

**Transportation Resource Oversight Committee Meeting
(Lake and Porter County)
Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Minutes**

Charles Bradsky called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube. In attendance were Jeff Bunge (Cedar Lake), Julio Arichavala (East Chicago), Debra Gritters (East Chicago), Keith Silvie (East Chicago), Duane Alverson (Lake County), Mitch Bishop (La Porte County), Jay Sullivan (La Porte County), Craig Hendrix (Lowell), Jeff Huet (Schererville), George Topoll (Union Township), Max Rehlander (Valparaiso), Beth Shrader (Valparaiso), Ryan Lisek, Mike Haluska, Tim Hollandsworth, Scott Pruitt, Trisha Nugent, and Alex Olesker.

NIRPC staff included Charles Bradsky, Tom Vander Woude, Ann Weitgenant, Stephen Hughes, Flor Baum, and Candice Eklund.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 31, 2023, TROC meeting minutes were approved on motion by George Topoll and seconded by Max Rehlander.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Program of Projects Update

Charles Bradsky discussed the updated Program of Projects (PoP) stating it included the modifications from the local quarterly meetings held this month. There is a surplus of \$1 million in FY 2024 and a deficit in FY 2026. There is also currently a deficit of \$5 million in FY 2025, but Charles stated this may be corrected due to the possibility of receiving funds from INDOT. Fiscal year 2027 is nearly balanced.

Charles provided an update on the approval of the 2024–2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In order for the TIP to be approved, the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) must be approved by INDOT and the USDOT (FHWA & FTA), but not before the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approves NIRPCs Air Quality Conformity metrics and places them in the Federal Register. Indication is the USDOT and INDOT will approve and sign the MTP on March 19, 2024, with an estimated TIP approval before April 1, 2024. Charles noted the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) will be released in September this year and applications will be accepted for 30 days. Charles suggested that the committee members discuss their ideas for applications with their mayors or municipal/county officials for approval before submitting projects. The committee members are encouraged to contact NIRPC staff with any questions when creating their applications.

New Business

Charles Bradsky notified the members that if any of their quarterly reports have not been completed in the LTAP system, they must do so to avoid running the risk of not being approved for funding on future projects. Charles noted that any yearly funding that is not used by a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) goes back to FHWA to issue to other states. INDOT received an additional \$32 million in 2024 funding, on transportation alternative projects. INDOT then contacted the MPO's asking if they had any trail projects and what the risks were to those projects. There are four trail projects in NIRPCs PoP that are scheduled to let before November 2024 and INDOT will reimburse NIRPC for these four projects in 2025 after they let, but all of the funding needs to be spent on infrastructure projects to qualify for reimbursement. This funding will help with the \$5 million deficit in FY 2025. Three projects were identified that can accelerate from FY 2025: two projects in East Chicago and one project in La Porte County.

DES #2101149 (La Porte County Request)

Mitch Bishop and Jay Sullivan, both representing La Porte County, discussed DES #2101149, a project under Group 2 funding. This project is a four-lane bridge on Michigan Boulevard and is a gateway to Michigan City. Mitch Bishop reported that La Porte County does not have the funding for construction on this project. Their consultant has said the project can be expedited to March 2025 (from FY 2026) because right-of-way is owned by the City of Michigan City and it is far enough along in the schedule. The project will cost \$4.6 million, and they are requesting \$3.6 million. Charles stated there are no guarantees the funding will be available from Group 1. On motion by Jeff Huett and seconded by George Topoll, the committee members agreed to accept both East Chicago projects and the La Porte County project if the funding is available. Charles will provide a status update of the additional funds from INDOT and the status of these three projects (which are at higher risk due to being on an accelerated schedule) at the next meeting on May 21, 2024.

New Requirement Update: CN Estimates Must be Correct in RTIP

INDOT and FHWA informed Charles that NIRPC's TIP needs to correctly reflect all the funds that are in a project, including stage submittals. The estimates need to be sent to Charles and Ann to ensure the updates are entered into the PoP and RTIP systems. This inclusion is also important because there may not be available funding to afford the substantial increases.

Request for Allocation of Funds Lost from Purchase Orders (POs) Closed by INDOT

At Local Quarterly Meetings (LQMs), INDOT informs the Local Public Agencies (LPAs) they must submit POs timely because INDOT's Central Office has the right to close them after six months if there are no claim submittals. If a claim has not been submitted for three months, INDOT will need to be notified by email with an explanation as to why a claim has not been sent to them. Several POs were closed at the end of January this year because claims were not submitted to INDOT in time, giving the appearance of inactivity, totaling a loss of over \$1.33 million for Group 1. Due to this loss of funding in FY 2023, several of the employees responsible for Charges (ERCs) requested additional funding for those projects to replace the funding they lost, totaling approximately \$700,000 to be reallocated in FY 2024 or 2025. On motion by Julio Arichavala and seconded by George Topoll, the TROC committee approved NIRPC to investigate options to possibly allocate these funds in FY 2024 to replace the funds that were lost when the POs were closed by INDOT's Central Office. The total loss has been determined to be \$738,264. The remaining lost funds of \$555,351 were from completed projects with funds remaining and didn't need those funds to complete any additional work.

CA-23-6 Enhancing Transparency Through Use of the Investing in America Emblem on Signs

The purpose of this register is to suggest guidelines for placing signs at construction sites to increase the transparency of how the project was funded if the project sponsor wishes to add these signs. These signs are available for federal reimbursement.

The New Administration Workshop will be held on February 29 from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm at the NIRPC office. Meeting materials will be available at the workshop, and a video will be distributed afterwards.

Adjournment

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:42 a.m. The next meeting will be held on May 21, 2024.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at [Transportation Resources Oversight Committee - Lake/Porter Counties 10-31-23 - YouTube](#)