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RDA Board Adopts Updated Strategic Plan

NWI RDA Board of Directors accepts plan, approves commuter connectivity-related grants to Gary and Valparaiso, and begins RFP process for a convention center study.

Crown Point, IN (December 15, 2016) – The Board of Directors of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) formally adopted the RDA’s updated Comprehensive Strategic Plan (CSP) today. The updated CSP provides a detailed road map for commuter rail expansion and related economic development in Northwest Indiana.

“Building the West Lake Corridor extension and double tracking the existing South Shore line from Gary to Michigan City will bring more people, more jobs, higher incomes and hundreds of millions of dollars of private investment to Northwest Indiana,” said RDA President and CEO Bill Hanna. “The term ‘game-changer’ is overused, but in this case it’s absolutely correct. This investment will make Northwest Indiana the first choice in suburban Chicago for new and existing residents, the first choice for businesses to start or expand, and the first choice for access to jobs, both in the region and in Chicago.”

The CSP update was required by the General Assembly in the 2015 legislation that provided \$180 million in state funds for the West Lake Corridor Extension. Copies of the new CSP are available at the RDA’s Crown Point offices as well as online at

http://www.in.gov/rda/files/RDA_Comprehensive_Strategic_Plan.pdf

The Board also took action on two other commuter-related projects. First, the Board approved a \$6.847 million matching grant to the city of Valparaiso for expansion of the ChicaGo Dash

BOARD ADOPTS PLAN ADD 1

commuter bus service. The grant would fund demolition, site cleaning and construction of a new transit center in downtown Valparaiso. This facility would include a ticket office, waiting area, restrooms, convenience retail space, and a second floor operations office. The City hopes to complete the project by summer 2019.

Second, the Board approved the reallocation of a \$4.5 million matching grant provided to the City of Gary in 2015. The grant was originally approved as part of the City's federal TIGER grant application for transit oriented development at the South Shore station in Miller. Due to the competitiveness of the TIGER grant program, Gary was unsuccessful in obtaining an award. However, updating the Miller station and its surroundings is a core component of regional commuter rail expansion as outlined in the updated CSP. Therefore the Board has reallocated the original grant to the project itself, contingent upon local and state matching funds being secured.

In other actions today, the Board:

- Approved an amount not to exceed \$25,000 to engage consulting firm Barnes & Thornburg to develop a request for proposals (RFP) to conduct a comprehensive market and feasibility study on additional convention/exposition space in Northwest Indiana.
- Approved an amount not to exceed \$35,000 to the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) for technical, facilitation, and account support for the Northwestern Indiana Brownfield Coalition project. NIRPC has worked with the RDA to create, maintain, and grow the project and has served in the role as Assistant Project Manager for the past two years. Funding available through the federal grant for the creation of a Brownfield Program originally funded NIRPC's support. However, that funding is coming to an end and, in order to maintain continuity and the level of expertise on this project, the RDA will extend its engagement with NIRPC for one year.



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- Approved the oversight and administration policy for proceeds of the Gary Urban Enterprise Association (GUEA). The RDA has worked in conjunction with the City of Gary Redevelopment Commission and Office of the Attorney General for the State of Indiana to reinvest sales proceeds from GUEA back into the community to create a façade improvement rebate program. The Commission will administer the façade improvement rebate program and formally dedicate the escrow account as a fund exclusively for the façade improvement rebate program, subject to the review of the RDA, pursuant to the direction of the Office of the Attorney General for the State of Indiana. The policy details the eligibility, geographic requirements, applicant requirements, eligible and ineligible activities, application process, review process, award detail, methods of reimbursement for use of the GUEA proceeds. The City of Gary Redevelopment Commission adopted the same policies in August 2016.

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About the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

Established in 2005 through a bipartisan effort including former Governor Mitchell E. Daniels, Congressman Peter J. Visclosky, key state legislators, and local elected officials, the RDA is quasi-governmental development entity entrusted to make public investment decisions within a regional framework for supporting catalytic infrastructure projects and inducing private sector investment. Years of successful results have made it a trusted and tested partner for growth in Northwest Indiana. For more information, visit www.rdatransformation.com or www.in.gov/rda