

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

Part II: TIP Development and Project Selection Processes

MPO Planning Process

The NIRPC Board of Commissioners is the final decision-making body of the MPO. Transportation-related decisions made at the Board level almost always originate in the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC)¹.

Transportation Policy Committee. The Transportation Policy Committee is one of five standing policy advisory committees to the Commission. The purpose of the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) is to oversee the development of a multi-modal system of transportation in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties and recommend appropriate regional policies. This is primarily done through TPC actions on a regional transportation plan, transportation improvement program, studies, analyses, work program and other special programs. The TPC receives input from transportation stakeholder subcommittees and then makes recommendations to the Commission or Executive Board. It functions primarily as a technical committee.

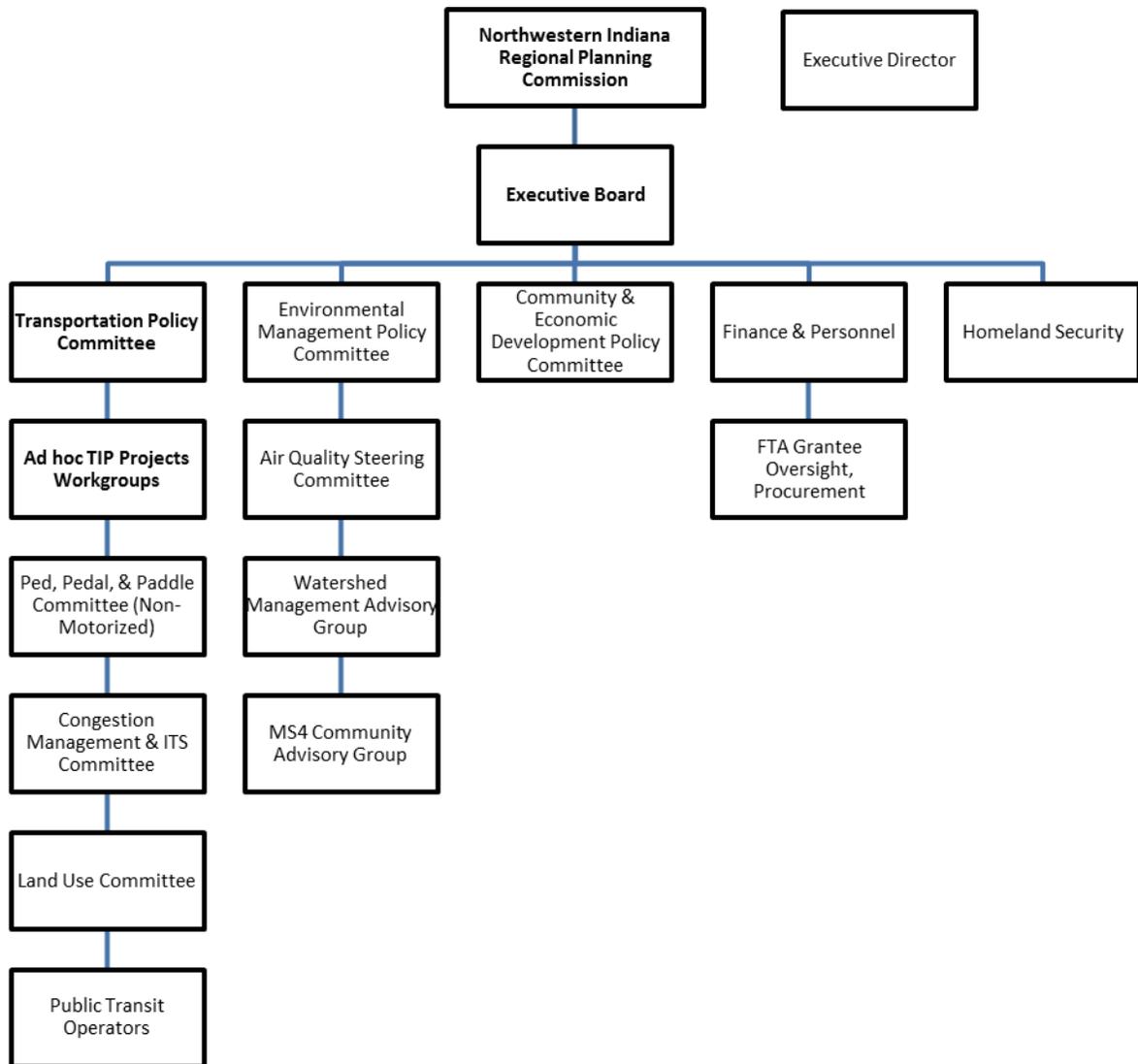
Functions of the metropolitan area transportation planning process of particular interest to the TPC are:

- identifying and analyzing transportation problems
- developing and recommending solutions
- fostering the development of projects, monitoring progress
- allocating available federal funds
- selecting and prioritizing projects of regional significance

¹ *However, the Commission may, under Indiana law, act on any matter brought before it for consideration.*

- coordinating activities and projects among local units of government within northwest Indiana, with adjacent areas, and with state and Federal agencies.
- conducting an open, public, and participatory planning process;
- keep transportation planning certified through a comprehensive, cooperative and continuous process.

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission: Organizational Chart and Planning Process



Commission and TPC Membership. Membership on the Commission is established by state statute (I.C. 36-7.7.6). Membership on the TPC is open

to all local units of government, transit operators, organizations representing various interests (persons with disabilities, environmentalists, senior citizens, etc.), federal and state agencies, and other persons representing a group or groups of people. The contact list for the NIRPC Commissioners and TPC is contained in Appendix F.

MPO Planning Area. The MPO planning area covers all of Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties, Indiana. This means that any surface transportation construction project funded through the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must be listed in our TIP as well as the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). This TIP also lists, for the first time, two projects containing federal funds from the U.S. Federal Rail Administration (FRA).

Urbanized Areas and Federal Funds. The Chicago Urbanized Area (Urbanized Area) extends into Lake and Porter Counties. In Lake County it covers the area north of Lowell to Lake Michigan. In Porter County, most of the area from north of Valparaiso to Lake Michigan is part of the Chicago Urbanized Area. Most of northwest La Porte County (and a small portion of extreme northeast Porter County) lie within the Michigan City/La Porte Urbanized Area.

Congress appropriates several types of Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation annually to both states (primarily highway-oriented funds) and urbanized areas (primarily transit funds). MPO's have the responsibility of allocating these funds to specific transportation projects. NIRPC oversees a number of locally adopted project selection processes that involve stakeholder participation in the development of the selection system and in the selection of projects recommended for inclusion in the TIP.

MPO Project Selection. The TIP development process for MPO-selected projects is largely carried out by groups of ad hoc stakeholder committees. Stakeholder committees are maintained for each funding program: Highways, Transit, Congestion, Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Transportation Enhancement, and Highway Safety. Membership is open to

the public. Meeting notices are posted on the NIRPC Website and also mailed to transportation stakeholders.

Each stakeholder committee reviews and reaches consensus upon the project selection criteria and relevant selection policies to be used in the selection process. Staff conducts the solicitation(s) and convenes the stakeholder committee(s) to review results of the project application process and recommend lists of projects to be selected for funding. Funding recommendations are reported to the Transportation Policy Committee in a draft version of the new TIP. The NIRPC Commission or Executive Board is informed in the same manner.

Types of Federal Funds. Federal surface transportation funds come from two operating administrations of the U.S. DOT: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). FHWA funds are allocated to the state and suballocated to NIRPC. FTA funds are usually allocated to urbanized areas. The specific federal funding programs from FHWA and FTA are as follows:

Surface Transportation Program (STP). Each year the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) makes apportionments of FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) contract authority to each Urbanized Area for highway improvement projects. The area within the Chicago Urbanized Area is apportioned STP Group I (large Urbanized Area) funds; the area within the Michigan City/LaPorte Urbanized Area is apportioned STP Group II (small Urbanized Area) funds.

FTA Section 5307. Each year the FTA apportions Urban Area Formula Grant (Section 5307) funds to each Urbanized Area for public transit projects. These funds are used for public transit operating and capital projects involving both bus and commuter rail transit services. Separate apportionments of Section 5307 funds are received by each of the two Urbanized Areas.

Section 5307 funds apportioned to the Chicago Urbanized Area are for the entire Urbanized Area, including both Illinois and Indiana portions. NIRPC maintains a Letter of Understanding with the Northeastern Illinois Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) that specifies how these funds are to be split.

Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ). The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) apportions FHWA CMAQ funds to each county in an air quality non-attainment (or maintenance, if attainment has been achieved).

Funds are received on the basis of population and the severity of the air quality problem. CMAQ projects are transportation projects which, if implemented, will result in lower emissions from internal combustion engines. Separate allocations are made to the combined Lake/Porter County area and to La Porte County.

FTA Sections 5316 (Job Access/Reverse Commute, or JARC) and 5317 (New Freedom). JARC-funded projects involve improving access to employment for lower income persons. New Freedom funds are for enhanced access to transit for persons with disabilities. Like the Section 5307 funds, these funds are apportioned to the Chicago Urbanized Area for the entire urbanized area, including both Illinois and Indiana portions. NIRPC maintains a Letter of Understanding with the Northeastern Illinois Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) that specifies how these funds are to be split.

FTA Section 5309 Rail Modernization. These are FTA formula funds that are used by the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) for improvements to the commuter rail facilities all along NICTD's rail corridor. Chicago Urbanized Area Rail Modernization funds are divided between Illinois and Indiana under an agreement with the RTA. NIRPC's TIP also includes Rail Modernization funds allocated to the South Bend Urbanized Area. Listed Rail Modernization projects may be undertaken in any of five counties, including Lake, Porter, LaPorte, and St Joseph Counties, Indiana, and Cook County, Illinois.

Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP). These funds must address critical safety needs on local roadways which have a history of crashes. Separate allocations are made to each Urbanized Area but funds may be used for projects in any county served by the MPO.

High Priority or Demonstration Project Funds. The TIP also includes other transportation projects which are selected by Congress (i.e., Demonstration or "High Priority" Projects).

The TIP also includes Regionally Significant transportation projects that involve no federal funds, and INDOT-selected local projects that are usually located outside of the urbanized area but within the three-county metropolitan planning area. These projects are not selected by NIRPC.

INDOT System Improvements. The TIP also includes projects that are undertaken by the state of Indiana. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) selects projects that will occur on state-owned roadways, which include Interstates and US-marked and State routes.

INDOT conducts its own project selection processes for those funds that it controls and provides NIRPC with a list of projects to include in the TIP.

INDOT also assists other state agencies such as the Indiana State Prison, Westville Correctional Center, Indiana Dunes State Park, Ports of Indiana at Burns Harbor, Purdue and Indiana Universities, and others by listing road and parking lot construction projects in the TIP and bidding them out through INDOT's letting system.

Road Improvements on Federal Lands. The TIP also includes projects that are undertaken by FHWA on federal lands within the region—which are managed by the National Park Service at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. There are federal lands in each of the region's three counties. The Eastern Federal Lands Division (EFLD) of FHWA oversees these funds. There are two EFLD-funded projects listed in the TIP.

The FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division (EFLD) maintains its own TIP process and document for transportation projects within or affecting federal lands in the region. NIRPC staff downloads the list of projects from EFLD and places them in our TIP.

Major Projects Implemented from the Prior TIP.

Borman Expressway Interchange at I-65 (final segment under construction).

Economic Stimulus Projects funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: \$61.4 million/149 projects.

Commuter Rail Train Control/Signal System (underway).

New Commuter Bus Service from Valparaiso for Chicago Loop area.

Three-County Air Quality Public Education Program

I-65 New Interchange at 109th Ave (now open to traffic)

Kennedy Avenue Reconstruction (Highland) I-80/94 to Ridge Rd

Cline Ave Improvement (Highland) Ridge Rd to 45th Ave

I-80/94 Drainage Correction near Kennedy Ave

Illiana Expressway NEPA Study (started)

US 30 Access Control Project in Merrillville: Project Started

Improvement of Boston/Larson/Bach Streets and SR 2 (LaPorte)

Coolspring Ave Reconstruction (Ohio to Roeske Ave) Michigan City

165th St Reconstruction (Hammond) Indianapolis Blvd to Calumet Ave

Purchase of 203 Alternative-Fueled Vehicles under the CMAQ Program

TIP Development Process

Introduction. In early 2010, NIRPC set out to develop a new TIP for the period FFY 2011 through 2015. In late 2009 INDOT developed a new Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) with new projects that were not included in our then-current TIP document.

Accordingly, stakeholder meetings were convened in early 2010 with the intent of developing a new TIP for adoption in June 2010. In May 2010, following discussions with INDOT, FHWA, and FTA, a decision was made to delay production of the new TIP until after the Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP) adoption (then expected in late 2010 or early 2011).

TIP development ceased for all funding programs except public transit. Following consultation with transit operators, FTA, and the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC), NIRPC proceeded with an update of the transit projects in the TIP.

2010 Transit Project Solicitation. The rationale for proceeding with a transit-only solicitation in 2010 was primarily due to financial and organizational structure changes. The start of services provided through the Regional Bus Authority (RBA), and the consolidation of the former Hammond Transit System with the RBA meant applicant and programing changes in the TIP. In 2009 the Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC) was experiencing significant shortfall in property tax revenue due to economic conditions and the state's new limits on property tax levies. In

the past three years GPTC has been forced to reduce personnel, and routes, days and hours of service.

Projects were solicited in early 2010 under Sections 5307 (both urbanized areas), Section 5309 Rail Modernization, Section 5316 Job Access/Reverse Commute, and Section 5317 New Freedom. For Section 5307 funds for Lake and Porter Counties, the project selection process and criteria used were based on the process developed under the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. That process identified six priorities and a scoring system. The Transit Operators Roundtable is the stakeholder group that reviews the projects and scoring results and reaches consensus on the proposed program of projects for the Lake Porter urbanized area. It will be this group that revises the project selection process based on the new goals and objectives in the 2040 CRP, once it's adopted.

The funds for the Michigan City-La Porte small urban area are allocated to the two eligible applicants in La Porte County based on a formula that is developed by the eligible operators.

The JARC and New Freedom proposed projects are reviewed and scored based on the region's adopted Coordinated Human Services Public Transit Plan. The Coordinated Plan identifies regional priorities and establishes criteria for selection of projects under both programs. The stakeholder committee for the JARC and New Freedom project selection process is the Coordinated Human Services Public Transit Committee. In addition to the public transit operators, the Committee includes representatives of human services organizations, private transit providers, persons with disabilities, minorities, and low income. Services selected for funding under the New Freedom initiative included expansion of demand response service hours in Porter County, and two partnership projects in Lake County. The partnership projects are with ARC Bridges in Hobart and Regional Mental Health. The provider is South Lake County Community Services, a public demand response provider serving middle and south Lake County. The projects facilitate greater access to transit for a variety of purposes, including education, employment and training services.

Services selected for funding under the JARC program are operated by the Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC). The service improves access to employment opportunities and educational facilities for low income persons in an area not previously served by public transit.

The consensus of the stakeholder committee for the JARC and New Freedom program was to award multi-year commitments to the three new services in order to provide continuity and allow time to establish a long-term funding stream.

The list of projects selected was incorporated into our current TIP via amendment.

The public transit projects proposed for inclusion in the new 2012-2015 TIP are, with minor exceptions, those that were selected in 2010.

2011 TIP Update. A schedule for undertaking the new 2012-2015 TIP was developed and distributed to the Transportation Policy Committee at its December 2010 meeting. It was announced that the solicitation would be limited to STP-funded projects in both urbanized areas.

This limited solicitation was due to the 2010 situation involving transit funding described earlier, plus our receipt of requests for supplemental funding from three of the six intersection improvement projects selected during the 2008 solicitation for funding with Highway Safety funds. The supplemental funding requested led us to believe that all new Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds would be allocated to these older projects (we were correct). CMAQ projects have never been solicited during a regular TIP update process—that solicitation schedule is aligned with the CMAQ eligibility determination process cycle.

Project selection process information for the 2010 public transit project solicitation (including Sections 5307, 5309, 5316, and 5317), as well as the 2008 HSIP and CMAQ solicitations, are found in Appendix E.

2011 TIP Update: Solicitation for New STP Projects. A series of stakeholder meetings was conducted in January and February 2011. There were a total of seven highway stakeholder meetings held.

A lengthy agenda was developed that began with a recitation of current planning and programming issues:

- What we learned from ARRA: Drainage/Flood Control Needs, PM, Sidewalks.
- FHWA Planning Emphasis Areas: Project Tracking & ADA Transition Plans.
- CRP Goals & Objectives: Shift to Growth Center Oriented Development.
- NIRPC Complete Streets Policy: Incorporation of non-motorized needs in highway design.
- Congestion Management System: Pre-Identification of Capacity-Increasing Projects.
- Regional Significance Guidance: Reclassification of some Aux Lane projects.
- FHWA/MUTCD Sign & Pavement Replacement.
- SAFETEA-LU Re-authorization & the mood of Congress.

The group made recommendations for basic requirements for the development of new TIP's and general TIP procedures. Some of these recommendations are being embedded in the transportation plan. Others are reflected in a modification to the (then) draft Quarterly Project Tracking System. These include the frequency of new TIP documents, contents of the published list of projects, use of "funding targets" in each pool of federal funds controlled by the MPO, cross-cutting project solicitation standards for all solicitations, TIP amendment and administrative modification procedures, and the quarterly project tracking system, among others.

The stakeholders concluded that the existing STP project selection system was obsolete and needed to be replaced. A new system was created that brought new elements, such as Complete Streets compliance, the use of data from NIRPC's new Congestion Management Process (CMP), reclassification of some types of projects consistent with our Regional Significance policy, and reconsideration of the eligibility of right of way expenses for federal reimbursement. Most significantly, however, was the incorporation of priorities expressed in the new Comprehensive Regional Plan that was under development simultaneously with the new TIP.

A new selection system was developed by stakeholders that resulted in the following funding categories for Group I-funded projects:

Funding Target	Percent
<u>Roadway Preservation</u>	<u>40% of Programmable Funds</u>
<u>Capacity Expansion</u>	<u>30% of Programmable Funds</u>
<u>Intersection Improvements</u>	<u>8% of Programmable Funds</u>
<u>Bridges</u>	<u>7% of Programmable Funds</u>
<u>Signalization</u>	<u>3% of Programmable Funds</u>
<u>On-System Drainage</u>	<u>8% of Programmable Funds</u>
<u>Other</u>	<u>4% of Programmable Funds</u>

A 100 point scoring system was devised for each funding target that allocated (up to) 60 points based on purpose and need and (up to) 40 points based upon the project's relative impact according to priorities expressed in the new Comprehensive Regional Plan's goals and objectives.

The project selection process for local capacity-increasing projects was rewritten to include two threshold requirements before a project would be considered for funding. Proposed projects must receive prior clearance and approval from our Congestion Management Process (CMP), and they must be included in the new long range plan (2040 CRP). Additionally, the relative ranking of the project in the CMP was also used in selecting capacity increasing projects submitted for funding consideration.

The solicitation was released on February 24, 2011. Responses (applications for new projects or requests for supplemental funds for existing projects) were due on March 16, 2011. This date was later extended to March 31, 2011 to accommodate completion of the Congestion Management Process. The Group I (Lake-Porter) stakeholder meeting was held on April 19, 2011.

[The Group II (Michigan City/LaPorte area) meeting was scheduled for April 20, 2011 but cancelled due to scheduling conflicts with two key stakeholders. Consequently, there were no new STP Group II projects selected. The STP Group II projects listed in the FFY 2012-2015 TIP are all carry over projects from the prior TIP.]

Results of the STP Group I Stakeholder Meeting. Given the uncertainties regarding future federal funding, stakeholders accepted the staff

recommendation to program only to FFY 2010 levels of funding for years 2012 through 2015. Funding was flat-lined at \$13,686,912 per year.

Staff calculated carryover funds on a cash basis. The most recent fund obligation data from INDOT (March 2011) was used. We projected a total programming limit of about \$66.5 million for the four year period covered by the new TIP.

Requests for supplemental funds for existing projects amounted to \$30.2 million. When added to the total cash needs of pre-existing projects (\$32.1 million), a total of \$62.4 million was needed to provide funding for existing projects. This left about \$4.1 million available for the programming of new projects.

Staff reported that of the 39 construction projects being carried over into the new TIP, eight (8) had already been let, and at least 12 (but likely no more than 16) would be let prior to July 2012. This would leave between 15 and 19 projects buildable during 2013-2015. Because several of these 15 to 19 projects have been carried over from multiple TIPs, the committee discussed options.

Because there is a two to three year lead (minimum) to bring a project to letting, the committee was faced with two choices: 1) Reject all of the applications for new Group I projects (and re-solicit in 2013) or 2) use the remaining \$4.1 million to provide initial federal funding to projects so that sponsors could begin development of these projects. The consensus of the group was to choose the latter—provide partial funding to projects in a manner consistent with the agreed upon project selection system.

The \$4.1 million was divided into the six funding targets and the highest scoring projects were selected in each (except Roadway Preservation and Intersection Improvements, where the selection system required that two projects be chosen in these categories). The committee was provided with an estimate of the unfunded federal portion of these projects (approximately \$22.8 million). A total of eight projects were selected and those are listed in this TIP. The total cost of each of these eight projects is displayed in the TIP, along with its pro-rata share of the \$4.1 million.

The 2011 STP Group I and II solicitation materials used for this process are displayed on the following pages. Additional materials, including scoring sheets, are displayed in Appendix E.