald Swets, Town of St. John
- Sharon Szwedo, Town of New Chicago

* Absent for 3 or more consecutive Commission meetings: see Indiana Code 36-7-7.6-5 (h).

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

Staff present included Tom Vander Woude, Eman Ibrahim, Charles Bradsky, Meredith Stilwell, and Grace Benninger.

A quorum of the Full Commission was not present, and a quorum for the Executive Board was also believed not to be present.

Public Comment – There were no sign-ups for public comment.

A temporary recess was called by Vice-Chair Bonta to try to resolve the quorum issue at 9:28 a.m.

The meeting was resumed at 9:45 a.m. with a quorum and convened as an Executive Board meeting. Attorney Hollenbeck noted that no action could be taken on the agenda item for the election of Officers.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 18, 2025, Full Commission meeting were approved on motion by Kevin Breitzke and seconded by James Ton.

Leadership – Tom Vander Woude, NIRPC Director of Transportation

Tom Vander Woude presented Resolution 26-03, supporting the *Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act*. He noted that the Leadership Committee reviewed the legislation at its previous meeting. The bill, recently introduced by Representatives Kristen McDonald Rivet and Rob Bresnahan, is intended for inclusion in the upcoming reauthorization of federal transportation legislation. It was developed by the Local Officials and Transportation Coalition (LOTIC), whose membership includes organizations such as the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), both of which NIRPC belongs to. The Leadership Committee recommended the resolution for Commission support.

Tom explained that the BASICS Act aims to address longstanding funding disparities between state and local governments. Local governments own approximately 75% of the nation's street network and 43% of the federal-aid highway system, yet receive only 16% of federal transportation funding. Consequently, half of locally owned principal roads and many locally owned bridges are in poor condition, and roughly 85% of traffic fatalities occur on local roads and non-interstate state highways. The bill seeks to correct these inequities.

Tom highlighted provisions of particular relevance to NIRPC as a metropolitan planning organization (MPO):

- **Shifts funding** from the National Highway Performance Program into the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), moving dollars from a rigid program to more flexible programs used frequently by MPOs. STBG is NIRPC's primary source of road project funding.
- **Increases formula bridge funding** and requires 25% to be suballocated for local bridge projects selected by MPOs or equivalent rural entities.
- **Increases HSIP funding** and requires states to suballocate 25% of HSIP funds to MPO-selected safety projects.
- **Restricts state transfers of HSIP funds**, ensuring states must offer unused HSIP funds to local governments via MPOs before transferring them elsewhere. Tom noted INDOT already follows a similar practice, but the bill would formalize it in statute.
- **Raises metropolitan planning (PL) funding** from the current fixed annual share—about 0.8% of federal-aid highway funds—to a consistent 2.5% per fiscal year. The 20% local match requirement would be eliminated, making the funds fully federally supported.
- **Creates a voluntary option** allowing MPOs to receive PL funds directly from the federal government rather than through INDOT, streamlining the contracting process.

Resolution 26-03 in support of the Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) was approved on motion by Tom Schmitt and seconded by Kevin Breitzke.

Perfect attendance recognition – Austin Bonta, NIRPC Vice-Chair

Commissioners recognized for attendance at all NIRPC Full Commission meetings in 2025: Wendy Mis, Warren Schacht, Mary Tanis, and Andy Vasquez.

Commissioners recognized for perfect attendance at all NIRPC Full Commission and Executive Board meetings in 2025: Robert Carnahan, Bill Emerson, John Matwyshyn, David Phelps, Tom Schmitt, James Ton, and George Topoll.

Certificates formally recognizing the attendance award will be distributed after being signed by the current chair, Wendy Mis.

Transportation – Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor

Kevin Breitzke reported that the Transportation Committee met on February 3, 2026. The committee received an update from Corradino on the second year of NIRPC's Road Safety Audit Program, which completed audits at seven sites across the three counties. The resulting reports identify short- and long-term safety improvements

and will support local applications for HSIP funding. The program will continue in 2027, with new applications opening this spring.

Kevin also noted that NIRPC has begun updating its long-range metropolitan transportation plan, building on *NWI 2050 and NWI 2050+*. The update will incorporate new data, forecasts, and public input, with completion expected by July.

The Transportation Committee recommended the resolutions below to the Full Commission.

- **Resolution #26-01: Adopting safety performance measure targets for 2026, amending the targets into *NWI 2050+* and the FY 2026-2030 TIP.** Grace Benninger reported that the six safety performance targets covering fatalities, serious injuries, their respective rates, and non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries presented reflect statewide data. MPOs and State DOTs have jointly set federally required safety targets since 2012, and NIRPC develops these in coordination with INDOT, IDOT, CMAP, and regional transit agencies. The targets must be included in NIRPC's Metropolitan Transportation Plan and TIP.

Since 2024, INDOT has set statewide targets using a 2% straight-line reduction from the 2021 five-year average. NIRPC adopts the INDOT targets to maintain consistency with the state-led performance framework and ensure uniform data methods and baselines. Grace noted that the serious injury rate and non-motorized fatalities & serious injury rate targets appear to have increased from 2025 to 2026. She explained this was due to a change from an automated reporting program used by the Indiana State Police for crash data to the Federal Highway Administration's required system for classifying the nature of serious injuries, which led to inconsistent data from 2019 to 2022, requiring recalculating and verifying the 5-year trendlines using data from the new classification system. While none of the safety performance targets are currently being met, the 2% reduction is aspirational, aiming to reverse the trend toward zero deaths as part of Vision Zero. Indiana is not alone in this, and there are a lot of other states that have seen increased fatalities and injuries in recent years. The safety targets are not enforced as thresholds but are used as planning tools, with compliance based on MPOs demonstrating that their planning and programming decisions support the State's target and an agreement that regional investments will support INDOT's safety goals. If adopted, the new targets will be amended into the *NWI 2050+* and FY 2026-2030 TIP. Staff will continue to monitor and report.

On motion by James Ton and seconded by Bill Emerson, the Executive Board approved resolution #26-01.

- **Resolution #26-02: Amending the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program for Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties, Indiana Amendments NO. 26-04.1.**

Charles Bradsky reported that a 21-day public comment period was held, and no comments were received. The amendment was also sent to the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) on December 22, 2025, and no comments were received. Concurrence was given by the ICG for these projects on January 2, 2026. The amendment consists of ten projects, four of which are INDOT projects. A question was raised about an administrative modification, to which Charles explained that a recommendation was made at the January Transportation Resource Oversight Committee Meeting to begin reporting all changes, including administrative modifications. Administrative modifications are minor changes to projects that only require an email from NIRPC to INDOT. The bridge removal project modification in question was due to new estimates.

On motion by James Ton and seconded by Tom Schmitt, the Executive Board approved resolution #26-02.

Commissioner Breitzke continued his Transportation Committee report, noting that Charles also presented administrative modifications, which are included in the Board packet. He reminded communities to check with their road departments about frost laws.

The next Transportation Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, 2026. The TROC meetings for February 24 have been cancelled.

INDOT Report –

Matt Dietchley reported to Commissioners during the recess and had nothing further to report.

Economy & Place – George Topoll

George Topoll reported that the committee met on February 11, during which the October 8, 2025 minutes were approved. Three presentations were given during the meeting. Gerry White, Northwest Senior Community Liaison for the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), presented on their site certification program; Tom

Vander Wouder presented on the 2050+ update; and Eman Ibrahim provided an update on land use and housing, and the corridor urbanism concept, which was adopted in the *NWI 2050+* to help revitalize urban corridors.

The next Economy & Place meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2026.

Environment – Bill Emerson

Bill Emerson reported that the committee met on February 5, 2026 where a presentation was made by Jack Weinberg from the Gary Advocates for Responsible Development on the future of steelmaking in Northwest Indiana. There are current steelworkers advocating for the steel mills not only to get greener, but also to be more sustainable in the long term by transitioning from blast furnaces to electric arc furnaces over time. Bill noted their offer to present to the Commission. Ryan Lisek from Drive Clean Indiana also gave a presentation on electric vehicles, green vehicle grants, and opportunities. Kathy Luther gave the annual update on completed programs and projects.

The next meeting of the Environment Committee is May 7, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Kevin Breitzke reminded the commissioners that committee meetings are on the NIRPC YouTube channel and can be watched in their spare time.

Other Business

Austin Bonta urged the Mayors in the room to imagine what would happen if their City Council routinely lacked a quorum, and Tom Vander Woude stated that, given that the officers do need to be elected, it is likely that the March meeting will be a Full Commission instead of an Executive Board meeting.

Commissioner Ton asked to circle back to Bill Emerson's report regarding the presenters' offer at the Environment Committee meeting to present to the Commission, to express his interest in hearing the presentation. Mayor Melton advised inviting the steel producers to present as well.

Bob Carnahan commended the City of Hammond, the City of Gary, and the City of Portage for their efforts to attract the Chicago Bears and expressed his hope that at least one of them will be able to bring the Bears to Northwest Indiana.

Attendance concerns were discussed. When asked about the consequences of missing meetings, Attorney Hollenbeck stated that state statute requires notifying the appointing authority if a Commissioner misses more than 3 consecutive meetings. He noted the intent behind NIRPC's structure as a Council of Governments—that elected officials participate directly in decision-making. Mayor Bonta emphasized that NIRPC decisions affect all communities and that inconsistent attendance limits communities' awareness and influence. Hollenbeck added that four communities have not made an appointment.

Members discussed proxy options, the need for onboarding for newly elected officials, and the value of an entire meeting as an informational session on NIRPC's role, processes, and requirements. Suggestions included staff developing onboarding materials and presenting directly to local governments.

Tom Vander Woude noted that NIRPC committee meetings are where detailed project and funding discussions take place, encouraging participation by elected officials or their staff. A request was made for a report showing community funding over the past 10–15 years.

Mayor Bonta committed to contacting the four municipalities without appointments and reminding others of the importance of attendance.

Hearing no further business, Austin Bonta adjourned the meeting at 10:53 a.m.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [Executive Board Meeting 2-19-26 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-19-26)

Transportation Committee
NIRPC Lake Michigan Room
February 3, 2026
Minutes

Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The voting members in attendance were Kevin Breitzke, Dean Button (Hammond), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Max Rehlander (Valparaiso), Kay Nelson (NWI Forum), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), Bob Thompson (Valparaiso Transit), and Martin Bobcek (Porter County).

Also in attendance were Jeff Huet (Schererville), Jake Dammarell (BF&S), Alex Olesker (BF&S), Christopher Murphy (Structurepoint), Dave Barich (Lochmueller), George Topoll (Union Township), Terry Martin (Carrier & Gable), Michelle Murray (NWI Forum), Jenny Linheart, Mark Rinehart (Corradino Group), and Greg Falkowski (Crown Point).

NIRPC staff present: Tom Vander Woude, Meredith Stilwell, Candi Eklund, Charles Bradsky, Grace Benninger, Mitch Barloga, Stephen Hughes, and Scott Weber.

1.1. Call to Order

Chair Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.2. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from December 2, 2025, were reviewed.

Motion to approve: Dean Button

Second: Tom Schmitt

Motion carried unanimously.

2. Public Comment

No public comment submitted.

3.1. Presentation: 2025 Road Safety Audits (RSAs)

Presenter: Mark Rinehart, Corradino

Mark presented on the RSAs conducted at seven intersections in the NIRPC planning area. The process included Project management planning, Data collection (crash data, police reports, traffic counts), Traffic analysis (existing conditions + 2050 forecasts), Working sessions with LPAs and law enforcement, Field checks, Final RSA documentation, and Key Findings. Mr. Rinehart gave a detailed example using 117th Ave & Parrish Ave, detailing 29 crashes (2022–2024), 38% with injury and 89% occurring during left-turn or right-angle turning movements. He noted the intersection performs poorly vs. peer locations (99th percentile for crash frequency & cost) and high volumes on Parrish cause gap issues for side-street traffic.

The near-term recommendations include to maintain two-way stop signs, improve signage and pavement markings, or to add LED flashing stop signs along with tree clearing to improve sight distance. The long-term recommendation is to construct a

single-lane roundabout, a countermeasure that has been proven to reduce serious crash types.

NIRPC staff noted that RSAs help build a pipeline of projects eligible for HSIP safety funding. NIRPC plans to continue annual RSA cycles, with a single-year contract for next year and with future two-year contracts after that point.

4.1 Resolution 26-01: Adoption of 2026 Safety Performance Targets

Grace Benninger presented the proposed safety targets for 2026, which are INDOT statewide targets, with a recommendation for NIRPC to support, rather than develop regional targets. She noted that adoption of performance targets is required for federal compliance and eligibility for HSIP. The proposed targets are as follows: 794.7 Fatalities, Fatality Rate of 0.992, 2,965.5 Serious Injuries, Serious Injury Rate of 3.702, and 462.96 Vulnerable Road User (Non-Motorized) Fatalities and Serious Injuries. Benninger noted that target increases in some categories reflect corrections in crash data reporting and adoption does not imply acceptance of predicted numbers; the goal remains zero deaths.

Motion to recommend approval: Dean Button

Second: Kay Nelson

Motion carried unanimously.

4.2 Update: 2027 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Presenter: Tom Vander Woude

NIRPC must update NWI 2050+ by April 2028. This update is planned as a limited update, not a full rewrite. It maintains a 2050 horizon year, the existing goals, vision, and chapter structure. The planning process will include update of all performance measures and data, public engagement, stakeholder outreach on implementation progress, update of socioeconomic forecasts, update of the financial plan, completion of the air quality conformity analysis. The focus of the update will be to evaluate progress since *NWI 2050+*, identify actionable implementation strategies, and prepare a fiscally constrained project list.

5.1 TIP Administrative Modification 26-19

Presenter: Charles Bradsky

Charles described administrative modifications as small project changes including minor funding adjustments (< \$100k). The January modification report included 3 INDOT projects (minor funding adjustments) and 1 LaPorte project (shifted from 2026 to 2027) Charles stated that the summary will now be provided monthly at Transportation Committee meetings.

5.2 Public Comment Report – TIP Amendment 26-04.1

Charles reported that a public comment period was held from January 2, 2026 to January 23, 2026. No public comments were received and the Interagency Consultation Group provided concurrence.

5.3 Resolution 26-02, TIP Amendment 26-04.1

Charles reported that Amendment 26-04-1 includes 4 INDOT projects, 6 local

projects (Gary, Griffith, Hobart, Porter County, Long Beach, Porter) and Long Beach and Porter projects were removed at their request.

Motion to recommend approval of Resolution 26-02: Dean Button

Seconded: Bob Thompson

Motion carried unanimously.

6.1 Partner Reports

Drive Clean Indiana – no report.

7 Staff Announcements & Upcoming Meetings

Environment Committee – February 5

Leadership Committee – February 10

Economy & Place Committee – February 11

Full Commission – February 19

8 Next Transportation Committee – March 3 at 10:00 AM

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Dean Button

Second: Bob Thompson

Meeting adjourned at 11:15am



Public Comment Report

Adoption of an Amendment to the Public Participation Plan (PPP), *Engage NWI*

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Transportation Committee

March 19, 2026

The draft of the amended Public Participation Plan (PPP), *Engage NWI*, was released for a 45-day public comment period that began on January 8, 2026, and ended February 24, 2026. The draft PPP was made available as a “redline” document (showing the prior text as well as the proposed amended text) at www.nirpc.org and in press releases, and links were posted on several social media sites.

Upon completion of the Public Comment period, one comment from the public was received through email. The comment and staff response are provided below.

Comment:

Public Comment on Proposed Engage NWI PPP Amendment

As a resident of Northwest Indiana and a recent Master of Public Administration graduate focused on governance and complex systems, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment to the Engage NWI Public Participation Plan.

While I understand the intent to streamline administrative processes by relocating cost change thresholds for Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments into the TIP itself, I have concerns about how this change may affect transparency, accessibility, and public confidence. Engage NWI is explicitly intended to serve as a clear, stable guide that enables meaningful public participation, not simply as a compliance document.

Moving participation thresholds into a frequently amended, highly technical document risks making it harder for residents to understand when engagement is triggered, even if opportunities remain technically available.

This shift may place a greater burden on the public—particularly seniors, caregivers, transit-dependent residents, and other traditionally underrepresented populations emphasized in Engage NWI—to actively monitor administrative changes in order to stay informed. At a time of heightened public interest in transportation and development decisions, this approach risks prioritizing administrative efficiency over clarity and predictability for the broader community.

I respectfully encourage the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission to consider additional safeguards alongside this amendment, such as retaining a plain-language summary of participation thresholds within the PPP and providing clear notice when incorporated thresholds change. Maintaining accessible and predictable participation standards is essential to sustaining public trust and ensuring the region's long-term success.

Respectfully,

Angela Forystek

Staff Response:

Ms. Forystek,

Thank you for your comments about the proposed amendment to Engage NWI, the Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the region. Your comment will be shared in its entirety with the Transportation Committee and the Commission along with this response as part of the Public Comment Report.

Moving the thresholds for TIP Amendments and Administrative Modifications into the TIP was recommended by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. The agencies noted in NIRPC's most recent Certification Review the following: *The NIRPC TIP does not currently list the thresholds which determine if a change to a project requires a modification or amendment. NIRPC should consider defining the thresholds for public awareness.* Relocation of the thresholds from the PPP to the TIP is the only matter at hand in the PPP amendment. This change will not result in any loss of transparency, accessibility, or public confidence since the description and thresholds for amendments and administrative modifications will be located in the same document as the projects and other information that comprise the TIP. Both the TIP and PPP are highly technical documents, but both are written in plain language that can be understood by the public.

The TIP document is generally very stable. A new TIP is prepared and made available for public comment only every two years. Most TIP amendments consist of adding or modifying projects. Amendments to the text of the TIP are not common.

The PPP describes the process for providing reasonable opportunities for the public to be involved in all of the planning activities of the MPO, not just those activities that are considered short-term planning, such as the TIP. This amendment places no greater burden on any member of the public because all amendments, either to the projects in the TIP or to the amendment procedures in the TIP, will continue to be made available for public comment prior to consideration by the NIRPC committees and governing board.

No other comments were received.



MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Committee

From: Stephen Hughes, Public Transit and Engagement Planner

Date: March 3, 2026

Re: *Engage NWI* amendment

Action Requested: Recommendation to the Full Commission/Executive Board to approve an amendment to the Public Participation Plan, *Engage NWI*, by adopting Resolution 26-04

Background

23 CFR 450.316, requires MPOs to develop and use a documented participation plan that includes explicit procedures and strategies to include the public and other interested parties in the transportation planning process. On August 15, 2019, NIRPC adopted *Engage NWI* as the Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the Commission. This document describes the public participation tasks associated with the Commission's various projects. Some of these tasks are required by statute, some are the Commission's good faith efforts to have meaningful public engagement with its work.

Engage NWI currently includes the definitions and thresholds that determine when a change to a project in the TIP is considered an Amendment; which is a major change that requires a public comment period, air quality consultation, and Commission approval; or an Administrative Modification, which is a minor change can be completed by staff without public comment or air quality consultation. During NIRPC's most recent Federal Certification Review the US Department of Transportation Review Team noted that *the NIRPC TIP does not currently list the thresholds which determine if a change to a project requires a modification or amendment [and] NIRPC should consider defining the thresholds [in the TIP rather than the public participation plan] for public awareness*. NIRPC staff concurred that relocating the definitions and thresholds for TIP actions into the TIP document will make it easier for the public to find these definitions and for NIRPC staff and committees to review these definitions and amend them as needed.

In response to that recommendation, NIRPC staff has prepared the proposed amendment to *Engage NWI* which deletes the definitions of TIP Amendments and Administrative Modifications. These revisions are on page 19 of *Engage NWI*.

Staff has also prepared a TIP amendment that will incorporate the definitions into the TIP document.

This proposed amendment was made available for the required 45-day public comment period from January 8, 2026, to February 24, 2026. Comments and responses are listed in the accompanying public comment report.

Recommendation

NIRPC staff recommends that the Transportation Committee forward its favorable recommendation to the NIRPC Commission/Executive Board to adopt Res. 26-04 approving an amendment to the *Engage NWI* Public Participation Plan.



RESOLUTION 26-04

A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN, *ENGAGE NWI*

March 19, 2026

WHEREAS, Northwest Indiana’s citizens require a safe, efficient, resource-conserving regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility of people and freight and contributes to improving the quality of life and economic wellbeing in Northwest Indiana; and

WHEREAS, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as “the Commission” being designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lake, Porter, and La Porte County Metropolitan Planning Area, has established a regional, comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) transportation planning process, to develop a unified planning work program, a transportation plan, and a transportation improvement program to facilitate federal funding for communities, counties, and transit operators, and to provide technical assistance and expertise to regional transportation interests; and

WHEREAS, the Commission performs the above activities to satisfy requirements of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (PL 117-58), applicable portions of all prior federal transportation program authorizing legislation, as well as other federal, state, and local laws mandating or authorizing transportation activities, including the utilization of a Public Participation Plan compliant with 23 CFR 450.316; and

WHEREAS, the Commission’s Public Participation Plan is *Engage NWI*, which was adopted on August 15, 2019; and

WHEREAS, *Engage NWI* was amended on August 21, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the changes to *Engage NWI* brought about by this amendment were made available for public comment; with all comments responded to; and

WHEREAS, the comments received about this amendment did not result in any revisions to the proposed amendment; and

WHEREAS, on March 3, 2026, the Transportation Committee recommended that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission make these changes to *Engage NWI*,

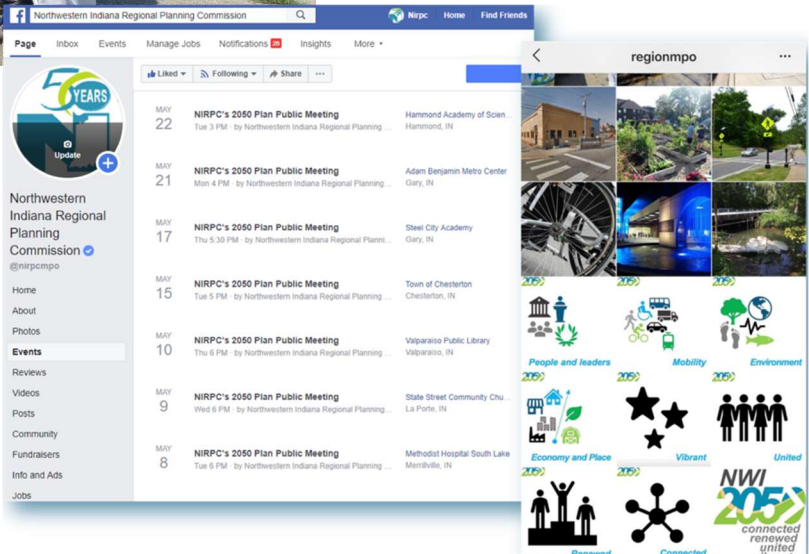
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission hereby amends *Engage NWI* by removing the definitions and thresholds for amendments and administrative modifications as shown on the attachment to this resolution.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission this 19th day of March 2026.

Chairperson

ATTEST:

Secretary



Engage NWI

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's Public Participation Plan – Adopted August 15, 2019 by Resolution 19-24
Amended August 21, 2025 by Resolution 25-15

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About Engage NWI

Engage NWI is the federally required “Public Participation Plan” that enables Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) staff to ensure that it is meeting all federal requirements for public participation, but more importantly, a guide that enables the public to engage with regional planning. **Engage NWI** promotes a meaningful exchange of ideas, identification of regional issues and solutions, as well as advancing initiatives to achieve the vision for Northwestern Indiana (NWI).

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Council of Governments (COG) for NWI, has the responsibility to conduct economic development, environmental, and transportation planning for Lake, LaPorte and Porter Counties. **Engage NWI** is required of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) to fulfill the regulations governing public participation (**23 CFR 450.316**).

Engage NWI is laid out in a question and answer format to assist NWI’s general public and stakeholders, and NIRPC’s regional planners to understand:

- ▶ How the general public and stakeholders can most effectively connect with regional planning – **Page 3**
- ▶ What is regional planning? **Page 4-5**
- ▶ When/where is the public engaged in regional planning? **Page 6-7**
- ▶ Why is public participation important to regional planning? **Page 7-8**
- ▶ Who is and should be involved in public participation? **Page 8-10**
- ▶ How is public participation conducted? **Page 11-13**
- ▶ The technical requirements of public participation **Page 14-16**

How to follow regional planning activities and find participation opportunities:

- ▶ **Website:** in.gov/nirpc
 - ▶ Sign-up for emails and newsletters here
 - ▶ Follow our calendar for events and meetings
 - ▶ Find NIRPC’s latest plans and updates
- ▶ **YouTube:** youtube.com/user/NIRPCPlanning
 - ▶ For livestreamed Commission and Committee meetings if you cannot or do not want to attend in-person
- ▶ **Facebook:** facebook.com/nirpcmpo
 - ▶ Like NIRPC’s Facebook page to follow planning activities and learn about engagement opportunities.
- ▶ **X:** x.com/NIRPC
 - ▶ Follow NIRPC’s X feed to hear the latest news and learn about engagement opportunities.
- ▶ **Instagram:** instagram.com/regionMPO
 - ▶ Follow NIRPC’s Instagram page to see what is going on in the region and learn about NIRPC’s work.

- ▶ **LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/company/nirpc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nirpc)
 - ▶ Connect with NIRPC's LinkedIn page to learn about NIRPC's work and other planning partners.
- ▶ **RTIP:** <https://rtip.nirpc.org/>
 - ▶ The Regional Transportation Improvement Program is NIRPC's online database of funded transportation investments throughout the region. Amendments are posted on RTIP when available for public comment.
- ▶ **Direct mail:**
 - To be added to our direct mail list, please send a request for newsletters:
Public Participation Planner
6100 Southport Road
Portage, IN 46368





What is regional planning?

Regional planning in NWI is conducted by NIRPC regional planners. NIRPC is charged in state law to focus on economic development, the environment, and transportation planning. NIRPC provides a regional forum to discuss issues, opportunities, problems, challenges, and concerns of member communities, the general public, and stakeholders. Regional planners work planning initiatives each year that will hopefully advance NWI towards achieving the visions laid out in the adopted long-range plan of the Commission, the *NWI 2050+ Plan*.

It is important to note that while regional planners may provide guidance on best practices, policy, zoning, transportation investments, economic development, or the environment, they do not make or enforce local ordinances or policies, as NIRPC is not charged with this mandate, nor given authority to do so, in state or federal law. In order to affect change locally, participation efforts by the general public and stakeholders must be geared towards local, state or federal government. Regional planners often may not lobby under federal law, rather may only educate or guide elected officials.

For regional transportation planning, NIRPC must follow the federally required "3C" transportation planning process. The "3C" transportation planning process requires cooperation among all levels of government, comprehensive consideration of many planning factors, and be a continuously evaluated planning process. Planning is carried out following contemporary federal transportation planning requirements of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Persons with Limited English Proficiency Executive Order 13166, the Clean Air Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and their predecessor acts. *Engage NWI* reflects all such requirements, especially those of [23 CFR 450.316](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23--chapter-450--section-316), the regulation that governs public participation.

Regional planners at NIRPC are responsible for the following:

-  *Economic development, environmental, and transportation planning*
-  *Technical assistance on planning best practices, and governance*
-  *Providing a forum for regional issues identification and problem solving*
-  *Facilitation of the prioritization of transportation investments for NWI*

Public participation and transit

Transit is an important travel option for many residents in the region, and many instances the only travel option for some residents. Transit in NWI consistently is rated by the public as a primary concern for our regional transportation system. The *NWI 2050+ Plan* and the *2018 Coordinated Transit Plan* demonstrate those issues and concerns.

The Federal Transit Administration allows a transit operator to rely on the MPO's Public Participation Plan for the Transportation Improvement Program. For transit operators to be compliant with Federal "Program of Projects" requirements, transit operators may utilize the public participation efforts of regional planners. Projects need to be published in sufficient detail, and the users of these projects should be provided an opportunity to examine the proposed program and submit comments. Transit Operators therefore must assist NIRPC with public participation efforts, including advertising and inviting the public to engagement opportunities.

When/where is the public engaged in regional planning?

There are three core MPO planning documents out of which all other regional planning activities are derived:

- ▶ **Long-Range Plan (LRP)** – The LRP sets the vision for NWI and focuses on economic development, the environment, and transportation. The LRP is updated every four years and is amended from time to time. The development of the MTP takes approximately one to two years and engagement opportunities are provided throughout its development to shape the vision, goals, and priorities of the Plan.
- ▶ **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** – The TIP is updated every two years and amended four times per year. The TIP includes transportation

investments for the next five years made by communities, transit operators, and the Indiana Department of Transportation. The development of the TIP involves all the towns, cities, counties, and transit operators of NWI and must be consistent with the *NWI 2050+ Plan*. Direct engagement with municipalities and transit operators is the most effective way for the public to influence the projects each applicant submits to NIRPC for funding.

- ▶ **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)** – The UPWP is updated every two years and amended in between generally once. The UPWP contains all the planning activities required by the Federal Highway and Transit Administrations in addition to planning activities identified by the *NWI 2050+ Plan*. The planning tasks are conducted by the regional planners at NIRPC. Each UPWP task includes a public participation goal appropriate for the task: Inform, Consult, Involve, or Collaborate. **See page 12 for details on goals.**

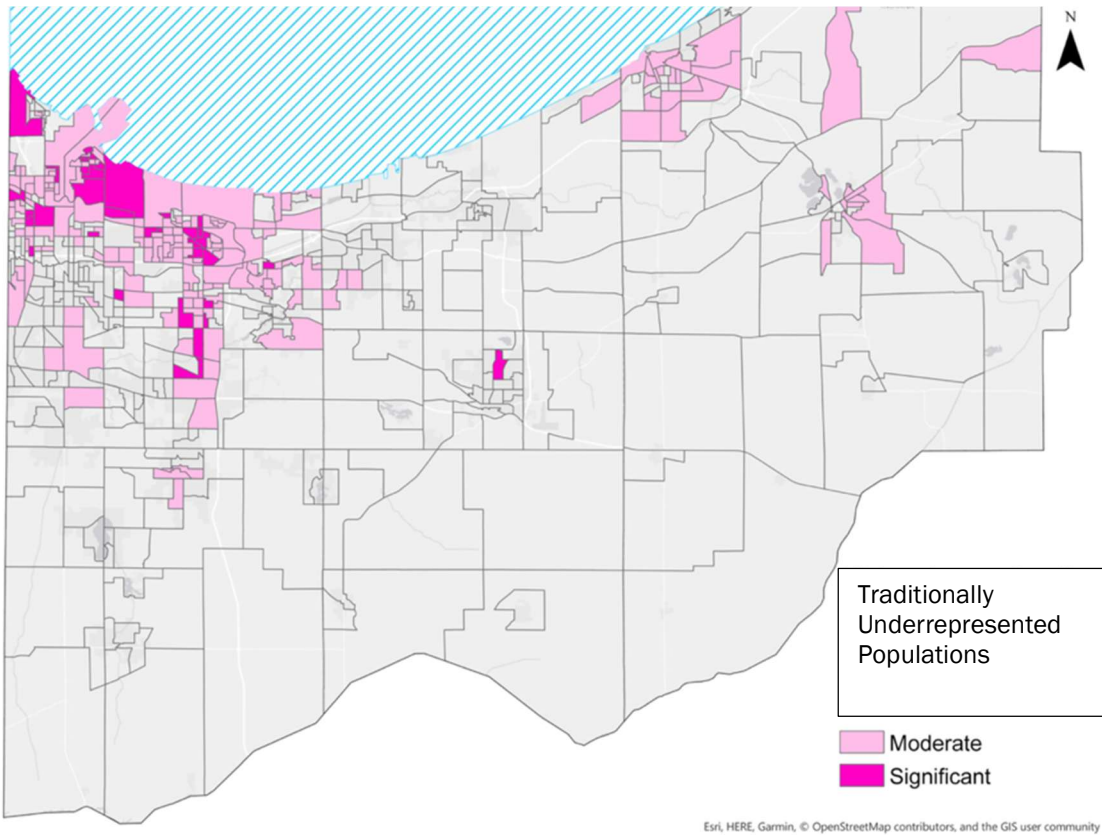
Understanding the core planning activities of NIRPC will help to connect interested individuals on when and where to engage in regional planning.

Engage NWI emphasizes that for effective regional planning, engagement should occur where people are, and early in the process. Input will be solicited from the general public and stakeholders when active engagement methods are utilized (described on Page 13), close to where the general public are already gathering and while plans are in development so that input can shape the outcome which is deliberated at the Commission. Every attempt will be made to hold active engagement activities throughout the region, balanced where transit is available and for the rest of the region, through a variety of creative means while plans are in development. The Commission will determine where and when to hold its meetings and those of its advisory committees.

Why is public participation critical to regional planning?

Engage NWI stresses the need for the general public and stakeholders to engage in regional planning to identify regional challenges, problems, and opportunities. Regional planners need to listen to voices of the general public and stakeholders to gain a diversity of input – especially from those traditionally underrepresented in planning processes – and hear potential solutions or to shape planning processes and achieve desired outcomes. The map on Page 9 represents the places in NWI that should be emphasized in engagement efforts. These places include higher than regionally average areas of minorities, low-income individuals, limited-English proficiency individuals, zero-car households, veterans, individuals over sixty-five years of age, and individuals with disabilities. Regional planners need input early in the process so that final plans can reflect a balance of priorities and interests heard from all over the NWI.

Engage NWI stresses the importance that additional effort be made to invite individuals that reside in such areas to participate in regional planning efforts to give voice to communities who have traditionally been under-represented.



Strategies to engage with emphasized places in NWI

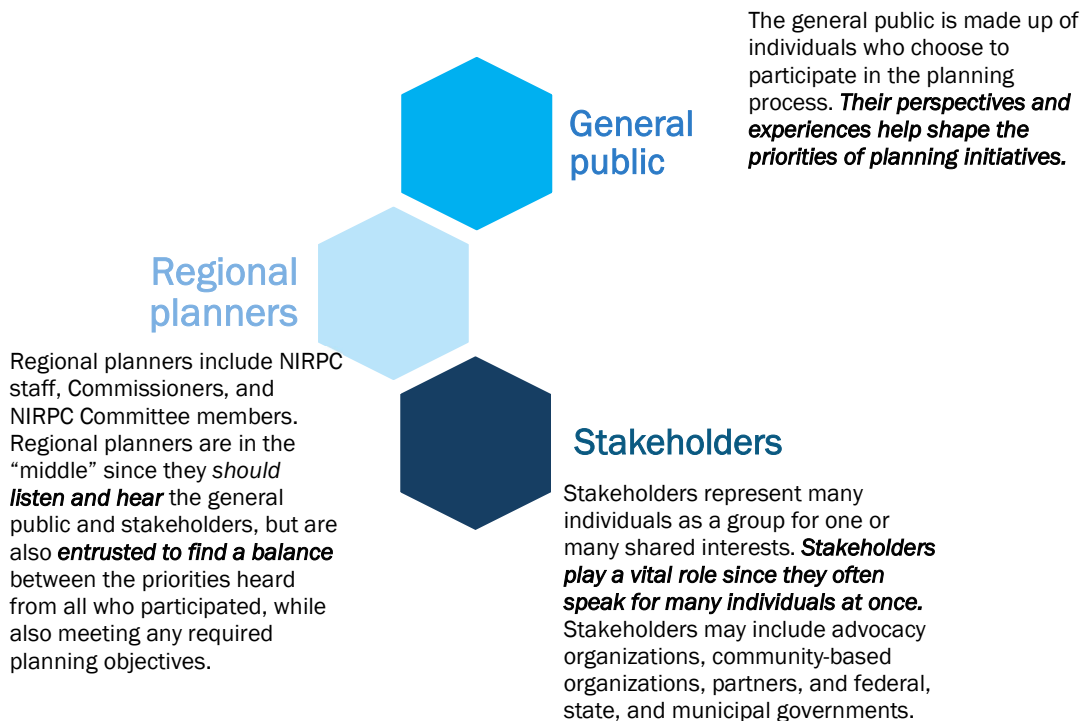
- ▶ **One-on-Ones** – depending on the planning activity, regional planners may make face-to-face contact with community-based organizations, neighborhood leaders, faith-based organizations, elected officials, and other important stakeholders that can connect regional planners to residents and businesses that have been underrepresented in regional planning activities. Such interactions are called “*Out and Abouts*” in *Engage NWI* and are described on Page 13.
- ▶ **Targeted formal engagement** – depending on the planning activity, regional planners may ensure that some of the formal meetings or “*Pop-Up Events*,” described on Page 13, are held in these emphasized places to make participation convenient, especially if community residents rely on limited public transit.

Who is and should be involved in public participation?

Engage NWI focuses upon “regional planners,” “the general public,” and “stakeholders” as three critical groups involved in public engagement. Each plays a unique and important role in the planning process. Regional planners at NIRPC seek to undertake various planning initiatives that need to be shaped by public input. The general public includes individuals and businesses that represent themselves in the planning process, while stakeholders represent “grouped” interests, needs, or desires in the outcome of a planning process. The perspectives, experience, and expertise from the general public, or stakeholders, is not only welcomed, but necessary in the planning process.

Shaped by their personal experiences, regional planners do not know and cannot see every detail of every issue in every community. Therefore, *Engage NWI* stresses the need for regional planners to listen to the general public and stakeholders as a duty, but also for the general public and stakeholders to share their perspectives, experiences, and expertise as regional citizens.

For *Engage NWI* to be effective, NIRPC, as the regional planners, will inform the general public and stakeholders of every opportunity to participate through the channels described on Page 3; however, the general public and stakeholders have the freedom to take advantage of the opportunity to play their part and actively engage in shaping their region.



About the regional planners - NIRPC

Regional planning and coordination came to Northwestern Indiana in 1965 when enabling legislation was passed by the Indiana General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor. The first state law called for a transportation planning commission, which was inspired by the 1962 Federal Highway Act. The state law has since been amended to create what is known today as the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, a three-county council of governments. In 2007, NIRPC's Executive Board membership expanded, and weighted voting was added.

NIRPC's governing body is the Commission composed of 53 county, municipal, and some township elected officials and a Gubernatorial appointment. The Commission membership is established in state statute and is required to meet in full at least four times per year and at a minimum statutorily responsible for the hiring of the Executive Director, adopting bylaws, electing officers, and annual budget appropriations. A smaller Executive Board is annually elected by and from the full Commission membership and takes on the routine business of NIRPC. The Commission has established several committees to make advice and assist in conducting its business. Please check NIRPC.org for updates on the committee structure and membership.

All Commission and committee business related to transportation planning and investment decision-making must adhere to *Engage NWI*. Planning for economic development and the environment may adhere to *Engage NWI* or the specific requirements of grants funding those activities in question. Noticing for Commission and Committee meetings will follow Indiana Open Door Law.

Commission	Full Commission <i>Meets four times per year or</i>
	Executive Board <i>Meets approximately six times per year</i>
Advisory Committees	Economy and Place
	Environment
	Leadership
	Transportation

*Last revised August 2025 / Any future changes to committee structure made by the Commission will be reflected in **Engage NWI** as a technical amendment.*

How is public participation conducted?

Engage NWI lays out on Page 12 the engagement goals, the promise made by *Engage NWI* associated with that goal, engagement methods associated with each goal, and the when the goal will be chosen for each planning task. Then all the technical requirements of *Engage NWI* are laid out (Page 14-16). Input from the general public and stakeholders early in the process is critical to shaping the final outcomes of each plan. With a diversity of perspectives in a region as large as NWI, it will be up to regional planners to find a balance between competing priorities and interests for the region. Before plan adoption by the Commission, the plan will be put out for a formal comment period, if required.

Techniques to invite participation

Engage NWI outlines methods to ensure regional planning is conducted with participation always at mind from the beginning of planning processes. Each planning task undertaken will identify a participation goal appropriate for that task (Page 12) and then planners will employ the methods that goal requires. It is expected that most tasks will be on the more participatory end of the spectrum.

However, no matter which type of participation goal that is required, participation will be possible in formats that are inclusive. *All meeting locations will be compliant with the ADA and requests for reasonable accommodations taken upon request within 72 hours of a formal meeting to ensure participation those who may need alternate formats of materials – including language translation, foreign, American Sign Language, or braille.*

Active participation methods				
Does the task require?	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Engage NWI goal:	Provide public with objective information and assist their understanding of regional challenges, options, opportunities, or solutions.	Obtain feedback on regional planning tasks, analyses, or prior to policy making.	Work directly with public and stakeholders throughout planning process to ensure concerns and ideas are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the public and stakeholders in every aspect of the planning process from project scoping through adoption of plans or policies.
Engage NWI promise	Keep general public and stakeholders informed.	Keep public informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and ideas, and provide public with report on how input shaped outcomes.	Work with public and stakeholders to ensure goals and ideas are directly reflected in planning work as much as possible and report on how input shaped outcomes.	Work with public and stakeholders to inform planning work from start at project scoping to understand issues, generate solutions, and incorporate feedback to shape outcomes.
Involvement methods / tools may include:	Website, social media, newsletters, multi-language publications, press releases, mailings, live streaming, white papers, or fact sheets.	Activities listed in “Inform” plus surveys, comment forms, webinars, or formal meetings	Activities listed in “Consult” plus focus groups, targeted outreach to meet people where they are such as “Out and Abouts,” or “Pop-up Events”	Activities listed in “Involve” plus task forces, charrettes, keypad polling, and working groups
When goal will be selected:	The “Inform” level of participation will be used for technical documents, but the methods will be used frequently to communicate regularly with the public	The “Consult” level of participation will be used less frequently, but the methods will be used when needed	The “Involve” method will be used frequently and the methods as well	The “Collaborate” method will be used frequently with major planning processes

Examples of active engagement

Some types of active and in-person engagement will be conducted by employing the following:

- ▶ **“Out and Abouts”** – regional planners meeting face-to-face to invite interest in planning activities, events or to solicit direct feedback
- ▶ **“Pop-up Events”** – regional planners sharing information / asking for feedback at other organization’s events
- ▶ **Formal meetings** – advertised open houses or public hearings – **timely notice per *Engage NWI* for all public meetings listed in the table to the right will be two weeks prior to the meeting.**
- ▶ **Task force / working groups** – invited and targeted participation of subject matter experts at the discretion of the NIRPC Executive Director

Effectiveness of methods and evaluation

From time to time the strategies and methods contained within *Engage NWI* will be reviewed for their effectiveness. The principal measure for effectiveness of *Engage NWI* will be:

- ▶ The frequency in which planning activities are conducted with the “Involve” or “Collaborate” goal of active participation methods described on Page 12 – should be at least 50% of activities; and
- ▶ How aggressively regional planners have made attempts to invite participation from the general public and stakeholders throughout the planning process. Opportunities include advertising, “*Out and Abouts,*” “*Pop-Up Events,*” social media or newsletter content, etc.

A summary of public participation efforts by regional planners will be published in the “Performance Report” recommended in the *NWI 2050 Plan*.

Technical aspects of public participation:

Public comment periods and public meeting requirements Core planning documents	Minimum comment period by law	Engage NWI comment length policy	Engage NWI formal meeting policy
Long-range plan (<i>new adoption</i>)	Not specified in federal law	30 days	Required
Long-range plan <i>Policy/Project amendment</i>		21 days	Not required
Long-range plan <i>Modification / Technical amendment</i>		None	Not required
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (<i>new adoption</i>)		30 days	Required
TIP <i>amendment</i>		21 days	Not required
TIP <i>modification / technical amendment</i>		None	Not required
Air Quality Conformity		30 days	Required
Unified Planning Work Program (<i>new or amendment</i>)	None	Not required	
Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (<i>new or amendment</i>)	21 days	Not required	
Public Participation Plan (<i>new or amendment</i>)	45 days	45 days	Not required
Other planning and policy documents			
Regional and sub-regional modal, corridor, development, or environment plans/policies	Not specified in federal law	21 days	Not required
Technical documents required to fulfill federal requirements		None	Not required

Amendments and modifications procedures

Amendment:

- ▶ ~~1) any phase of any project is added or construction phase or transit project deleted;~~
- ▶ ~~2) any addition of funds over \$100,000;~~
- ▶ ~~3) change to an air quality non-exempt project;~~
- ▶ ~~4) project scope change that alters original intent of project;~~
- ▶ ~~5) change to policy or programming rules.~~
- ▶ An Amendment is a revision to a metropolitan transportation plan or TIP that involves a major change to a project included in a metropolitan transportation plan or TIP including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes or changing the number of stations in the case of fixed guideway transit projects). Changes to projects that are included only for illustrative purposes do not require an amendment.
- ▶ Interagency Consultation Group review on *all* TIP amendments and a redetermination of fiscal constraint is required. **Twenty-one-day comment period required.**
- ▶ Must be approved by Commission or Executive Board. **Public comment opportunity is available at the meeting.**
- ▶ A list of the specific changes to a project in the TIP that require an Amendment are included in the most recently adopted version of the TIP and are incorporated here by reference.

Administrative Modification:

- ▶ ~~1) project moving year to year (but not out of the TIP, which is an amendment);~~
- ▶ ~~2) project fund source change;~~
- ▶ ~~3) project is split into multiple construction segments;~~
- ▶ ~~4) addition of funds under \$100,000 (TIP and UPWP); or~~
- ▶ ~~5) typographical changes.~~
- ▶ An Administrative Modification is a minor revision to a metropolitan transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates.
- ▶ Modifications are made by NIRPC staff at the request of project sponsor subject to regulation and funding availability.
- ▶ A redetermination of fiscal constraint is required.
- ▶ A list of the specific changes to a project in the TIP that may be completed [as an Administrative Modification](#) is included in the most recently adopted version of the TIP and are incorporated here by reference.

Technical Amendment:

- ▶ Changes to technical information that does impact policy or programmed projects, iee.g.: performance targets, data updates, asset information.

- ▶ Must be approved by Commission or Executive Board. **Public comment opportunity is available at the meeting.**

Emergency Amendment:

- ▶ NIRPC Executive Director authorizes a TIP amendment without public process or Commission if:
 - ▶ **1)** public well-being or safety is at risk; or
 - ▶ **2)** lapse or loss of federal funds is at risk.
 - ▶ A redetermination of fiscal constraint is required.

Path to address public comments

Comments received during a comment period will be reported to the Commission via a “Public Comment Report.” The Report will be made available on the NIRPC website and included with draft plans before adoption. The Report will constitute the formal response to comments and will contain the following: **1)** the original comment, as received; **2)** a recommendation by staff on how the final plan may address the substance of the comment; and **3)** a notation on whether or not the recommendation is a major or minor revision.

Any such recommendation to revise a draft plan that proposes: **1)** Policy revisions; **2)** Adds a project not previously subjected to public review; or **3)** deletes a project subjected to public review, will be considered a major revision and will trigger an additional public comment period. All other recommendations will be regarded as minor revisions representing comments that are more general. Advisory Committee(s) or the Commission will consider recommendations at their discretion.

Public Comment Period (per *Engage NWI policy*)

Recommended major revisions?

Recommended minor revisions?

The commission may accept or modify major revisions and start new full comment period

The Commission may reject major revisions and adopt the plan

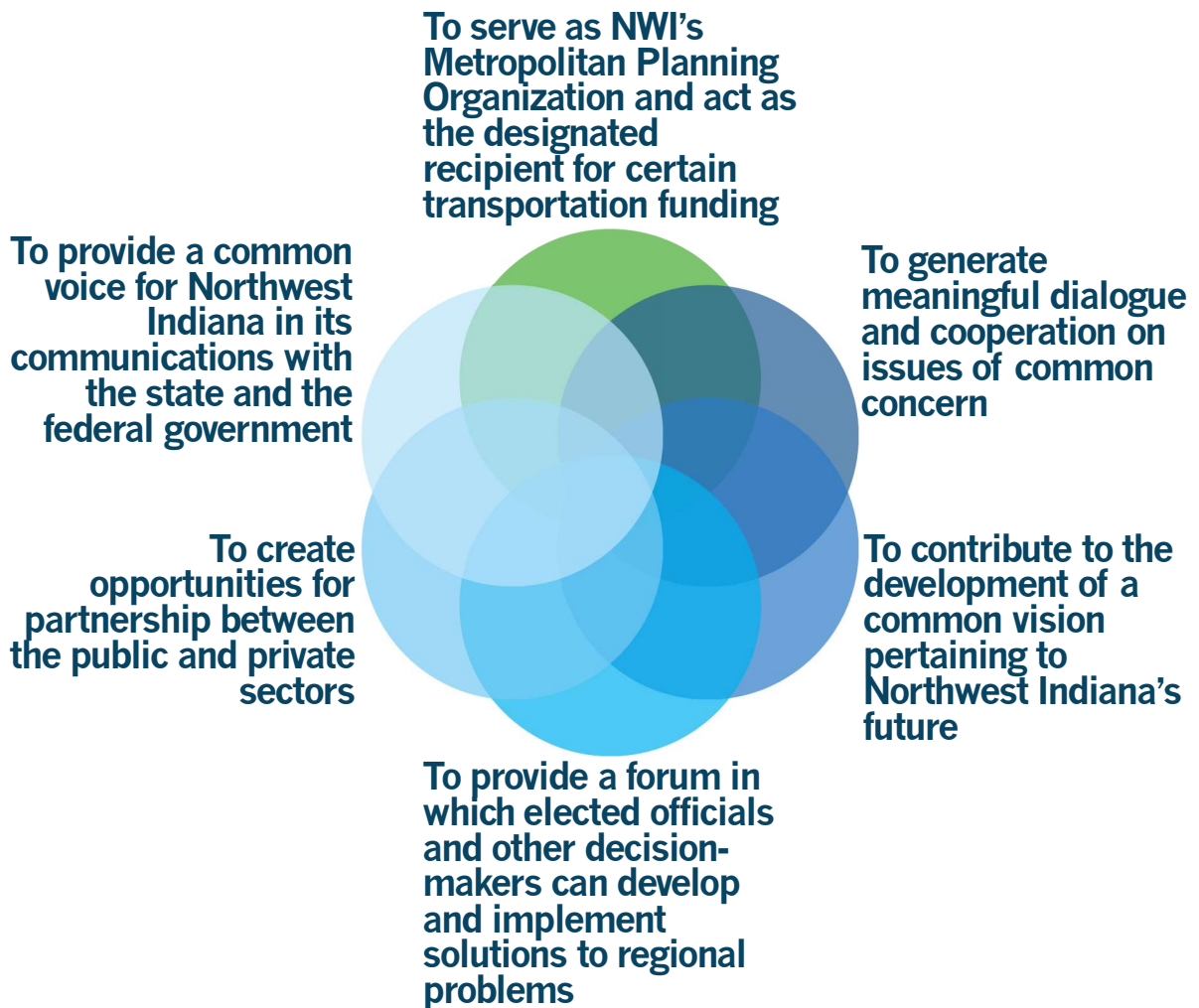
The Commission may accept, reject, or modify minor revisions and adopt the plan

Second Public Comment Period
(per *Engage NWI policy*)

The Commission may accept, reject, or modify major revisions and adopt the plan. *Public engagement ends.*

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NIRPC's Role in the Region



For more information:

Visit:

www.nirpc.org

Contact:

Public Participation Planner at comments@nirpc.org
or 219-763-6060

Request alternative formats of plans or meeting materials:

nirpc@nirpc.org or 219-763-6060



Public Comment Report

Amendment #26-05 to the FY 2026 - 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Transportation Committee

March 3, 2026

Amendment #26-05 to the FY 2026 - 2030 Transportation Improvement Program was released for a 21-day public comment period which began on February 4, 2026, and ended on February 25, 2026. Amendment 26-05 is an addition of an appendix to NIRPC's current TIP with guidelines for TIP Revisions, especially for thresholds to changes in costs:

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

To date one comment has been received. It is considered to be minor because it does not address the change proposed in the amendment.

That comment came from Ms. Strzelczyk of the Town of Munster (dated 2/18/2026) and is:

Comment:RE: Pedestrian/Cyclist Crossing on Briar Lane /Manor Ave over train tracks
Currently there is no pedestrian east/west crossing over the train tracks from Ridge Rd on the North to Fisher Rd on the South. Walkers and bikers need to divert either to Ridge Rd or Fisher to access St. Paul and St. Thomas More Schools, Jewel, the library, parkland area and neighbors so close yet so far. Ridge Road is both unsafe and unpleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. Cars speed, it is noisy and there are car fumes. The sidewalk is near the road itself and a car jumping the curb due to a slight collision or loss of control is foreseeable. There is a below grade pedestrian crossing north of Ridge Rd at Manor/Belden Pl as well as nearby Broadmoor Ave so walkers/cyclists have 2 options to cross the train tracks for Eads School for example. Walkers south of Ridge Rd should have equal ability to traverse the train tracks without having to divert either to Ridge or Fisher. This long distance is a deterrent for many. A Briar Lane crossing would also be a deterrent to train fence jumping that is happening now. Original town train plans included a Briar Lane grade crossing. To encourage more healthy walking options, facilitate safer pedestrian/cyclist access and afford residents south of Ridge Rd the same east-west access across the train tracks as those residents north of Ridge Rd, I request consideration of this project with federal funds available under the NIRPC TIP program.

NIRPC's response (2/23/202) was:

Ms. Strzelczyk,

Thank you for your thoughtful email letting us know of a concern in Munster.

We share your concern for the pedestrian and bicyclists and the extra-ordinary detour that they have in getting to town amenities. NIRPC puts out a Call for Projects every two years where local governments may propose projects to be recipients of federal funding. That call will be this fall (2026). We are forwarding your email to the Town Manager for Munster for their consideration in this call, since the sponsor would be the Town of Munster. I encourage you to continue to discuss with your town council this idea and it's importance to your neighborhood and the town.

If you have any other questions, Please do not hesitate to contact me.

NIRPC staff also sent a draft of the amendment to several members of the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) looking for guidance on January 6, 2026, since this amendment is different than our 'normal' amendments. The comments we received include:

(From Erica Tait, - FHWA; 1/16/2026) Good afternoon Charles, I hope this note finds you well. Thank you for the note below and the opportunity to provide feedback. Adding an appendix to the TIP to outline and/or clarify amendment and modification procedures would fall under the definition of administrative modification from the perspective of FHWA. Since that is the case, USDOT will not be issuing an approval letter.

Regarding the alignment of NIRPC's definitions to INDOT's, please note that changes requiring a redemonstration of fiscal constraint must be processed as amendments. In addition, other MPOs and INDOT have adopted some grouped project procedures that may not apply to/in NIRPC.

I'm happy to have a call to discuss in further detail if that would be helpful.

No other comments from other members were received. Based on this response, no other response or concurrence is needed from USDOT or INDOT.

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Committee

From: Tom Vander Woude, Director of Transportation

Date: February 24, 2026

Re: TIP amendment #26-05: approving revisions to the definitions and cost thresholds for TIP Amendments and Administrative Modifications and incorporating them into the FY 2026-2030 TIP as Appendix 5.

Action Requested: Recommendation to the Full Commission/Executive Board to adopt Resolution 26-05 approving Amendment #26-05 to the FY 2026-2030 TIP

Background

NIRPC adopts a new five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) every two years. Once adopted, a TIP may be revised from time to time in accordance with procedures adopted by the MPO and with 23 CFR § 450.328. Revisions to the TIP are categorized and approved differently based on the scope, scale, and circumstances of the change to a project and whether a project is exempt or non-exempt from air quality conformity analysis.

NIRPC's Public Participation Plan *Engage NWI* currently includes the definitions and thresholds that determine when a change to a project in the Transportation Improvement Program is considered an Amendment; which is a major change that requires a public comment period, air quality consultation, and Commission approval; or an Administrative Modification, which is a minor change can be completed by staff without public comment or air quality consultation. These definitions and thresholds were adopted in 2019 when *Engage NWI* was adopted.

During NIRPC's most recent Federal Certification Review, the US Department of Transportation Review Team made two recommendations regarding NIRPC's TIP change procedures.

- First, they noted that *the NIRPC TIP does not currently list the thresholds which determine if a change to a project requires a modification or amendment [and recommended that] NIRPC should consider defining the thresholds [in the TIP rather than the public participation plan] for public awareness.*
- Second, they noted that NIRPC cost-change thresholds for amendments and administrative modifications are the same for both locally sponsored and INDOT-sponsored projects, which requires that proportionally small cost increases for INDOT projects be processed as amendments. Additionally, NIRPC's thresholds are different from those of the INDOT State Transportation Improvement Program which has resulted in some procedural confusion and perceived delays for INDOT. The review team recommended *that NIRPC consider using INDOT's thresholds for modifications and amendments when making changes to INDOT*

projects (which do not affect NIRPC’s fiscal constraint determination) to expedite review and approval of TIP/STIP amendments.

In response to these recommendations, NIRPC staff reviewed the TIP Change procedures in *Engage NWI* and prepared a set of revisions, which have been compiled into an appendix for inclusion in the FY 2026-2030 TIP document. The appendix was reviewed and discussed at a January 21, 2026, meeting of the Transportation Resources and Oversight Committee (TROC). At that time, TROC voted to recommend the approval of the proposed changes and to adopt the INDOT cost-change thresholds for both local and INDOT-sponsored projects – with a further recommendation that these thresholds be reviewed again during the development of the FY 2028-2032 TIP.

Approval of the attached Resolution 26-05 will add *Appendix 5: TIP Changes* to the FY 2026-2030 TIP. Within Appendix 5 are the following revisions to the TIP change terminology and procedures:

1. The definitions of Formal Amendment, Technical Amendment, Emergency Amendment, and Administrative Modification are expanded and clarified, including incorporating language from 23 CFR §450.104. This corrects some ambiguity in the previous definitions. For example, with respect to a non-exempt projects, previously a *change to an air quality non-exempt project* was defined as an amendment; whereas the revised text states that only a *Change in project scope that affects air quality conformity determination or a Change of years of a regionally significant project within the current TIP that results in the project's anticipated open to traffic year moving regional emissions analysis years in the Air Quality Conformity Report for the current TIP* are amendments.
2. The cost-change threshold for Amendments is revised from \$100,000 for all projects to a sliding scale based on the total programmed project costs shown below. This will allow for larger cost changes to be processed as Administrative Amendments.

Cost Change Thresholds for All Projects		
Total Programmed Project Costs in an Approved TIP	Amendment	Administrative Modification
Less than \$2,000,000	Equal to or greater than 75%	Less than 75%
\$2,000,000 - \$14,999,999	Equal to or greater than 50%	Less than 50%
\$15,000,000 - \$75,000,000	Equal to or greater than 40%	Less than 40%
Greater than \$75,000,000	Equal to or greater than 30%	Less than 30%

A separate Resolution #26-04 will remove the TIP change language from *Engage NWI*.

This proposed amendment was made available for the required 21-day public comment period from February 4, 2026, to February 25, 2026. Comments and responses are listed in the accompanying public comment report.

Recommendation

Relocating the definitions and thresholds for TIP actions into the TIP document will make it easier for the public to find these definitions and for NIRPC staff and committees to review and amend them as needed. Establishing clear definitions and thresholds that are consistent with INDOT will make TIP management more efficient and help NIRPC and INDOT ensure highway and transit projects are funded and completed in a timely manner.

NIRPC staff recommends that the Transportation Committee forward its favorable recommendation to the NIRPC Commission/Executive Board to adopt Res. 26-05 approving Amendment #26-05 to the FY 2026-2030 TIP.



RESOLUTION 26-05

A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION AMENDING THE FY 2026-2030 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR LAKE, PORTER, AND LA PORTE COUNTIES, INDIANA AMENDMENT NO. 26-05

March 19, 2026

WHEREAS, Northwest Indiana’s citizens require a safe, efficient, and resource-conserving regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility and contributes to improving the quality of life in Northwest Indiana; and

WHEREAS, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as “the Commission”, being designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lake, Porter and La Porte County Metropolitan Planning Area, has established a regional, comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) transportation planning process to develop the unified planning work program, a transportation plan, and a transportation improvement program to facilitate federal funding for communities, counties, and transit operators, and to provide technical assistance and expertise to regional transportation interests; and

WHEREAS, the Commission performs the above activities to satisfy requirements of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (PL 117-58)), applicable portions of all prior federal transportation program authorizing legislation, as well as other federal, state, and local laws mandating or authorizing transportation planning activities; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program is a product of a multi-modal, 3-C transportation planning process, compatible with regional goals and objectives and socio-economic and demographic factors of *NWI 2050+*; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program implements *NWI 2050+*, is fiscally constrained, and is consistent with the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program is developed by the Commission in coordination and cooperation with local elected and appointed highway and transit officials, special interest and service organizations, including users of public transit, the Indiana Department of Transportation, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Federal Transit Administration, and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency; and

WHEREAS, the changes to the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program brought about by this amendment were made available for public comment in the manner prescribed by the 2019 Public Participation Plan, *ENGAGE NWI*; with no comments; and

WHEREAS, on March 3, 2026, the Transportation Committee recommended that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission make these changes to the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission hereby amends the FY 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program by adding *Appendix 5: TIP Revisions* as shown on the attachment to this resolution.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, this nineteenth day of March 2026.

Chairperson

ATTEST:

Secretary

Appendix 5 – TIP Revisions

Amendment & Administrative Modification Procedures

Once adopted, a TIP may be revised from time to time in accordance with procedures adopted by the MPO and with 23 CFR § 450.328. Revisions to the TIP are classified and approved differently based on the scope, scale, and circumstances of the change to a project and whether a project is exempt or non-exempt from air quality conformity analysis.

Definitions

Formal Amendment - a revision that involves a major change to a project included in a TIP. A Formal Amendment requires public review and comment in accordance with NIRPC's adopted Public Participation Plan and a redemonstration of fiscal constraint. If an amendment involves "non-exempt" projects in nonattainment and maintenance areas, a conformity determination is required. (cf. 23 CFR §450.104)

The following changes to any project shall be considered **major** and require a **Formal Amendment**:

- A new project is added (even if the project was in a previous TIP).
- A new phase of a project is added or a construction phase or transit project is deleted.
- A significant increase or decrease in project costs as defined in the *Cost Change Threshold* tables below.
- Change in project scope that:
 - alters the original intent of the project, and/or
 - affects air quality conformity determination.
- Change of years of a regionally significant project within the current TIP that results in the project's anticipated open to traffic year moving regional emissions analysis years in the Air Quality Conformity Report for the current TIP.
- Change to projects impacting fiscal constraint.
- Change to policy or programming rules.

Technical Amendment – A change to technical information in the TIP that does not impact policy or programmed projects, e.g.: performance targets, data updates, asset information. Technical Amendments do not require a formal public comment period but must be approved by the Commission/Executive Board. Public comment opportunity is available at the meeting.

Emergency Amendment – A change to a project that is authorized by the NIRPC Executive Director without public comment or Commission/Executive Board approval in order to respond to a time-sensitive, emergency situation. NIRPC's Public Participation Plan permits an Emergency Amendment only in cases where public well-being or safety is at risk or there is a threat of a lapse or loss of federal funds. A redetermination of fiscal constraint is required.

Administrative Modification - A minor revision to the TIP that involves minor project changes. An administrative modification does not require public review and comment, a redemonstration of fiscal constraint, a conformity determination (in nonattainment and maintenance areas), or Commission/Executive Board approval. (cf. 23 CFR §450.104)

The following changes to any project shall be considered **minor** and may be completed as an **Administrative Modification**:

- Change of years of a project within the current TIP.
- Change of years of a regionally significant project within the current TIP as long as the project's anticipated open to traffic year stays within the regional emissions analysis years in the Air Quality Conformity Report for the current TIP.
- A non-significant funding change (see the *Cost Change Threshold* tables below).
- Correction of minor data entry or typographical errors or other 'scrivener's errors' that have no impact on fiscal constraint.
- Minor change to a project description that does not alter the original project intent.
- Addition of a designation (des) number or transit project identification number (TPIN) to a project.
- Addition of or change to a federal funding source that does not impact fiscal constraint.

Cost-Change Thresholds for Amendments and Administrative Modifications

For changes to the cost of projects (excluding groupings and reductions of any amount provided project length, termini, and description remain the same), there is a sliding scale to determine whether a modification or amendment is required. All measurements for these cost changes are made from the last approved TIP amendment/modification to account for incremental changes. The tables below list NIRPC's cost change thresholds for determining amendments vs. modifications:

Cost Change Thresholds for All Projects		
Total Programmed Project Costs in an Approved TIP	Amendment	Administrative Modification
Less than \$2,000,000	Equal to or greater than 75%	Less than 75%
\$2,000,000 - \$14,999,999	Equal to or greater than 50%	Less than 50%
\$15,000,000 - \$75,000,000	Equal to or greater than 40%	Less than 40%
Greater than \$75,000,000	Equal to or greater than 30%	Less than 30%