



April, 2008

NEWS

A monthly newsletter from the RBA

RBA to Launch Customer Information Center in May

By Thomas S. Phillips

NWI Community Action Corporation

Beginning May 1, the Regional Bus Authority will launch the Customer Information Center using the number:

1-877-5 easygo
(1-877 532-7946)

The **easygo** Customer Information Center is the place to start for fixed route, paratransit, and demand response transit. In addition to public transit questions, callers can also get routes, schedules and availability of curb-to-curb service.

The Northwest Indiana Community Action Corporation (NWICA) currently operates the Indiana 211 social services information line for the region. The RBA is taking the first steps to making travel easier in Northwest Indiana. The new center is a “one-stop shop” for transit information.

Making Transit Easier. 877-532-7946



NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE NUMBER—The Regional Bus Authority kicks off a new Customer Service Number as a key step toward regionalizing bus services effective May 1, 2008. Above is an interior bus card for area buses.

RBA & **easygo** Set for Radio, Teams up with NIRPC



By Ken Dallmeyer
Project Director, RBA

Listen for words about the RBA and **easygo** on local radio stations in Northwest Indiana. The RBA has arranged for ads on radio stations, WLTZ AM, 1370, Gary; WJOB AM, 1230, Hammond; WZYN FM, 107.1, Lowell; and WLJE FM, 105.5, Valparaiso.

In addition, posters will appear on transit buses and vans and a brochure will be widely distributed.

This advertising will start the process of unifying the image of public transportation by promoting the RBA Customer Information Center and its toll free hot line. This

information will be updated regularly as the RBA introduces improvements.

Customer Information Center

The RBA is teaming up with the Northwest Indiana Community Action Corporation to create a transportation customer information center. By calling a toll-free number, customers will be advised by trained personnel on bus routes, demand response and rail services.

RBA Partners with NIRPC

The RBA will collaborate with the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission to assure that the RBA and our service providers meet the extensive requirements of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The RBA will provide the non-federal match for FTA grants while moving to an integrated and coordinated public transit system for Northwest Indiana.

easygo to Link Services

For the first time, the transit services in Lake and Porter Counties will have a common brand name called **easygo**.

The logo will be used on buses and vans, bus stops, passenger shelters, transfer centers, and on advertising. For an example, look at the interior bus card shown above.

A Call for a “Leadership Summit on Transportation.” See Dennis Rittenmeyer’s Column on Other Side.

RBA Meeting Set for May 21

The RBA will meet at 3 p.m. on May 21, at the Center for Advanced Clinical Studies, Methodist Southlake, Merrillville.

President's Corner

Leadership Summit On Transportation!



By Dennis Rittenmeyer, Ph.D.
President, Regional Bus Authority of NWI

The 2008 legislative session is now history. While there was at least a partial or temporary resolution to the property tax issue, efforts to secure funding for the rail extension were not successful.

Most recently, Skybus, the long-awaited new airline to operate out of the Gary/Chicago Airport, almost immediately after beginning operations reduced its service by one half. Shortly thereafter, it ceased operations entirely and filed bankruptcy.

While there are new projects being started that will improve bus transportation, there is no dedicated long-term funding, and, thus, the very projects that the RDA has funded may be short lived.

The answer to all three transportation problems would appear to be a concerted effort to focus on "transportation" as a pathway to economic growth and community revitalization. Unfortunately, our history has been one of polarization and a mentality that supports, "I've got to get mine, before you can get yours." If anything, 2008 has shown us these strategies are inherently divisive and flawed. Therefore, I suggest we create a new paradigm.

We on the RBA believe the strategy to find the right answers to our dilemma is a "leadership summit"—an intensive discussion of all the issues among those key "stakeholders" (legislators and others) who must be involved if our efforts are to be successful. This is not a call for a town meeting or even a referendum; it is a call for the leaders in our community to pull themselves together to talk about the real benefits that can be achieved by working together.

For it to be successful, this leadership summit must be convened by an interested, yet neutral party. The answer to that question is the Regional Development Authority (RDA), the very organization that was created by the Indiana General Assembly to support and enhance these three transportation modes and improve our community.

Let's hope they do it!

Dr. Rittenmeyer is President, Calumet College of St. Joseph.

RBA Key to Transportation Future

By Frank Van Til
Co-Owner, Van Til's Supermarket

I was honored to be inducted recently into the Northwest Indiana Business and Industry Hall of Fame. As I was being introduced at the Radisson, it was noted that I am a supporter of regional bus transportation.

So I ask myself: 'What is it going to take to get serious about buses?' Maybe the better question is: 'What is it going to take to get serious about transportation?'

Specifically, we need to look at transportation as a strategy to assure the long term viability of sustaining good paying jobs along the lakeshore. Simply, it's in everyone's interest to keep good jobs here, given that people often work up "north" and live "south."

How do we do this? First, we need to encourage Gary, Hammond and East Chicago to work together to secure an intermodal rail facility here. That will bring trucking jobs and related employment and make north county a transportation hub. Secondly, we need to focus the Gary/Chicago International Airport on freight. The recent problems with Skybus dictate that we should rethink our emphasis on passenger service. Thirdly, the extension of commuter rail deserves our support. It will encourage people to move from Chicago, as well as link Lake County to jobs in Illinois.

As we focus on rail, we need to ensure that our bus and rail systems are coordinated. The RBA already has taken steps toward a regional system. But the RBA needs to consolidate the bus systems of Gary, Hammond and East Chicago.

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PLANNING RBA ROUTES—Members of the RBA Service Development and Management Committee met at NIRPC on April 2 to discuss assuming GPTC routes. This committee is led by Board Member, Charles Barbour (left, front).