

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting  
Radisson Hotel at Star Plaza, Ambassador Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Merrillville, Indiana  
September 15, 2016  
Minutes

Chairman Jim Ton called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Executive Board members present included Geof Benson, Kevin Breitzke, Anthony Copeland, Dave Decker, Michael Griffin, Tom McDermott, Diane Noll, Ed Soliday, Greg Stinson and Jim Ton.

Other Commissioners present included Kyle Allen, Jr., Robert Carnahan, Bill Emerson, Jr., Dave Shafer, Brian Snedecor and George Topoll.

Guests present included Rebecca Holwerda, Justin Mount, Jeff Sheridan, Bill Hanna, Robert L. Buggs, Nick Burbknecht, Julia Surber, Don Oliphant, Lyndsay Quist, Karen Freeman-Wilson, David Wright, Jeff Huet, Sherry Zeller, Dave Wellman, Val Gomez, Bill McCall, Bill Sheldrake, Randy Strasser, Tim Zorn and Andrew Steele.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Steve Strains, Dave Hollenbeck, Jody Melton, Angie Hayes, Kelly Wenger, Kathy Luther, Gabrielle Biciunas, Stephen Sostaric and Mary Thorne.

**Presentation:**

Bill Hanna, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), presented on the 2016 update of their Comprehensive Strategic Plan. In 2015, the Indiana General Assembly extended Indiana's investment appropriating \$6 million per year and instructed the RDA to refocus its strategic development plan around a commuter rail asset which would provide the connectivity to Chicago employment opportunities. This in turn would attract new residents to Northwest Indiana, create jobs and help build the region's economy. Chicago's economy pays 37% more in wages for the same job as is paid in Northwest Indiana. A rail system acts like a jobs multiplier. Over the next 30 years, West Lake expansion alone will support an additional 2,500 annual ongoing non-rail jobs and double-tracking the existing South Shore line will create 5,700 annual jobs in the region. The RDA is also working to incentivize development around the stations on both the West Lake Corridor and on the enhanced, double-tracked South Shore Line.

Over the 20-year period from 2019 to 2038, the West Lake plus double-tracking scenario would produce a total of \$502 million from state sales tax and state income tax. Funding the \$615.5 million construction of the West Lake Corridor would be paid through the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts Program, state and local funding and the RDA. The return on investment in the 20<sup>th</sup> year for the West Lake Corridor and double-tracking is projected to be 4.2 times the public investment.

In answer to a question by Kevin Breitzke, Ed Soliday said a NIRPC resolution in support of the RDA would be timely and beneficial. Mr. Soliday mentioned that an aerial tour of Northwest Indiana was held for the senior members of the Indiana House of Representatives, and as a result their viewpoint

of the region has changed significantly for the better. Several members remarked on the tremendous potential of the region in capitalizing in expanding its economy. The passing of the wheel tax by some of our communities also shows a willingness to help fund infrastructure maintenance. Mr. Soliday continued by saying that we must all agree on the meaning of the Marquette Plan and define our commitment to that plan. Kevin Breitzke made a motion to draft a resolution in support of the efforts of the RDA regard to the South Shore double-tracking project and the West Lake Corridor project; seconded by Greg Stinson. The Executive Board voted unanimously to draft a resolution of support for the efforts of the RDA with regard to the South Shore double-tracking project and the West Lake Corridor project and the benefits as shown in the RDA report.

Jim Ton noted that there was a quorum for a meeting of the Executive Board.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the July 21, 2016 Full Commission meeting were approved on a motion by Geof Benson and a second by Michael Griffin.

#### **Report of the Chair – Jim Ton**

Jim Ton thanked the Commissioners for their extra time and effort in making the new paradigm of the new structure work.

#### **Report of the Executive Director – Ty Warner**

Indiana Senators Dan Coats and Joe Donnelly wrote a joint letter with the two Illinois Senators challenging the notice of proposed federal rulemaking on consolidation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), which could require the merger of NIRPC with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). Ty Warner thanked Congressional staff members Rebecca Holwerda (Sen. Coats) and Justin Mount (Sen. Donnelly) for the support of the Senators. There was also a joint letter sent from Congressman Pete Visclosky (D-IN) and Congressman Dan Lipinski (D-IL), which was also much appreciated. Warner also thanked Representative Ed Soliday for his letter of opposition to the rule. The U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee signed a joint letter which said this proposed rulemaking is not at all what they had intended by the FAST (Fixing America's Surface Transportation) Act. There was a large outpouring across the country against the proposed rulemaking. The relatively short comment period is closed. Jim Ton added that NIRPC sent a letter objecting to the process that had been taking place, as well as the inherent problems. Several municipalities penned their objections as well.

#### **Finance & Personnel Committee:**

- Diane Noll congratulated Angie Hayes and her staff, reporting that the annual financial report is complete. There were no comments or findings. The committee met this morning and there are several items for consideration.
- Diane Noll presented Procurement #16-21, Administration of Air Quality Public Knowledge and Perception Survey, for the purchase of services pertaining to the survey paid with Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds at 80% and an in-kind match of 20% with a cap price of \$75,000. On a motion by Diane Noll and a second by Greg Stinson, the Executive Board approved Procurement #16-21.
- Diane Noll presented Budget amendment 6 to add new revenue to the budget for an additional \$248,161 for Highway Safety Improvement Program for the I-65 and US 30 Planning Study. On a

motion by Diane Noll and a second by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board approved Budget amendment 6.

- Diane Noll presented Budget amendment 7 to add new revenue of \$25,000 for a portion of the statewide trail study with in-kind match provided by Indiana University. On a motion by Diane Noll and a second by Kevin Breitzke, the Executive Board approved Budget amendment 7.
- Diane Noll presented Budget amendment 8 transferring \$1,700 from contractual to communication expenses to cover a program change for the Environmental programs. On a motion by Dave Decker and a second by Greg Stinson, the Executive Board approved Budget amendment 8.
- Diane Noll motioned to approve an Agreement between NIRPC and Ratio Architects for consulting services for the I-65 and US 30 safety planning project procured under RFP 16-14. Greg Stinson seconded the motion. Ty Warner commented that it was significant that NIRPC is meeting today in Merrillville, located in the study area. Brian Snedecor said that this work is necessary because of the continued growth of the corridor. The Executive Board voted to approve the I-65 and US 30 agreement.
- Diane Noll presented the agreement between NIRPC and the Trustees of Indiana University on Behalf of the Epply Institute for an Indiana Trail Study. On a motion by Diane Noll and a second by Geof Benson, the Executive Board approved the Indiana Trail Study agreement with one abstention by Michael Griffin, who stated that he is an Adjunct Professor at IUN.

#### **Environmental Management Policy Committee – Geof Benson**

- Geof Benson read Resolution 16-28 supporting the 2016 SepticSmart Week of September 19-23, 2016. Geof Benson motioned to approve Resolution 16-28 and Kevin Breitzke seconded the motion. Jim Ton commented that the Town of Chesterton also passed a resolution in support of SepticSmart Week. Bob Carnahan requested a copy of the resolution, once signed and adopted. The Executive Board voted to adopt Resolution 16-28 supporting 2016 SepticSmart Week.
- NIRPC received a Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Grant for a feasibility study of the Deep River Dam, as well as a US Forest Service grant for ash borer tree removal and recovery. A grant application for municipalities will be created.

#### **Technical Planning Committee:**

Michael Griffin reported that the Technical Planning Committee met on September 13th. The Committee heard a presentation from Gary Public Transportation Corp on the alignment alternatives for the proposed Broadway Rapid Bus service and a naming of the system. This presentation was a part of GPTC's outreach.

The Committee also heard an overview from staff on a "B-List" project solicitation. INDOT has a strict "use it or lose it" rule regarding its funding of transportation projects. For Lake and Porter Counties there is approximately \$1.2 million, and for LaPorte County there is a little over \$230,000 available. These projects will recycle surplus, current year federal highway funds into new projects. At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, just prior to the expected release of the solicitation, staff received substantial comment from a stakeholder's engineer and staff did not have a chance to review and respond to the comment. In order to meet the timetable needed for this solicitation, and to avoid a reconvening of the entire TPC, the committee voted to enact an ad hoc committee consisting of volunteers from the TPC to review and recommend to the Full Commission in October.

The TPC also voted to recommend the Congestion Management Process Analysis and the Environmental Justice Analysis for a second bridge at the Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor. These recommendations are in line with the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*. Recommendations for both these analyses will be presented to the Full Commission for its adoption next month. The Committee also heard updates from the Topical Committees.

The next meeting of the Technical Planning Committee will be Tuesday, October 11th at 9 a.m. in NIRPC's Lake Michigan Room.

Jim Ton appointed the following to the "B-List" ad hoc sub-committee: George Topoll, Dave Shafer, Michael Griffin, Mark O'Dell, David Wright and Kay Nelson. Other interested TPC members may still serve on the committee.

**Indiana Department of Transportation:**

Lyndsay Quist reported that a lot of construction work is still ongoing. The Lake County added travel lane project is still under review with selection sometime this month.

**Other Business:** No other business was brought before the Board.

**Announcements:**

Robert Carnahan asked that Dean White, who passed away recently, and his family be remembered in prayer.

**Public Comment on Agenda Items:**

- Robert Buggs, President of the Board of Trustees of the Gary Public Library, read a letter submitted to INDOT regarding water issues the library has encountered after the installation of the new sidewalks along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The letter asks INDOT to revisit these issues as they pose potentially hazardous conditions during inclement weather. Robert Buggs announced the anticipated grand opening of the newly renovated Library and Cultural Center is in the fall of 2016. Lyndsay Quist responded that INDOT has been working with the City of Gary to get this issue resolved.

Hearing no other business, on a motion by Greg Stinson and a second by Geof Benson, Jim Ton adjourned the meeting at 10:00 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. DVD recordings will be available once they are received by NIRPC from the videographer.*

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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