

## **Transportation Policy Committee Meeting**

NIRPC/Forum Offices

February 11, 2014

### MINUTES

#### **Members Present**

Jim Polarek, Stan Dobosz, Don Parker, Rob Strader, Tyler Kent, Joe Crnkovich, Claudia Taylor, Bob Thompson, David Wright, Jezreel Rodriguez, Chris Meyers, Mary Jane Thomas, Dwayne Williams, Phil Gralik, Craig Phillips, Jim Mandon, John Bayler, Stan Dostatni, Jeff Huet, Dave Decker, Mark O'Dell, Art Biciunas, and Joyce Newland and Jerry Halperin via conference phone.

#### **Guests**

Joe Simonetto, Mark Pittman, Ron Wiedeman, Matt Ovenchuk, Karren Lee, Brad Minnick, Ehren Bingaman, Joe Nordman, Matt Deitchley, Deb Backhus, Christopher Murphy, Teresa Torres, Peter Kohut, Glen Campbell,

#### **NIRPC Staff**

Steve Strains, Mitch Barloga, Mary Thorne, Eman Ibrahim, Gary Evers, Jack Eskin, Kevin Garcia, Scott Weber, Sarah Geinosky, Gabrielle Biciunas, Belinda Petroskey, Stephen Sostaric.

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

- a) Vice Chair Jim Polarek called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.
- b) The INDOT voluntary participation survey was available on the table.
- c) On a motion by Stan Dobosz and a second by Don Parker, the minutes of the January 16 meeting were approved as submitted.

### **2. Presentation**

Joe Nordman of Robinson Engineering and Jim Mandon, Town of Munster presented on the grade separation project at 45<sup>th</sup> Street and Calumet Avenue. There is a lot of congestion and when the CN trains go through, delays can reach up to 45 minutes. Proposed improvements will include grade separations, signalizations, right-of way solutions and a continuous bike path. Jim Mandon added that there is considerable cost to having to provide a temporary track for the CN for each phase for only a week or more, when that railroad has the EJ&E to use as an alternate track until each project phase is completed. It is hoped that building a temporary track can be avoided. The cost of the alternate track is between \$7-8 million per phase and we may ask for help from NIRPC and possibly our legislators in negotiations with the railroad on this temporary track. Letting is currently scheduled for the spring of 2015.

### **3. Planning**

- a) Scott Weber gave an update on considerations for the NIRPC travel demand modeling process. In the context of the Illiana Corridor methodology review, a travel forecasting meeting was held last November, consisted of NIRPC, Federal Highway Administration, INDOT and Illiana study consultants. One of the purposes was to discuss the modeling process as it relates to the air quality conformity analysis. One outcome were some ideas on how the modeling process can to be updated over the next few years. An extensive, regional travel survey was done in 2007-08 for Northeast Illinois and Northwest Indiana. Its

results have not been fully incorporated into NIRPC's model, and will be in this calendar year. Another travel survey will need to be done in a few of years. It has yet to be determined whether NIRPC will continue using the EMME model or another one. An activity-based travel demand model will be able to answer more travel questions than the current model based on a household's travel activity. The process of refining NIRPC's modeling will involve a number of other agencies. The next steps will be to set short, medium and long term goals. More information will be available on the NIRPC as the modeling process evolves.

- b) Kevin Garcia gave an update on the Intelligent Transportation System update. He distributed a work plan from now to the end of June. A timeline was provided leading to the NIRPC board approval on an updated ITS at its June meeting. ITS helps put in place a more efficient operating transportation system. Some common types of projects are variable message signs on interstates, signal timing improvements at intersections, and real-time information about available public transportation.
- c) Gary Evers reported on the functional classification system review. The update which includes 58 changes will be made "en masse" and must be done before September of 2014. TIP and project solicitation changes include five year standard plans for each federal aid program, moving toward a cash based system. Staff expects that our region's implementers will spend allocations every year. Quarterly reports on the status of projects will be electronically filed. Prior approval of change orders are required. Mitch Barloga added that there are to be five to eight years of Transportation Alternative Program projects to be programmed. More information on this will be available at Ped, Pedal & Paddle meetings.
- d) Eman Ibrahim announced that NIRPC selected seven Creating Livable Communities planning grants totaling \$402,000. They were awarded to Chesterton, Crown Point, East Chicago, Gary, Highland, Town of Porter and Winfield. Construction and implementation phases will be solicited in the next round.
- e) Mitch Barloga reported on the proposed I-65 widening project near Crown Point and the Cline Avenue bridge addition. We are on schedule for TPC action on April 8 and Full Commission action on April 17. Several Interagency Consultation Group meetings were held and we are currently in a public comment period for I-65 and we are adding the Cline Avenue Bridge. The comment deadline of March 5 may be extended. Details of the two public meetings on February 18 and 19 are shown under *Upcoming Meetings* later in the packet.

#### 4. Programming

- a) **Amendment #9 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program:** Gary Evers described the 4 added INDOT projects. On a motion by Don Parker, second by, Amendment #6 to the FY 2014-2017 was recommended to the NIRPC Board.
- b) **Amendment #12 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program:** Gary Evers described the new local projects and phases for Hobart, Portage, Munster, LaPorte County, Lake Station, Merrillville, Gary and Lake County Parks and deletions for LaPorte County and Lake County Parks. On a motion by Mary Jane Thomas and a second by Don Parker, Amendment #12 to the FY 2014-2017 was recommended to the NIRPC Board.
- c) Stephen Sostaric presented the Public Comment Report for the Bikes on Trains Feasibility Study. About 80 comments were received through NIRPC's phone comment line, social media, email and postal service, along with a 300-signature petition. Joe Crnkovich explained the nature of the study, which is to look at the feasibility and cost.
- d) **Amendment #8 to the FY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program:** Belinda Petroskey described the amendment for the feasibility study of bikes on South Shore trains totaling \$205,000, of which \$164,000 will be funded through FTA Section 5307 funds with \$41,000 in local match. Jack Eskin and Nicole Barker gleaned support from NICTD, Porter County, LaPorte County, Arcelor-Mittal, the Regional Development Authority, National Park Service, Greenway Fund and NIPSCO who all provided

portions of the local match. On a motion by Don Parker and a second by Dave Decker, Amendment #8 to the FY 2014-2017 was recommended to the NIRPC Board.

**5. Indiana Department of Transportation**

- a) Matt Deitchley described the projects in the letting list for January through April 2014.
- b) The Illiana Tier 2 EIS is available for public review and comment at [www.illianacorridor.org](http://www.illianacorridor.org). Public meetings will be held next week at Lowell Middle School at 19250 Cline Avenue from 5-8 p.m. on February 18 and at the Local 150 Training Facility at 19800 West Arsenal Road in Wilmington Illinois from 5-8 p.m. on February 19.

**6. Transit Operators Reports**

- a) **NICTD** – Joe Crnkovich reported that January ridership was down about 9% due to the severe weather and people likely taking vacations. Most capital projects are on hold. The draft EIS for the West Lake Corridor study is out in a request for proposals, with the deadline for proposals March 5. The bridge is out in east Lake County. Bids for replacement will be out shortly. Craig Phillips added that the Michigan City relocation analysis is on the Michigan City website and the environmental stage is the next step.
- b) **GPTC** – David Wright said January ridership figures were not yet available. Solicitation for the consulting work on Broadway will be out later this month. There will be a report to the Gary Chamber Economic Development Committee on February 19. A public forum was held earlier this month at the Hammond Library. In addition to alignment changes to the Tri-City Corridor, a feeder will be run to Hessville, Purdue-Calumet, and down Calumet Ave. and Indianapolis Boulevard in Munster and Highland. The presentation is on the GPTC website. The final public hearing is March 6 at 5:30 p.m. at the Metro Center in downtown Gary.

**7. Local and Regional Transportation Projects** – No reports were given.

**8. Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration**

**FHWA:** Joyce Newland reported that five planning emphasis areas (PEA) for 2015 for all of Indiana’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations to include in their Work Programs are for continued ADA Transition Plan work with local agencies, quarterly project tracking, pavement management system supporting the requirements of MAP-21, and functional classification were shared. MPOs should continue working with INDOT on the functional classification map. Pavement management systems need to be in place to use federal funds for pavement preservation and they will need to be approved by INDOT. MPOs are to continue with “red flag” environmental investigations to avoid project delays. Draft rule-making on HSIP (safety program) performance measures and new planning regulations are to come out the end of this month.

**9. Planning Neighbors** – No reports were given.

**10. Other Business, Public Comment, Staff Announcements and Upcoming Meetings**

- a) No other business was brought to the committee.
- b) **Public Comment:** Teresa Torres, Everybody Counts asked that the last two months’ minutes be amended with regard to her public comments. Teresa Torres added that she received no answer to her January request for information regarding the disbursement of RBA funds. A response was provided to her by Steve Strains under Staff Announcements below. Teresa Torres said she did not recall being addressed by David Wright as was stated in the minutes and asked if the last sentence in that paragraph was attributed to someone in particular. Mary Thorne stated she would go back and check the mp3 file and report her findings to the Chair and staff.
- c) **Staff Announcements:**

- Steve Strains read a written response to Teresa Torres' January inquiry about the disbursement of State funds originally meant for the now defunct Regional Bus Authority. After reading the statement, it was handed out to everyone present. The response in part stated that the Public Mass Transportation Fund (PMTF) is a dedicated revenue fund created by the 1980 Indiana General Assembly to assist public transportation in the state. PMTF funds are formula based and not open to competition or public comment. NIRPC administers the funds on behalf of INDOT. PMTF funds are included in NIRPC's budget under Transit Operating Projects Fund. INDOT requested that NIRPC distribute the \$506,267 2013 RBA PMTF funds to NIRPC's sub-recipients who receive their PMTF funds through NIRPC. For the 2014 RBA funds, GPTC made a request to INDOT for a portion of the funds. INDOT granted that request in the amount of \$410,771 and the balance of \$151,929 went to East Chicago Transit based on increased ridership by both operators since the RBA's demise. INDOT requested a MOU be written so that the RBA 2014 funds could be allocated to GPTC and East Chicago Transit. No such request for an agreement was received for the 2013 RBA funds.

Teresa Torres stated that the 2013 funds went to Porter County demand response providers and South Lake County Community Services, not to North Township or East Chicago Transit which were the two communities which suffered the loss of the RBA. She asked for clarity as to why this committee was not involved in that decision, who made the decision to distribute those 2013 funds and whether or not it was a public meeting since there was no public record; she found nothing in any minutes or on any agenda. Steve said that throughout the history of the PMTF, allocations are made by formula and are not acted on by the Transportation Policy Committee. In response to a question by Steve Strains, David Wright said his notes showed no indication that this was brought before the transit operators' roundtable. Jim Polarek asked that Teresa Torres put her requests in writing and submit them to Ty Warner.

- Gary Evers announced a meeting on February 26 at 1:30 p.m. in the NIRPC auditorium with those communities who submitted requests for HSIP funds on how to proceed in getting their requests funded.

The next Transportation Policy Committee meeting will be at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, March 11 at NIRPC.

On a motion by Don Parker and a second by Dave Decker, Jim Polarek adjourned the meeting at 10:45 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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