

Technical Planning Committee

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Minutes

This meeting was convened as an electronic meeting, pursuant to Governor Holcomb's extended Executive Order 21-03. All persons were meeting remotely on a Zoom platform that allowed for real time interaction and supported the public's ability to observe and record the proceedings. When the agenda item was provided for public comment, this was supported as well. A roll call was taken to motion and approve the agenda items.

Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Committee members present were Bryan Blazak (St. John), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County), Jeff Huet (Schererville), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Tim Hollandsworth (INDOT), Frank Rivera (E. Chicago), Carl Lisek (SSCC), Anne Maloberti, Terry Martin, George Topoll (Union Township), Kay Nelson (FORUM), Don Oliphant (CBBEL), Timothy Werner (CIORBA), Nick Bellar (Winfield), Duane Alverson (Lake County), Dean Button (Hammond), Mark O'Dell (Chesterton), David Wright (GPTC), Blossom Mabon, Beth West, Mike Jabo (Valparaiso), Beth Shrader (Valparaiso), and Kelly Wenger (NICTD).

Staff present were Mitch Barloga, Meredith Stilwell, Lucas Ecklund-Baker, Eman Ibrahim, Kathy Luther, Scott Weber, Kevin Polette, Candice Ecklund, Denarie Kane, Charles Bradsky, Peter Kimball, and Flor Baum.

The February 9, 2021 and February 18, 2021 meeting minutes will include Kay Nelson in committee members present. Both sets of minutes were approved on motion by Kay Nelson and second by David Wright.

Public Comments

No public comments to announce.

Planning

Scott Weber presented on an update for the second amendment and conformity analysis to the *NWI 2050 Plan*, including the launch of the public comment period. *NWI 2050* is our Region's long-range plan that was adopted in May 2019. The amendment is needed to fulfill federal requirements because of the latest NOFA that adds regionally significant projects. The four projects being affected by amendment 2 are as follows:

- INDOT project on US 41 is an existing project. The scope was never intended to go as far south to Lowell. The southern terminus that is in the *NWI 2050 Plan* is being edited up to approximately 135th Place in the Cedar Lake area instead of State Road 2 in the Lowell area. There is no cost affected.
- Main St extension project along the Munster/Dyer border into the Village of Linwood, IL is an existing project. The project was originally slated to be completed by the year 2030 in the *NWI 2050 Plan*. However, that will change to 2040.
- The Town of St. John's Cline Avenue gap project between 93rd Ave and 101st Ave is a new project that will be added to the *NWI 2050 Plan*.
- Porter County's Willow Creek extension project is also being added. This is an extension of an existing project in Porter County. The scopes southern terminus is being changed from State Road 130 to US 30. We are proposing to add CN funds in FY-26.

These changes will be released for public comment today and through April 8 for a 30-day period.

Scott also presented on Air Quality Conformity. This is required because NIRPC is a non-attainment area designated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for ozone. The four projects mentioned are among others that are in the document. The Conformity Report document will also be circulated for public comment from March 9 through April 8.

Programming

Charles Bradsky presented on the recommendation for Group 1 transit projects in the 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). A three percent annual increase in funding was proposed that is compounded annually. This gave us nearly \$2M in 2025 and \$2.5M in 2026. 2026 is not something that Federal Transit looks at, as their focus is on the four-year TIP. Only the year 2025 was balanced (2026 was not balanced). It was agreed on at the Transit Operators meeting that we would look at all received operating assistance and preventative maintenance in 2021 and start programming those numbers. In some cases, preventative maintenance was less in 2025 than in 2021. Also, in balancing the budget for 2025, the lesser amount was chosen. What is being proposed is just under \$1.5M over the \$14.4M that we have planned for 2025. If Federal Highway opposes the budget, GPTC's \$2.26M budget for new busses will be adjusted. It would continue to be a line item in the TIP. There was discussion on the Volkswagen funding towards busses. David Wright (GPTC) clarified that the funding is going busses that are currently in order, and not for 2025. There was discussion on the three percent increase. Kathy Luther stated there is Highway money that can be moved over to the Transit side as another possibility. The \$8 pilot operations and facility improvements line item is a potential CMAQ project. The \$8 is a placeholder for a continued plan on implementation of the project that will start this year with Federal funding. However, the \$8 line item will be moved to CMAQ. Beth Shrader (Valparaiso) stated that the assumption to choose the lesser amount to budget the Valpo bus lines is not ideal. By 2025 Valpo's expectation is that all the 80/20 (CMAQ/Fed) funding for the lines that will have been in service for three years will have been depleted. This does not allow them to maintain service levels. Charles advised that amendments can always be made starting in August. Another Transit Operators meeting will be held to explain the individual changes in the budget. Charles will also send the list of all transit projects to INDOT's review. The TIP adoption will also be out for public comment starting today.

On motion by David Wright and second by George Topoll the Technical Planning Committee accepted the transit program of projects as presented to go to public comment beginning today.

Topical Committee Reports

Mitch Barloga reported on DNR Next Level Trails Program; Round Two Awardees. Three of the awards were given to northwest Indiana communities. There is \$29.6M available and is combined with \$21.9M of local match. This is all administered by the Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR). 18 projects were funded out of the 93 applications submitted. The longest awarded project is 14.5 mi; the shortest awarded is .88 mi. Three of these projects are within the NIRPC area: Crown Point's Pennsy Greenway regional project, Portage's Marquette Greenway regional project, and Valparaiso's Vale Park West local project.

Eman Ibrahim reported on the Land Use Committee. The last committee meeting was held on January 7. There was discussion of roadway expansion and planning projects.

Scott Weber reported that the Surface Transportation Committee (STC) will meet in April instead of May to discuss final prerequisites for some of the projects that were agreed to.

Reports and Planning Partners

Announcements and upcoming dates were shared with the committee.

Next Meeting

The next Technical Planning Committee (TPC) meeting is slated for Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. at the NIRPC offices.

The meeting concluded at 11:06 a.m.