

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties, Indiana for 2012-2015

Part I: Introduction

A Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP, is a short-range financial and spending plan for the utilization of U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) surface transportation funds. These funds, identified later in this document, are used for highway, transit, and non-motorized transportation projects. NIRPC's TIP is updated every other year and includes projects undertaken by municipalities, counties, transit operators, and the State of Indiana. Federal (U.S. DOT) planning regulations guide the preparation and development of TIP documents.

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) has been designated by the Governor as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to undertake transportation planning for northwestern Indiana. We are a council of governments established under Indiana law. NIRPC has, pursuant to the federal planning regulations, undertaken a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process that includes, among other things, the development of a Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

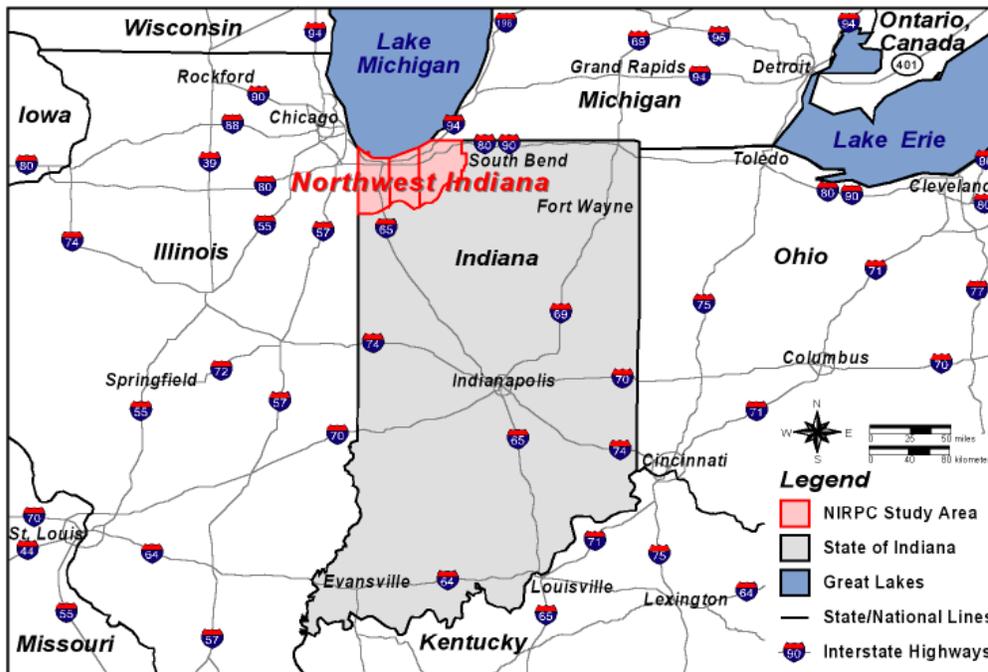
The TIP process is designed to ensure the implementation of the goals and objectives identified in NIRPC's Regional Transportation Plan.

NIRPC's Regional Transportation Plan is the Transportation Section of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP), adopted in June 2011.

About NIRPC

NIRPC was originally established as the Lake-Porter County Regional Transportation and Planning Commission in 1965, pursuant to an act of the Indiana General Assembly. An amendment to this legislation in 1973 provided the Commission with its current name and allowed for the addition of new member counties. La Porte County joined NIRPC in 1979.

NIRPC is a regional council of local governments serving the citizens of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties in Northwest Indiana. The entire three-county area is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Northern Lake and Porter Counties are a part of the Chicago, IL/IN urbanized area. NIRPC provides a forum that enables the citizens of Northwest Indiana to address regional issues relating to transportation, the environment and community, and economic development.



NIRPC's metropolitan planning area is located at the southern tip of Lake Michigan and represents an integral part of the greater Chicago metropolitan area. It consists of 771,815 people (2010 Census) and covers 1,520 square miles. There are forty-one cities and towns and forty-four townships within the NIRPC planning area.

NIRPC Commissioners. There are fifty-three Commissioners—all of whom are elected officials. In addition to the 41 municipal appointments (one per city or town), the County Councils, Boards of Commissioners, and County Surveyors appoint one member each, as does the Governor. The Commission or the Executive Board meets monthly. NIRPC's meetings are open to the public and there is a place on every agenda for public comment.

The legislation under which the Commission operates is contained within Indiana Code Title 36, Article VII, Chapter 7.6. Section 12 of this statute plainly states our purpose:

“The purpose of the commission is to institute and maintain a comprehensive planning and programming process for:

- (1) transportation;*
- (2) economic development; and*
- (3) environmental;*

policy and provide a coordinative management process for the counties described in section 1 of this chapter. The commission shall coordinate its activities with all member units in the counties and shall coordinate and assist the planning programs of member units and the state that are related to its purpose.”

One of the most important designations NIRPC has received is that of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for northwestern Indiana. MPO's are responsible, together with state departments of transportation and public transit operators, for carrying out the transportation planning process for urbanized areas.

Of equal importance is our status as a Designated Recipient of U.S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds (in two urbanized areas) under three FTA grant programs. We function as the grantee for eight (8) local public bus transit operators. We are also the Designated Recipient for the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), Indiana's only commuter railroad.

Our region is a diverse and dynamic whose complexities are reflected in the regional transportation system. The NIRPC planning area includes arguably some of the most strategic and critical links in the national transportation system. These factors combine to make the role of MPO for northwestern Indiana extraordinarily challenging. NIRPC, in undertaking its mission, is cognizant of its obligations and responsibilities, under various federal and state statutes, to promote inclusion and not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, or any other factor.

Basic Federal Requirements for Transportation Improvement Programs.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's current planning regulations¹ associated with the implementation of surface transportation programs issued include specific requirements for development and content of TIPs. These requirements are summarized below.

- Time period: *The TIP shall cover at least a four year period and be updated at least every four years.* The TIP covers the four year period from July 2012 to June 2015.
- Public Comment: *The MPO shall provide all interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the proposed TIP.* Appendix B of this document summarizes the public participation process for the development of the Conformity Determination, Comprehensive Regional Plan, and TIP, including comments, suggestions, and responses from that process.
- Regionally Significant Projects: *The TIP shall contain all regionally significant projects requiring an action by FHWA or FTA regardless of funding source.* These projects are discretely identified in the TIP.
- Specific Project Information: *The TIP shall list capital and non-capital surface transportation projects using a variety of federal funds or regionally significant projects requiring FHWA or FTA action.* For each project or project phase, the TIP shall include sufficient descriptive material including work type, termini, length, total cost, amount of federal funds, and responsible agency. The project table in the TIP provides this information for each project.
- Consistency with the Transportation Plan: *Each project or project phase included in the TIP shall be consistent with the approved metropolitan transportation plan.* New capacity expansion projects selected for inclusion in the TIP were selected from the new 2040 transportation plan. All other projects (i.e., those involving preservation and maintenance projects) are

¹ 23 CFR Part 450, Subpart B, issued February 14, 2007

consistent with that portion of the plan that requires the prioritization of these types of projects.

- **Financial Plan:** *The TIP shall include a financial plan that provides system-level estimates of costs and revenue sources that are reasonably expected to be available to adequately operate and maintain Federal-aid highways and public transportation.* Appendix D provides summary financial information regarding projected surface transportation funds and expenditures for cities, towns, counties, and transit operators within the three-county area over the life of the TIP.
- **Prioritization Process:** *The MPO, in cooperation with the State and public transportation operator(s) shall develop a prioritized TIP and should identify the criteria and process for prioritizing projects.* Descriptions of the procedures and processes used to select and prioritize projects in the TIP are found in two places.

Project selection systems (including criteria) for recently selected projects (2010 Public Transit, 2011 Lake-Porter County Local Highways, and INDOT-sponsored projects) are found in the next section (Part II) of this document.

Most of the other local projects appearing in the 2012-2015 TIP were selected in 2008 or earlier and have been rolled over into the new TIP. Information pertaining to the manner in which those rollover projects were selected was published in our 2009-2013 TIP. That information has been included in Appendix E of this document.

- **Status of Major Projects from the previous TIP:** *The TIP should list all major projects from the previous TIP that were implemented or delayed.* That list appears at the end of Part II of this document. Separately, there is an Annual List of Projects that is published during the first quarter of each year. The ALOP shows federal surface transportation fund obligations for the prior year.
- **Air Quality:** *The TIP shall demonstrate conformity with the State Implementation Plan (SIP).* Appendix C contains the air quality conformity determination for the Transportation Plan and TIP.

Organization of the TIP Document

This balance of this document is organized into the following two parts:

Part II: TIP Development and Project Selection Processes. This chapter contains a description of the MPO planning process, general guidelines we follow in soliciting and selecting local projects with federal funds that are assigned to us, INDOT's project selection processes.

This is followed by a more detailed discussion of our 2010 Public Transit solicitation and our 2011 solicitation for Local Highway projects in Lake and Porter Counties.

As already noted, solicitation and selection system details for rollover projects² from our 2009-2013 TIP can be found in Appendix E. In most cases, the text in Appendix E was copied from the old TIP document.

Part III: Program of Projects and Related Information. This chapter begins with a summary explanation of the actual list of projects, including tabular and graphic information. This is followed by a key to interpreting the information in the tables and where to go to get additional information.

The data tables are presented last. There are 465 projects included with a total value of approximately \$665.4 million. The list is divided into five sections:

1. Transit Projects	193 Projects	\$174.1 million
2. INDOT Sponsored Projects	94 Projects	\$230.2 million
3. Federal Agency Sponsored Projects	2 Projects	\$ 2.2 million
4. Local Highway-Related Projects	161 Projects	\$243.6 million
5. Transportation Enhancement	16 Projects	\$ 15.3 million

² This includes Surface Transportation Program (STP) Group II, Local Highway Safety Improvement, and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Programs

LIST of APPENDICES

Appendix A: Official Actions and Compliance. This appendix contains the NIRPC Board resolutions adopting the Conformity Determination, Plan, and TIP. This section also contains the NIRPC Board resolution authorizing execution of the required planning process certification document.

Appendix B: Public Involvement. This appendix contains the public involvement-related documentation relative to the Conformity Determination, Plan, and TIP. This includes comments and our responses.

Appendix C: Conformity Determination.

Appendix D: Financial Plan. The joint FTA/FHWA Planning regulations identify three primary purposes of the financial plan for Transportation Improvement Programs: 1) To demonstrate how the TIP, if approved, will be implemented; 2) To identify resources from public & private sources that are reasonably expected to be made available to carry out the TIP; and 3) To recommend additional financing strategies to carry out needed projects and programs.

Appendix E: Prior Project Selection Processes. This appendix contains details on the manner in which local projects were selected for funding prior to 2011. Most, but not all, local projects listed in the TIP were selected in 2008-2010 and have been carried over into this new TIP. Those old processes are described here.

Appendix F: NIRPC Commissioners, TPC Contact/Membership Lists, and Transit Operators.