

# Public Participation Plan 2013

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**Draft**  
**11/27/2013**

**This draft reflects all edits that were placed in the plan as of November 27, 2013. The edits were proposed by the following: the NIRPC Commission's Ad Hoc Sub-Committee, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT).**

Requests for alternate formats, such as large print or recorded materials, 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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**2013 NIRPC Board of Commissioners (Appointing Authority – Member)***Lake County*

Lake County Commissioners - Roosevelt Allen, Jr., Executive Board  
Lake County Council - Christine Cid  
Lake County Surveyor - George Van Til  
Mayor of Crown Point - David Uran, Chairman  
Mayor of East Chicago - Anthony Copeland, Executive Board  
Mayor of Gary - Karen Freeman-Wilson  
Mayor of Hammond - Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.  
Mayor of Hobart - Brian Snedecor, Vice-Chairman  
Mayor of Lake Station - Keith Soderquist  
Mayor of Whiting - Joseph M. Stahura  
Cedar Lake Town Council - Robert Carnahan  
Dyer Town Council - Jeff Dekker  
Griffith Town Council - Stan Dobosz  
Highland Town Council - Michael Griffin  
Lowell Town Council - Donald Parker  
Merrillville Town Council - Shawn M. Pettit  
Munster Town Council - David F. Shafer  
New Chicago Town Council - Philip Mores  
St. John Town Council - Michael Forbes  
Schererville Town Council - Tom Schmitt  
Schneider Town Council - Richard Ludlow  
Winfield Town Council - James Simmons

*Porter County*

Porter County Commissioners - Nancy Adams, Executive Board  
Porter County Council - Jim Polarek  
Porter County Surveyor - Kevin Breitzke  
Mayor of Portage - Jim Snyder  
Mayor of Valparaiso - H. Jonathan Costas  
Beverly Shores Town Council - Geof Benson  
Burns Harbor Town Council - Jeff Freeze  
Chesterton Town Council - James G. Ton, Secretary  
Dune Acres Town Council - Vacant  
Hebron Town Council - Don Ensign, Executive Board  
Kouts Town Council - James Murphy  
Ogden Dunes Town Council - Tom Clouser  
Pines Town Council - George Adey  
Porter Town Council - Greg Stinson  
Porter Township Trustee - Edward Morales  
Union Township Trustee - Anthony Pampalone

*LaPorte County*

LaPorte County Commissioners - Dave Decker, Executive Board  
 LaPorte County Council - Matthew Bernacchi  
 LaPorte County Surveyor - Anthony Hendricks  
 Mayor of LaPorte - Blair Milo, Treasurer  
 Mayor of Michigan City - Richard Murphy  
 Kingsbury Town Council - Mark Ritter  
 Kingsford Heights Town Council - Rosalie Jacobs  
 LaCrosse Town Council - Vacant  
 Long Beach Town Council - Bob Schaefer, Executive Board  
 Michiana Shores Town Council - Patrick Margraf  
 Pottawattomie Park Town Council - Vacant  
 Trail Creek Town Council - John Bayler  
 Wanatah Town Council - Diane Noll  
 Westville Town Council - Vacant  
 Governor of Indiana - Ed Soliday, Executive Board

**2012 Public Participation Task Force Members**

From May to August 2012, a Public Participation Task Force was convened and drafted the mission statement, purpose, goals and objectives of the Public Participation Plan, which NIRPC incorporated into this plan. Below is a list of the people that were invited to participate during that period of time.

**Tom Anderson**, Member, Izaak Walton League  
**Jena Bellezza**, Marketing Director, Indiana Parenting Institute  
**Amanda Chraca**, Economic & Community Development, 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator, Purdue Extension LaPorte County  
**Elias Crim**, Citizen, City of Valparaiso  
**Stephen Gill**, Northwest Indiana Field Representative, Indiana Youth Institute  
**Sandra Hall Smith**, Assistant Director, Center for Urban & Regional Excellence, Indiana University Northwest  
**Tyler Kent**, Director of Planning, City of Valparaiso  
**Tarry Martin**, Pastor and Consultant, City of Gary  
**Jeannette Neagu**, President, Save the Dunes  
**Angie Nelson**, Public Affairs Manager, NIPSCO  
**Randy Novak**, Fire Marshall, Michigan City Fire Department  
**Jim Pinkerton**, Communications Director, INDOT  
**Sylvia Planer**, President, Hammond Hispanic Community Committee  
**Charlotte Read**, Environmental Advocate, Save the Dunes  
**Rev. Cheryl Rivera**, Executive Director, Northwest Indiana Federation  
**Lisa Schmidt**, Member, Leadership Northwest Indiana  
**Kathy Sipple**, Consultant, Social Media  
**Tyrone Spann**, Director of Programming, Foundations of East Chicago  
**Mary Jane Thomas**, Director of Community Development & Planning, City of LaPorte

## Chapter One: Introduction

Nestled in the Northwest corner of Indiana between the metropolitan influences of Chicago and Indianapolis, and shaped by sand and steel, Northwest Indiana draws on a rich history of economic accomplishment and unmatched natural beauty. Today, these advantages present us with a unique challenge in an unpredictable world – to shape our own future and to sustain our diverse quality of life.

Originally called the Lake - Porter County Regional Transportation and Planning Commission, the two-county agency was created by state statute in 1965 and defined as a multi-purpose, area-wide planning agency. It was organized in 1966. In 1973, by an amendment to the original state statute, the name was changed to the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC). In 1975, Indiana Governor Otis Bowen re-designated the agency as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the two-county region. LaPorte County joined in 1979, and the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary was officially extended to include LaPorte County in 1994. NIRPC's metropolitan planning area consists of the entire three-county area of Lake, LaPorte, and Porter Counties.

The agency conducts the continuous, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process required of all MPOs. Planning is carried out in accordance with the federal transportation planning requirements of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21), the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and their predecessor acts. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) reviews the metropolitan area transportation planning process carried out by NIRPC, in partnership with INDOT and others every four years.

In 2003, major changes were made to NIRPC's functions and appointing authorities in a law passed by the Indiana General Assembly and signed by the Governor. The new legislation defined NIRPC as a council of governments (COG) and designated regional planning responsibilities in the areas of economic development, environmental resources, and transportation. Reorganizing as a council of governments increased the size of the Commissioner Board from 39 to 51. The new seats included representation from all 41 cities and towns in the three-county region. The legislation also specified that only elected officials could be appointed to serve on the Commission. In 2007 the legislation was amended to add trustees of a township with a population over 8,000 which do not contain a municipality. This added two more voting members, making the total Commissioner Board 53. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and public transit operators, selected by the operators, continue to participate on the Commission as non-voting members.



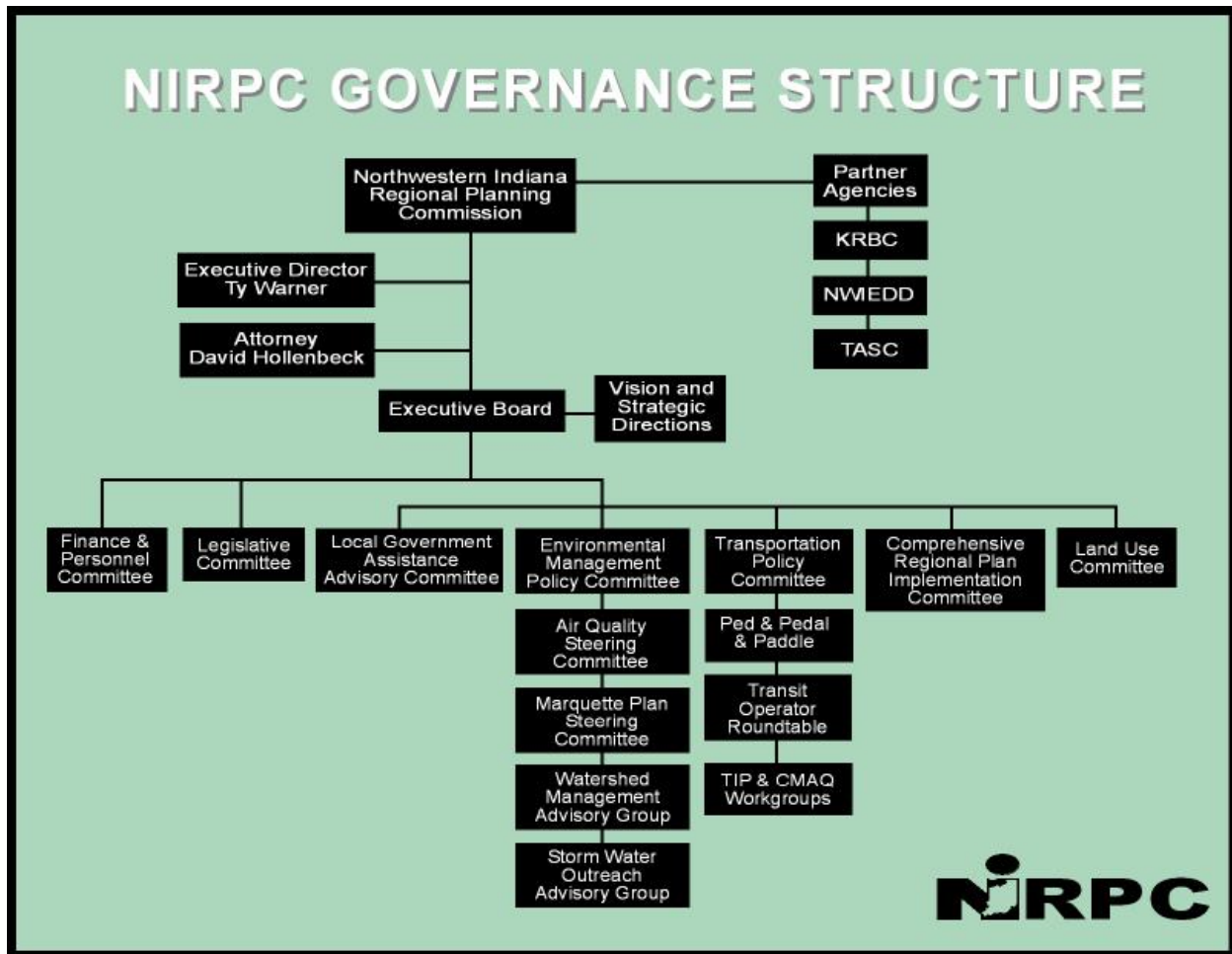


Figure A: NIRPC Governance Structure

The business of the agency is conducted through the Commission's governance structure as pictured in Figure A above. Many of the agency's planning activities are conducted through task forces or working groups which report to the appropriate policy advisory committee. Participation on these task forces and working groups is open to the public. Information on current planning initiatives and opportunities for participation are located on the NIRPC web site at <http://www.nirpc.org>.

To address its many planning responsibilities, NIRPC develops a wide variety of plans. Recent examples, in addition to this Public Participation Plan, include the:

- 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (2040 CRP);
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Watershed Management Plan;
- Ped and Pedal Plan 2010; and
- Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems Architecture.

NIRPC welcomes and encourages public participation in the planning activities of the agency. The Public Participation Plan presents NIRPC's goals and objectives for engaging the public as active participants in the agency's planning activities. It describes the various

methods staff will use to solicit, involve, and respond to the region's residents during transportation and other planning processes. The plan provides NIRPC staff with a set of tools they will use, as appropriate, for working through these public participation processes and engaging people in a variety of ways. While federal regulations are specific to transportation planning, the Public Participation Plan will guide all of NIRPC's planning activities.

While NIRPC faces challenges in dealing with declining federal, state and local funding, the agency will use available resources to ensure the participation of all citizens of northwest Indiana. Chapter Five: Public Involvement Techniques identifies potential methods staff will employ to maximize outreach. While every technique may not be appropriate for use in every instance, NIRPC is committed to conducting as open a process as possible.

Through discussions and public meetings, NIRPC aims to reach the residents of Northwest Indiana through as many venues as possible. From social media on the web to electronic mailings of NIRPC's newsletter, *the regional view*, NIRPC will continue to inform and engage the public using traditional and non-traditional techniques. NIRPC's mission is to involve the public in its decisions that affects the future of Northwest Indiana, and to consider the public as stakeholders in the decisions that help strengthen the region.

In meeting notices, for example Transportation Policy Committee meetings, NIRPC is committed to using the language found on the inside cover (page 2) of this document and as it relates to TTY users.

## **Chapter Two: MPO Public Participation Requirements**

As the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for Northwestern Indiana, NIRPC is responsible for complying with the transportation planning public participation regulations contained in 23 CFR 450.316 (see Appendix D) and published on February 14, 2007. The federal regulations call for a participatory process "for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process." (23 CFR 450.316(a))

When a major planning process is undertaken, such as a Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and accompanying Conformity Determination, NIRPC will form a task force or a steering committee to help formulate the plan/ program. In the case of an updated Public Participation Plan, the drafted plan has a minimum forty-five day public review and comment period. If significant public comment is made (see page 12), suggesting revision of the plan, the edits will be made and the plan will be posted to the public for an additional forty-five days. If the plan receives no major suggestions for revision, the plan is proposed to the NIRPC Board of Commissioners for adoption, upon hearing a recommendation

from the Transportation Policy Committee. How NIRPC implements a major plan/ program of the transportation planning process, including public comments follows in Figure B.

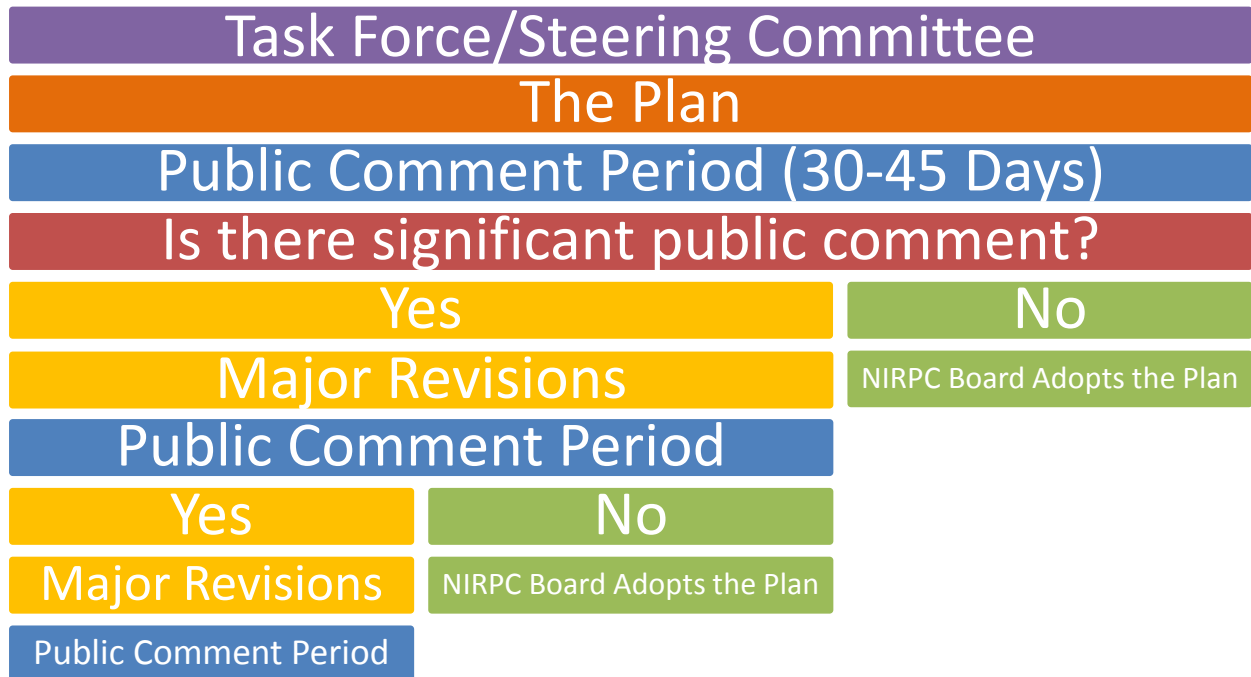


Figure B: NIRPC Comment and Action Process Chart.

Specifics on the length of required public review and comment periods required for the transportation planning and other NIRPC documents are contained in Figure C below. The U.S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) proscribe a minimum length of 45 days for public comment periods on the new or updated public participation plans. For other types of documents there is no minimum length required—in these instances the Metropolitan Planning Organization is permitted discretion in determining the minimum length. Historically, NIRPC has used a 30-day period (minimum) for these other documents. This Public Participation Plan retains this 30-day standard for all original documents, but does make two exceptions, as noted in Figure C below, for minor amendments to the TIP (as discussed in Chapter Three) and all amendments to the Unified Planning Work Program.

Public Comment Period Length by Document Type			Public Meeting Required ?
Document Type	Minimum Review Period		
	Required by Federal Regulation	Per Our Policy	
<b>MPO Planning Documents Required by Federal Statute &amp; Regulation</b>			
Long-Range Transportation Plan	Not Specified	30	Yes*
Long-Range Transportation Plan Amendments	Not Specified	30	Yes*
Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	Not Specified	30	Yes*
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Not Specified	30	Yes
Major TIP Amendments	Not Specified	30	No
Minor TIP Amendments	Not Specified	7	No
Air Quality Conformity Determination	Not Specified	30	No
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	Not Specified	30	No
UPWP Amendments	Not Specified	7	No
Public Participation Plans (PPP)	45	45	Yes
PPP Amendments	45	45	Yes*
<b>Other Plans and Documents of Regional Significance</b>			
Corridor, Neighborhood, or Sub-Area Transportation Plans	Not Specified	30	Yes*
Other Regional Plans	Not Specified	30	
Comprehensive Regional Development Plans/Updates	Not Specified	30	Yes*
Comprehensive Regional Environmental Plans/Updates	Not Specified	30	Yes*
Comprehensive Regional Economic Development Plans or Updates	Not Specified	30	Yes*
Other Significant Documents, Policies, Guidance, and Standards	Not Specified	30	No

*\*Denotes formal public meetings that we will conduct (under our own authority) that are not required by 23 CFR Part 540.*

Figure C: Document Comment Requirements

Comments received during the formal comment period are reviewed by staff and the applicable task force/ steering committee. Each comment will be classified as either Significant or Not Significant. Comments are defined as “significant” comments if they result in the following actions being taken:

1. Require substantive changes and additions to the draft document;
2. Propose major MPO policy revisions and additions; and/or
3. Contain major new projects not previously subjected to public review and comment.

Following each public comment period conducted for a major planning process, the task force or steering committee would review a Public Comment Summary Report prepared by staff. Such Reports will list each comment received, describe the manner in which the comment was considered by the staff, indicate the significance of the comment, and indicate if there is a need to modify the document. The Report must be reviewed by the appropriate NIRPC policy committee and received by the NIRPC Board prior to their taking action on the plan. The NIRPC Board must receive the Public Comment Summary Report prior to adopting the document itself. The Report is required to be included in the final printed version of the Long Range Transportation plan, TIP, and Conformity Determination. Public meetings will be held as shown in Figure C (above).

<b>Disposition of Comments Received</b>	
<b>Comment Type</b>	<b>Action Required</b>
<b>All Comments</b>	Prepare a written Public Comment Summary Report that is reviewed by the cognizant NIRPC Policy Committee and adopted by the NIRPC Board. Include the Report in the subject Document.
<b>Non-Significant Comments</b>	
No Change in Document Text Required	List the comment in the summary report.
Require Change in Document Text	Make the change to the document. In the Public Comment Summary Report, identify the change and the rationale for making the change.
<b>Significant Comments</b>	
Require Change in Document Text	In the summary report, identify the change, present an analysis of the issue (including the rationale for making the change), and identify any follow-up actions needed that are external to the document.
	Make the change to the document. Repeat the process (i.e., begin a new public comment period on the revised document). Prepare a new Public Comment Summary Report.

Figure D: Disposition of Comments Received

If all comments are classified as “Not Significant” and the document task force (or steering committee) determines that the draft document does not need to be changed, the document may be adopted by the NIRPC Board as it was released for public comment.

If all comments are classified as “Not Significant” and the document task force (or steering committee) determines that the draft document does need to be changed, the document may be adopted by the NIRPC Board as revised.

If any individual comment received is determined to be “Significant” and the document task force (or steering committee) determines that the draft document does need to be changed, the document may be revised. However, in this case, a new public comment period will be started on the revised document.

Additionally, NIRPC will also document, consider, and respond to any public input received at any time during the development of the long range transportation plan and/or TIP (outside of a public comment period). The record of NIRPC’s consideration and response to this type of input

will also be included in the Public Comment Summary Reports, respectively, for the plan and TIP.

## **Increased Access to NIRPC Meetings**

One of the first tasks in improving the participation of more residents is to improve the accessibility to NIRPC meetings, task forces and working groups. Requests for alternate formats, such as large print or recorded materials, or assisted listening accommodations, such as signing, must be made at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

Due to the lack of public transportation to get across county lines in general, and across most municipal boundaries in particular, access to the NIRPC office is limited. NIRPC is committed to opening up the opportunities to participate by implementing several new initiatives.

- **Web-Casting Meetings** – In calendar 2014 NIRPC will pursue the ability to provide real-time meeting access through equipment, staffing and internet capacity. All meetings of the MPO transportation policy committee and transportation work groups and task forces will be available live on the web when NIRPC obtains the technology. People participating via the web cast will be able to request accessible format documents in advance and submit comments in real time. The full commission meetings held quarterly and monthly executive board meetings will continue to be recorded and rebroadcast as is currently being done with Access LaPorte County (ALCo).
- **Variable Meeting Locations** – In addition to providing real-time meeting access as resources for doing so become available, NIRPC will periodically rotate meeting locations among the three member counties for meetings of the Transportation Policy Committee when significant transportation planning decisions are on the agenda. Significant decisions include changes to the transportation component of the long-range plan, a new or substantially revised TIP, or adoption of a new or updated specific transportation plan, such as the Coordinated Human Services Plan, or the Ped and Pedal Plan. Furthermore, NIRPC will consider rotating locations for its quarterly full commission meetings on occasion to further improve accessibility to all stakeholders. Those non-NIRPC meeting locations should have the ability to provide real-time meeting access.

## **Special Participants in the MPO Planning Process**

The MPO planning regulations call for direct participation of the local public transit operators, paratransit providers, and other agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the planning area that are affected by transportation in the development of long-range plans and the Transportation Improvement Program. For public and paratransit operators this requirement is met through the Transit Operators Roundtable, a group that NIRPC convenes. It provides transit operators with direct access to the planning and programming processes and

as a source for information on new or revised MPO policies or procedures. In addition, there is a planning Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NIRPC, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and operators of public transportation. The current MOU is from 2008, which will be reviewed and updated in calendar 2013 starting with INDOT.

To strengthen the ties between the MPO and transit operators, NIRPC membership was altered to provide for a representative selected by the transit operators to sit on the NIRPC Board. Public, private and paratransit providers are also routinely included as stakeholders in transportation planning task forces and steering committees. Representatives of “other related agencies and officials,” including human services, municipal and county planners and highway officials, private and public sector economic development officials, environmental interests, airport operations, and freight interests are members of the NIRPC Transportation Policy Committee.

Representatives of other related agencies and officials, along with INDOT, the transit operators, and representatives of the disability community, the elderly, low-income and transit users, constitute the core group of stakeholders in the transportation planning process. This core group is the main source of volunteers for working groups, steering committees and task forces formed as needed to support a specific planning activity, such as the long-range plan.

The last category of special participants is Federal Land recipients. In Northwest Indiana, this includes the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. The National Park Service maintains a consistent presence in the transportation planning process by having representation on the MPO Transportation Policy Committee and serving on related task forces and working groups. There are no Indian Tribal lands or National Forests in Northwest Indiana.

## **Coordination with Statewide Transportation Planning**

In addition to fostering participation with the public and a broad range of stakeholders, the MPO planning regulations also call for the MPO’s coordination with the statewide transportation planning public participation and consultation processes.

Coordination with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) takes place in two ways:

1. INDOT representatives participate monthly in the NIRPC Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) meetings. INDOT, as well as the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are non-voting members of the TPC, and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is a voting member of the TPC. These members, in addition to other stakeholders, serve as an on-going opportunity for bi-state, federal, state and local officials to coordinate and cooperate.
2. For public review and comment on state transportation plans, NIRPC works cooperatively with INDOT in publicizing the State’s public planning meetings. Prior to these meetings, INDOT district staff meets with MPO staff to review projects

proposed in Northwest Indiana. Issues are resolved informally, if possible. If not, the MPO submits formal written comments when the annual meeting takes place. The INDOT process provides for responses to comments within thirty days.

## **Chapter Three: Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Revisions Amendments and Administrative Modifications**

### **Introduction**

A Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a short-term (four-year) list of federally funded surface transportation investment projects in a metropolitan planning area. Surface transportation projects include those for public transit, local and state highways and bicycle/pedestrian projects.

A TIP must also include all regionally significant surface transportation projects, including those funded without federal funds. All local preservation and maintenance projects listed in a TIP must be consistent with the current regional transportation plan, which currently is the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan. All capacity-increasing projects (such as added travel lane projects or regionally significant new roadways) must be specifically identified in both the regional transportation plan and its accompanying Air Quality Conformity Determination.

Local preservation and maintenance projects included in the TIP are prioritized and selected in accordance with guidance from the regional transportation plan. Both the plan and TIP must conform to the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality.

NIRPC's Board adopts a new TIP every other year. In between, revisions are made to the TIP by way of amendments. The purpose of this section of the Public Participation Plan is to identify the various types of TIP revisions that are typically encountered and describe the process through which these changes will be made to the TIP. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Planning Regulations that govern the development of Transportation Improvement Programs (23 CFR Part 450) require that these amendment processes and procedures be included in this Public Participation Plan.

### **Terms and Definitions**

**TIP Amendment** A TIP amendment is a change to the TIP that is subjected to a public comment period, reviewed by the Transportation Policy Committee, and formally adopted by the NIRPC Board.

**Administrative Modification** An administrative modification revises a project already in the TIP. Changes made in this manner are not subjected to a public comment period, not reviewed by the Transportation Policy Committee, and not formally adopted by the NIRPC Board.

**Project Phases** Each highway construction project typically has three phases, Preliminary Engineering (PE), Right of Way (RW), and Construction (CN). Additionally, some project



sponsors may break a lengthy roadway improvement project into multiple segments, also referred to as phases.

Conformity Determination Regulations of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that implement the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 require that a formal, ongoing process be established to ensure that the Regional Transportation Plan and TIP conform to the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality. Each transportation Plan (or amendment thereto) and each new TIP must be supported by an updated Conformity Determination. The Conformity Determination will identify all Regionally Significant, Non-Exempt projects that add capacity to the transportation network. Capacity-increasing projects that are not in the Conformity Determination may not be included in a TIP.

Interagency Consultation Group The Indiana Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) consists of representatives from EPA, Federal Highway Administration, (FHWA), Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). The ICG must review each TIP amendment prior to adoption to verify the air quality status of each project included in the amendment. The amendment may not take effect without this clearance.

## **TIP Amendments**

There are three types of amendments: Minor Amendments, Major Amendments, and Emergency Amendments. Each are described as follows:

Minor Amendments Minor amendments add new or delete existing air quality-exempt projects, add federal funds to air quality-exempt projects already in the TIP that are funded entirely with non-federal funds, make changes in project termini (increases in length up to one-half mile) for air quality-exempt projects, minor changes in design concept or scope (with no additional travel lanes) for air quality-exempt projects).

Minor amendments require ICG review, a public review and comment period of one calendar week (or five business days) prior to final action by the NIRPC Board, and re-determination of fiscal constraint.

Major Amendments Major amendments make changes in the length of projects (of one-half mile or more) or to project termini (the starting and ending point of the project) for air quality-exempt projects, make major changes in design concept or scope (with no additional travel lanes) for air quality-exempt projects, or involve the addition of a new phase to any-project already in the Conformity Determination and TIP.

Major amendments require ICG review (and a conformity consultation call when the amendment involves a non-exempt project), a public review and comment period of 30 calendar days prior to final action by the NIRPC Board, and re-determination of fiscal constraint.

Amendments that add new air quality non-exempt projects to the TIP will be processed only when the project is listed in the then-current Conformity Determination.

Emergency Amendments In rare instances NIRPC's Executive Director may make a TIP amendment via a letter to INDOT. These amendments will only be made after the Executive Director, upon the recommendation of the NIRPC Transportation Projects Manager (and others, if necessary), concludes that a delay in adding the project to the TIP through the standard amendment process would either: 1) adversely affect public well-being or safety, or 2) result in the lapse or loss of federal funds to the region. The Executive Director has the discretion to make or not make the amendment.

This process may not be used to make changes either to air quality non-exempt projects or to "regionally significant"<sup>1</sup> transportation projects. Emergency amendments will be submitted to the ICG for review on the date they are issued. The NIRPC staff that manages the TIP must re-determine fiscal constraint prior to referring the amendment to the Executive Director for concurrence.

## **Administrative Modifications**

Changes to air quality exempt, non-Regionally Significant projects already in the TIP may be made by way of an administrative modification. The correction of typographical and other errors will be made in this manner, along with changes in the year, federal funding type, level of funding (total or federal) and/or descriptive information. Division of one listed project into two (or more) or consolidation of multiple projects into a single project with no changes to overall scope or termini may also be performed administratively. Once these changes are made, NIRPC will inform INDOT and the project sponsor via e-mail.

Administrative modifications that involve increases in federal funds require a re-determination of fiscal constraint for the affected federal fund type.

## **Other Provisions**

Publication of Current List of Projects NIRPC will post a copy of the most current list of projects (as amended) on its website, along with each individual amendment following its adoption. Administrative modifications will be highlighted on the current list of projects in the TIP that is posted on NIRPC's website. Each batch of administrative modifications processed will be posted on NIRPC's website.

Interagency Consultation Group Review All TIP amendments will be submitted to the Indiana Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) for review at least seven calendar days prior to NIRPC Board action. The ICG will determine the status of each item in the amendment pursuant to the Federal Clean Air Act and its implementing regulations. Projects may be removed from the amendment pursuant to ICG guidance.

NIRPC will also use the Public Participation Plan as a way to increase public and stakeholder awareness about the federal and state dollars that NIRPC allocates to transportation projects.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 38 in Appendix A for definition of regionally significant.

## Chapter Four: Purpose, Mission, Goals and Objectives

From May to August 2012, a Public Participation Task Force was convened and drafted the mission statement, purpose, goals and objectives of the Public Participation Plan, which NIRPC will incorporate into its programs. NIRPC will continue its commitment to broad-based citizen participation in all major regional planning activities. In addition, to ensure the continued relevance of the Public Participation Plan, it will be reviewed and modified, as needed, every four years.

### Public Participation Mission Statement

*The NIRPC Public Participation mission is to engage residents of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties in a meaningful exchange of ideas to move toward solutions for the diverse needs of the region's present and future transportation, economic and environmental planning and programming.*

### Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

The Plan outlines goals and objectives for public participation in the Commission's transportation, economic development and environmental plans and programs. It identifies public involvement activities that NIRPC will use to achieve the Plan's goals.

### Public Participation Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To develop strategic outreach plans which assure outreach to all of the public, with specific attention given to individuals and groups who have been traditionally underserved and underrepresented in the regional planning process.

Objective 1.1 Increase the participation of individuals in the regional planning process, with specific attention given to minorities, low-income persons, people with disabilities, the young, the elderly, and non-English speaking communities.

Objective 1.2 Build a communications network with organizations within the region.

Goal 2: To create a public involvement environment that is welcoming, open, accessible, easily understood, participatory, and inclusive.

Objective 2.1 Due care will be exercised to identify persons and parties who wish to be known for the record. Any memorializing record will be composed and made available pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5, the Open Door Law.

Objective 2.2 Interact with the public in a manner that demonstrates active listening, mutual respect, understanding, acceptance, and responsiveness.

Objective 2.3 Build consensus and trust.

Objective 2.4 Communicate in alternative and/or bilingual formats as necessary to facilitate full participation of all residents.

Goal 3: To foster continuous dialogue with the public.

Objective 3.1 Develop relationships with the public using appropriate communications techniques.

Objective 3.2 Use tools such as the NIRPC website, social media, online surveys, and crowdsourcing applications to engage the public.

Goal 4: To ensure decision makers are informed of public input.

Objective 4.1 Provide detailed and objective information that clearly defines the issue at hand

Objective 4.2 Provide timely information and opportunities for public dialogue in advance of key decision points

Objective 4.3 Provide feedback to the public on how their input was used by decision makers.

Goal 5: To continuously evaluate the public participation process.

Objective 5.1 Provide a means for residents' feedback on the public participation process.

Objective 5.2 Establish internal and external evaluation processes.

Objective 5.3 Evaluate actual performance in a timely manner and take corrective action as needed.

Objective 5.4 Communicate results of the evaluation process to participants and decision makers to demonstrate accountability

## **Chapter Five: Public Involvement Techniques**

This section contains a menu of public involvement techniques used by NIRPC. Included in this menu are descriptions and activities associated with each technique. Depending on the purpose of our outreach efforts, NIRPC will use the most appropriate and effective techniques to engage the public. The tools are grouped into categories based on increasing levels of public control over NIRPC's planning outcomes. Following the table is an explanation with examples.

	<i>(Lower)</i>	<u><i>Level of Participation</i></u>	<i>(Higher)</i>	
<b>Public Participation Goal</b>	<b>Inform</b> To provide the public with balanced and objective information and to assist in their understanding of planning problems, alternatives, opportunities, and solutions.	<b>Consult</b> To obtain public feedback on our planning work, analyses, outreach efforts, and decisions.	<b>Involve</b> To work directly with the public throughout the planning process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	<b>Collaborate</b> To partner with the public in every aspect of our planning process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions.
<b>NIRPC's Promise to the Public</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influences our decisions.	We will work with you to ensure that your goals and aspirations are directly reflected in our planning work as much as possible, and to provide feedback on how public input influences our decisions.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions to our planning issues, and incorporate your advice and recommendations into our decisions as much as possible.
<b>Public Involvement Techniques</b>	Website, Facebook, Twitter, Newsletters, Press Releases, Legal Advertisements, Direct Mailings, Fact Sheets, Display Advertisements	Facebook, Twitter, Surveys, Comment Forms, Public Meetings	Open Houses, Group Meetings, Webinars, Surveys	Task Forces, Working Groups, Youth Outreach, Small and Large Group Meetings

Figure E: Public Participation Matrix

Source: NIRPC, adapted from International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum

## NIRPC Website

**Description:** The website contains information about NIRPC's major planning activities. Agency work products, such as the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Ped, Pedal & Paddle Plan, the agency's Unified Planning Work Program, and extensive demographics data are available here. Links to local, state and federal sites are provided. At least a two-month calendar of public meetings and events is easily accessible and up-to-date.

**Outcomes:** The website is used by the public as an informational and educational tool. It is especially useful when it is kept up-to-date, which is a goal of NIRPC.

## Newsletters

**Description:** Newsletters are produced on an on-going basis and for special projects and planning activities. The agency newsletter, *the regional view*, is prepared quarterly and circulated electronically and in print. Project specific newsletters, such as the Watershed Management Plan newsletter, are produced on an as-needed basis.

**Outcomes:** Newsletters inform and educate the public about NIRPC and major planning projects.

## Press Releases

**Description:** Formal press releases are distributed to local media including newspapers, radio stations, local cable and public TV. They announce upcoming special events and provide information on specific issues that are introduced to the Commission.

**Outcomes:** Press releases are made to inform the public of major actions and special events. Major actions include public hearings, federal planning reviews, major plan adoptions, and opportunities for public participation.

## Legal Advertisements

**Description:** Legal notices announce pending major actions and public hearings. They advertise requests for proposals, requests for qualifications, and bids. Legal notices also announce opportunities for public review and comment.

**Outcomes:** Legal notices are made to inform the public of major actions and special events. Major actions include public hearings, federal planning reviews, major plan adoptions, and an opportunity for the public to be heard.

## Direct Mailings

**Description:** In order to conserve paper and resources, and to provide for fastest delivery of notices or information, direct mailings are used primarily to announce upcoming meetings for those that have requested hard copy. Generally, electronic distribution is preferred in order to conserve resources and provide for immediate receipt. Letters or flyers may ~~also~~ be used to announce special meetings, such as public meetings on long-range plans, or meetings on highway projects that will have a major impact on the region.<sup>2</sup> It is important that mailing lists be in a continuous state of development.

**Outcomes:** Direct mailings are made to inform the public of major actions and special events. Major actions include public hearings, federal planning reviews, major plan adoptions, and opportunities for public participation.

## Display Ads, Announcements, and Flyers

**Description:** Display ads, announcements and flyers are used to promote meetings and activities that are not regularly scheduled, such as open houses. They are published in local newspapers and/or posted at meeting sites such as libraries and municipal offices.

**Outcomes:** Announcements and flyers are made to inform the public of major actions and special events. Major actions include public hearings, federal planning reviews, major plan adoptions, and opportunities for public participation.

## Fact Sheets and General Information Documents

**Description:** Fact sheets and general information documents are brief statements of facts or brief descriptions of, a program or project that provides information to the public. They are circulated electronically, and as requested by mail.

**Outcomes:** Fact sheets and general information documents are made to provide information on current and forthcoming planning projects.

## Comment Forms

**Description:** Comment forms provide a method for the public to express their opinions on plans or projects. They are made available at open houses, formal public hearings, and on the website, and may be included in newsletters. Information for accessing comment forms will be included on the website and as part of newsletters or a separate insert.

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<sup>2</sup> A list of media contacts will be updated at least annually, and be available upon request.

**Outcomes:** Comment forms and comment cards are provided at public workshops, open houses, public hearings and other meetings. Comment cards are included in newsletters.

## Facebook

**Description:** NIRPC posts upcoming events and links to other web sites and articles on its various Facebook pages. Facebook will serve as a source for discussion about topics that affect the region. NIRPC currently has several Facebook pages: the *Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission*, *INVolve Northwest Indiana*, *Splash*, the *Northwest Indiana Watersheds* and the *Northwest Indiana Greenways and Blueways Plan*.

**Outcomes:** Share information about meetings and events at NIRPC and throughout the region in a manner beyond the traditional NIRPC communications listed in this chapter. Information is shared about meetings and events at NIRPC and at our partner agencies in the region. Discussions of important regional issues are conducted on our Facebook pages. Comments and feedback on NIRPC's programs and planning activities are sought and received via Facebook.

## Twitter

**Description:** Soon after the adoption of the Public Participation Plan, NIRPC will begin using Twitter to share information about our events, meetings, plans, and programs, and will also use Twitter to re-tweet information, events, and articles from other sources in the region that are regional in scope and related to NIRPC's mission.

**Outcomes:** NIRPC shares news and information about events, meetings, programs, and plans for NIRPC and other regional agencies. NIRPC solicits feedback from our stakeholders and the public on our programs and planning projects.

## Surveys

**Description:** Paper and electronic surveys are used when very specific input from the public is needed. Surveys ask specific questions related to planning projects and initiatives. They can be conducted via the NIRPC website, Facebook or through web-based tools such as Survey Monkey, and are distributed at meetings, special activities, or through the mail.

**Outcomes:** Public comments are obtained for such efforts as origin-destination studies, corridor studies, public transit analyses (not route analyses), and other planning studies.



## Open Houses

**Description:** Open houses are informal public meetings, where project team members interact with the public on a one-on-one basis. Short presentations may be given at these meetings. The open houses are intended to provide information and to solicit public comment on a proposed plan or activity in the early stages of its development.

**Outcomes:** The public is invited to review plan development. The public is informed and educated on planning issues.

## Small and Large Group Meetings

**Description:** These are targeted meetings held with a specific group of stakeholders, such as municipal and county planners, economic development specialists, youth groups, or neighborhood organizations. In larger group meetings where discussions take place in smaller groups, diversity will be encouraged. In designing an agenda for a meeting, consideration will be given to identifying start and end times, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes. NIRPC staff, in consultation with the appropriate committee, will determine whether it is necessary to bring people together to achieve the purpose and goals or identify another way(s) to disseminate the collected information and receive feedback.

**Outcomes:** Early plan development or preliminary study coordination.

## Webinars

**Description:** Webinars are virtual meetings where participants join via telephone or online through chat windows. These meetings are low-cost, and require either telephone or internet service. Webinars allow for online sharing of content, and provide people with an opportunity to participate in meetings from home, work, or any location that is convenient for their needs.

**Outcomes:** Issues are discussed related to planning. Feedback is provided on plans and topics. Documents, photos, and web pages that articulate planning initiatives and projects are shared online.

## Public Hearings

**Description:** Public hearings are legally advertised meetings in which a structured, formal procedure is used to take public comment. The proceedings are recorded and transcribed for the record.

**Outcomes:** Federally required hearings are conducted on certain public transit activities. Voluntary hearings are conducted when a formal record of public comment is desired.

## Public Outreach and Inclusion

**Description:** These are special activities geared toward educating and involving the public in the regional planning process. For example, hosting events at K-12 schools throughout the region and collaborating with various community organizations within Northwest Indiana. In addition, include engagements at the six colleges and universities that are located in the region: Ivy Tech Community College, Indiana University Northwest, Purdue University Calumet; Valparaiso University; Calumet College of St. Joseph and Purdue University-North Central.

**Outcomes:** NIRPC staff is available to meet with any and all groups and community organizations as requested.

## Task Forces and Working Groups

**Description:** These special committees are created to address a particular subject or activity. They have a definite starting and ending point. Membership on a task force or working group is always open to the public.

**Outcomes:** Plans, small-area studies, and other planning studies are conducted.

## Alternate Formats

**Description:** Alternate formats are used to accommodate residents who have difficulty in accessing news from NIRPC through traditional means. Examples include large print documents, compact discs (CDs), bilingual documents, or signers at public meetings or hearings. Where meetings are concerned, requests for alternate formats or assisted listening accommodations must be made at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. NIRPC is committed to using the language found on the inside cover (page 2) of this document, and as it relates to TTY users.

**Outcomes:** Documents in alternate formats are made available upon request.

## Chapter Six: Evaluation of the Public Participation Process

### The Meeting Report

The meeting report should be designed with outcomes in mind, based on the results of the meeting or workshop. Within one month of the conclusion of a public meeting, a report should be posted on the website and sent to all of the people who were invited and attended the workshop, and interested parties. This report should present the workshop goals, agenda and meeting design, as well as the following items:

- The outreach approach, collaboration with partners, and presentations

- Engagement process
- Highlights of prioritized voting
- Analysis of demographic responses (“Who’s-in-the-room”) and participants’ priorities
- Final actions that should be taken to address the issues discussed at the meeting.

NIRPC strives to evaluate its public process internally and externally. Externally, participants in NIRPC workshops will be asked evaluative questions using polling, paper evaluation forms, or other means to gather feedback for NIRPC’s use in future meetings. Participants will also be informed of how to convey additional feedback should they have comments at a later date. A sample evaluation form for participants follows, which may be added to depending on the needs of the meeting.

Internally, NIRPC will evaluate the methods it uses to engage the public, from what techniques were used, what stakeholders attended, and how the participants were informed of the results after the meeting or workshop was concluded. The form for NIRPC staff members to fill out after an event follows on page 32.

**DRAFT**

**Evaluation of the Public Involvement Process**

**Evaluation Form for Participants**

**This Form is available in alternate format upon request.**

**If you need assistance in completing this form please contact**

\_\_\_\_\_.

**The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, familial status, parental status, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.**

## General Information

Plan or Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Participation Took Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Location(s) Where Participation Took Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Is This Your First Time Participating in a NIRPC Activity?: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## About Your Experience

How did you learn about this activity?

Did you feel you were welcomed to participate? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no, would you please tell us what the problem was?

Did you feel free to make comments and ask questions? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no, could you please tell us what the problem was?

Did you feel your comments were heard and considered, and/or responded to?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no, could you please tell us why you feel that way?

Did you feel you received good background information that helped you participate in the activity? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no, could you tell us what was missing, or what other information would have helped?

Were you satisfied with the room arrangement? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Were you satisfied with the location? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no to either of these 2 questions, what could we do to improve your experience?

Were you informed of how your input would be used, or what the impact would be? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

Were you informed of the remaining activities and the timing of the completion of the project you participated in? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

Were you informed about how it would be reported back to you? Yes\_\_\_\_  
No\_\_\_\_\_

Would you participate again in a NIRPC activity? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_  
If no, would you tell us why not?

What could NIRPC do to improve your participation experience?

### **About You (optional)**

#### **Race**

Caucasian: \_\_\_\_\_ African-American: \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino: \_\_\_\_\_  
Asian/Island Pacific: \_\_\_\_\_ Native American: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Age**

Younger than 25 years old: \_\_\_\_\_ 25-34: \_\_\_\_\_ 35-44: \_\_\_\_\_ 45-54: \_\_\_\_\_  
55-64: \_\_\_\_\_ 65 years or older: \_\_\_\_\_

## Evaluation of the Public Involvement Process

### Public Outreach Form for NIRPC staff

Plan or Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

### Demographics

#### Race

Caucasian: \_\_\_\_\_ African-American: \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino: \_\_\_\_\_

Asian/Island Pacific: \_\_\_\_\_ Native American: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Age

Younger than 25 years old: \_\_\_\_\_ 25-34: \_\_\_\_\_ 35-44: \_\_\_\_\_ 45-54: \_\_\_\_\_

55-64: \_\_\_\_\_ 65 years or older: \_\_\_\_\_

What types of stakeholders were represented at this meeting?

What type(s) of outreach activities/techniques were used?

How far in advance of key decision-making points did NIRPC seek public input and disseminate information? Was citizen feedback actively solicited throughout the project and/or planning period? If so, was it used in the evaluation?

How was public participation incorporated into the decision-making process?  
Is there evidence of the degree to which public input influenced the process and changed the product?

How were residents informed of the results of the public participation process?

How did the incorporation of the Public Participation Plan into the plan/project improve stakeholder input?

What techniques that were not used for this meeting should be used for future meetings?



## **Conclusion**

NIRPC's Public Participation Plan represents the course of action that the organization is committed to following in order to achieve outstanding public participation in its planning endeavors. This includes the planning areas of environment, economic development, land use and transportation. NIRPC encourages Northwest Indiana residents and stakeholders to take an active role in moving the region toward a vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united future. Whether people have been a consistent participant in regional forums or are new to the process, everyone's contribution is valuable for the dialogue on successful implementation of the regional vision, goals and plans to continue.

This Public Participation Plan and other plans and information about NIRPC, may be found on the NIRPC web site at <http://www.nirpc.org/>. The reader can discover how he or she can play a vital role in creating our tomorrow... today.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations**

Following is a list of terms and abbreviations commonly used in regional planning and MPO documents, including the Public Involvement Plan.

##### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, State and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. It also mandates the establishment of TDD/telephone relay services.

##### **Comprehensive Planning**

A planning process that determines a community's or region's goals and aspirations that typically addresses land use, transportation, utilities, recreation, housing, and economic development. Comprehensive plans usually include large geographical areas, a broad range of topics, and cover a long-term time horizon.

##### **Contiguous Area**

Land area immediately adjacent to and influenced by a defined planning area.

##### **Coordination**

The comparison of the transportation plans, programs, and schedules of one agency with related plans, programs and schedules of other agencies or entities and the adjustment of plans, programs and schedules to achieve general consistency.

##### **Cooperation**

The interaction of parties involved in carrying out the planning and/or project development process to achieve a common goal or objective.

##### **Council of Governments (COG)**

A cooperative association of local governments that addresses regional issues. COGs are associations that represent member local governments, mainly cities

and counties, that seek to provide cooperative planning, coordination, and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern that cross jurisdictional lines. In this sense, COGs serve to develop consensus on many issues that need to be addressed in a sub-regional or regional context.

### **Environmental Justice**

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. It will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

### **FHWA**

The Federal Highway Administration

### **FTA**

The Federal Transit Administration

### **IDEM**

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management

### **INDOT**

The Indiana Department of Transportation

### **Interagency Consultation Group (ICG)**

ICG includes members of the staffs of the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Indiana Department of Transportation, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, and Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. The group is responsible for coordination of activities related to air quality conformity, including the establishment of motor vehicle emissions budgets, regional emissions analyses and the determination of exemption status for transportation projects. All transportation projects must be cleared through this process before being included in the Transportation Improvement Program.

**Keypad Polling**

Wireless technology used in community meetings to prioritize actions and recommendations for decision making in the planning process. Keypads, which are about the size of a credit card, and/ or personal smartphone devices are used to select multiple choice answers based on the ideas and opinions of the participants. Keypad polling allows for voting to take place and display the results immediately.

**Meaningful Dialogue**

An exchange of ideas or opinions meant to help shape public policy or form consensus. It includes sharing and listening by all parties.

**Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

The organization designated by the Governor to be responsible for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more. It is the forum for cooperative transportation decision making. NIRPC was designated the MPO for Lake and Porter Counties in 1975. LaPorte County joined NIRPC in 1979 and was added to the Metropolitan Area Boundary in 1994.

**Metropolitan Area Boundary**

At a minimum, the existing urban area, non-attainment area (see definition below) and contiguous area expected to become urban in the next 20 years. The metropolitan area boundary for Northwest Indiana includes the entire Counties of Lake, Porter and LaPorte and defines the area within which NIRPC conducts the transportation planning process.

**Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)**

This law was enacted in 2012, and will fund surface transportation programs at over \$105 billion for fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014. MAP-21 creates a streamlined and performance-based surface transportation program and builds on many of the highway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian programs and policies established by the Federal Government. MAP-21 supersedes The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which was enacted in 2005.

**Non-attainment Area**

Geographic areas designated by the USEPA for failure to meet the national ambient air quality standards defined in the Clean Air Act, as amended.

**Paratransit**

Paratransit service is defined in Department of Transportation regulations as “comparable transportation service required by the ADA for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems”. 49 C.F.R. § 37.3

**Public Hearing**

A formal meeting at which the agency receives public comments or testimony on a particular proposed action in an open setting. It is an opportunity for members of the public to voice its opinions and provide input to a board or other body on a particular issue or topic. A transcript of the testimony received at a public hearing is prepared. Often, all comments received prior to the public hearing and for a set amount of time after are made part of the hearing’s permanent record.

**Public Participation**

Actively engaging residents in regional public policy formation by allowing and inviting residents to discuss and provide suggestions on projects and initiatives of local and regional significance.

**Public Meeting**

An open forum in which all are welcome.

**Regional Planning**

Public sector activities encompassing economic, social, environmental and physical elements to develop and implement appropriate public policy in an area covering more than one jurisdiction.

**Regionally Significant Project**

A transportation project that is on a facility, which serves regional transportation needs and would normally be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area’s transportation network, including at a minimum all principle arterial highways and all fixed guide way transit facilities that offer an alternative to regional highway travel. Examples include roads that provide access to and from the area outside the region; major activity centers in the region; major planned

developments such as new rental malls, sports complexes, etc.; or transportation terminals as well as most terminals themselves.

**Social Equity**

Social equity, a concept that plays a role in NIRPC's 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan, is a social state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects. At the very least, social equity includes equal rights under the law. It also includes equal opportunities and obligations. It is the overall fairness of a society in its divisions of rewards and burdens.

**Stakeholder**

Individuals and organizations involved in or affected by the transportation planning process. A widely used term that notates a public agency, private organization or the traveling public with a vested interest, or a "stake" in one or more transportation elements in the planning process. Residents, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the process.

**Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act**

This is a Federal law providing that no person, irrespective of race, color, or national origin, shall be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

A staged, multi-year multi-modal program of transportation projects in the MPO planning area that is consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan.

**Transportation Plan (Long and short term)**

A plan that identifies facilities that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system. It gives emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions, and includes a financial plan that

demonstrates how the plan can be implemented. A metropolitan area transportation plan must have at least a 20-year planning horizon.

**Urbanized Area**

A geographic area with a population of at least 50,000 as designated by the Census for areas with an overall density of 1,000 people per square mile. The urbanized area of Northwest Indiana as defined by the federal Census is approximately the northern half of Lake County, the northern third of Porter County, and a section of LaPorte County, which includes the cities of Michigan City and LaPorte.

**USEPA**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency

**USDOT**

The United States Department of Transportation

## **Appendix B**

### **Public Participation and the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP)**

The 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP) relied on an unprecedented level of public involvement to develop a vision that was representative of the entire region (see the following section for this regional vision). An Outreach Subcommittee advised the 2040 CRP Steering Committee to make sure that the process was inclusive. In the end, NIRPC engaged more than 2,300 residents to gather input, build consensus around goals and objectives for the 2040 CRP, and ensure that the recommendations of the plan are realistic and can be implemented.

### **Vision and Values Statement for the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan**

*INVision* Northwest Indiana - Stretching from the treasured shores of Lake Michigan to the historic banks of the Kankakee River and committed to an ethic of sustainability:

#### *A revitalized region*

Urban areas are renewed, and our environment is clean.

#### *A vibrant region*

Our economy is thriving; our people are well educated; our growth is planned; and natural and rural areas are valued and protected.

#### *An accessible region*

Our people are connected to each other and to equal opportunities for working, playing, living and learning.

#### *A united region*

Celebrating our diversity, we work together as a community across racial, ethnic, political and cultural lines for the good of the region.

Drawing on the *INVision* Northwest Indiana themes of an accessible and united region, NIRPC will make participation in the planning process more accessible to all of our region's residents. To read the entire Comprehensive Regional Plan, as



well as the Executive Summary and other plans that NIRPC has created, please visit NIRPC's web site at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org).

## **Appendix C**

### **A Commitment to Environmental Justice**

On February 11, 1994, a presidential executive order was issued to address environmental justice (EJ) in minority populations and low-income populations. It directed every federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on "minority populations and low income populations." The order was designed to focus Federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority communities and low-income communities with the goal of achieving environmental justice. The order promotes nondiscrimination in Federal programs substantially affecting human health and the environment, and provides minority and low-income communities' access to public information on, and an opportunity for public participation in, matters relating to human health or the environment.

Northwest Indiana will focus on revitalization of the region's "urban core" communities, which include Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and Michigan City, to make efficient use of resources and to capitalize on existing infrastructure and assets. The application of environmental justice in these communities also demonstrates NIRPC's commitment to shared benefits and burdens in the decision making process of NIRPC's work. NIRPC also understand that the growth and revitalization of these communities are not only critical to these individual cities, but are essential to the continued success of Northwest Indiana as envisioned in the 2040 CRP.

Properly implemented, EJ principles and procedures improve all levels of transportation decision making. A comprehensive approach will:

- Result in better transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people.
- Design transportation facilities that respect context and integrate with existing communities.
- Enhance the public-involvement process, strengthen community-based partnerships, and provide minority populations and low-income populations with

opportunities to learn about and improve the quality and usefulness of transportation in their lives.

- Improve data collection, monitoring, and analysis tools that assess the needs of, and analyze the potential impacts on, minority populations and low-income populations.
- Partner with other public and private programs to leverage transportation agency resources to achieve a common level of accessibility for communities.
- Avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority populations and low-income populations.
- Minimize and/ or mitigate unavoidable impacts by identifying concerns early in the planning phase and providing offsetting initiatives and enhancement measures to benefit affected communities and neighborhoods.

As part of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP), NIRPC conducted an analysis of transportation projects in the plan, and measured the benefits and burdens that these projects would bring to environmental justice communities. While limited in scope, the outcome of the analysis showed that environmental justice communities either would benefit, or at very least not be burdened, by the transportation projects in the 2040 CRP.

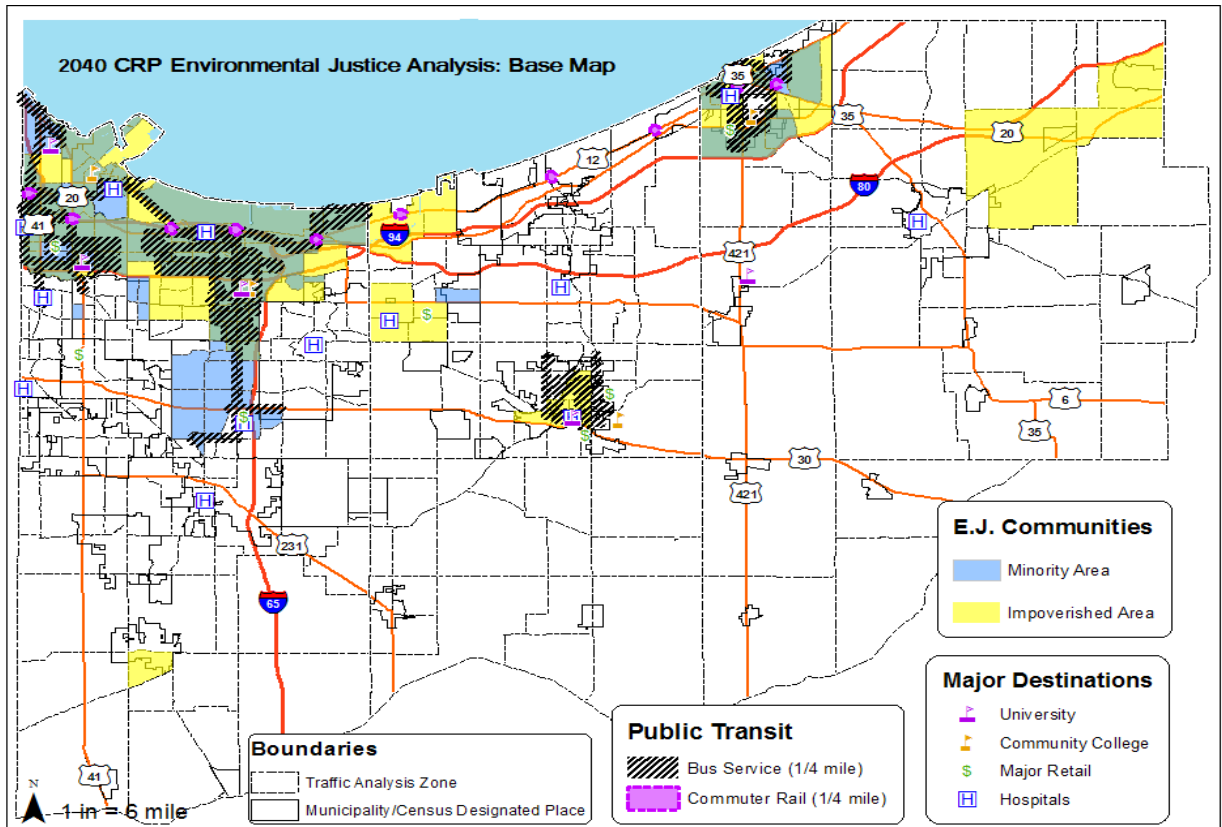


Figure F: 2040 CRP Environmental Justice Analysis. Source: NIRPC

The Environmental Justice Analysis is based on assumptions for population and employment that are grounded in the Growth and Revitalization Vision for Northwest Indiana – the preferred scenario for the CRP. The Vision calls for the revitalization of the urban core, the development of “livable centers” throughout the region, and in general an end to sprawling land use patterns. This analysis is dependent on breaking with the status quo and implementing the recommendations of the CRP. NIRPC is committed to the results coming from a broader outreach strategy.

## Appendix D

### 23 CFR §450.316 Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation

#### **This is an excerpt from the current federal transportation planning regulation requiring the development of a public participation plan.**

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The participation plan shall be developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

- (i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
- (iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
- (iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
- (v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- (vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- (viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which

- interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
- (ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and
  - (x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs shall be developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

- (1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;
- (2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and
- (3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as

defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under § 450.314.

*Source: United States Department of Transportation, 72 FR 7261, Feb. 14, 2007*

## Appendix E

### Resources

#### **Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA)**

*The mission of ESPA is to promote universal access to transportation for people with disabilities under federal law and beyond by partnering with transportation providers, the disability community and others through the provision of training, technical assistance, applied research, outreach and communication. The primary values of their work are partnership, coalition building, coordination, inclusion, independence and the importance of access to transportation choices for people with disabilities. ACTION stands for Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation.*

[www.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org)

#### **International Association for Public Participation**

*IAP2 is an international organization advancing the practice of public participation. Its mission is to advance and extend the practice of public participation.*

[www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)

#### **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)**

<http://www.dot.gov/map21>

#### **Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission**

[www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org)

#### **United States Department of Justice**

1. *ADA Checklist for Polling Places*

<http://www.ada.gov/votingck.htm>

2. *A federal resource document for businesses on how to hold accessible events*

<http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg>

#### **United States Department of Transportation**

*Informing People through Outreach and Organization, Section 1.A.B: Involving Persons with Disabilities*

[http://www.planning.dot.gov/PublicInvolvement/pi\\_documents/1a-b.asp](http://www.planning.dot.gov/PublicInvolvement/pi_documents/1a-b.asp)

## Appendix F

### Essential Accessibility Features for NIRPC Meetings

As NIRPC staff identifies potential locations for meetings at NIRPC and for public meetings outside of the NIRPC office, staff will review those locations for basic, essential accessibility features (see below) to assure that the locations are potentially useable for people with disabilities. Any location that does not meet the basic, essential accessibility features will not be considered by NIRPC to host its public meetings. Those that meet the basic, essential features will be further evaluated in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for accessibility to assure that the locations and the conduct of NIRPC public meetings are accessible to people with disabilities.

The essential features that NIRPC will require include:

1. Current **parking** spaces that are at least 8' wide with at least 5' aisles next to them, or the ability to block off temporary spaces for the meeting.
2. A **walkway** with a stable and firm surface at least 36" wide from the accessible parking to the accessible entrance to the building.
3. If the accessible **route** is different from the primary route to and through the building, have the ability to post signs with the wheelchair symbol that show the route.
4. A **doorway** of the accessible entrance into the building at least 32" wide with a door that has a lever, push plate or automatic door, or with a person to assist people to enter.
5. An **elevator** or lift to the floor where the meeting is located if the meeting is not on the ground floor.
6. **Tables** where the top is between 28" to 34" with clearance around the table for a wheelchair to move, and where a wheelchair can pull under the edge of the table.
7. Wide, accessible **path** to the restrooms or to an accessible restroom.
8. A **toilet stall** or single occupancy **restroom** wide enough that a wheelchair can enter and close the door behind with interior space to turn around. This is an accessible stall or room size of at least 60" wide and 56" deep with a door that opens out. Rear and side grab bars are present.
9. The ability for a wheelchair to roll under the **sink** or to the side of the sink.



## Appendix G

### Consent Decree: Sections II-G-1-7 (pages 24-26)

The following is an excerpt from a consent decree that details the resolution of a federal class action lawsuit filed by eight persons against NIRPC in 1998. The consent decree details the actions that NIRPC and its sub-recipient public transit operators will follow to maintain compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. Affected public operators are those that receive their Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding through NIRPC. Included are: East Chicago Public Transit, Southlake County Community Services, North Township Dial-a-Ride, Porter County Aging and Community Services, Opportunity Enterprises, the City of Valparaiso (V-Line and Chicago DASH), and the City of LaPorte (TransPorte).

#### G. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

1. NIRPC understands and agrees that as the MPO for Northwestern Indiana, it must make efforts in planning mass transportation services to ensure those services can be used by individuals with disabilities as provided in 49 U.S.C. § 5301.
2. Moreover, NIRPC understands and agrees that pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 5303, before approving any long-range transportation plan, NIRPC must provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the plan.
3. All public meetings or public hearings held by NIRPC for the purpose of receiving public comment on the regional transportation plan or the Transportation Improvement Program (including the Program of Projects) shall be held in compliance with the ADA and the following guidelines:
  - a. Public meetings and hearings will be held at accessible facilities;

- b. Should multiple public hearings or meetings be held on any given topic, at least one of those meetings or hearings will be held at a location in Lake County to which and at a time of day when transportation for persons with disabilities is available;
  - c. Should a single public hearing or meeting be held on any given topic, that meeting or hearing must be held at a location in Lake County to which and at a time of day when Demand Response Services for persons with disabilities are available;
  - d. Notice of all meetings and hearings will be posted at the NIRPC office at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting and/or hearing;
  - e. When the law requires that legal notices be posted in newspapers, those notices shall be supplemented by press releases and public service announcements which summarize the information being posted;
  - f. Announcements or press releases will be sent to appropriate newspapers, radio stations and television stations in Northwestern Indiana at least thirty (30) days prior to a hearing and/or meeting, and copies of those announcements or press releases shall be mailed to those individuals and entities identified on the mailing list described in Section II.E.14.a. of this Consent Decree;
  - g. Provide auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communications at meetings and hearings upon request.
4. When legally-noticed public hearings are held, written responses to questions and/or comments posed at a public

hearing shall be prepared within sixty (60) days and made available to the public on request.

5. NIRPC agrees that it shall continue to seek to improve its Public Participation Plan. To that end, NIRPC agrees that for those provisions of its Public Participation Plan that relate to persons with disabilities, NIRPC, through a team consisting of not more than two representatives of NIRPC and not more than two representatives of Everybody Counts, shall develop and recommend that portion of the Public Participation Plan that relates to participation for persons with disabilities to the full NIRPC Commission. NIRPC and the plaintiffs agree to identify their representatives for this team within ninety (90) days of the effective date of this Consent Decree.
6. In the event that a regional council on accessible transportation is formed in conjunction with any Consent Decree entered into by any NIRPC subgrantee defendant or any voluntary agreement between subgrantee operator defendants and plaintiffs, NIRPC agrees to recognize, acknowledge, and participate in the regional council in accordance with this Section.
7. NIRPC agrees that its Executive Director shall appoint one staff member to serve as an ex-officio (non-voting member) of the regional council.



## NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Together We Make The Difference

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On the [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org)  
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### RESOLUTION 13-08 A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION TO ADOPT THE 2013 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

**WHEREAS**, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is the designated Council of Governments and the Metropolitan Planning Organization for Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties; and

**WHEREAS**, NIRPC has adopted a Vision and Strategic Directions for 2008-2013 that includes the strategy to, “Exhibit a standard of trust and effectiveness in NIRPC’s convening, partnering and collaborating, demonstrating extraordinary leadership and commitment to regional planning”; and

**WHEREAS**, NIRPC created the Public Participation Task Force in order to produce a new public participation plan that better reflects NIRPC’s commitment to engage residents and other stakeholders in the regional decision-making processes involving its three planning domains of transportation, economic development and the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, the draft Public Participation Plan was available for public review and comment from October 10, 2012 through April 2, 2013, and the Public Comment Summary Report was received;

**WHEREAS**, the Public Participation Plan was developed according to the U. S. Department of Transportation’s February 14, 2007 planning regulations for Metropolitan Planning Organizations;

**WHEREAS**, the Transportation Policy Committee reviewed, discussed and acted on the 2013 Public Participation Plan at its May 14, 2013 meeting and recommends it to the Commission for action.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission hereby adopts the 2013 Public Participation Plan for use in engaging Northwest Indiana’s residents in the development of plans and programs of the Commission.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the planning process is a dynamic one, and that this plan demonstrates the best efforts of NIRPC at this current time, with the explicit understanding that changes will be necessary and that this plan will be periodically evaluated with the assistance of committed stakeholders.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

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David Uran, Chairman

ATTEST:

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James G. Ton, Secretary