



2007: NIRPC IN REVIEW

It has become a tradition here at NIRPC to use the first issue of our newsletter each year to look back at the prior year. This is somewhat akin to our unique, descriptive and award winning report entitled, "What Ever Happened to That Project."

It is especially appropriate to look back at 2007 because it was very much a year characterized by increased strategic planning, accountability and the measurement of results. Under the chairmanship of Mayor Leigh Morris of La Porte, NIRPC's executive board and policy committees were charged with identifying their mandates and work plan commitments, developing new work plan goals, and developing indicators for measuring success. All of these activities were directed at working toward the attainment of the vision and strategic directions which had been previously set for NIRPC for the period 2005 – 2008.

Here's a chronological overview of the significant efforts which took place at NIRPC during this past year:

January As set forth in its enabling legislation, a new NIRPC executive board is chosen at the quarterly meeting. The new corporate officers are Leigh Morris, Mayor of the City of La Porte (chair); Dan Klein, Mayor of the City of Crown Point (vice-chair); Jon Costas, Mayor of the City of Valparaiso (treasurer); and Jerry Cooley, Chair of the La Porte County Council (secretary). Outgoing chair Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor, is commended for his

achievements of the past year, including the first national planning award for NIRPC from the National Association of Regional Councils and the settlement of the long-standing class action suit with Everybody Counts.

In partnership with the Regional Bus Authority, *The Regional Strategic and Operations Bus Plan* for Lake and Porter counties is completed.

A joint legislative agenda is developed with the Northwest Indiana Forum. Referred to as "V-8," the program is comprised of eight significant State legislative initiatives deemed to be important for the future of northwest Indiana (see January 2007 newsletter for a description of the program). Significantly, the Forum and NIRPC also conducted their first-ever legislative reception at the Indianapolis Marriott on January 24, which was well attended by elected State officials from the region.

February Nineteen Commissioners and managerial staff gather on a snowy Saturday morning for a retreat in order to set work plan priorities for 2007. A strategic framework is developed for the executive board and each of the committees in order to review progress during the course of the year and identify meaningful indicators of success. Staff utilizes this input in drafting the Unified Planning Work Program for next year and determining unmet funding needs.

A regional economic development study is completed and adopted. The

study includes a cluster analysis of the northwest Indiana economy and identifies issues and opportunities, along with the roles of NIRPC and its partner organizations in economic development for the region.

A delegation of NIRPC commissioners and the executive director participate in the Conference on Regions sponsored by the National Association of Regional Councils in Washington, D.C. The group also meets with U.S. Congressmen Pete Visclosky and Joe Donnelly and a senior staff member of Senator Dick Lugar to discuss NIRPC's federal legislative interests.

March The Regional Development Authority approves an \$85,200 grant to NIRPC toward the cost of conducting a household travel survey. The La Porte County Council subsequently authorizes \$14,800 for this purpose. The last such study was conducted over 10 years ago, and new information on the travel habits of the region's residents was needed for modeling and planning purposes. The study is being conducted in cooperation and coordination with a companion effort of the metropolitan planning organization for northeastern Illinois in order to provide improved information on interstate travel patterns.

NIRPC actively coordinates its planning with State agencies in the development of the new *Indiana State Trails Plan*.

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

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Executive Board

Officers

Joseph Stahura

Chairman

Mayor of Whiting

H. Jonathan Costas

Vice-Chairman

Mayor of Valparaiso

Jerry Cooley

Treasurer

La Porte County Council

Stanley Dobosz

Secretary

Griffith Town Council

Members

Kevin Breitzke

Porter County Surveyor

David Cincoski

Chesterton Town Council

Michael Griffin

Highland Clerk Treasurer

Ron Lombard

Trail Creek Town Council

Stephen Mockler

Wanatah Clerk Treasurer

Shawn Pettit

Merrillville Town Council

Chester Dobis

Governor's Appointee

Indiana State Representative

John Swanson

Executive Director

NIRPC

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Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission Elects 2008 Officers

On January 17, 2008, the members of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) elected Joseph Stahura, Mayor of Whiting, to serve as its chairman for 2008. Also elected were Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas, Vice-Chairman; La Porte County Councilman Jerry Cooley, Treasurer; Stanley Dobosz, Griffith Town Councilman, Secretary; and executive board

members State Representative Chester Dobis, Trail Creek Town Councilman Ron Lombard, Wanatah Clerk-Treasurer Stephen Mockler, Shawn Pettit, Merrillville Town Councilman, Highland Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin, Chesterton Town Councilman David Cincoski, and Porter County Surveyor Kevin Breitzke.

Upon assuming the



Whiting Mayor
Joe Stahura

chairmanship, Mayor Stahura thanked the membership for its vote of confidence and said, "NIRPC is moving forward at a steady pace."

NIRPC Supports RBA's request for federal transit funding

On December 13, 2007, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission endorsed the Northwest Indiana Regional Bus Authority (RBA) request for designated recipient status for federal transit funding.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires the Governor of each state to designate eligible agencies to request, receive, manage and disburse FTA grants and to administer FTA funded projects as designated recipients.

NIRPC, Gary Public Transportation Corporation and the City of East Chicago are currently designated recipients of FTA funded projects. NIRPC formally supported and endorsed the RBA request to be added as an additional designated recipient in Northwest Indiana. An announcement from the Governor is pending.

The RBA is the regional agency statutorily empowered to provide financing, construction and/or operation of public transit services in

Northwest Indiana and needs designated recipient status so as to fulfill its statutory responsibilities.

At the same time that the Commission endorsed the request, they also authorized NIRPC staff to negotiate an administrative assistance agreement with the RBA such that NIRPC staff will implement and perform some of the designated recipient functions and responsibilities on a contractual basis.



| | Inflow | Outflow |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Lake | 3.2 | 2.2 |
| Porter | 2.3 | 0.6 |
| La Porte | 0.6 | 0.4 |

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimates of gross commuter flows reflect the annual earnings of in-commuters and out-commuters by county and can be used to assess impacts of commuting on county growth and economic development. This chart shows, in billions of dollars, how much money is earned by in and out commuters for the 3 county region.

2007: NIRPC IN REVIEW (CONTINUED)

April A major change to NIRPC's enabling legislation is approved by the Indiana General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Daniels. At NIRPC's request, Rep. Chet Dobis sponsored a bill which would continue NIRPC's weighted voting option, provide borrowing authority for cash flow purposes, provide our counties with alternatives to the property tax in meeting their NIRPC assessment requirement, and expand the executive board to 11 members, with one additional member from each county.

The General Assembly also passes S.B. 105, which authorizes and funds a study requested by NIRPC of the need for and feasibility of a potential Indiana expressway between I-57 and I-65.

The full commission adopts a communications audit and plan developed under a grant from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation. The plan recommends a series of actions to enable NIRPC to become more strategic and effective in its communications activities.

May NIRPC awards contracts to a consulting team comprised of JJR, SEH, J.F. New, and Cambridge Systematics for purposes of developing the Marquette Plan – Phase II, a vision for redevelopment of the eastern 24 miles of the region's Lake Michigan shoreline areas. The same team will be utilized to prepare corridor planning studies which will be integrated into the Marquette Plan for U.S. 12 and 20 in Porter County.

June NIRPC receives an honorable mention award for its eXtraordinary Road Trip video game at the annual conference of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) in Orlando. At the same event, Munster Clerk – Treasurer Dave Shafer is re-elected to his second term as a Region VI representative on NARC's board of directors.

The Commission adopts the *Connections 2030 Compliance*

Amendment, which meets the new requirements for the long-range transportation plan imposed by the new Federal transportation law. The new plan contains major new sections on congestion management and safety for the region.

The Commission also adopts a new *Transportation Improvement Program* for the period 2008 – 2011, which also meets the new federal transportation law requirements.

July With internship assistance from Valparaiso University, NIRPC undertakes a digital land use inventory utilizing Geographic Information Systems.

August NIRPC conducts two major public hearings on transit services, focusing particularly on services to the disabled community, as part of its requirements under the federal consent decree with Everybody Counts.

September The NIRPC's executive board adopts an amendment to the *Public Participation Plan* in order to secure compliance with the new federal transportation law requirements.

The Sensible Tools Handbook for Indiana is finalized and released. Authored by Professor Eric Kelly of Ball State University's College of Architecture and Planning, the report provides guidance for public officials, professional planners, developers, and citizens in the application of sensible growth principles to development decision-making.

October At its quarterly meeting, the Commission elects Clerk – Treasurer Michael Griffin of Highland, Michael Bucko of the Porter County Council, and Wanatah Clerk – Treasurer Stephen Mockler to the newly-expanded seats on the NIRPC executive board. Whiting Mayor Joe

Stahura is also elected to fill the unexpired term of vice-chair Dan Klein.

The Sensible Tools Handbook for Indiana receives the outstanding project award for 2007 from the Indiana Metropolitan Planning Organization Council at its annual meeting in Evansville.

NIRPC executive director John Swanson presents testimony on transportation issues in northwest Indiana at hearings of the Joint Committee on Transit and Transportation Alternatives and the Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission of the Indiana General Assembly.

November A set of public open houses and a stakeholder meeting conclude a process of extensive input into the development of the Marquette Plan – Phase II and the U.S. 12 and 20 Corridor Study. The consulting team is also able to receive input from all twelve municipalities in the Phase II study area through a series of council meetings.

December The Commission adopts the *Greenways and Blueways Plan for Northwest Indiana* at its quarterly meeting. An announcement is made that the ArcelorMittal USA Foundation had awarded a \$75,000 grant to the Openlands Project and NIRPC for purposes of implementing components of the plan.

At the same meeting, the board adopts the Northwest Indiana Compact between the Forum and NIRPC, which establishes an agreement for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination between the two entities.

After extensive discussion, the Executive Board adopts two resolutions in support of State and Federal legislation for the Great Lakes Compact and the financing for the South Shore commuter rail service expansion to Lowell and Valparaiso.

Funding for RBA

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



Recently, Project Director Ken Dallmeyer, Attorney Dave Hollenbeck, Mary Jane Shkroba, from NIRPC, and I met with the Federal Transit Administration in Chicago. The purpose was to discuss the RBA's application for "designated recipient" status and what requirements might be placed on the RBA by the FTA.

The meeting was cordial and very productive. There were some pleasant surprises, such as that the FTA will endorse Governor Daniels' designation, thus streamlining the process. That is good news because

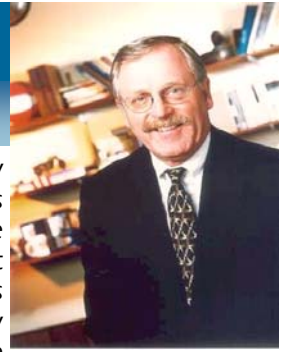
we expect speedy action by the Governor.

Unfortunately, we also learned that the FTA has genuine concerns about funding for the RBA without a permanent, long-term funding source. We explained that our funding comes currently from the Regional Development Authority in the form of a two-year grant. That grant runs from January of 2008 through December of 2009. The FTA explained that with such federally subsidized activities as the acquisition of a bus, with the life expectancy of twelve years, this agency would be loath to make that commitment if we did not have our own local funding commitment for longer than two years.

This is not an insurmountable hurdle

because they provided us with some other options. It also suggests that any application we

make to the FTA will have a heightened level of scrutiny. Presumably, the only source for such funding is by way of legislation passed by the Indiana General Assembly or continuing funding from the RDA. The RDA is on record indicating it is not interested in long-term funding. Thus, the very burden with which we have been struggling for so many years is now being re-presented to us by the federal government. The challenge before us is significant and the time is short!



MS4 Annual Meeting a Success

The Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Community Partnership had a successful annual meeting on January 29th in the NIRPC auditorium. The Community Partnership is a unique cooperative and cost sharing program between twenty two entities in Northwest Indiana and NIRPC. Twenty two people attended, representing eleven of the communities which contract with NIRPC to provide public outreach, education, and public involvement services for their stormwater permit programs.

Kathy Luther, NIRPC Director of Environmental Management provided an overview of the many public education materials and outreach activities that NIRPC staff undertook on their behalf in 2007. These included distributing thousands of brochures, coloring books, and rain gauges at numerous community festivals and events;



exchanging hundreds of old leaky gas cans for new spill-proof versions at household hazardous waste collection days; and publishing an educational water insert in the NWI Times.

Community representatives were provided with a draft 2007 Compliance report so that they could provide input or comments prior to NIRPC submitting the

documents to IDEM. The report format is considerably different from previous years. This year we are using the compliance forms required by the state. This should make it easier for MS4 Operators to include our information in their own reports.

After the overview of 2007, Sarah Nerenberg conducted a discussion to secure input for 2008 program objectives, activities, and key messages for the public. Some high priority activities that identified for 2008 are targeting homeowners associations on maintenance techniques and practices for subdivision storm water systems, erosion control workshops for builders and construction personnel, and good housekeeping and pollution prevention training for municipal staff.

NIRPC Chair cites Key Accomplishments

NIRPC's exiting Chairman, Mayor Leigh Morris of La Porte, gave his parting words at the December Executive Board meeting. In this he gave a list of accomplishments from 2007 and a look to the future for the incoming board members. The following is the list of accomplishments from 2007 along with a look to the future for the incoming board members:

1. Completion of a communications audit and adoption of a communications plan—including much enhanced bi-monthly NIRPC Newsletters, new mapping capabilities as a result of our new GIS specialist and a much improved NIRPC Website. We have also had more consistent media coverage of our meetings. Public interaction efforts have also been enhanced.

2. The Commission's effectiveness has been enhanced by several initiatives, including development of a commissioner orientation program, holding a commissioner planning retreat, and a much more concerted effort to encourage attendance and participation by Commissioners. We didn't have to cancel a single Executive Board meeting because of a lack of a quorum. We've had a major educational component at each Commission and Executive Board meeting.

3. The NIRPC staff has been reorganized and refocused, including the appointment for the first time of a Director of Planning (Steve Strains).

John and his team have handled leadership changes without missing a beat as far as I can see, and the team is stronger than ever. I would note particularly the leadership of Mary Jane Shkroba in helping to strengthen several areas of finance and administration.

4. There has been continued growth in developing and understanding NIRPC's role in economic development and how this role relates to NIRPC's role in environmental protection and transportation planning.

5. We clarified the role of each NIRPC Committee and asked each of them to adopt work plans and objectives for accomplishment this year. The process isn't perfect, but with nurturing it can help us to continue to improve NIRPC's effectiveness and enhance understanding of its important function.

6. We continued to build a strong public/private sector relationship with the Northwest Indiana Forum, adopting for the first time a joint legislative agenda and a joint legislative reception.

7. The Towns and Small Cities Council came back to life and is helping to balance NIRPC's emphasis between larger urban centers and these smaller communities.

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

The evolution of NIRPC to a regional council of governments focusing on the current and future economic development, environmental protection and transportation needs of Northwestern Indiana took some major steps forward during the past year, thanks to the leadership of John Swanson and the hard work of his dedicated staff and the effective interaction of Commissioners, committee members and volunteers. While I believe we should be proud of what's been accomplished and what I see as significant enhancement of focus and effectiveness, I hope we won't get too satisfied with where we are and what we're doing. There's much more we need to do to stimulate the continued planned growth and progress of Northwestern Indiana and enhance the quality of life for its residents. I believe NIRPC must continue to move toward a more proactive role in assuring the most positive balance practical between its three key functional areas—economic development, environmental protection and transportation. We're moving from a crawl in economic development . . . maturing in transportation planning . . . and wavering in environmental protection. Perhaps that's to be expected at this point in NIRPC's evolution but, in my opinion, we should not be satisfied with this mode of operation. NIRPC was not put in place to protect the status quo. Northwestern Indiana has been held back by a lack of coordinated positive regional leadership and NIRPC should be a key player in helping to assure that void is filled.

RDA Funds Little Cal Flood Protection

The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority at its February 12, 2008 meeting in Indianapolis approved the release of \$6 million to aid the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission in providing necessary easements, utility relocations and cash match to the US Army Corp of Engineers construction of the final levee segments and contract for pumping station expansions in Hammond and Munster.

A joint letter to the RDA by Governor Mitch Daniels and U.S. Congressman Peter Visclosky urged the RDA board to provide this fund advance to allow flood

control construction by the end of 2009. Once complete and certified over 5,000 acres containing more than 8,000 homes businesses and public buildings will be removed from the 200 year flood plains along the Little Calumet River in Gary, Griffith, Hammond, Highland, and Munster.

Part of this project also includes building 20 miles of new & reconstructed flood levees and recreation trails/facilities along 10 miles of the river, preserving and enhancing over 700 acres of



existing wetland in corridor, and creating urban development opportunities on over 3,500 acres along I-80/94 (Borman Expressway).

Letters of support were sent to the RDA from Indiana State Senator Frank Mrvan and Mayor Tom McDermott Jr. of Hammond.

NIRPC Calendar of Events

March

- 1** NIRPC/Forum Economic Development
101 Workshop
@NIRPC Auditorium— 7:30am
- 6** Environmental Management Policy Committee
@NIRPC Auditorium— 9am
- 6** Towns and Smaller Cities Council Ethics
Program
@NIRPC Auditorium— 5:30 pm
- 11** Transportation Policy Committee Meeting
@NIRPC Auditorium— 9am
- 20** Finance and Personnel Committee
@NIRPC Board Room— 8 am
- 20** Executive Board Meeting
@NIRPC Auditorium— 9am
- 27** Economic Development Committee
@NIRPC Packer Room— 8 am

April

- 3** Environmental Management Policy Committee
@NIRPC Auditorium— 9am
- 8** Transportation Policy Committee Meeting
@NIRPC Auditorium— 9am
- 17** Finance and Personnel Committee
@NIRPC Board Room— 8 am
- 17** Executive Board Meeting
@NIRPC Auditorium— 9am
- 24** Economic Development Committee
@NIRPC Packer Room— 8 am