

**Transportation Policy Committee Meeting**  
Construction Advancement Foundation Training Center  
6050 Southport Road, Portage  
November 10, 2015  
MINUTES

**Members Present**

Joe Simonetto, Dave Decker, Joe Crnkovich, Claudia Taylor, Tom MacLennan, David Wright, Taylor Wegrzyn, Phil Gralik, Jeff Huet, Jan Orlich, Stan Dostatni, Don Parker, George Topoll, Teri Dixon and Mike Yacullo.

**Guests**

Julie Ritzler, Julia Surber, Mike Jabo, Joe Wszolek, Jill Murr, Roger Stephens, Dennis Cobb, Chris Moore, Mark Pittman, Allen Johnson, Kevin Breitzke, Ismail Attallah, Jerry Heimsoth, Jim Nowacki, Mark Gordish, Bob Csanyi, Nick Barbknecht, Paul Panther, and Keith Benman.

**NIRPC Staff**

Mitch Barloga, Belinda Petroskey, Scott Weber, James Winters, Gary Evers, Steve Strains, Sarah Geinosky, Eman Ibrahim, Stephen Sostaric and Mary Thorne.

**1. Call to Order, Opening and Announcements**

- a) In the place of the Chair, Joe Simonetto called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.
- b) The INDOT voluntary participation survey was available for attendees to fill out.
- c) On a motion by Jeff Huet and a second by Phil Gralik, the minutes of the September 8, 2015 meeting were approved as submitted.

**2. Presentation:** Scott Weber and James Winters, NIRPC, presented on highway congestion in Northwest Indiana and the 2015 Urban Mobility Scorecard as compiled by Texas A&M University. The Chicago Metropolitan Region, which includes the NIRPC region, ranked eighth worst in the nation in annual delays per auto commuter. Based on national traffic data compiled, congestion delays in the three-county region have increased 45 percent on area roadways the past two years. That congestion now costs Northwest Indiana's economy \$500 million per year. Solutions include, but are not limited to, adding capacity in critical corridors, providing travel choices, and changing usage patterns. The full presentation can be found on the NIRPC website at: <http://www.nirpc.org/transportation/transportation-policy-committee/tpc-presentations/nwi-congestion-urban-mobility-scorecard-presentation.aspx>.

**3. Planning**

- a) Mitch Barloga reported on the Greenways + Blueways 2020 Update. The trail survey remains available for the next month and a draft of the plan will go out for public comment. The final plan will be out in spring of 2016.
- b) Stephen Sostaric reported that the public comment period for the Functional Classification System Update Amendment will end on November 20. Once completed, the report will then be shared with this committee, asking for confirmation of a previous recommendation, and asking the NIRPC Commission to take action.

**4. Programming**

- a) Gary Evers gave an update on the end of the year balance projections for FY2016 federal spending. About 51% of the Chicago Urbanized Area (UZA) funding was obligated in the first quarter. No funds were obligated for the Michigan City LaPorte Urbanized Area (UZA), but the funding is going toward preliminary engineering projects. About \$38.3 million will be spent in the Chicago UZA and about \$3.3 million will be spent in the Michigan City – LaPorte UZA. The variance by program was listed with the total for all programs being \$856,310 for the Chicago UZA and for \$119,895 for STP only in the Michigan City – LaPorte UZA. All years through 2019 have been reconciled. Local Public Agencies (LPAs) are saying they will spend \$74 million in 2017 but Gary said that will not happen.
- b) Gary Evers said \$700,000 in Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is now available. The submission deadline for the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) 2015-1 is December 4 with the full application deadline of December 16. \$4.1 million will be available for 2017-2021 due to a project found ineligible and it is critical to fill this gap. LPAs can now submit portions of pre-existing projects and swap out CMAQ or STP money with HSIP money. Any unspent funds will be returned to INDOT. Gary Evers said sign projects in Lowell, Schererville and Porter will be put through at 100% funding. PE is at 100% and construction is at 90/10. This is only for Lake and Porter counties. For the Michigan City UZA, NIRPC has received a signed letter of intent for a project for their HSIP 2016 funds and a project for 2017 funds.
- c) The list for solicitation for 2016 funded HSIP activities will be brought to the committee next month for their action to recommend with action by the NIRPC Commission on December 17. The last day to request issuance of purchase orders is the first week in May.

## 5. Indiana Department of Transportation

Julie Ritzler reported on the INDOT lettings through January. The Dyer project listed for January was moved up from February to January.

## 6. Transit Operators Reports

- a) **LaPorte Transit** – Tom MacLennan reported that the third and fourth propane vehicles will be received next month, one is on order and hopefully two more will be ordered next year.
- b) **Valparaiso V-Line and Chicago DASH** – Taylor Wegrzyn reported that the V-Line had 10,833 passenger trips last month and the *ChicaGo* Dash had 5,282, down 9% over October 2014 but up 2% over September 2015. The total increase this year was 4.5% over last year.
- c) **East Chicago Transit** – No report was given.
- d) **GPTC** – David Wright reported that ridership for August was up 6% and for September was up 5.5%. The Livable Broadway working group met yesterday on the Livable Broadway project and the Broadway Rapid. Specifics for the 2017 vision were produced and an open house will be held on November 30 at the Metro Center from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. The Metro Center will be the trailhead for the Gary trail project. The City of Gary received a technical assistance grant for the Main Street Refresh Program. GPTC and the Legacy Foundation are partnering with the city on that program.
- e) **Michigan City Transit** – No report was given.
- f) **NICTD** – Joe Crnkovich reported that October ridership was down 2% over October of 2014. The overhead wire project for 2015 has ended with new wire installed from the Michigan City shops to a point east of Range Road in LaPorte County. The substations at Ogden Dunes and at 31<sup>st</sup> Street in Chicago will go back on line by the end of the year. NICTD provided some of the funds for the Indiana portion. A trial run of the Bikes on Trains was conducted in October and work continues on converting a section on each of three cars for racks. Weekend bikes on trains will be scheduled next spring. The work on Dune Park station should be done within the next few weeks. The draft Environmental Impact Study on the West Lake Corridor Extension is expected by the end of the year. Preliminary engineering on the repair and rehab of five bridges should be done by the end of the year.
- g) **North Township Dial-A-Ride** – No report was given.

- h) **Opportunity Enterprises** – Claudia Taylor reported that they have taken possession of the two replacement vehicles, and the fencing and security project should be done before winter.
  - i) **Porter County Council on Aging and Community Services** – No report was given.
  - j) **South Lake County Community Services** – No report was given.
7. **Regional Transportation Partners** – No reports were given.
8. **Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration** – No reports were given.
9. **Planning Neighbors** – Terri Dixon, CMAP, reported that they are working on their new long range plan.
10. **Public Comment on Agenda Items** – Jim Nowacki, Gary, questioned the Westlake Corridor expansion when NICTD ridership has decreased. TIGER and RCI grants were promised and the City of Gary committed \$330,000 per year for 30 years on this expansion which will ultimately take riders off the main commuter rail line.
11. **Other Business, Staff Announcements and Upcoming Meetings**
- a) **Other Business** – No other business was discussed.
  - b) **Staff Announcements** – Mitch Barloga said the Greenways & Blueways Update survey is on the NIRPC website.
  - c) **Upcoming Meetings at NIRPC** – Future NIRPC meetings will be announced as they are scheduled. The Executive Board/Full Commission will meet on December 17 at 9:00 a.m. at the Construction Advancement Foundation Training Center, 6050 Southport Road, Portage, which is just west of NIRPC.

The Transportation Policy Committee will next meet on December 8 at 9:00 a.m. also at the Construction Advancement Foundation Training Center.

Joe Simonetto adjourned the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

*A Digital MP3 of this meeting is filed. Contact Mary Thorne at the phone or email below should you wish to receive a copy of it.*

For requests for alternate formats, please contact Mary Thorne at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 131 or at [mthorne@nirpc.org](mailto:mthorne@nirpc.org). Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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