

# Connections 2030 Compliance Amendment



Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission



2030 ●  
**WIN**  
CONNECTIONS

03/15/072007

NIRPC APPOINTMENTS (HEA 1010)

APPOINTING AUTHORITY

MEMBER

APPOINTING AUTHORITY

MEMBER

LAKE COUNTY

PORTER COUNTY

Lake County Commissioners  
Lake County Council  
Lake County Surveyor  
Mayor of Gary  
Mayor of Hammond  
Merrillville Town Council  
Munster Town Council  
Mayor of Hobart  
Mayor of East Chicago  
Griffith Town Council  
Highland Town Council  
Schererville Town Council  
Mayor of Crown Point  
Mayor of Lake Station  
Mayor of Whiting  
Dyer Town Council  
Cedar Lake Town Council  
Lowell Town Council  
Winfield Town Council  
New Chicago Town Council  
St. John Town Council  
Schneider Town Council

Gerry Scheub  
Will Smith, Jr.  
George Van Til  
Shirley Stanford  
Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.  
Shawn M. Pettit  
David F. Shafer  
Linda Buzinec  
Richard Medina  
Stanley Dobosz  
Michael Griffin  
Michael Troxell  
Dan Klein  
Ron Good  
Joseph M. Stahura  
Robert Rybicki  
Patricia Wisniewski  
Judith Walters  
William Teach  
Roger Pelfrey  
Sherry P. Sury  
Richard Ludlow

Porter County Commissioners  
Porter County Council

Porter County Surveyor  
Mayor of Portage  
Mayor of Valparaiso  
Chesterton Town Council  
Hebron Town Council  
Porter Town Council  
Kouts Town Council

Ogden Dunes Town Council  
Burns Harbor Town Council  
Beverly Shores Town Council  
Dune Acres Town Council  
Pines Town Council

LA PORTE COUNTY

La Porte County Commissioners  
La Porte County Council  
La Porte County Surveyor  
Mayor of Michigan City  
Mayor of La Porte  
Trail Creek Town Council  
Long Beach Town Council  
Kingsford Heights Town Council  
Kingsbury Town Council  
Michiana Shores Town Council  
Wanatah Town Council  
LaCrosse Town Council  
Pottawattamie Park Town Council  
Westville Town Council

Governor of Indiana

Robert Harper  
Michael Bucko

Kevin Breitzke  
Doug Olson  
H. Jonathan Costas  
David Cincoski  
Don Ensign  
William Sexton  
David Brooks

P. Thomas Clouser  
Robert M. Perrine  
Joan Bliss  
Benjamin Bolton  
Cathi Murray

Michael Bohacek  
Jerry Cooley  
Robert Przybylinski  
Charles Oberlie  
Leigh Morris  
Ron Lombard  
Bob Schaefer  
Rosalie Jacobs  
Ed Ritter  
Steve Millick  
Stephen Mockler  
vacant  
Susan Tochell  
vacant

Chester Dobis



To the Citizens of Northwestern Indiana:

We are proud to present to you the *Connections 2030* Regional Transportation Plan, as amended to be compliant with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act- A Legacy of Users (SAFETEA-LU) . That current Federal Surface Transportation Act was enacted on August 10, 2005 . This plan provides the framework for the development of the transportation system, including the network of roads and public transit services from now to the horizon year 2030. This plan addresses immediate and forecasted transportation needs with proposed spending on a variety of high-priority state and local initiatives such as the reconstruction and upgrades of interchanges, new interchanges and added travel lanes on arterial highways. Public transit service improvements are also anticipated. Complementing this plan are parallel planning activities by the Regional Bus Authority to identify the opportunities for new fixed-route bus services, and demand-responsive services to people with mobility limitations.

This plan was prepared with the involvement of many stake-holders, including local governments, operators of public transportation services, the Indiana Department of Transportation, advocates for minorities and persons with limited means, and advocates for protection of the environment. Our gratitude is extended to them for their generous investment of time and expertise in the development of this plan.

As part of a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive planning process, this plan will lay the foundation for future efforts that will continuously adapt to changes in the development patterns of Northwestern Indiana, and respond to the limitations of financial resources from federal, state and local sources. The plan is the product of one of the three planning domains for the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC). Economic Development and Environment are the other two domains. Together, the three domains are the subject of the comprehensive planning activities of the Commission. NIRPC's purpose is to create the conditions within which policy makers and the public can create a sustainable, vibrant regional community and quality of life for Northwest Indiana. We believe that this plan provides a strong start down that path.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John A. Swanson", written in a cursive style.

John A. Swanson  
Executive Director



**NORTHWESTERN INDIANA  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

Together We Make The Difference

6100 Southport Road Portage, Indiana 46368

Telephone (219) 763-6060  
Fax Messages (219) 762-1650

On the Internet www.nirpc.org  
E-mail Messages nirpc@nirpc.org

**RESOLUTION 07-13**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION TO ADOPT AN AMENDMENT TO THE *CONNECTIONS 2030*  
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

WHEREAS, the citizens of Northwest Indiana require a safe, efficient and effective regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility and contributes to improving the quality of life in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as "The Commission", being designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Lake, Porter and LaPorte County Region, has established a region-wide, cooperative, comprehensive and continuing planning process to develop the unified planning work program, long-range transportation plan and transportation improvement program. The Commission enacts the plans and programs to facilitate federal, state and local funding for surface transportation improvements carried out by the Indiana Department of Transportation, the region's communities, counties and transit operators, and provides technical assistance and expertise to regional transportation interests; and

WHEREAS, the Commission performs the above mentioned activities to satisfy metropolitan transportation planning requirements under the Federal-Aid Highway Acts of 1962, 1970, 1973 and 1976, the Surface Transportation Assistance Acts of 1978, 1982, 1987, 1991 and 1998, the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 as amended in 1970, 1974 and 1982, the Rail Reorganization Act of 1973, the Clean Air Act of 1970 as amended in 1977 and 1990, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, 2005) and other legislation mandating cooperative, comprehensive and continuing regional transportation planning activities; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has adopted, amended or updated various regional transportation plans for Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties over the years in light of new information and changing conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has conducted the *Connections 2030* planning process in an open and participatory manner, involving numerous people, including solicited public comment at various points in the process, including requesting comment on the draft *Connections 2030* Plan, and the Commission has reviewed and considered the comments received and recommended modifications to be effected to the draft *Connections 2030* Plan;

Resolution 07-13

Page 2

WHEREAS, the Commission has prepared a *Connections 2030* Regional Transportation Plan that identifies more than \$4 billion in likely available funds for public transportation and highway projects that operate, preserve and enhance the regional transportation system and support for ongoing transportation planning activities in northwest Indiana, provides support for projects to be implemented, and guides the selection process of the Commission's Transportation Improvement Program.

WHEREAS, the Commission has officially made an Air Quality Conformity Determination as required by federal and state law and regulation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission amends the *Connections 2030* Regional Transportation Plan (last amended September 21, 2006) to incorporate modifications consistent with the requirements of SAFETEA-LU.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission on this twenty-first day of June, two thousand and seven.

Leigh Morris, Chairman

ATTEST:

Jerry Cooley, Secretary

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Public Involvement.....	26
<b>Part I: Background</b> .....	<b>I-1</b>
1. Demographic Trends and Forecasts .....	I-2
2. Regional Transportation System .....	I-35
3. Regional Land Use Planning & Design.....	I-71
4. Environmental Planning.....	I-81
5. Economic Development.....	I-83
<b>Part II: Transportation Program Development</b> .....	<b>II-1</b>
1. Financial Capacity & Projection .....	II-2
2. 2030 Plan Project Evaluation and Selection.....	II-32
3. 2030 Regional Transportation Plan Projects .....	II-58
4. Transportation Improvement Program Guidance .....	II-76
5. Air Quality Conformity Determination .....	II-89
<b>Part III: Transportation System Strategies</b> .....	<b>III-1</b>

---

1. Transportation Management & Operations .....	III-2
2. Congestion Management Process .....	III-11
3. Freight Operations .....	III-21
4. Intelligent Transportation System (ITS).....	III-25
5. Transportation Safety .....	III-26
6. Transportation Security.....	III-44
<b>Part IV: Future Initiatives &amp; Needs .....</b>	<b>IV-1</b>
1. Future & Ongoing Studies.....	IV-2
2. Public Transit .....	IV-8
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>Appendix A:</b> Regional/ local Agencies contact information .....	A-2
<b>Appendix B:</b> Coordination with Historical and Anthropological Planning.....	A-3
<b>Appendix C:</b> Illustrative Lists of Projects .....	A-18
<b>Appendix D:</b> Public Comment .....	A-21
<b>Appendix E:</b> Acknowledgment .....	A-39

# INTRODUCTION

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### *COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS*

NIRPC, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), has the responsibility to conduct a transportation planning process for the Lake, La Porte, and Porter County region. This includes parts of two Census-defined urbanized areas in Indiana, which are the Chicago IL-IN, and Michigan City, IN-MI urbanized areas. The most significant federal influences in the development of metropolitan plans and programs are the surface transportation program authorization acts, which have added new prominence to metropolitan area planning. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) and its predecessor, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), increased nationwide MPO responsibility in decision-making, and emphasized concepts such as congestion management, intelligent transportation systems and financially responsible planning. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law on August 10, 2005, authorizing funding and programs for highway, public transportation and other modes for federal fiscal years 2005-2009. It builds on the foundation of changes from ISTEA and TEA-21. In addition, the

Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 greatly impact the relationship between transportation and air quality, particularly transportation planning in non-attainment areas like Northwest Indiana.

According to SAFETEA-LU, state and metropolitan area transportation plans have to be compliant with the new federal requirements by July 1, 2007. SAFETEA-LU kept most of what was required in ISTEA and TEA-21.) Some significant MPO planning changes and additions are required by SAFETEA-LU, which have to be included in transportation plans and transportation improvement programs adopted after July 1. After that date all new Plans, TIPs and amendments to those documents have to be SAFETEA-LU compliant. During the last year, each MPO's planning process was reviewed by the federal transportation agencies (FHWA and FTA) for compliance with the law, a review called a "gap analysis." MPO plan documents and the underlying work activities have to meet federal expectations and close the gap.

With the passage of SAFETEA-LU, the eight planning factors (for both metro and statewide planning) are:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- Increase the safety of the transportation sys-

- tem for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

The new federal planning regulation, issued on February 14, 2007 and effective a month later provides some specific language regarding compliance. The NIRPC transportation planning process is presently or is becoming compliant with both the spirit and letter of the law.

## **OVERVIEW**

The Connections 2030 *Regional Transportation Plan* has two particular roles which must mesh together.

The first role, as envisioned by local leaders, is one of developing consensus for vision and policy guidance in the region by developing a framework for considering how one major public investment, that of transportation, will affect and be affected by future changes in land-use, social, economic, environmental characteristics and concerns. While only one of many initiatives in the region for cooperation and coordination in the areas of economic and workforce development, education reform, enhancing social equity, local government finance, air and water quality management, biodiversity and other elements that affect the quality of life for our citizens and residents, the *Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan* is the one plan that is regionally adopted and must consider the interactions of these many elements in planning the location of transportation facilities and services for the foreseeable future.

The second role is an administrative one, where federal and state laws require a creation of a plan that meets certain requirements in order for the Northwest Indiana region, the state and the greater Chicago Metropolitan area to maintain certification

and continue to receive transportation funding.

The *Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (Connections 2030)* is the latest in a series of transportation plans developed and adopted over the past 30 years for the three-county Northwestern Indiana region. The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), conducts the metropolitan area transportation planning process for the Lake, La Porte, and Porter County area. The long-range transportation plan, which is updated or replaced every three years, is one of the required products of the federally prescribed metropolitan area transportation planning process.

NIRPC is responsible for developing and updating a 20-year, regional transportation plan for the three-county region. The previous Plan was the *Vision 2020 Regional Transportation Plan*, adopted in 1999, and amended in 2001. *Connections 2030* identifies a network of multi-modal, regionally significant transportation corridors within which improvements are planned. When implemented, *Connections 2030* will more cost-effectively improve access, safety and mobility in the region. Its primary focus is preserving and improving the current transportation systems, while recommending limited expansion. It supports the development of

a multi-year Transportation Improvement Program, providing a commitment to projects and policies upon which projects are programmed.

The Northwest Indiana region is a diverse region that in terms of land-use development:

- Is urban, suburban and rural.
- Has areas of market-supported growth and areas of market abandonment.
- Has natural and historical features that must be protected and areas that need to be reclaimed and redeveloped.
- Has both pockets of poverty and areas of affluence.

In the *Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan*, NIRPC attempts to make the first steps to address the diverse desires, needs and aspirations of the region in a coordinating and consultative fashion. NIRPC recognizes that there is not a one size fits all solution, and that each part of the region has unique perceptions on how to best find its future prosperity within the larger framework.

#### THE NORTHWEST INDIANA REGION

Northwest Indiana is a region of 1,520 square miles comprising land-use extremes ranging from

the environmentally unique Indiana Dunes to one of the nation's largest concentrations of heavy industry. The region is a vital part of the sixteen county, 9.3 million person, Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City, IL-IN-WI Combined Statistical Area (CSA). The Census 2000 population of 741,468 in the three county region comprises a diverse mixture of social and economic characteristics. From 1990 to 2000 growth in the region reversed the negative trends of the 1980's which were primarily due to rapid restructuring of the industrial economy.

Central and southern Lake and Porter counties constitute some of the fastest growing sections of the region. The major industrial urban areas developed along Lake Michigan are experiencing redevelopment efforts. As a result of Census 2000, La Porte County was designated as a Metropolitan Statistical Area after reaching population density thresholds required for an urbanized area. Reasonable land prices, a strong housing market, lower real estate taxes and environmental resources continue to attract new residents to the area.

The continued transition of the national economy to a more productive, though reduced, manufacturing base, the rapid growth of service industries and the expansion of the wholesale and retail trade sector have allowed Northwest Indiana to recover and expand. With a major restructuring of its eco-

nomie base and the strategic national geographic position of the area, Northwest Indiana has continued to develop around the framework of the existing transportation system.

### *A Different Plan*

A transportation network that provides mobility and access is essential to Northwest Indiana and its economic resurgence and social interaction. The region's location at the southern tip of Lake Michigan forces the national surface transportation system to converge on Northwest Indiana. The national transportation system has contributed to the development of Northwest Indiana, although it has also been responsible for dividing regional communities. Northwest Indiana is a region some describe as segregated, and the Census demographic statistics support this perception. Is transportation part of the problem or is it part of the solution? Increased affordable mobility can reduce social barriers, allowing people of all races and incomes to travel freely, safely and economically to job, school, medical and recreation destinations. *Connections 2030* is different from the previous plans, for it very explicitly commits the use of transportation funds in a manner that supports and promotes social justice for all citizens.

The *Connections 2030* Plan was developed in a very open, public process including people from

throughout the region. This Plan was adopted by elected representatives from the three counties and their 41 cities and towns. While, when implemented, it will not cure all that ails the region, it does create public policies aimed at using transportation investments in ways which improve the existing urban and suburban areas. It promotes healthy growth and sustainable development. *Connections 2030* is a substantial demonstration of what can be accomplished in this region when citizens take the time and make the effort to talk to and listen to each other.

Making this planning effort work for the region was the task of the *Connections 2030* Working Group. The Working Group was representative of the ethnic and racial diversity of Northwest Indiana as well as the interest groups with a stake in transportation planning. This dedicated group of individuals began with crafting a new vision statement and goals and objectives and finished with a draft *Connections 2030* Plan two years later - not an easy feat for a group of people that included those familiar with the planning process as well as newcomers with a goal of a path to a different plan. The final product is the result of the common goal - a transportation system that will serve and improve Northwest Indiana.

### ***Major Themes***

During the development of the Plan several major

themes began to emerge that contributed to the finished product. How investment in public infrastructure impacts low-income persons and minorities, how benefits and burdens of major projects are distributed and articulating public policies that support redevelopment over green-field development were very much a part of the development of *Connections 2030's* goals and objectives.

Connecting transportation infrastructure to land-use received an extensive review during sessions in trying to come to terms with sprawl and smart growth. There was wide acceptance of the notion that smart growth meant dense development in and close to the existing urbanized area. It was characterized as having public infrastructure that is a natural extension of existing services. It was also characterized as being pedestrian and transit friendly with preservation of open spaces, important wetlands, and natural areas. Smart growth was also perceived to be more responsive to the needs of the poor and vulnerable.

Factors identifying where growth and development should occur included:

- Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas
- Availability of sewers and water and adequate streets and roads.

- Consideration of the changing nature of the region from industrial to more residential and commercial development, including in the unincorporated areas.
- Incentives to attract redevelopment to the urban core.
- Market attraction of growth areas

Discussion sessions held all over the region yielded several other issues that citizens wanted addressed.

- The heavy truck traffic through neighborhoods,
- Air quality,
- Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas and resources,
- Improved access to jobs, medical and shopping facilities via improved public transit,
- The need for a new expressway interchange,
- Better routes to Chicago,
- Expanded commuter rail,
- Preserve farmland and protect environmentally sensitive areas,
- Build more roads to encourage new growth.

Another issue discussed extensively in public meetings was funding of transportation projects. There is definite public support for an improved and expanded regional public transit system, including new commuter rail service. But there is no regional consensus on how to pay for such projects. There is both strong support for and against a new south Lake County east-west highway route, but there is definitely no local funding mechanism in place to build it.

While other states allow the use of sales tax by local entities for major infrastructure projects, Indiana reserves that source for state use only. There are other state-allowed avenues open to each county individually to adopt other types of local taxes that would generate the funds needed for large regionally significant projects. However, there does not appear to be clear public support or the political will to pursue these sources. However, a food and beverage tax is emerging as a politically palatable way to fund the Regional Bus Authority. Some local funding has been allocated to the Regional Development Authority. The Regional Bus Authority has begun to tap into that source for service evaluations.

The funding situation has a crippling effect in particular on how public transit is addressed in *Connections 2030*. With a federal requirement to be fiscally constrained and no dedicated source of

local funding to support it, the Plan is very light on new and expanded public transit projects.

### *Transportation Issues*

Many issues impact planning decisions relating to the future transportation system. These include:

- Continued preservation need of existing infrastructure and responding to deficiencies in the system.
- Relationship between transportation and land-use.
- Transportation induced development, environmental impacts, and social equity.
- The need to ensure intermodal mobility.
- The accelerated expansion of urban areas. Households have used the accessibility advantage of interstate and other highways, the ease of movement between the places they connect, to move away from central locations to larger homes and lots in the suburbs. Expansive, low density suburban and rural development (sprawl), central area disinvestment, has increased dependency in the private automobile and reduced the ability to provide cost effective transit services.

These issues are reflected by the pattern of development within Northwest Indiana. The decades-long decline in population within the urban core of the region has been offset by rapid residential growth in the outer suburban fringe of southern Lake County and central Porter County. Without a substantial change in land-use policy across Northwest Indiana, this pattern of development is expected to continue in the future.

It is often perceived by some that continually expanding the regional highway system is the only effective way to respond to network deficiencies, to improve regional mobility and to reduce air quality impacts. However the provision of major new highway facilities ultimately results in induced land-use development and induced demand for highway travel.

The highway network improvements recommended by *Connections 2030* are indicative of the effort to concentrate investments within the existing developed corridors to increase the potential for redevelopment and infill and to minimize the effect of induced development. This approach is consistent with the activities of other regional interests to reverse the trend of continued sprawl and to minimize the notion that building extensive new highway facilities is the solution to network congestion and air quality concerns.

Within the existing developed area, there are many physical deficiencies in the highway system. The historic development of the region along the shore of Lake Michigan has promoted the development of a transportation system that primarily accommodates east-west intra-regional movement. In addition, the highway network is often fragmented with irregular or incomplete links across municipal, county and state jurisdictions. This is particularly evident at the Illinois/Indiana state line where jurisdictional obstacles have limited arterial crossings to six locations in 38 miles.

The recent acceleration of development south and east into central Lake and Porter counties has illustrated major deficiencies in the highway network due to these physical limitations. The increased separation between regional industries and the workforce and the accelerated rate of interstate commuter traffic are some of the region's greatest mobility problems. Continued suburban development trends in both Northwest Indiana and adjacent areas in Northeast Illinois are likely to temper these problems in the future.

Conflicts between automobile traffic and both road and rail freight movement further complicate highway travel in this region. The region's heavy industrial base is responsible for generating an inordinate volume of both highway and rail freight contributing significantly to highway congestion

and air pollution. This situation is compounded by the convergence of national highway and rail freight traffic on the Chicago metropolitan area, which serves as a national transportation hub. Freight traffic represents a unique and difficult problem to be addressed by regional transportation providers. Urban development patterns have presented an impediment to an efficient transportation network. As essential as they are to the movement of goods, the interweaving railroads present a serious obstacle to the north-south movement of goods and people, restricting the orderly and timely movement of highway traffic in the region. In addition, access to key regional transportation facilities such as the Gary/Chicago International Airport and Indiana's International Port/Burns Harbor at Portage is impeded by transportation system conflicts and decentralized land-use activities.

The significant demographic and economic changes experienced in Northwest Indiana have resulted in a shift in the travel patterns of regional workers. The substantial decrease in employment in Hammond, East Chicago and Gary and the subsequent increase in employment in south Lake County and Porter and La Porte counties during the past 20 years have reduced the effectiveness of the historically municipal transit systems. Efforts have continued to implement more regional transit services to respond to the decentralization of em-

ployment, although progress has been limited to a few transit routes extending beyond their respective municipal limits.

Commuter rail passenger needs for the South Shore Line service include the provision of additional seating capacity to alleviate train overcrowding, a reduction in the number and duration of delays, an increase in express service (to reduce travel times), improved reverse commute service to destinations in Hammond, East Chicago, Gary and Michigan City, improved station facilities and boarding areas, increased parking availability, improved customer information and the ability to provide tickets by internet. Infrastructure needs for the Northern Indiana Commuter Transit District (NICTD) include the replacement or upgrade of bridges, the modernization of catenary and signal systems and an overhaul of existing passenger cars and future overhaul of 1992 cars.

Municipal bus service operators, through their individual surveys and collective discussions, have identified the lack of additional access destinations outside of their respective fixed route service areas as a principle deficiency in the existing system. Additionally, the desire for more frequent bus service, expanded hours of operations (including late night and weekend service), better consumer marketing and service information and increased coordination among existing transit services represent

needs to be addressed.

Users of demand-response bus services have described a variety of needs related to accessing and providing demand-response transit services. Improved and increased transit services for employment access as well as access to medical, social, educational and other services, appears to be a common theme expressed by all of the affected stakeholders.

Demand response service consumers participating either through surveys conducted by providers or at transit related public meetings have consistently identified the need for more dependable and timely transit services. Riders comments have also called for more system capacity during the morning and afternoon rush periods in order to accommodate work related trips. The demand response transit providers have identified a need for more efficient use of existing equipment and the coordination of communications, dispatching and service fare structures. Providers have also identified an increased demand for employment related transit service both earlier in the morning and later into the evening to accommodate second and third shift work schedules as a need to be addressed.

Transit users and providers alike have identified the need for improved public information and education for existing and potential transit users.

Continued coordination and cooperation between transit providers to establish a more efficient regional system of transit services has consistently been cited by stakeholders as a goal for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of regional transit service in Northwest Indiana.

The elimination of federal transit operating assistance to urban areas with a population over 200,000 has emphasized the need to establish local transit funding support in order to avoid reliance on funding from outside the region. In addition, improvement and expansion efforts are stifled by the lack of a local, sustaining source of revenue. The creation of a Regional Bus Authority (RBA) represents an appropriate mechanism to develop and administer a region-wide, sustaining source of local revenue for transit service.

### *Developing the Plan*

The first task in the development of the new Plan was to develop an expanded Vision for the process, a mission and new goals and objectives, including those that reflected a commitment to the principles of environmental justice, or social equity. Past long range planning committees, while open for membership to the public, consisted primarily of local and county highway department officials, municipal planning and economic development staff, transit operators, and consultant engineers.

In developing *Connections 2030*, Working Group members followed recommendations from two reports prepared by the Chicago Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) a non-profit organization that is active in finding creative ways to engage community based development. These reports are titled, “*Environmental Justice Planning Integration, Analysis of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission’s, Unified Planning Work Program, Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program*” and “*A Framework for Public Involvement.*” The CNT reports were prepared as part of a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) demonstration grant on better integrating the environmental justice principles into NIRPC’s transportation planning process, based on a finding that the *Vision 2020* Regional Transportation Plan adopted January 11, 1999, failed to fully address the elements of Federal Executive Order 12898 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations” (1992). The finding was subsequently rectified in the adoption of a NIRPC Environmental Justice Strategy in 2000. The Environmental Justice Center at Indiana University Northwest and the Environmental Justice Partnership, a coalition of civil rights, community development, environmental and religious groups, reviewed and targeted the recommendations of the reports and pressed to expand the scope and open the process for developing *Connections 2030*.

Based on those recommendations, NIRPC engaged additional Working Group members from a broader range of interests representing targeted populations. Developed initially by the Policy Subcommittee of the Working Group, the adopted Goals and Objectives clearly reflect the shift from the more bureaucratically driven goals of the previous plan towards a more socially responsive document. Therefore, the goal of the Working Group of taking a different path to a different plan is realized.

### **Vision and Mission**

The assessment of the diverse needs and aspirations of the region led to the articulation of a Vision, an idealized picture of how transportation and transportation policy and decision-making should interact to meet major regional goals. As can be seen, the Vision integrates transportation into the fabric of regional policy development and envisions a process that includes all members of the public in decision-making. The Mission connects the Vision to the more specific goals and objectives.

### **VISION**

That safe, efficient, effective, inter-modal transportation is provided to all residents of Northwest Indiana, that facilitates their movement within the

region to health care, work, recreational and life enhancing activities in an equitable manner, that improves, and protects the environment, promotes sustainable development and reinvestment of the older industrial communities without displacement, and emphasizes inclusion of public participation in the planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes.

### **MISSION**

The Mission of the *Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan* is to guide the utilization of transportation funding resources in a manner that accomplishes the Plan's Vision, Goals and Objectives.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The precepts of the Vision are expanded in 12 Goals and 59 Objectives. In keeping with desire to integrate transportation planning, investment and policy into the fabric of the region the Goals and Objectives connect to important regional policy and programs that address the future of our region. These goals and objectives have guided the development of this plan and will also guide the development of future planning and the selection, development, design and programming of street, highway, transit, pedestrian, bicycle and other regional facilities and services. Of particular significance is Goal 7 – Make Decisions with Full Public

Participation, which are commitments to engage those who may benefit or who are hurt by regional decisions.

**Goal 1 - Promote Economic Growth and Development**

*Promote economic growth and development by providing regional transportation services that are designed to allow all people in the region access to jobs, health care, shopping and recreation, encouraging redevelopment and reinvestment in older core cities as well as development in suburban communities and planning economic development that is cognizant and supportive of the needs of low income people and people of color.*

**Objectives**

- Encourage transportation projects and policies that maximize use of existing infrastructure to promote high-density development, infill, redevelopment and adaptive use of existing buildings.
- Cooperatively explore with local and regional agencies the long-term implementation of high-quality / high-capacity local transit services such as light rail transit or bus rapid transit. Address land-use policies

required to achieve markets for viable services including increasing density to increase demand.

**Goal 2 - Provide Efficient and Effective Intermodal Transportation**

*Provide efficient and effective inter-modal transportation that promotes sustainable use of land that is not sprawl inducing, eliminates and/or reduces the burdens and that equitably distributes benefits and any remaining burden.*

**Objectives**

- Encourage regional cooperation in large infrastructure developments to avoid duplication and inefficiency.
- Encourage transportation improvements where there are established comprehensive plans for roads, sewers, water lines, schools, and other infrastructure.
- Encourage environmentally compatible development.

**Goal 3 -      *Create Environmentally Healthy Communities***

*Encourage the development of transportation projects that create environmentally healthy communities, improve regional air and water quality and enhance the social, economic and environmental quality of life of the region.*

**Objectives**

- Prioritize transportation investments which achieve improved air and water quality.
- Encourage environmentally friendly transportation projects.
- Minimize the health risks of transportation operations such as airborne particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and ozone.
- Reduce VOC, NOx and other precursors to ozone and support the state's air quality commitments for the region.
- Encourage communities to develop transit-oriented and/or transit friendly development.
- Encourage transportation investment that does not create adverse development in environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, recreational areas and historic and cultural

sites.

- Coordinate transportation planning and development with existing environmental programs, policies and projects.
- Give priority to projects and policies that reduce the conversion of agricultural and non-urban land to urban-type land-uses.
- Improve the influence of transportation upon public health.
- Reduce residential exposure to pollutants (noise, benzene, PM<sub>2.5</sub>) from high traffic areas.
- Reduce the health hazards such as obesity and social isolation of auto dependent landscapes by encouraging accommodations for safe pedestrian and bicycle access and links to public transit.

**Goal 4 -      *Plan for Sustainable Development***

*Plan for the economic and social realities of the region and facilitate economic development in areas with established infrastructures that will decrease the onset of urban sprawl. Transportation and economic development will encourage sustainability and principles of environmental justice in order to create healthy, livable, sustainable transportation systems that increase job and income opportunities, promote efficient and healthy*



*land-use patterns, and create environmentally safe communities.*

**Objectives**

- Promote the improvement and expansion of public transit services that reduce the barriers that impede access to jobs for people of color and low income persons.
- Reduce truck traffic in Environmental Justice communities through freight diversion to rail or other socially and environmentally sensitive alternatives.
- Give priority to transportation investment that decreases racial and economic segregation and supports the creation of affordable housing in all communities across the region.
- Give priority to transportation investment that is supported by comprehensive plans in the region that:
  - Promote sustainable land-use by concentrating new growth around existing centers and limiting growth in outlying areas.
  - Promote mixed-use development of jobs, services and housing.
  - Promote density for compact develop-

ment.

- Allow for pedestrian-friendly communities, preservation of natural areas and the existence of open space buffers between communities
- Give priority to transportation investment that promotes economic development in the core communities.

**Goal 5 --**      *Plan and Create Multi-Modal Opportunities*

*Plan and create opportunities for all communities, especially environmental justice communities, to travel the region to access jobs, housing, health care, education and social activities emphasizing connectivity by all modes of transportation to the places where people work, live and socialize.*

**Objectives**

- Promote public transit opportunities that link environmental justice communities to important job, medical, shopping, recreation and education centers.
- Promote bus feeder systems and pedestrian/ bicycle access to commuter rail stations.
- Address barriers to pedestrian, bicycle, and

transit use due to safety, security and crime.

- Encourage a bicycle network that adds bicycle lanes to appropriate streets to provide the access to jobs and other opportunities in order to reduce traffic congestion and complement off-street trails.

**Goal 6 -- Consider Disproportionate Impact (of Benefit and Burden) on Communities**

*Consider impacts for all transportation policies and investment decisions that benefit certain communities and burden others (including social, psychological, physical, economic, long term, short term and cumulative impacts on people of color and low-income populations) and by considering the sprawl inducing effects of transportation planning.*

**Objectives**

- Conduct impact analyses to determine the disproportionate affect of transportation policies, decisions, projects, plans, and programs on senior citizens, youths and children, all forms of disability, low income households, minority persons and others.
- Reduce disproportionate impacts on senior citizens, youths and children, all forms of disability, low income households, minority persons and others.

Encourage initiatives that are cognizant and supportive of the needs of low income people and people of color.

**Goal 7 - Make Decisions with Full Public Participation**

Make transportation and investment decisions after having made real and tangible efforts to inform and engage the affected communities of the issues and after having given the citizens opportunities to provide input and feedback and consideration of their concerns, and inclusion of the public in planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of the plan.

**Objectives**

- Continuously work to develop a public participation process that is:
  - ⇒ Inclusive - involving the broadest possible cross-section of the community.
  - ⇒ Appropriate - tailored to the diverse needs of the community.
  - ⇒ Empowering - provide opportunities for the public to have input into the decision-making process.
  - ⇒ Be proactive in seeking

out and responding to the concerns of the Environmental Justice populations.

- Provide complete information to the public regarding the transportation planning process.
- Provide timely notice to the public for all public meetings and opportunities for feedback and comment.
- Provide full public access to key decisions.
- Provide opportunities for feedback and comment throughout the entire planning process.
- Provide early and continuing involvement opportunities throughout the entire planning process.

**Goal 8--** *Preserve Existing Transportation Network*

Preserve the existing transportation network in the region in order to insure the system continuity and continued flow of people and goods throughout the area.

Objectives

- Give investment priority to maintaining and rebuilding existing transportation infrastructure, operations and services.
- Prioritize the transportation infrastructure to enhance community and economic vitality.
- Preservation and maintenance of the existing multi-modal transportation system has a higher priority than highway expansion.

**Goal 9 -** *Promote a Cost-Effective Transportation System*

Promote a cost-effective transportation system in northwest Indiana by efficiently allocating the financial resources available to all modes and by exploring the expansion of these funding sources through new and creative financial mechanisms.

Objectives

- Promote savings through cost-effective use of regional and local infrastructure. Reduce transportation system costs, pursue stable long-term revenue options and allocate the available financial resources to all modes of regional significance.

- Promote infrastructure savings with smart growth instead of low-density development in low infrastructure areas
- Examine closely whether the planned expenditures of transportation policies and projects meet the test of benefits and burdens for minority and low-income populations.
- The NIRPC has responsibility to seek opportunities to pursue greater state local and federal funding.
- Local governments have responsibility to seek financial capacity to meet transportation obligations and match state and federal funds.

**Goal 10 -** *Improve Safety and Efficiency*

Improve the safety and efficiency of the system through better management and operation of existing transportation facilities.

**Objectives**

- Encourage pedestrian and bicycle friendly communities and roadways.
- Encourage local communities to define safety needs and strategies.
- When planning transportation projects con-

sider whether the proposed action will improve personal security.

- When planning transportation projects consider whether the proposed action will affect emergency response time.
- When planning transportation projects consider whether the proposed action will increase personal safety for non-motorist.

**Goal 11 -** *Promote Freight and Goods Movement*

Promote a high-capacity, cost-effective, safe, efficient transportation network that reduces impact and equitably distributes the benefits and burdens of freight movement and goods movement as a key to the region's economic vitality.

**Objectives**

- Assess and reduce the disparity of impact of freight movement operations in the region, in particular with respect to EJ communities.
- Encourage public sector investments to equitably improve the compatibility of freight movement services and facilities with adjacent communities.
- Promote safety at intersections and at-grade highway-railroad crossings.

- Encourage input from the inter-modal freight community.
- Promote transportation investment that improves or enhances the safety of hazardous materials routes.
- Promote transportation projects that reduce the pollution impact (e.g. air, noise, vibration) of freight movement within the region.
- Encourage input from communities most affected by freight movement.

**Goal 12 - *Promote a Secure Transportation System***

Promote a secure transportation system that protects the users and the communities of the region from injury or property damage resulting from criminal activity.

**Objectives**

- Protect transportation from damage.
- Provide system alternatives to enable continuation of social and economic activity.

***Who is the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission?***

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) was created by state statute in 1966. It is a multi-purpose, area-wide planning agency in Lake, La Porte and Porter Counties. The agency is a cooperative of local governments that represent the communities and counties of Northwest Indiana and the Governor of the State. In 2003, NIRPC's membership was expanded in a law passed by the Indiana General Assembly and signed by the Governor. It gives voting rights on the 51-member Commission only to elected officials who represent the counties, the cities and now, all of the towns in NIRPC's jurisdiction. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), and transit operators will continue to participate on the Commission as non-voting members, and fully partake in its activities and discussions.

NIRPC was designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization in 1975, and conducts the metropolitan area transportation planning process for the three-county region. This planning is carried out in keeping with the federal transportation requirements of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, and their predecessor acts. The transportation planning process remains certified by the United States Department of Transportation, with

NIRPC having undergone its most recent, Federal Planning Certification Review in 2005.

## **2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Over the course of the development of the *Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan* fifteen open houses were conducted for the purpose of soliciting citizen comments. An additional five open houses were held for public review of the *Regional Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan of 2004* component of Connections 2030. Also, NIRPC received 24 letters and emails during the review process.

All of the open houses were held in public, accessible places. All of the locations were accessible via demand response public transit. Several of the facilities were also located on bus transit routes. Public notice of the events was accomplished using media releases to major local print and radio outlets and the local public television station; announcements at public meetings; posting on the NIRPC website; and direct mailing to transportation stakeholders including the NIRPC Transportation Policy Committee, the Connections 2030 Working Group, public transit operators, and organizations and agencies representing social and human services, the environment and social justice concerns.

### Summary of Comments and Responses By Category

#### *Land Use, Sprawl, Smart Growth, Transit Friendly Development, Planning*

⇒ Twenty-five comments were received that addressed concerns with or support for better, coordinated land use planning resulting in less sprawl-type development, and more reinvestment in the urban and older suburban areas. Some felt the language in the plan was “weak” on encouraging and promoting anti-sprawl development practices. Others were pleased that the plan acknowledged the need to address the problem of sprawl and promote smart growth. Transit-friendly development was most often noted as a desirable strategy for both smart growth practices and development around the proposed expanded commuter rail stations. The negative effects of sprawl on the urban populations were noted by several people, including one comment that said “north county issues need to be addressed so that planning does not encourage sprawl and development away from developed areas”. Another noted that “auto dependent transportation is not good and sprawl has negative economic and social consequences”. Another noted “the Illiana Ex-

pressway and Peotone Airport are 100% encouragement of sprawl”. “To meet the goals and objectives of Connections 2030,” said one comment, “land use planning and regional reinvestment in the northern cities to end the sprawl cycle is needed.” Recommendations from the public included educating cities and towns on transit friendly development practices, and dropping proposals that facilitate flow out from already established areas to the “country”.

**Response:** *The Connections 2030 plan recognizes the link between land-use and transportation in its goals and objectives and discusses it in Chapter 5 Regional Land Use Planning and Design. NIRPC acknowledges that much still needs to be accomplished. With respect to land use policies NIRPC role is advisory and to that end we intend to engage municipal and county officials and planners in increasing awareness of concepts such as smart growth, sustainable development, and transit friendly development practices. Further, NIRPC is engaged in regional programs for watershed management and green infrastructure. The Marquette Plan and Commuter Rail Expansion Planning offer additional opportunities.*

**Roads - Local and State**

Sixteen people commented on plans for roads, streets and highways.

⇒ The extension of Vale Park Road in Valpa-

raiso generated several comments and letters, all in opposition to the proposal which will cross an environmentally sensitive area.

**Response:** *The extension Vail Park Road around a portion of Silver Lake was found to have negligible impact in terms of regional traffic or air quality. The city is no longer seeking federal funding. The road has been consistently on local thoroughfare plans and is a part of the regional street and highway network. Whether to complete the link and its design are City Valparaiso decisions.*

⇒ The concept of a new east-west route in south Lake County, referred to as the Illiana Expressway, was both supported and opposed. Supporters, including the South Suburban Mayors and Mangers Association in Illinois, spoke to the need to relieve congestion, improve access to Chicago, and to facilitate development if a new airport is built in Peotone, Illinois. Noted one writer, “There is a need to address growth in south Lake County, Porter County, and south Will County (Illinois) that improvements on the Borman don’t address such as Joe Orr Road-Main Street alignment and extension.” Those opposed to the concept cited its sprawl-inducing impact, degradation of existing quality of life, loss of prime agricultural land, and the disinvestment in the ex-

isting urban and suburban areas that such a project may cause.

**Response:** *At this point, a regional consensus does not exist on the desirability of an expressway type facility in the southern part of the region. INDOT has been carrying a proposal called a Suburban Needs Proposal in its long-range plan. The proposal is in the pending but unapproved 2005 update of the state's plan with the start of construction shifted to 2028. Connections 2030 includes the proposal only for further study and a resolution has been drafted for Commission approval. The Plan and the resolution call for a study of the impacts of the proposed facility.*

⇒ Pros and cons were cited about the proposed interchange at I-65 and 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue. One writer stated, "It would promote increased development away from the urban communities of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago and push people, products and services further into the southern portion of the county. This has severe economic, social and employment issues for people in the northern areas of Lake County," Noted another, "New interchanges almost instantly become an unsightly and unnecessary collection of fast food restaurants and gas stations, which facilitate the lifestyle habits that are compromising the health of our popula-

tion." Supporters of the new interchange cited its necessity for access to the Purdue University Incubator development, and its positive potential impact on encouraging new development.

**Response:** *Localized consensus has developed for the location of the interchange at 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue, while there is still larger regional discord on the desirability of an interchange at all. A congressional earmark for the proposal is in the pending House-approved transportation bill and the proposal is in the INDOT Long-Range Transportation Plan. The proposal is included in Connections 2030, as there is committed funding and no significant impact with respect to air quality.*

⇒ Other specific road projects drawing comments included US 421. Several La Porte County residents noted the need to improve the intersection with US 20 and US 421. In Porter County widening US 6 east of SR 149 was recommended to increase the safety of persons turning onto and off US 6 on a hill.

**Response:** *Design and engineering considerations are addressed by INDOT or local sponsor as the project is developed. Comments received are forwarded to the people with design responsibility. Public meeting are generally held prior to start of construction.*

⇒ Opposition to the lane addition proposals on Route 51 and 61<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and to the extension of Wisconsin Street to US 30 was expressed based on the potential for negative impacts to environmentally sensitive areas including wetlands.

**Response:** *The people who commented will be referred to INDOT and City of Hobart. Route 51 and 61<sup>st</sup> Ave. are planned expansions. Wisconsin Street was not included in the plan.*

⇒ The proposed new interchange at I-94 and the Porter - La Porte County line drew opposition because it would destroy wetlands and sacred Native American ground.

**Response:** *The people who commented will be referred to INDOT and City of Hobart. Route 51 and 61<sup>st</sup> Ave. are planned expansions. Wisconsin Street was not included in the plan.*

⇒ Extending 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and improving it through to Main Street was recommended,

**Response:** *This proposal will be discussed with Lake County officials as potential local sponsors in the next plan update cycle.*

⇒ Designating US 12 as a scenic highway.

**Response:** *This proposal will be discussed with Lake*

*County officials as potential local sponsors in the next plan update cycle.*

⇒ Several general comments about roads were received. It was noted that strip malls are popping up and planning has gone “amok” because connecting roads and frontage roads are not available, making it difficult to access them.

**Response:** *This proposal will be discussed with Lake County officials as potential local sponsors in the next plan update cycle.*

### **Public Transit**

There were 28 transit-related comments submitted during the Connections 2030 planning process.

⇒ Specific to NICTD were comments in support of more frequent service to South Bend, a later evening train for those visiting Chicago for recreational purposes, more parking, and public transit service to the stations. Other recommended improvements were for removing the tracks from 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Michigan City and for extending the service south to the City of La Porte.

**Response:** *Proposals for the improvement of South Shore services have been forwarded to NICTD for input on cost and feasibility. Moving the tracks and*

*expanding service to La Porte have significant capital and long term operating impacts. The NICTD Board is presently addressing the issue of a later evening departure from Chicago.*

⇒ The proposed expansion of commuter rail to Valparaiso and Lowell drew mostly support from the public. Most often mentioned as reasons to proceed with the project were the need to increase access to the Chicago job market and the positive economic impact on northwest Indiana. The line to Lowell was viewed by some responders to be sprawl-inducing as the density currently does not exist in that corridor to support the new service. Several comments addressed the need to plan new commuter rail stations in neighborhoods so people could walk to the train, and to have bus service to the stations. Two comments addressed the need to consider other tracks for the commuter train as the proposed tracks are currently heavily used by freight trains.

**Response:** *The Plan supports the next phase in the development of new commuter rail service. Transit friendly development practices are promoted in the plans goals and objectives. The transit component of the Plan, Chapter 4, identifies the future need to address bus service to new commuter rail stations. The next phase in the development of new commuter rail requires extensive analyses of both market poten-*

*tial and appropriate track alignment.*

⇒ The majority of public comments on bus/demand response transit addressed the need for more public transit and the need to fund it better. Access to jobs across all three counties was most often mentioned as the reason to support public transit. In Lake County the need to access jobs at the new commercial development at the Purdue Incubator was called out as both a public transit need and an environmental justice issue. Several comments addressed the need for more transit in Porter and La Porte Counties.

**Response:** *Chapter 4 contains the details of the three-county regional transit plan. It includes recommended services to job and service centers from the urbanized areas as well as the suburban and rural areas.*

⇒ Also commented on was the need for more wheelchair accessible and affordable service during off-peak hours. NIRPC was also advised that people who plan and operate public transit need to understand how different levels of disabled people travel generally, and specifically how developmentally disabled people may not be able to understand headers or be able to read schedules.

**Response:** Chapter 4 contains the details of the three-county regional transit plan. It includes recommendations for increased capacity for demand response service in all three counties and for increased funding from the state and local governments. It however does not address the issues related to how different levels of disabled people travel and the impact of that on transit planning and operations. This is a significant issue for public transit operators, the RTA, and the MPO and will be pursued as a regional service development need.

⇒ Transit friendly development practices and the environmental benefits of transit were also mentioned in several comments addressing sprawl.

**Response:** Transit friendly development practices are incorporated into the Plan's goals and objectives.

### **Bike/Pedestrian Modes**

Five comments from the 2030 open houses focused on the need to make roads safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Almost all of the comments called for either more dedicated trails or wider street rights-of-way dedicated to alternate modes. One writer noted that "It is now unsafe to ride bikes due to the type of developments." This group also recommended that sidewalks should be required and that the public be educated on sharing the road with bike riders.

An additional five open houses were held for public review of the pedestrian and bicycle plan component of Connections 2030. Nine comments were received. They were consistent with the comments from the 2030 open houses in terms of supporting more local trails. Nearly all of the respondents indicated that they would use trails to shop or commute to work if more were available. They were unanimous in their willingness to be advocates for more trails. It was also suggested by one attendee that more emphasis was needed for equestrian access.

**Response:** The Ped & Pedal Plan is a component of the Connections 2030 Plan. Included are recommendations for additional trails and design standards for wider shoulders. The need for more equestrian access was also acknowledged in the plan.

### **Planning (Generally)**

Five comments on planning in general were submitted. The need for more coordinated planning was identified as well as the need for more aggressive planning utilizing impact fees to cover public infrastructure costs. Several comments addressed the need to incorporate transit-friendly development practices into local and county subdivision and zoning ordinances.

**Response:** The Plan contains a commitment by NIRPC to seek funding to do a comprehensive land

use plan for the three-county area. It also includes a commitment to working to educate local planning bodies on smart growth strategies, and sustainable and transit friendly development practices.

### **Heavy Trucks**

A great deal of input was received from the Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association of Hammond about the impact of heavy truck traffic on their neighborhood. The neighborhood contains SR 312 Chicago Avenue. SR 312 serves as the main truck route into the industrial area across the state line from US 12/20 and SR 912 and North Lake County industries. Residents of the area recommended building a truck bypass. Similar input was heard in Gary on US 12/20 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues and elsewhere in the region. Representatives of the Lake County Fish and Game Commission pressed for shifting heavy trucks including permitted extra-heavy trucks to the Indiana Toll Road or Cline Ave with a new direct road link to the Lake Calumet area of Chicago. Other comments addressed the desire to move the trucks off the roads and onto trains as a means to address congestion.

**Response:** *The Connections 2030 plan recommends a freight needs study that addresses community compatibility with trucks and trains, but also recognizes the importance of freight movement to the regions economic vitality and quality of life. National estimate indicate that freight traffic will likely double*

*over the next 20 years. Much more knowledge is needed local and regional and through freight movements. See Chapter 9 of the Plan report.*

### **Social/Environmental Justice**

Nine comments were made on the social equity or environmental justice aspects of the plan. Several comments addressed the negative social and economic consequences of what was perceived as sprawl-inducing projects like the new interchange on I 65. NIRPC was advised to consider first how people could access the new commercial and employment opportunities created by construction of the interchange. Another stated “Allocating funds to suburban areas for growth is an environmental justice concern”. Other comments addressed the need to do more to relate the plan to the goals and objectives to facilitate an environmental justice analysis. One participant recommended having the plan reviewed for social justice impacts by an independent source who would also identify mitigation policies as needed.

**Response:** *Very early in the plan development process NIRPC engaged representatives from organizations represented by the Environmental Justice Coalition. This engagement led to Vision Goals and Objectives that expanded the plan’s purview beyond narrow transportation considerations. In addition, areas of the region with minority and/or low income popula-*

tions were identified. Proposal evaluation procedures for both the plan and TIP were devised to consider impacts on minority and low income populations. A major initiative to expand investment in public transportation was undertaken. An Environmental Justice evaluation report was prepared and is available for review.

### **Policy**

Three comments were made on policies that direct federal transportation funding. All three were opposed to the priority given to highways over public transit. One participant noted that federal policy is throwing billions at the worst mode (highways) and pennies at the best mode (transit). Others stated that federal funding policies force dependence on cars, which are more polluting and less safe and called for a reordering of priorities to transit at the local, state and federal levels. Another comment addressed how the plan's goals and objectives were ignored or watered down in the expansion project selection process.

**Response:** *The Connections 2030 plan is the result of a collaborative process of local state and federal interests. The foundation of the process is federal priorities and programs and administration structure which are inherently modal and certainly give priority to the highway mode over transit or other modes. For example, while it is possible to transfer STP funds from highway to transit, federal law only*

*allows the funds to be used for transit capital projects in Lake and Porter Counties when the real need is for assistance in operating services.*

### **Environmental**

Five comments addressed the environmental impacts of several projects. Opposition to the extension of Vale Park Road, improvements to 61<sup>st</sup> Avenue, SR 51 and 101<sup>st</sup> Avenue were all based on potential negative impacts to wetlands or watersheds and forested areas. Another issue for one participant was the need to address the potential for expanding warehousing and distribution centers versus the increase in air pollution and traffic congestion, especially in downtown Gary and around the Gary/Chicago Regional Airport. Other comments spoke to the need for fewer roads and more greenways, public transit and bikeways to promote personal and environmental health.

**Response:** *The Connections 2030 planning process greatly expanded its horizons to consider larger regional concerns and to coordinate with on-going water management, green infrastructure and economic development initiatives. NIRPC plans to more closely coordinate these activities.*

**Summary of Public Participation in the Connections 2030 Compliance Amendment, Conformity Determination, and Fiscal Years 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program**

A thirty - day comment and review period and three open houses were held to provide opportunities for the public to comment on the proposed Compliance Amendment, new TIP and new conformity determination. Notice of the comment period and three open houses was advertised in legal notices to the four major dailies serving Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties. Notices were also sent to the extensive transportation stakeholders list and individual reporters who typically cover NIRPC activities. The draft documents and notice of the open houses were distributed to all public libraries in the three-county area and were available on the NIRPC website as well. The open houses were held in public places accessible by fixed route transit service in two cases, and demand response services in all three locations.

Information presented at each of the open houses included: 1) NIRPC as MPO, an explanation of the role of the MPO in transportation planning; 2) the proposed language to address compliance with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU); 3) the list of projects proposed for inclusion in the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); 4) the Air Quality Conformity Determination for the Compliance Amendment; and 5) citizen participation in regional planning. Visual techniques were employed to depict the

state's "Major Moves" proposed projects, the proposed safety planning component, the congestion management system planning component, the service recommendations of the Regional Bus Authority's Strategic and Operations Plan, and the MPO public participation process.

Overall attendance at the three open houses totaled eleven people. No substantive comments either in favor of or opposed to the draft documents were made. Conversations were held one-on-one with staff on storm water management related to state construction projects, the process of doing the conformity determination, NIRPC's weighted voting method, NIRPC's role in project implementation, relocation of the South Shore tracks off 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Michigan City, and INDOT policy on drive-way cuts on US 421.

Two letters opposing the Illiana Expressway were received as part of the public comment period. The Sierra Club and the Citizens Against the Privatized Illiana Toll Road submitted letters. The letters are included in Appendix D.

#### **Summary of Comments and Draft NIRPC Response**

**Comment:** Both letters addressed the need for NIRPC to conduct a more broadly defined study of the Illiana including a more detailed analysis

of impacts not only on the urban core but also on the rural and prime agricultural communities. CAPIT advocated for a study that addresses overall regional economic and transportation needs that focuses on urban revitalization, rural and agricultural preservation, and innovative and environmentally progressive land use practices and transportation methods. The Sierra Club advocates a study on alternatives to the Illiana that explores regional land use policies, supports ending dependence on cars for transportation, and supports renewal of the urban areas and preservation of the rural areas. Both organizations cited the recently-released report of the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program titled “The Vital Center: A Federal-State Compact to Renew the Great Lakes Region”.

**Response:** Based on public input from the Connections 2030 amendment in the fall of 2006 on the Illiana NIRPC included in its work program for fiscal year 2008 an Illiana Task Force. It is intended that the task force will serve as one source of input into the INDOT-sponsored Illiana feasibility study authorized in SB 105, which covers the area from I-65 west to I-57. The task force will focus on producing a draft regional policy position on the Illiana. It will look more closely at implications on regional land use, congestion, urban revitalization, and rural preservation. Membership on the task force will be open to the

public as well as NIRPC Commissioners.

NIRPC has already taken steps to create a multi-state planning process called for in the Brookings Institution report. Starting with the Wingspread Accord (2001) NIRPC has established working relationships with Southeast Wisconsin, Southwest Michigan and Northeast Illinois to form the type of “super-regional” approach to planning needed to address issues facing the Great Lakes region, especially the renewal of the existing urban core areas and the need for growth management strategies.

**Comment:** Both organizations also advocate for comprehensive regional land use planning.

**Response:** Based on public input from the first round of participation activities in the adoption of 2030 the fiscal year 2008 Unified Planning Work Program contains a work task to accomplish this. The description of this task is included in Appendix D.

**CAPIT Comment:** It should be clarified that NIRPC’s 2005 endorsement of the INDOT proposed feasibility study related only to the section from I-57 to I-65.

**Response:** CAPIT is correct. Clarifying lan-

guage to that effect will be added.

**CAPIT Comment:** Clearly document why NIRPC believes the Illiana would result in congestion relief on the Borman.

Clearly document the source of the forecast for a 50% increase in truck traffic on the Borman Expressway over the next 20 years.

**Response:** Lake and Porter Counties are currently designated as Moderate Nonattainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone (8-hour standard). The Indiana Department of Environmental Management has submitted air quality monitor data that indicates the fact that Lake and Porter Counties are currently in attainment of the standard, and has requested redesignation of Lake and Porter Counties from non-attainment to attainment.

NIRPC completed a set of model runs in July, 2004 in the context of the evaluation of all proposals that were submitted for the Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan. The model runs included the committed network, (existing network with projects that were committed for construction) and the proposed projects. The projects were individually compared to the existing plus committed network and in-

cluded the change in regional vehicle-miles of travel, emissions of volatile organic compounds and emissions of nitrogen oxides. In all cases, the population, households and employment projections for all transportation analysis zones were held constant. The Illiana concept was tested from I-55 to I-65 as a freeway and as a tollway, with a 50 cent toll at each on-ramp. Two additional runs were done for the Illiana concept that included a modest redistribution of future population, households and employment growth in Lake County to the zones in the vicinity of the proposed facility. These two runs were labeled as Illiana Freeway with Sprawl and Illiana Tollway with Sprawl.

Without the redistribution of population, households and employment growth, the Illiana resulted in a reduction in VMT and emissions. With the redistribution, the Illiana as a freeway

	VMT	VMT Change	VOC (g)	VOC Change	NOx (g)	NOx Change
Committed Network	35,286,498		7,112,782		10,135,982	
Illiana Freeway	35,186,645	(99,853)	7,003,991	(108,791)	10,014,211	(121,771)
Illiana Tollway	35,062,533	(223,965)	7,008,285	(104,497)	10,004,090	(131,892)
Illiana Freeway with Sprawl	35,497,627	211,129	6,751,853	(360,929)	10,142,492	6,509
Illiana Tollway with Sprawl	35,386,594	100,096	6,758,764	(354,018)	10,135,085	(897)

resulted in an increase in VMT, but a reduction in VOC emissions and an increase in NOx emissions. As a toll way with the population, households and employment redistribution, the Illiana resulted in an increase in VMT and a decrease in emissions.

The change in year 2030 traffic volumes on I-80/94 and on US-30 were based on the analysis.

These projections are based on the existing forecasts of 2030 population, households and employment at the transportation analysis zone level, with a slight redistribution of growth to the areas around the proposed facility. The analysis did not include changes in fuel costs and higher costs for the trucking industry. The analysis includes the existing bus transit services and the existing South Shore service. The proposals for the expansion of commuter rail service to central Porter County and southern Lake County were

analyzed separately from the Illiana proposals.

**CAPIT Comment:** (Summarized) CAPIT objects to the tone of the language used in the Future Initiatives and Needs chapter as appearing biased in favor of building the Illiana as opposed to looking objectively at all issues and possible impacts equally between the urban areas and rural areas.

**Response:** Staff recommends a re-write of the applicable section (Part IV - Future Initiatives and Needs - Illiana Expressway Corridor) to reflect an objective approach to the issue as follows:

When NIRPC adopted its long-range transportation plan for the horizon year 2030 in April 2005 it also unanimously passed a resolution calling for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to conduct a feasibility study to determine whether a need exists for a new interstate

highway in the southern portion of the region, which has been generally referred to as the Illiana Expressway. The resolution supported only the segment

Location	No Illiana		Illiana Scenario		Change	
	Total	H. Trucks	Total	H. Trucks	All Vehicles	H. Trucks
I-80/94 at Illinois State Line	206,295	38,551	178,916	30,775	-13.27%	-20.17%
I-80/94 from Cline to Burr	204,403	36,088	170,774	27,660	-16.45%	-23.35%
US-30 at Illinois State Line	45,755	3,201	40,940	1,304	-10.52%	-59.28%
US-30 from SR-53 to I-65	78,621	2,638	61,142	1,546	-22.23%	41.37%-
Illiana W. of I-65			78,028	16,001		
Illiana at Illinois State Line			81,354	18,207		

from I-65 west to I-57. In 2007 the Indiana General Assembly passed legislation authorizing a “feasibility study” of the Illiana. The state-supported feasibility study is narrower in scope and designed only to produce specific technical data.

As there is no existing regional consensus to build the Illiana, either on the part of local elected officials or the public, NIRPC proposed a task force to look at the broader implications of building or not building a south county expressway. The adopted UPWP contains a work task to address this. The description of this task is included in Appendix D. The effects on the environment, life styles north and south, the economy and regional mobility will be addressed. It is envisioned that the task force will be a source of input into the INDOT-sponsored “feasibility” study, in essence expanding the state scope to be more inclusive with a thorough look at all of the potential impacts, good and bad, urban and rural. The goal of the task force is to provide information upon which to base NIRPC’s position on the future of the Illiana.

**CAPIT Comment:** NIRPC needs to respects its own call for “extensive and meaningful input” on all future initiatives.

**Response:** NIRPC welcomes and encourages

public participation in all of its regional planning initiatives. The need to be especially inclusive in the Illiana discussions has been made very clear and NIRPC is committed to conducting an extensive outreach program under the Illiana Task Force work program activity. CAPIT and Sierra Club members, among others, will be invited to participate on the task force.

**Sierra Club Comment:** What happened to the urban growth boundary in the original 2030 plan?

**Response:** The growth boundary concept was discussed as a strategy but not adopted as regional policy. The growth boundary concept differs from the urbanized area boundary defined by census data and identified in the plan.