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Contact: Dave Wellman
Diversified Marketing Strategies
219-226-0300
dave@3dms.com

RDA Wins Applause from Mayors, State AG

*Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority welcomes new board members
Glover and Good amidst praise for ongoing economic development projects*

INDIANAPOLIS (January 20, 2011) – The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) held its annual Board of Directors meeting today in Indianapolis. The event featured local and state officials who uniformly praised the organization for its economic development work in the region, as well as presentations from the Regional Bus Authority (RBA) and the Gary/Chicago International Airport detailing their progress in accomplishing long-term goals supported by the RDA. Key highlights of the meeting included:

- The Board welcomed two new members: Ed Glover, representing East Chicago, and Jeff Good, representing Porter County. “The addition of these two new members is a very positive step,” said Board Chairman Leigh Morris. “It is great to have East Chicago represented by Ed Glover, and Jeff Good brings an important perspective to the Board and renews the participation of Porter County in the RDA.”
- In addition to swearing in its newest members, the Board also unanimously reappointed Bill Joiner as Treasurer, and named Harley Snyder its new Vice Chairman.
- In a special presentation to the Board, Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller said, “I remember the creation of the RDA in 2005, and at its creation there were some very high hopes, but also some unspoken fears.” Today, those hopes are

well on their way to being fulfilled, he continued, while the fears have proven groundless. “Now, other regions of the state, in Fort Wayne and in southern Indiana, are looking at the RDA as a model for organizations of their own,” he noted. “Because of its openness, its transparency and its accountability, the RDA had been a model of good government.”

- Because of that track record, the Attorney General made a bold proposal to the board that the RDA consider serving as a trustee over casino revenue intended for economic development in East Chicago. More regarding the proposal, which the RDA Board of Directors promised to take under careful consideration, can be found here: http://www.in.gov/portal/news_events/65955.htm
- Reports presented to the board by the Mayors of Hammond, Whiting and East Chicago and officials from the Regional Bus Authority and Gary/Chicago International Airport illustrated how the RDA’s efforts are connecting the region and creating opportunities for growth. Hammond Mayor Thomas M. McDermott, Jr. pointed to the George Lake Trail Pedestrian Bridge in Forsythe Park which will link his city with neighboring Whiting. “We are bringing two communities together with a bridge, and I think that really speaks to what the RDA is all about,” McDermott said.
- Similarly, work by the RBA has expanded the ability of residents to move around the region, and they are taking advantage of it. RBA Executive Director Tim Brown noted that bus ridership in Hammond rose from 13,000 to 21,000 between July of 2010 and the end of the year. He credits seven public input sessions which allowed the RBA to better tailor bus routes, for the dramatic increase in ridership. In 2010, the RBA also created a new bus line from Dyer into downtown Chicago to serve the growing commuter population. The existing ChicaGo Dash bus service from Valparaiso is quickly exceeding expectations, he noted, with daily ridership surpassing 100 daily in 2010, a year ahead of schedule.
- Steven Landry, Interim Director of the Gary/Chicago International Airport, updated the Board on the progress of the Airport’s Runway Extension Program and said that the project was on schedule to meet Chairman Leigh Morris’ promise that “dirt will fly by the 4th of July” 2011. More than \$29 million has been spent so far to prepare for the extension, and the Airport has secured or been pledged enough funds to complete the estimated \$129.7 million project.

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