



A HISTORY OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION 1966–2016

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) is a multi-purpose, sub-state, area-wide planning agency. NIRPC is a Regional Council of Governments and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Northwestern Indiana. Created by an action of the Indiana General Assembly and signed by the governor in 1965, NIRPC held its first meeting in 1966, marking the beginning of formalized regional collaboration among the communities of northwest Indiana in cooperatively planning for the future of the region.

NIRPC is the only regional planning body in the State that has its enabling statute specifically adopted into state code. An amendment to the legislation in 1973 provided the Commission with its current name and allowed for the addition of new member counties. Under this provision LaPorte County joined NIRPC in 1979.

Together with the state department of transportation and public transit operators, MPOs are responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process for urbanized areas. Since its formation, NIRPC has qualified the region to receive billions of dollars in federal grants to produce funding for local and regional projects, investments and services. NIRPC has generated a spirit of cooperation and collaboration within the region and has provided technical services and advice to local governments.

NIRPC is comprised of fifty-three members appointed by local elected officials, and one appointed by the Governor. All of the Commission members must be local elected officials. The Commission's planning area is comprised of the three participating counties of Lake, Porter and LaPorte. It consists of over 775,000 people and covers 1,520 square miles. There are forty-one cities and towns and forty-four townships within the NIRPC planning area.

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Over the 50 years of its existence, NIRPC's contribution to the region has been marked by:

- Maintaining a certified metropolitan area planning process, keeping the region eligible for federal transportation funds;
- Leadership in saving the South Shore Railroad commuter service from discontinuance, forming the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, participating in the initial purchase of new rail cars, and planning for new stations;
- Encouraging the formation of the Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission, which planned for new and expanded marinas;
- Forming the Borman Task Force to call attention to severe problems along I-80/94 in Lake County, and recommending solutions;
- Providing vehicles and operating assistance for public transportation systems, particularly those serving people with mobility limitations;
- Providing staff services to agencies such as the Little Calumet Basin Development Commission and the Kankakee River Basin Commission;
- Providing a forum for the discussion of environmental, economic development and transportation issues; and
- Providing a long-term vision and achievable plans for the region.

What follows is an abbreviated history of the agency over its first 50 years. Though northwest Indiana continues to face challenges both old and new, an examination of this history shows how far the region has come in half a century, and how much can be accomplished by working together. It is on that foundation that the next 50 years will be just as history-making.

Tyson Warner AICP
NIRPC Executive Director
2013 - Present

A DRAFT CHRONOLOGY OF 50 YEARS OF NIRPC HISTORY

1962 The Federal Highway Act of 1962 requires that by July 1, 1965 there be in existence an area-wide transportation planning process for each metropolitan area in the country. This was a requirement for federal highway construction funding to continue. Many metropolitan areas had begun this kind of regional transportation planning even prior to 1962, and with the passage of the Federal Act, many more such agencies came into existence.

1965 Regional planning comes to Indiana in 1965, when enabling legislation was passed by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Roger Branigin. This law allowed Lake and Porter Counties to work together to establish transportation planning in the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area of Northwest Indiana, which consisted of Lake and Porter Counties. The 1965 legislation called for a transportation planning commission, and was in keeping with the Federal Highway Act of 1962.

1966 By Executive Order on January 26, 1966, Governor Roger Branigin establishes the first regional transportation and planning commission under the terms of the 1965 state law. The Executive Order covered Lake and Porter Counties, and LaPorte County could be added later.

The Lake-Porter County Regional Transportation and Planning Commission (LPCRTPC), pursuant to State enabling legislation, holds its first meeting in March, 1966.

In a meeting in Valparaiso on October 24, action is taken by LPCRTPC: a) to form a Council of Governments; b) on legislation prepared by a subcommittee; c) on the appointment of an Executive Director. In addition to membership from Lake and Porter Counties, representatives from LaPorte County attended the meeting. LaPorte Co. is seriously considered for inclusion on the Commission.

By a unanimous vote of the Commission on November 10, Norman E. Tufford is named Executive Director, at an annual salary of \$18,000. He would begin on January 1, 1967.

In December, attorneys for Lake, Porter & LaPorte Counties meet with the LPCRTPC legislative committee, chaired by Lake Co. Plan Commission Secretary Jim Ranfranz, to discuss a regional comprehensive planning bill for Indiana. The planning bill passed by the 1965 General Assembly was not acceptable to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

1967 LPCRTPC meets to draw up a regional planning bill for the 1967 General Assembly, a bill designed to meet HUD planning requirements to qualify for grants.

February – LPCRTPC passes resolution to make the organization legal.

NIRPC is designated an Area-wide Planning Agency for Lake and Porter Counties and a Review Agency for federal grants.

April – LPCRTPC, concerned with being in limbo, passes a resolution aimed at making the agency legal. Appointments have to be certified.

LPCRTPC subcommittees meet to discuss development of study design guidelines for the agency, which is necessary to enable counties, cities and towns to qualify for federal funds. A consultant is to be hired to develop the study design. Lake and Porter Counties are assessing a tax of 30 cents per capita to fund the study.

June – There is a discussion about federal aid for the region, looking for a solution to meet U.S. Housing and Urban development (HUD) requirements and to move ahead with the area's transportation and comprehensive planning needs.

June – LPCRTPC discusses Bi-State planning; and reviewed potential consultants for an agency study design.

NIRPC approves support of Little Calumet River flood control and recreational development in Lake and Porter counties.

The first NIRPC committee structure adopted. Meetings are held to discuss development of study design guidelines for the agency, which is necessary to enable counties, cities and towns to qualify for federal funds. A consultant would be hired to develop the study design. Lake and Porter Counties are assessing a tax of 30 cents per capita to fund the study.

October - LPCRTPC opposes the Penn Central Railroad plan to discontinue one of two commuter trains from Valparaiso to Chicago.

November - An application for planning assistance for the next year's work program in the amount of \$126,244 is approved by LPCRTPC.

December - The LPCRTPC's plan for a study design is under review by the State Highway Commission; board members elected to leadership positions.

1968 LPCRTPC approves support for Lake County public park system.

August – A site study for a regional international jet airport in Northwestern Indiana, which favors an area east of Chesterton for the multi-million dollar facility because of its close proximity to Lake Michigan, is formally adopted by the LPCRTPC. The site was eventually nixed due to its proximity to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. The Porter County Airport eventually located in Valparaiso.

August – Jim Ranfranz resigns from the Lake County Plan Commission to join LPCRTPC as assistant director effective October 15.

September – Lake County budget hearings set, and LPCRTPC is looking to more than triple its budget.

Two-county plan to start soon with consultant under contract to prepare a study design.

December – LPCRTPC board hears of a plan to purchase new cars for South Shore for a total of \$9 million. A non-profit corporation would be formed.

A regional conference is sponsored by LPCRTPC and addresses regional problems and progress.

December – Federal funds are sought for new cars for the South Shore Railroad. A corporation is being formed and will be proposed to the U.S. Department of Transportation to see if it qualifies for federal Mass Transportation funds. If it does not qualify, the Indiana General Assembly may be asked to create a commission to raise funds, buy new cars and lease them to the railroad. The 40 year old cars are deteriorating rapidly, and the railroad has lost money on its passenger service, which cannot be made up by freight revenues.

LPCRTPC joins the National Service to Regional Councils (later National Association of Regional Councils, or NARC).

1969

January – The Little Calumet River feasibility study for flood control and recreational navigation will continue. LPCRTPC approves a memorandum of understanding with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Army Corps of Engineers, and other agencies to proceed with the study.

A \$6 million federal grant for new South Shore cars does not meet federal mass transit requirements and will not be granted to the not-for-profit corporation.

LPCRTPC assigned responsibility as a clearinghouse for project reviews. Reviews are delegated to a 5-member planning committee of LPCRTPC.

- May - Governor Edgar Whitcomb calls the Little Calumet River called the most severe flood problem in the state. LPCRTPC is a member of a river advisory committee.
- October – The president of the South Shore Railroad tells LPCRTPC at a meeting in Gary that it does not plan to curtail service.
- December – LPCRTPC is nearing completion of the first regional solid waste study.
- NIRPC’s first employee handbook adopted.
- LPCRTPC adopts a metropolitan area continuous comprehensive planning program.
- 1970 March – Pros and cons are aired at LPCRTPC hearings on a proposed S.R. 49 bypass east of Valparaiso.
- July – LPCRTPC applies for a federal grant for new South Shore cars, similar to an application filed for new Illinois Central cars by the Chicago South Suburban Mass Transit District.
- NIRPC adopts “Guidelines for Growth”, the 2-county region’s first comprehensive plan. The plan described the region’s economy and resources, projected population growth, described existing land use, articulated goals and policies, and set forth a general plan for future development.
- December – State legislation offers to change 1965 Regional Planning Act where State would take over regional planning, and LPCRTPC recommends changes to it
- A two-county traffic study was approved by the Indiana State Highway Commission. Consultant Alan M. Voorhees & Associates to perform the origin-destination study
- 1971 January – LPCRTPC moves from Crown Point to 8149 Kennedy Avenue in Highland.
- January – LPCRTPC Chair opposes proposed state legislation that would put power and authority for regional planning and local zoning under state control.
- LPCRTPC adopts the Indiana Public Employee Retirement Fund for employee participation.
- LPCRTPC is designated as Administrator and Planner for the Little Calumet River Basin Commission.

- April – LPCRTPC in cooperation with State Highway Commission, will begin a regional transportation study. Alan M. Voorhees & Associates conducts an origin-destination survey for NIRPC for a comprehensive transportation study for Northwest Indiana. It will include home interviews, roadside interviews, truck-taxi interviews and a comprehensive traffic volume counting program. The Indiana State Highway Commission is paying for most of the \$800,000 cost of the study.
- May – HUD denies a 2/3 federal share grant for new South Shore cars, saying the shares must be 50/50.
- October – The bi-state area is eligible for full 2/3 federal share transit grants after meeting federal transportation planning requirements, as a bi-state Regional Transportation Board had recently been established.
- 1972
- January – South Shore grant is approved but the local share is not available.
- July – Proposed legislation to establish a regional mass transit authority is discussed at LPCRTPC meeting. The need for an authority was expressed but with no agreement on how to fund it.
- October – South Shore Railroad urged to come up with matching funds for a federal grant for new cars.
- November – Hearings are held on the LPCRTPC draft regional open space plan to solicit views of citizens. There was mild opposition at one public meeting. According to the plan, there is a deficiency of 15,644 acres of open space in the two-county area, and the plan posited if there is enough open space to handle population growth. The study is to be completed by the end of 1972 and make locals eligible for federal funds for open space land acquisition.
- Environmental Protection Committee meets.
- LPCRTPC adopts Affirmative Action Program for Equal Employment Opportunity.
- 1973
- LPCRTPC adopts a joint agreement establishing the Northwestern Indiana Area Library Services Authority.
- March – South Shore Railroad is told LPCRTPC that the railroad cannot provide the \$3 million local share of a federal grant for new cars.
- Public RAP (“Resolving Areawide Problems”) sessions were held to identify issues for the revised regional plan.

June – The Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee meets. A two-county waste disposal study will begin in July and is anticipated to be finished May, 1974. It is to be done by LPCRTPC staff with consultants. The study is funded by a US EPA grant of \$62,000 plus \$31,000 local share.

June – The LPCRTPC board is reorganizing under a new 1973 state law in which 14 members are to come from Lake County and 10 from Porter County. Two-thirds are to be elected officials or their appointees. The agency name will be the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC).

September – 19 people attend a NIRPC RAP session in Valparaiso to obtain input on goals and objectives based on previous information from the public in the spring, when problems were identified.

Various environment-related committees combine to form the Environmental Management Committee.

NIRPC votes to support the Regional Transit Authority bill.

NIRPC is invited to join Indiana Association of Regional Councils.

1974 March – NIRPC is designated by Governor Otis Bowen as a Water Quality Management Agency.

April – Illinois & Indiana governors issue executive orders establishing a bi-state commission to serve as a coordinating agency. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and NIRPC have to approve it before it is implemented.

The Preliminary 1995 Transportation Plan for Lake and Porter Counties is discussed at NIRPC board meeting. The preliminary plan will be revised based on comments received before final adoption. It was also reported that adoption of a long-range transportation plan and the formation of a bi-state plan commission are requirements to make the region eligible for federal transportation funds. Governors of Indiana and Illinois have signed executive orders creating a bi-state board to coordinate planning. The preliminary plan includes a Whiting to Crown Point express bus. Continuation of the South Shore and the Penn Central commuter railroads is also in the plan, as is the extension of Cline Avenue to link with an east-west South Suburban expressway. The South Suburban would link I-65 with roads in DuPage County, IL.

June – The Federal Highway Administration accepts the NIRPC preliminary 1995 Transportation Plan for the Lake and Porter County region. It must be completed and then updated for 2000. The 1995 Plan needs to be reviewed in public meetings and adopted. Since a bi-state policy board has yet to be formed, the Plan has to be

approved by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS). Six months are given to work out the details of bi-state planning. NIRPC is working with a committee of the General Assembly to enact legislation to create a regional transit authority

July – Bi-state planning membership in dispute between IL Governor Dan Walker and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley who wants to appoint more than one member to the commission. Final agreements between Governor Walker and Indiana Governor Bowen have to be worked out before the bi-state commission meets.

The revenue subcommittee of the agency is studying revenue options to support public transportation. Among possibilities considered feasible for financing regional mass transit systems at the state level are establishment of a state lottery, increasing auto registration and increasing motor fuel tax. At the regional level, money could be raised through a local motor fuel tax or with the local option income tax.

September – NIRPC holds public hearings around the region on the proposed 1995 Transportation Plan to explain the draft plan and hear comments. Staff to take maps of the Plan to each community for discussion and have maps initialed as proof of agreement. Commission action scheduled to take place in October. Adoption of the final plan is necessary to continue to receive federal funds after 12/31/74. In the Plan, the South Shore and Penn Central commuter rail services continue and an express bus from Whiting to Crown Point is proposed, as is a South Suburban Expressway from I-65 into DuPage Co. Also proposed is \$420 million for road improvements and \$80 million for mass transit. The Plan includes a number of transportation centers, arterial improvements and signal timing. A first priority is to complete Cline Ave 6-mile extension north. Second priority is to build the S.R. 49 bypass east of Valparaiso. The plan also includes an extension of Cline Ave south to the proposed South Suburban Expressway. Commission action on the Plan is expected in October.

November – Retention of a \$6 million federal grant for new South Shore cars hinges on proposed Indiana legislation to allow financing for transit. Transit subcommittee of NIRPC recommended to the full Commission to ask for more time to obtain the local share. A letter received from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration assumes there is no local interest in the federal grant earmarked 2 years ago. When the grant was approved, it was assumed that the private railroad company would provide the 1/3 local share; rather, the company indicated that they could not afford the \$3 million because of increased costs.

November 27 – The NIRPC board approves the 1995 Transportation Plan for Lake and Porter County region for highways, railroads and express bus routes. At the board meeting it was reported that the region (i.e., the NIRPC planning process) is certified to receive federal transportation funds contingent on progress on planning between Indiana and Illinois. In other business, the board acted to send letters to Indiana General Assembly asking for help in providing a funding source to match a

federal grant for new cars for the South Shore. In addition, the board approved a resolution asking for a full-time local planner for development of the Dunes National Lakeshore.

NIRPC is designated as Water Quality Management Agency.

The Indiana Regional Planning Act is amended decreasing the number of votes required for action by the Executive Board from 13 to 7, and to authorize the Governor's appointee to vote.

NIRPC wins second place from the National Association of Regional Council's Special Project award for its Discover Northwest Indiana Series. The series included Northwest Indiana Landmarks, Industrial Heritage, Bikeways, and Parks Guide.

1975 February – The St. John Town Council adopts a resolution approving the NIRPC 1995 Transportation Plan, but with a major change: that the east-west south suburban expressway be located farther south, because the line on the map is currently on the southern edge of the newly annexed part of the Town.

March – NIRPC is authorized as a Provisional Economic Development District.

April – The NIRPC Regional Development Committee approves a variety of projects, including: INDOT resurfacing of U.S. 41; federal funds for restoration of the old Lake County Courthouse; Federal Housing Administration loans for a housing project in East Gary (now Lake Station); funds for the Northwest Indiana Comprehensive Health Planning Council; federal funds for 9 buses for Metro Corps of Gary; 12 buses for the Lake County Economic Opportunity Council; low interest loan for the Town of Dyer for water treatment plant and new well; equip nursing facilities at Indiana University Northwest; planning funds for the Indiana Dune National Lakeshore to study the Mount Baldy section of the park; and funds for neighborhood revitalization in the City of Hammond.

April – On April 19, Governor Otis Bowen designates the recipients for Urban Mass Transportation Administration funds for Northwest Indiana. They are: For the City of east Chicago – the Office of the Mayor; for the City of Gary – The Gary Public Transportation Corporation; for the balance of Lake and Porter Counties – the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. The letter to the Administrator of UMTA in Washington, D.C. went on to say, "The concurrence of the Secretary of the Department of Transportation in the above recipient designations is respectfully requested."

May – NIRPC and the cities of Gary and East Chicago are designated by Governor Otis Bowen as recipients of federal transit funds. Fund allocations to bus operators and to the South Shore are discussed, as is the creation and funding of a regional transit authority.

November 6 – NIRPC is named as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning by Governor Otis Bowen. The letter states, “It is my understanding that Governor Walker has not designated the Illinois-Indiana Bi-State Commission as the MPO for the 8 counties involved. Pending such action by the State of Illinois, I am re-designating the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission as the MPO for the counties of Lake and Porter.”

November – In response to Governor Bowen’s April 19 letter, the Acting Director of the Section 5 Division of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration concurred in the designated recipients for East Chicago, Gary and the balance of Lake and Porter Counties.

NIRPC is designated as Secretary and Records Repository of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Transportation Authority.

NIRPC testifies before a standing committee of the Indiana General Assembly, supporting, in concept, the creation of a state Department of Transportation. The hearing was held at the NIRPC office. NIRPC’s support for a DOT was based on the need to better coordinate a variety of transportation modes. It would consolidate separate agencies, including the State Highway Commission, Port Commission, Aeronautics Commission, etc. Part of the testimony stated, “The current arrangement makes it difficult to view the transportation network as one total, integrated system designed to move goods and people efficiently.”

NIRPC adopts Air Quality Assessment plan.

NIRPC begins to develop a comprehensive regional plan, replacing the 1970 “Guidelines for Growth” plan. The new plan contains land use, housing and economic development components. In addition the plan provides the framework for functional planning efforts in transportation, parks and recreation, water resource management and solid waste. These ‘functional’ plans will be prepared later as separate documents, addressing the established set of goals and objectives in the comprehensive regional plan.

The U.S Environmental Protection Agency approves the application for the Northwest Indiana Water Quality Management Program under the direction of NIRPC, and requested that staff revise the work program to add \$985,000 for the two-year program. The application was submitted under Section 208 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act amendments of 1972, which set 1985 as the target date for the elimination of discharge pollutants into the nation’s navigable waters.

NIRPC, by law, is designated Secretary of the Lake County Public Transportation Authority.

NIRPC receives indefinite certification from FHWA to be involved in short range transportation planning and programming.

Aerial photos, taken in the spring for NIRPC become available. They are at a scale of 1:400, each covering four square miles, with about 200 needed to cover the entire two-county area.

NIRPC combines November and December meetings into one meeting in December to allow room for the holidays, beginning the annual combined-meeting precedent.

NIRPC joins with NIPC on a Bi-State Commission between Northeastern Illinois and Northwest Indiana.

1976 February – Indiana Appeals Court upholds the new Indiana Regional Planning Act, which had been challenged in a class action law suit.

A new Comprehensive Regional Plan is adopted for the two county area.

All modes of transportation are now included at the Transportation Planning Committee meetings. NIRPC begins transportation planning specifically to address the needs of the elderly and handicapped, forming a Task Force chaired by retired Lake County Superior Court Judge Joseph V. Stodola, Jr.

September – Groundbreaking for the construction of the Cline Avenue north extension

September – Phone hotlines and a post office box are established to collect ideas for the year 2000 bi-state transportation study. It will update the 1995 Plan adopted in 1974. A bi-state task force was formed to develop the plan. Members include NIPC, NIRPC, CATS, RTA and City of Chicago planning department.

Norman Tufford is appointed to serve on the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Advisory Commission.

NIRPC joins with the Indiana Coastal Zone Management Program through the 208 (Water Quality Management) Program.

A state grant in the amount of \$99,960 is awarded to the Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railroad to help cover operating expenses for the commuter line's 1975 operating losses. NIRPC presented the check to NICTD who will give it to the South Shore.

1977 Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District is formed to fund passenger services with NIRPC as designated Staff and Records Repository.

The Kankakee River Basin Commission is created to address interstate issues along the Kankakee River with NIRPC as its staff.

The Lake Michigan Shoreline Coalition is formed.

April – The Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) of NIRPC is considering an emissions plan, which would include specific goals (transportation control measures) for the reduction of vehicle emissions. The plan's deadline is July, 1979.

May – A Steering Committee wants NIRPC to keep planning for a Transportation Support Center to coordinate transportation in Lake and Porter Counties for people with mobility limitations. NIRPC would support the Center until it can become incorporated and separate from NIRPC. The Center concept was studied and developed for NIRPC by Wendell Campbell Associates.

September – the Valparaiso to Chicago Conrail (formerly Penn Central) commuter train is to be discontinued before the end of 1977. Federal subsidy is going from 90% to 50%, so a much larger local match will be required. Many riders are expected to shift to the South Shore, which is already at 110% capacity, and the South Shore needs new cars soon.

Nov. – Dec. – NIRPC seeks a Director for the Transportation Support Center, an organization to be formed to coordinate transportation in Lake and Porter Counties for people with mobility limitations, including operating a transportation information and referral service. The Elderly & Handicapped Task Force developed the idea during NIRPC's planning since 1976 for improved transit service for people with disabilities. The Center is funded by an UMTA grant.

1978 Conrail commuter service between Valparaiso and Chicago is discontinued.

NIRPC is certified as Lead Local Agency by the Indiana Air Pollution Control Board.

NIRPC is designated as Solid Waste Management Region and Agency by the Indiana Environmental Management Board.

NIRPC serves as staff to the Lake County Economic Development Authority and the Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission.

NIRPC adopts Open Door Law policy regarding public meeting notice.

NIRPC adopts Northwestern Indiana Year 2000 Regional (2-county) Airport System Plan involving Gary Municipal Airport, Hobart Sky Ranch, Griffith Airport, and Porter County Municipal Airport.

Recycling discussed among the region leaders.

NIRPC Transportation Planner Steve Strains appointed Director of the new Transportation Support Center, which will oversee the development of a transportation information and referral office, contact public transportation companies and suggest improvements of service for persons with mobility-limitations. Under a federal Section 9 grant through the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, funds are allocated for the establishment of the Center under the auspices of NIRPC.

1979 HB 1192, the South Shore Bill, is signed by Governor Otis Bowen, which created a commuter rail service fund (about \$1.4 million a year generated from a tax paid by railroad freight car owners who leased them for use in Indiana) effectively keeping NICTD in operation.

April – 1,600 westbound South Shore riders complete questionnaires distributed by NIRPC staff to determine ways of improving service. The survey is sponsored by NICTD.

May – At a special full NIRPC Commission meeting held May 16 at the Portage Holiday Inn, NIRPC welcomes LaPorte County as a member.

May – NIRPC publishes an industrial site survey, which is a listing of available industrial sites in Lake & Porter Counties, providing information on size, availability of utility services, current zoning, transportation accessibility, and the name of the owner or real estate representative. NIRPC compiled the information obtained from chambers of commerce, plan commissions and economic development commissions.

May – A Park Access Study is conducted by the staffs of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department and NIRPC.

June – In conjunction with the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns and Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA), NIRPC hosts a series of educational workshops on water quality.

June – NIRPC updates its Directory of Local Elected Officials to include officials in LaPorte County.

NIRPC adopts a resolution supporting Economic Development District designation for Northwest Indiana

Federally funded transportation systems begin ADA transition plans for their facilities and vehicles as a result of new DOT regulations

August – As part of the Little Calumet River flood control and recreation project, NIRPC staff obtains samples of the river’s water during a low flow period. The data was needed to analyze existing water quality.

September – Salute ’79 weekend held welcoming members of the General Assembly to the NIRPC region, an informal weekend of visiting and sightseeing to get legislators from around the state acquainted with Northwest Indiana.

NIRPC signs a Memorandum of Agreement regarding transition of water quality management activities.

NIRPC adopts the *Vision 2020 Regional Transportation Plan*, a multi-modal plan for the preservation, maintenance and expansion of the transportation system in northwest Indiana.

The Northwest Indiana Association of Commerce and Industry is formed to improve Northwest Indiana’s business climate and quality of life by presenting a unified approach to problems in the area. It will seek to improve cooperation with such groups as the Lake County Community Development Committee and NIRPC.

With NIRPC’s assistance, a report describing the costs and feasibility of making the nation’s passenger trains accessible to people with disabilities is completed. The year-long study, completed by a consultant, analyzed initial and long-term costs as well as potential new ridership on rapid transit and commuter railroads. Data about the South Shore commuter service is analyzed.

Preliminary specifications on new railroad cars sought for the South Shore Railroad are mailed to 10 rail car manufactures around the world. NIRPC staff member Jerry Hanas, assisting NICTD, expects replies in August, with advertising for bids in September.

1980

The Little Calumet River Basin Commission is formed to serve as the required local sponsor for the Little Calumet River, Indiana Flood Control and Recreation Project.

Amtrak begins Chicago to Indianapolis service, which NIRPC supports.

NIRPC performs the first inventory of Northwest Indiana natural and environmentally critical areas.

A major push for transit access for the disabled is seen throughout the region’s transit operators.

NIRPC prepares an application requesting Water Quality Management Planning funds. \$125,000 will be used to prevent silt from entering Lake George in Hobart. The lake is being dredged in an effort to improve its water quality. An additional

\$125,000 will be used for Cedar Creek Watershed, a sub-basin of the Kankakee River Basin. Problems that will be addressed will include identifying septic disposal concerns around Lake Dalecarlia and other urban run-off pollution.

June – NIRPC is part of a Water Quality Conference, where the public hears panel discussions about water quality projects and issues. One of the recurring themes is turning wetland areas into a recreational greenbelt.

June – The “Transition Plan for Handicapped Access to TransPorte” is adopted by NIRPC. The Transition Plan, prepared by NIRPC, was reviewed with the LaPorte County Elderly and Handicapped Committee prior to its approval by the City’s Board of Works. NIRPC’s approval marks the final step before the plan is submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and the State Planning Services Agency.

NIRPC sponsors a Vehicle Emissions Inspection Demonstration to make Northwest Indiana residents aware of the inspection/maintenance program that is going into effect within the next 18 months. The simple, five-minute test is conducted on 275 automobiles from the region and out-of-state in an effort to determine how many cars are meeting pollution standards set by the U.S. EPA. 59% passed the test. In addition to the test, NIRPC staff conducts a survey to see how knowledgeable people in the region are about the emissions testing program. 40% of the people questioned were aware that inspection and maintenance would be mandatory by December, 1982.

July – Bids open for new cars for the South Shore Railroad. In addition, a \$48 million South Shore renovation is underway, which includes an initial \$10 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation, with subsequent grants to be awarded each year for the next three years. The money will be used to upgrade maintenance facilities and tracks along the 89-mile route.

NIRPC is involved in a cooperative effort with State mental health affiliated agencies and media people in an effort to obtain a media grant. The ultimate goal of the media plan is to promote better community education and public relations in the mental health area via sharing media resources and equipment.

A program designed to develop legislative strategies was tentatively adopted by NIRPC’s Legislative Policy Advisory Committee. The primary objective of the program is to gain support for regional programs by developing a closer working relationship with the State Legislative Delegation from the region. The Committee hopes to get more legislative involvement by aggressively monitoring and supporting legislation at the local, state and federal level.

August – NIRPC helps announce that the Indian Port Commission is hosting an open house to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Port of Indiana at Burns Waterway Harbor.

NIRPC receives an award from the Illiana Coordinating Council on the Handicapped for the Commission's contributions in transportation planning for the disabled and dedicated support. Steve Strains, Transportation Support Center Director, receives an individual award for outstanding service to the handicapped.

September – NIRPC, working in conjunction with federal, state and local authorities, is involved in efforts to search out hazardous chemical dumping grounds throughout Northwest Indiana. It will work with the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana in locating dangerous dumping sites, analyzing substances found and enforcing remedial actions.

December – Transit operators discuss funding allocations amongst less federal funds and increasing operator requests. A proposal to give funding priority to buses and paratransit over the South Shore Railroad was not adopted. It would have eliminated the formula-based fund allocation method used.

1981 NIRPC, through a grant, procures a van (dubbed "The Plan Van" by Times reporter Tom Inkley) and 18 traffic counters for data collection.

NIRPC adopts Transition Plan for Handicapped Accessibility to Gary Neighborhood Services and Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

NIRPC writes a Minority Business Enterprise Plan.

NIRPC purchases a TRS-80 Model II computer to conduct travel modeling in-house.

The Indiana State Board of Health pulls out of the Inspection & Maintenance program, threatening the auto emissions program and making NIRPC totally accountable for the program.

NIRPC receives the first coordinated grant for funding of new vehicles for nine private non-profit agencies to transport the elderly and disabled. NIRPC purchased vehicles with federal transit funds (80%), with the local share (20%) provided by the transit operators. NIRPC leases the vehicles to the operators, who operate and maintain them.

The Town of Porter files a lawsuit against NIRPC for omitting its project (among others) from the over-budgeted project list submitted to the Indiana State Highway Commission for Federal Aid Urban funds. The eligible project list would have been tossed completely without the cuts. Porter later withdrew its lawsuit in April of 1982.

The 1982 budget cuts are a result of federal cuts to transportation under the Reagan Administration. The possibility of staff layoffs looms large. Senator Lugar says that the effects on Northwest Indiana would be devastating and one transit district should be the recipient for funds.

NIRPC transportation planner catches an error which allows Northwest Indiana to get an extra \$58,000 in state transit funds.

NIRPC employs consultant Bernardin - Lochmueller & Associates to study the data and computer systems and offer recommendations in five general areas of concern that were identified and addressed, including: operational considerations; hardware and operating environment; software and data services; transportation database(s); and long-range agency direction/services.

August – At a Legislative Briefing a suggestion is made to change the NIRPC name to the Northwestern Indiana Intergovernmental Council “since ‘regional planning’ has an unfavorable connotation downstate in the Legislature.” No action was taken.

The NIRPC Transportation Department staff are divided into four areas: Data Collection, Modeling, Transit Financing and Highway Development.

A NIRPC board motion passes to allow NIRPC staff to meet with the NIRPC attorney to address the Indiana State Board of Health relative to the Inspection and Maintenance demonstration program and EPA vehicle test van.

NIRPC adopts Comments on the Interim Rule for Handicapped Accessibility document, which discussed inadequacies and problems with the special effort required for each federal funded transit operator.

Jody Melton becomes coordinator of Kankakee River Basin Commission.

NIRPC conducts A-95 reviews of various projects that have applied for federal funds. Approved were a Hammond downtown park, recreation area at Lake Etta in Black Oak, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. Deferred was a request by the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore for a land acquisition program.

April — NIRPC studies the water quality of Valparaiso area lakes, which leads to a land use management plan, to lessen run-off. A county land use ordinance is explored.

June – NIRPC’s Transportation Support Center surveys the transportation needs of the mobility limited so transit operators can provide better services.

July – In its Clearinghouse Review role, NIRPC approves a family planning grant for Planned Parenthood over stiff opposition.

NIRPC's first regional transit map is published.

October – There is further NIRPC Executive Board discussion about a possible name change to the Northwestern Indiana Regional Intra-Governmental Council as a way of overcoming the “cold reception” given to regional planning by members of the Indiana General Assembly. The change would be an attempt to overcome opposition to regional planning ideas and funding.

Negotiations continue for a long-term (1981-1986) operating subsidy contract between NICTD and the South Shore Railroad.

1982 The first new NICTD commuter rail car arrives from Japan in January, delivered to GE's assembly plant in Hornell, New York.

March – Local highway projects are under review by NIRPC staff and committees. Communities “have to do their part and have projects that are ready,” and not just “grab for projects like orphans in a candy store,” says NIRPC staff member Ross Brown.

April – the first run of NICTD's pilot car from Japan passes all tests.

April – NIRPC Cline Ave. Corridor Committee considers transit options, including express bus, commuter rail, light rail and monorail.

August – The NIRPC air quality task force opposes federally the mandated vehicle emissions inspection and maintenance program to be in place January, 1983. It also opposes SE Wisconsin and NE Illinois ozone monitoring data being used to determine air quality in NW Indiana.

The first mobile emissions inventory for hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide is completed.

The Transportation Support Center is incorporated as a private non-profit agency and an affiliated agency of NIRPC.

Transit operators feel the first pinch of the loss of federal funds and agree on an allocation formula. There is \$5.7 million less than the previous year.

The vehicle emission inventory is complete and sent to Illinois.

NIRPC receives approval to purchase 5 vehicles for the Lake County Economic Opportunity Council (LCEOC) and 5 for the TradeWinds Rehabilitation Center.

Work is completed by NIRPC on a “Freight 2000” study.

The bus capital fund is distributed to six transportation agencies with NIRPC as public agency sponsor on behalf of the private agencies.

The NIRPC Commission files a UMTA Section 5 grant to sponsor Justak Corp., doing business as VIP Coach Lines, to purchase a wheelchair lift transit bus to operate in Whiting, East Chicago and Griffith.

NIRPC sends a letter to the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns suggesting an action plan for the Association to deal with the impending transit crisis.

The Pine Lake Avenue Traffic Study for the City of LaPorte is performed by NIRPC staff.

NIRPC files application and executes a contract with UMTA implementing the Mobility of the Elderly and Handicapped.

TPC works with Purdue on an intermodal freight study for Northwest Indiana.

A major roadway inventory of travel time, crashes, etc. will be computerized in summer.

NIRPC produces a Share-a-Ride brochure in an attempt to match potential carpoolers.

A mock rail disaster is conducted on Highway 12 and Tremont, which will help with handling real emergency situations.

NIRPC staff works with Calumet Forum on the final edition of Directory of Organizational Resources for Economic Development (chambers of commerce, Economic Development Corporations, financial institutions, etc.)

U.S. EPA Section 208 and HUD programs are cut. Section 208 is now 205(j). More cuts would mean layoffs of NIRPC staff. It was noted that 10-12 non-minority staff left the agency during the past year.

Water Quality Management Plan is amended to include Lake Dalecarlia Regional Waste District as a planning

NIRPC assists the Indiana Division of Aeronautics to update part of the State and Regional Airport System Plans.

The Cline Avenue expressway was extended. Some 5.7 miles of new freeway from the Toll Road to Chicago Avenue was constructed at a cost of \$250 million.

NIRPC assists Merrillville Chamber on a transit survey for commuter services to the Loop in Chicago, South Shore, and North Township Elderly and Handicapped.

NIRPC adopts resolution finding plans, programs and projects in the area in conformance with State Implementation Plan (SIP) for air quality.

NIRPC receives census data for tracts in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago SMSA.

Department of Highways notes a “dramatic” slowing of projects.

A resolution passed on NIRPC’s legislative concerns regarding property tax freeze, an occupation tax proposal, budget freezes, etc. sent to IACT.

September – Times publishes an editorial on the auto emissions inspection and maintenance program.

The Air Quality State Implementation Plan indicates Lake and Porter will attain national ambient air quality standards by 1987. A vehicle inspection and maintenance program is not necessary.

The Air Quality Mobile Source Inventory Report was completed.

NIRPC assists Chesterton with traffic flow studies; assists Highland on changing use of buildings and zoning on Kennedy Avenue; assists 7 communities in the redistricting process; and assists 9 communities with their Registered Cities and Towns applications.

NIRPC partners with Jewel Foods for three days in November on a Shop & Share Program where Jewel where 5% of total sales from special certificates goes to support transportation for the elderly and handicapped.

NIRPC sponsors several successful Christmas Transit Service Days in December to aid the elderly and handicapped.

A contract with the National Park Service provides for a study on access to Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore via public transportation.

Studies are undertaken on the impact to the region of a potential 1992 Chicago World’s Fair.

1983

February – The Indiana House of Representatives passes a bill to remove automatic per capita county contributions to NIRPC, saying that NIRPC’s requests should be approved by county councils annually. NIRPC was supported by representatives from Northwest Indiana as the change was proposed from representatives from outside the region.

A bi-state agreement is reached in the suballocation of federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) public transit funds for variety of projects. NIRPC, CATS, NE Illinois RTA and Bi-State Commission were involved in the decision.

March – NIRPC programs the State’s rebuilding and widening of bridges along I-94 in Lake Co. and Porter Co.

April – NIRPC hears proposals by Dyer for federal funds for the extension of Calumet Avenue to US 30 and for improvements and eventual widening of Sheffield Avenue. Munster favors the extension of Calumet. NIRPC is surprised by two proposals on two nearly parallel routes.

May – The NIRPC Transit Finance Committee decides how to allocate \$1.2 million in federal transit funds from the bi-state pot. It is to fund, among other things, a new commuter rail station at SR 49 in Chesterton, which is the region’s top transit priority. NW Indiana traditionally receives 6.5% of the bi-state allocation, in negotiating with NE Illinois.

June – NIRPC is told by the Bi-State Commission Director that the US EPA will likely reject Indiana’s air quality plan. Indiana wants to separate itself from NE IL and SE WI; and EPA is upset with Indiana’s delay in implementing a vehicle emissions testing program.

June – NIRPC drafts budget for 1984, proposing same amount of \$2.18 million, with no staff raises.

The Transportation Support Center, Inc., formed in 1982, has been unable to raise funds for senior and disabled transportation services. The Center was organized to coordinate transportation services for people with mobility limitations.

July – NIRPC A-95 review approves a variety of projects for federal funding, including renovation of former Conkey Printing/Rand McNally Corp. for a new Hammond city garage & offices; improvements to Whiting Community Center; site improvements to West Point Industrial Park in Hammond; Gary Sanitary District Worker training; new Town Hall in Dyer; and an expansion to the TradeWinds Rehabilitation Center building.

August – NIRPC’s Trans-Info Center begins to take calls about available transit in the region. Funded through an 18 month demonstration grant from UMTA, the Center will take calls from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

NIRPC distributes a new brochure, “Indiana’s Shoreline – A Recreational Guide.” It is an informational tool for visitors, developed by NIRPC under the Indiana Coastal Zone Management Program, and done in conjunction with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the Calumet Forum, Inc., Lake County Parks and Recreation,

the Hammond Department of Economic Development, the Michigan City Port Authority, the University of Illinois, and Purdue University.

NIRPC'S Transit Finance Committee approves fund allocations for many transit projects, including for paratransit vehicles; Hammond bus plaza planning, design and construction; South Shore station improvements in East Chicago and Hammond. Withdrawn is a request by Gary to rehabilitate downtown Union Station, and requests by NIRPC for a needs assessment for a possible 1992 World's Fair, and a transit route analysis along Cline Avenue.

NIRPC'S Transit Finance Committee is not in agreement to allocate federal transit funds for private operators. East Chicago and Gary transit directors veto what has to be a consensus among these two cities and Hammond, NICTD and NIRPC. Chicago commuter bus operators Hammond Yellow Coach and Justak VIP coach wanted funds for new buses and Yellow wanted money for an engineering study for a new garage.

NIRPC is to ask the U.S. Department of Commerce to expand the census urbanized boundary to make it more realistic to what is urbanized. This would qualify the region for more federal funds, which are allocated on the basis of urbanized area population. In other business, the NIRPC board approved some transit fund allocations, including for NICTD to study the acquisition of the South Shore RR from the Chessie System.

September – NIRPC board reluctantly supports Indiana's vehicle emissions testing program, which would not begin for at least 2 years.

October – NIRPC asks Indiana Governor Robert Orr to support federal funding that is proposed in a House bill for the Valparaiso to Chicago Amtrak (formerly Penn Central and Conrail) commuter service.

NIRPC releases a report on the status of highway projects in Lake Co., some state and some local, with their cost and percentage complete. List includes reconstruction and widening of 9 bridges on the Borman Expressway.

November – NIRPC files UMTA grant for \$240,030 federal share for a taxi user subsidy program for the elderly and handicapped, who would have to register for eligibility and get half-fare rides on local cab rides. \$80,010 local share to be paid by NIRPC.

NIRPC receives UMTA transit grant for planning for a possible 1992 World's Fair in Chicago; for vehicles for service for people with mobility limitations by LCEOC and Trade Winds; and for Chicago commuter service by Yellow Coach and VIP Coach.

NIRPC is awarded the National Association of Regional Council's Award of Excellence for achieving an excellent rating in their performance evaluation program among all regional councils nationwide.

Indiana uses monitored readings on ozone taken in Indiana to show how Northwest Indiana will reach the air quality standard, which may make it difficult to get USEPA approval, which uses data collected in NE Illinois. If the state plan is accepted as proposed, the problem of sanctions will be removed. If rejected, there could be a tremendous loss of Federal money for highway projects and sewage treatment. (EPA dropped its threat in 1986).

NIRPC assists in preparing an Economic Development packet containing location, work force, finances, utilities and services, transportation and employee information that will be distributed by the Calumet Forum through a nationwide mail out to promote business and industrial interests in Northwest Indiana.

The 1982 Transit Monitoring Report summary of facts and performance of the public transportation systems in the region is made available.

June – The US 49 bypass groundbreaking takes place. It will be built east of Valparaiso.

The new transit route map includes local bus routes, commuter bus and rail lines and elderly and handicapped service.

NIRPC is to open a Trans-Info Center August 1 to provide information about transit services in the region.

September – The A-95 Review Clearinghouse Program by NIRPC ends.

October – 30 buses purchased by NIRPC arrive for delivery to LCEOC and TradeWinds.

NIRPC presents the Distinguished Regional Achievement Awards to NICTD, Michiana Shores and Munster.

NIRPC, Calumet Forum and Northwest Indiana Association of Commerce and Industry sponsor an Economic Development Summit to improve communications between economic development groups.

1984 January – NIRPC discusses needing more highway funds from the state; pushes for improvements on I-94 and I-65; assesses impacts and strategies of a possible 1992 World's Fair in Chicago.

January – At a news conference in LaPorte, city and town leaders tell the audience why the county should not pull out of NIRPC. Others questioned continued membership in NIRPC. A LaPorte newspaper editorial followed up, encouraging the County to stay with NIRPC and despite the County's budget problem, to spend the \$59,000 annual cost to belong to NIRPC. County Council voted to pay the \$74,946 in dues to NIRPC, which had doubled from 1983 because the County was not paying its full share.

March – The request by Yellow Cab and Coach for federal funds to subsidize the purchase of taxi cabs draws criticism at the NIRPC Transportation Policy Committee. Some members say that tax money should not be used to subsidize a private enterprise. Also criticized were requests by other agencies for federal transportation funds for fuel tanks, garages, computer software and other ancillary services.

April – The Bi-state Regional Airport System Plan is reviewed by NIRPC Airports Task Force. There is discussion about seeking federal funds for improving Northwest Indiana's airports. The reasons given for needing improvements is increased industrial use of airports and being ready to take advantage of economic opportunities from the impending Chicago World's Fair.

The NIRPC Transit Finance Committee approves \$5.2 million in planning and capital requests, including just over \$1 million (\$872,510 federal share) for NICTD for new cars for the South Shore service. Also approved were federal funds for vehicles to transport people with mobility limitations.

June – Discount taxi rides for elderly and people with disabilities scheduled to begin July 1.

August – NIRPC lays off 4 people that are not supported with federal funds. Cuts include stopping the Trans-Info transit information service because the federal grant funds were expended with no financial commitment to continue the service. There is discussion about the per capita contributions from the counties, including LaPorte being delinquent in paying, and Lake County substantially reducing its contribution.

NIRPC approves its budget for 1985. The general fund is \$1.9 million; capital is \$1.3 million. The per capita contribution for the counties is Lake \$300,000; Porter \$59,000; LaPorte \$59,000. The private providers (subgrantees) that will receive capital equipment are Gary Neighborhood Services, Hammond Yellow Coach Lines, Lake Co. Association for the Retarded, Lake Co. Economic Opportunity Council, Porter Co. Association for Retarded Citizens, Retired Senior Volunteer Program of Northwest Indiana, Southlake Center for Mental Health, and TradeWinds Rehabilitation Center.

September – NIRPC board member Pat Schaadt and Thomas and Paul Coulis from Hammond Yellow Cab speak at a National Association of Regional Councils conference about public/private partnerships in providing transit. NIRPC pioneers

an effort to work with private non-profit and private for-profit transportation providers to expand transit service to the general public and especially to people with mobility limitations. NIRPC purchases vehicles with federal funds and leases the vehicles to the operators, with the operators paying the 20% local share.

December – Cities along the lakeshore meet to discuss plans for new and expanded marinas on Lake Michigan. State support, including legislation is likely needed to create a financing mechanism.

NIRPC presents the Distinguished Regional Public Official Award to Richard Collins, Mayor of Crown Point and former Mayor Elden Kuehl of Valparaiso.

A complaint is filed citing the election of the Porter County representatives to the Executive Board being done by secret ballot, judged to be in violation of the open door statute. A hand vote was performed at the February meeting of the full Commission.

Letter from Senator Richard Lugar expressed support in the effort of purchasing the South Shore Railroad.

IACT selects Merrillville as the site of its 1986 annual meeting.

State legislation passed allowing NICTD to own and operate the South Shore Railroad.

NIRPC attorney Joe Skozen determines the Commission has been operating within the realm of the statutes, powers and authority required of the Commission and that by-laws are not mandatory.

Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott, Sr. appointed chair of a Borman Task Force to study congestion and safety improvements.

NIRPC organizes an Overall Economic Development Program Committee to allow for assistance from the US Dept. of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

NIRPC updates Water Quality Management Program.

The State emissions testing program for air quality non-attainment areas has begun.

The Trans-Info Center receives almost 3,000 requests for transit information in its first year.

NIRPC receives approval of its Trans-Discount Program, offering discounts on taxi fares to qualified elderly and handicapped people in the three-county region.

NIRPC writes letter to the EPA and State Department of Health that construction activities underway on the Borman, Indianapolis Blvd, US 30 and the Toll Road will slow traffic, increase idling, and increase mobile emissions. It may cause deviation from the ozone standard this summer.

A report on the Borman is released, which includes a list of interchanges, management systems, visitors' center, market strategy, computerization of the Borman and beautification needed.

NIRPC hosts the Indiana Department of Highways' annual meeting with the MPOs. The first such meeting outside of Indianapolis, it was held at the Howard Johnson at Indianapolis Boulevard and I-80/94 in Hammond.

NIRPC completes the base year (1980) modeling effort for auto and transit trips. This model is then used to simulate the year 2000 highway patterns to aid in alleviating congestion.

NIRPC's Trans-Info call center handled over 5,700 information requests since it began, and was expanded to 24/7 service.

A resolution is adopted to ratify the Indiana/Illinois subarea allocation of the FY 1985 UMTA apportionment, establishing the bi-state shares for 1985.

An Airport Systems Plan was developed by NIRPC.

1985 NIRPC received the Certificate of Conformance for the Comprehensive Annual Report for FY ending 12/31/1984 from the Government Finance Officers Association. This is the highest form of recognition in government accounting and financial reporting.

Distinguished Regional Public Official awards were presented to NIRPC board members Patricia Schadt and N. Atterson Spann, Jr.

The "Marquette Project" begins to take shape. It is a plan by Congressman Pete Visclosky to reclaim Indiana's lakeshore for public use. What Visclosky proposes is that land not being fully used by industry be reclaimed for public use. Future industry should be located south of U.S. 12. Ideally, he would like to see 75% of the lakeshore dedicated to public use and possibly extend Lake Shore Drive in Chicago to the Michigan state line. The Marquette Project is an idea, not yet a plan. The ultimate goal is to revive the area and improve quality of life.

March – NIRPC proposes to utilize 2% of federal transit funds for grant administration, an idea opposed by some.

April – NIRPC approves \$1 million for a three-county solid waste study.

Governor Robert Orr threatens to halt funding of Borman Expressway improvements and other highway projects in Lake County because state legislators from Lake County did not endorse a gas tax increase. Discussion at the NIRPC board meeting includes whether and how to respond to the threat. NIRPC Commission member Jim Weiser (Lake Co. Councilman) reports about the Borman Task Force recommendations.

June – Lake and Porter Counties are in air quality non-attainment. There are questions about the air emissions data and traffic modeling data and the amount of emissions reductions that can be expected from mobile sources.

In an interview, Deputy Director Jim Ranfranz discusses Lake Michigan marinas and commuter rail service. The Marina Development Commission is new and will hire an executive director. Ranfranz says that NIRPC has secretarial and planning services to offer to the Marina Commission. On the subject of the South Shore commuter rail service, he says that the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District needs to ask the region to evaluate the importance of the commuter rail service. There is presently no local financial support. The new owner of the railroad is the Venango River Corp. with NICTD as the public oversight agency, and NICTD is concerned with Venango's high costs.

July – NIRPC will provide administrative services to coordinate, act as liaison and provide oversight between communities planning to build marinas along Lake Michigan. The cities are Hammond, East Chicago, Gary, Portage and Michigan City. NIRPC staff member Barbara Waxman will be marina project coordinator and spend half of her time working with the Lake Michigan Marina Commission, which was created by the Indiana General Assembly in 1984.

August – A State Legislative Study Committee met at NIRPC and is studying abandoned railroad rights-of-way; the ownership and what to do with them is complicated. Discussion included a one year moratorium on use of abandoned lines. There is activity to try to establish the old Monon rail line through Hammond as a commuter rail corridor. It would be more difficult if it was abandoned and the rails and ties were removed.

NIRPC approves use of federal highway funds for preliminary engineering of the Calumet Ave. extension from Munster through Dyer to U.S. 30. This specific action taken because NIRPC has a policy of not allowing federal funds it controls to typically be used for PE, which is rather to come from local funds. Federal funds allocated by NIRPC are normally allowed only for right-of-way and construction. Construction of the extension of Calumet Ave. might begin in 1986 or 1987.

With the purchase of 31 buses, NIRPC becomes the second largest transit fleet owner in Northwest Indiana.

NIRPC adopts a resolution requesting the US Congress to reject the Reagan Administration's budget proposal for transit.

A resolution is adopted in support of the construction of the Borman Traffic Management Center.

A resolution is adopted endorsing the needs and priorities of the Lake Area United Way.

A resolution is adopted allowing NIRPC staff to participate in Lake County's Health Insurance policy.

In excess of a quarter of a billion dollars spent in Northwest Indiana on highway projects alone Since the highway federal aid program began.

The Little Calumet River Basin Commission's dredging project is completed from Broadway Avenue west to Grant Street.

A new NICTD passenger station in Chesterton is under

NIRPC is selected to provide administrative staff services for the new Marina Development Commission and will conduct marina assessments.

The NIRPC Commission votes that all salary increases that have been granted since June 15, 1985 to any and all members of the NIRPC staff are rescinded and salary adjustment policies are suspended until further notice.

NIRPC submits its Overall Economic Development Program to the EDA.

The South Shore creates an emergency service plan in light of an impending financial crisis.

The Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission formed.

Three plaintiffs sue NIRPC and six other Northwest Indiana governmental units alleging racial discrimination.

1986 NIRPC receives Comprehensive Annual Financial Report Award from Government Financial Officials Association.

NIRPC receives Certificate of Conformance Award.

NIRPC presented Distinguished Regional Achievement Award to Erich Boehm of US Cable for its video of the Borman Expressway.

NIRPC presented Distinguished Regional Public Official Award to Michael Quinn, IACT.

NIRPC celebrates 20th anniversary.

Norman Tufford named a Sagamore of the Wabash by Governor Robert Orr.

April - NIRPC TPC monitors local road projects to push for progress or federal funds could be withdrawn and given to another community. Some specific projects that were lagging were mentioned.

A small study NIRPC proposed in its Work Program to identify Borman Expressway alternatives was rejected by INDOT as too small and not comprehensive enough. It was for \$26,000 in discretionary money, and INDOT said it would cost \$250,000 to \$300,000 to do well by a consultant, which is what INDOT is considering doing. INDOT said that the redesigned interchanges and the freeway management system currently in development should help traffic flow.

May – NIRPC creates a hazardous materials (Haz-Mat) subcommittee on Environment to coordinate agreements and provide training, etc.

June – NIRPC releases Regional Airport System Plan, updating the 1978 Plan. It recommends moving the EJ & E Railroad and extending Gary's runway, among other improvements there, and recommends improvements at other airports; NIRPC adopts a resolution urging requirement of proof of compliance with the emissions testing program for auto registrations.

August – Lake Co. is to cut per capita payment to NIRPC from 48 to 35 cents in the county's 1987 budget. LaPorte County has not paid its full share to NIRPC for a few years. Therefore, NIRPC budget cuts cause 4 staff to be laid off; two programs to be cut, including the Trans-Info Center; and some staff hours and benefits cut.

September – NIRPC TPC is told by INDOT that individual communities have to ask INDOT to take back Ridge Road. The request by NIRPC 2 months ago is not valid. In addition, NIRPC heard that some local projects were canceled by INDOT due to lack of funds. INDOT wanted a prioritized list of projects from NIRPC and has not gotten it. NIRPC is beginning to monitor local highway projects so delays are noted quicker and projects that are more ready can move up the list for funding.

NIRPC adopts a resolution to participate on a site feasibility study for additional new major airport capacity serving the Chicago Metro area, as long as Gary Airport is included in the study.

October – NIRPC board members discussed recently released government cooperation/ consolidation study by Indiana State University. Community consolidation. Government consolidation, dubbed Metrolake, was one of many recommendations and the one that got the most attention and backlash.

Commission approves an across-the-board salary increase in the amount of 3/8 of 1% per month dating back to the employee's last un-rescinded salary increase for all employees with continuous service dating back to September 15, 1985.

NIRPC adopts the Regional Airport System Plan.

Norman Tufford appointed by Governor Orr to the Indiana Economic Development Council.

NIRPC assists in hosting the annual Indiana Association of Cities and Towns convention, which is held in Merrillville.

Cline Avenue north extension completed.

Congress authorizes \$90 million for Little Calumet River Flood Control Project.

NIRPC adopts an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy Statement.

Norman Tufford resigns as Executive Director effective December 31, 1986 subject to action by NIRPC for protection from personal liability in connection with the current on-going lawsuit, as provided in state statute.

1987 Acting Executive Director James Ranfranz announces new NIRPC theme *"Together We Make a Difference."*

The Trans-Discount Program has over 3,500 participants regionwide with seven cab companies participating.

NIRPC Mission Statement adopted.

April – NIRPC appoints James Ranfranz as Executive Director. Among other things, he calls for a closer relationship with the Northwest Indiana Forum.

May – The three-year federal demonstration grant funds are depleted and the Trans-Discount Service will end on June 15. It will continue where there are local funds to support it. NIRPC would continue to administer the program for those communities. The Trans-Discount Service provided discounted taxi rides for elderly and disabled.

NIRPC to hold regional meeting on emergency response for handling hazardous materials. Federal law mandates communities develop such response plans by November, 1988.

June – The compact between transit systems in East Chicago, Hammond and Gary for transit service for people with disabilities was discussed. Some people want lifts on fixed-route buses, but the 3 systems are opting for a demand-response, door-to-door accessible system.

July - In a discussion of waste disposal around the region, NIRPC Chairman Don Bengel said that a regional approach should be used to address the issue of where to dispose of the area's garbage. It is possible for the region to form a solid waste conservancy district.

August – The Tri-State Policy Committee of the Chicago Airport Study, formally requested the Federal Aviation Administration to evaluate the region's airspace. A Federal Aviation Administration official expressed doubt that airspace over NW Indiana can be redesigned to make Gary a major 3rd Chicago regional airport. Gary will still be in consideration in the 2nd phase of the Chicago Airport Study by Peat Marwick Main. The Chicago Aviation Commissioner said that a 3rd airport is not needed, that it would become a "white elephant," that the two Chicago airports, including an O'Hare expansion, will have enough capacity.

August – With NIRPC staff present, Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher and Chicago Mayor Harold Washington met to discuss the third major airport.

September – There is discussion of the challenges for the Gary Airport becoming the 3rd major Chicago area airport, including air space, additional designation of wetlands at the airport site, nature preserve, railroads at the west end of the runway, toxic waste sites, including a Superfund site and the highly polluted Grand Calumet River.

October – NIRPC agreed to conduct a study of prenatal needs in the region with a \$20,000 from the Indiana State Board of Health. Some members of the Commission objected, saying that NIRPC does not need to be in, nor is it qualified to be in, the medical field.

November – Regional trail planning is launched at a meeting hosted by the Town of Highland, following discussions between Hammond and Highland about a trail on the abandoned Erie Lackawanna railroad right-of-way. Congress may establish a national trail fund.

Three rural Indiana sites are added to a list under consideration for a 3rd major airport, as reported at a NIRPC Transportation Policy Committee. The technical committee of the Chicago Airport Capacity Study group will meet at CATS, eventually narrowing the field of 9 sites and compare them with airports in

Milwaukee and Gary to determine which one would be viable as a reliever airport for O'Hare and Midway.

The Indiana Department of Highways employs a consultant to study the Borman Expressway and make recommendations. The consultant tells NIRPC's Borman Task Force that INDOT is looking at the study results and considering how to pay for the recommended improvements. Engineering studies for reconstruction of interchanges at Calumet, Indianapolis Blvd., Kennedy Ave. and Burr St. combined would cost \$45.2 million. A visitor center would require another interchange. A license plate survey will be conducted to see where vehicles are entering and leaving the Borman.

NICTD board membership is increased by four to help broaden the base for local funds.

The Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission receives the Outstanding Planning Achievement Award for 1987.

NIRPC authorizes Submission of the Overall Economic development Program to the Economic Development Administration.

East Chicago Marina holds its grand opening.

NIRPC and plaintiffs from the 1985 lawsuit negotiate a settlement.

NIRPC endorses the distribution of minimum allocation funds to local units of government.

Hugh Rhein receives Certificate of Achievement Award for excellent financial reporting from the Government Finance Officials Association.

1988 NIRPC's Borman Welcome Center Steering Committee recommends hiring of HNTB of Chicago for the welcome center's feasibility study. HNTB is also doing a freeway management study of I-94 in conjunction with the planned improvement of five interchanges in Lake County. Indiana Dept. of Highways is paying \$330,000 for the freeway management study.

NIRPC adopts a resolution urging Indiana Department of Highways to reconstruction of 5 interchanges on the Borman as well as future widening to eight lanes.

August – Options are discussed for preserving the one Amtrak commuter train in each direction from Valparaiso to Chicago, which is the only Amtrak commuter service without a local subsidy. Congressman Pete Visclosky says efforts to expand NICTD's jurisdiction to provide a commuter line from Valparaiso will be explored.

A NIRPC study to study the feasibility of providing commuter service along the Monon line should be available by next spring. The cost of the study is \$60,000.

October – NIRPC holds discussion on alleviating congestion on I-94 and US 30 and supports an east-west south suburban expressway linking IL 394 and IN 49. Its location would be south of Crown Point and north of Cedar Lake, crossing I-65 at about the US 231 interchange.

NIRPC planning staff and the Valparaiso Chamber support the extension of SR 149 south of SR 130 to US 30. More north-south roads are needed in Porter County. INDOT will have to agree to the extension of the State highway.

November – NIRPC pursues the enactment of a Northwest Indiana Transportation Development Authority, which would have taxing authority, perhaps sales or income, to build transportation infrastructure. NIRPC also pursues a change in its State enabling legislation to increase the per capita contributions from 30 cents to 65 cents. LaPorte County Council did not approve the higher rate.

December – NIRPC comments on the methodology Indiana University Business Research Center used to develop population estimates. NIRPC disputes the methodology, saying that basing estimates on vehicle registration is misleading in areas near other states, like Northwest Indiana because some Indiana residents register their vehicles in Illinois, where the vehicle tax is lower.

Concerns arise that UMTA funds are to be cut by 53% in 1989 are allocated to major transportation systems, placing a disparaging burden on the elderly and disabled.

March – A resolution on Section 9 apportionment goes back to the Transit Finance Committee for reconsideration. A special Executive Board meeting is held a week later to address the TFC findings and resolutions ratifying the 1988 UMTA Section 9 funds, ratifying the Indiana/Illinois subarea apportionment, amending the 1984, 1985 and 1987 program of projects, and amending the CY 1987 and 1988 annual element transit component of the 1988-1992 TIP were passed.

Through approved bonding authority, \$93 million will become available for the reconstruction of five of the Borman interchanges.

NIRPC enters into an agreement with National Park Service and Indiana Department of Natural Resources to develop a regional trails plan for the three county region.

NIRPC recognized by Governor Robert Orr as an economic development district.

NIRPC adopts Public Transit Development Program for Northwestern Indiana.

NIRPC consultants draft a report on Air Carrier Airport Capacity Study identifies Gary Regional Airport as the best option for a third airport.

Gary Airport hosts first air show.

NIRPC authorizes submission of the Overall Development Program to the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

West Lake Corridor Study Technical Advisory Committee formed to guide a NIRPC feasibility study for additional commuter rail service.

Updated regional transit route map available.

1989 April – NIRPC, Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service are collaborating on a regional trails study. Some trails will be built on abandoned rail rights-of-way. NIRPC seeking ideas from public. Meanwhile, Portage, Valparaiso and Chesterton are taking some initial action to eventually build their first trail segments.

May – US Senator Richard Lugar requests a \$500,000 appropriation for a study to alleviate congestion on I-80/94, which will study options, such as removing tolls on Indiana Toll Road, which is under capacity, and building another east-west expressway.

The NIRPC US 30 Task Force begins to discuss problems along the corridor from the Illinois state line to Valparaiso. NIRPC is collecting land use information.

A Westlake Corridor Study is carried out by consultant Ken Cypra for NIRPC. It discusses transportation options in the corridor, comparing travel time, cost and ridership. NIRPC adopts the findings and recommendations.

The Little Calumet River flood control project construction to start after years of congressional and state legislative action, and planning. Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission is housed at NIRPC, with Dan Gardner as its Executive Director.

June – NIRPC discusses Main Street improvements, including widening and extending to Illinois, and the scope of a possible environmental impact study, which would be required.

The National Park Service and its consultant meet at NIRPC to discuss National Lakeshore studies, including feasibility of converting US 12 to a scenic highway, a Little Calumet River corridor study to link trails and recreation along the river, and development at the west end of the park.

July – NIRPC's Borman Task Force hears results of the INDOT Freeway Management Study by HNTB, which says that interchange improvements and installation of electronic systems (now called Intelligent Transportation Systems) are keys to improving traffic flow and safety. The report says that the problems are more related to interchanges and not mainline capacity.

The Operations Subgroup of the NIRPC Ridge Road Task Force nears issuing recommendations. The major arterial provides both access to land uses and as a highway through the region, an alternative to the Borman Expressway. Recommended improvements will likely include widening from the Illinois state line into Porter County, with 4 lanes plus a turning lane.

Sixty Lake County political and civic leaders launch Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott, Sr.'s Lake 2000 plan for intergovernmental cooperation. A 13 member committee is appointed. Fair representation is questioned by some; others say that they are interested in doing something to work together and not just talk. Issues where the need for cooperation is identified include, transportation, waste disposal, sewage treatment, recycling, joint purchasing, warehousing, education, and ambulance service.

November – Support for a regional transportation system dominates the discussion at a NIRPC meeting. NIRPC Executive Director Jim Ranfranz says that there is a transportation crisis, where transit and highway improvements and expansions need funding. To save the Amtrak commuter line from Valparaiso and save the right-of-way from being abandoned from Hammond to Munster, funding will have to be identified. Options mentioned for tax increases include income, gasoline and sales.

December – NICTD writes to CSX Corp. to say it was taking responsibility to launch and operate a commuter rail line between Lowell and Chicago. NICTD reaches an agreement with the Hammond Interurban Railroad Commission to take over negotiations to preserve and purchase a 5-mile track that CSX has petitioned the ICC to be allowed to abandon. In addition, NICTD will close on the purchase of the passenger assets of the South Shore RR by the end of 1989 and will assume responsibility for passenger service about January 1. A bankruptcy court approved the purchase. NIRPC recently studied several options, endorsed the idea of a commuter rail line over the CSX tracks between Lowell and Chicago.

The Borman Expressway Freeway Management Study on interchanges is completed.

NIRPC adopts findings and recommendations in first West Lake Corridor Study.

1990

Hammond, Munster, Highland and Crown Point assume administrative responsibility for the Trans-Discount Service, ending NIRPC's involvement of the program that began with a federal demonstration grant.

April – The I-80/94 990 Borman Congestion Relief Study, funded with \$500,000 in federal funds obtained by U.S. Senator Richard Lugar, is reported at the NIRPC full commission. Wilbur Smith & Associates was selected by Indiana and Illinois Departments of Transportation. A bi-state committee will be appointed to oversee and help steer the study.

The 1991 federal budget proposal threatens to eliminate operating subsidies for mass transit for areas with populations of more than 1 million. Because Northwest Indiana gets its transit money through a federal allocation to the bi-state Chicago metropolitan area, it would lose operating funds although Northwest Indiana has fewer than 1 million people. It was said that the loss of federal operating funds could eliminate all mass transit in Northwest Indiana. NIRPC lobbies for transit funds.

INDOT will rebuild I-94 interchanges at Calumet and Kennedy Avenues next year. Overpass bridges will remain open during construction but with restrictions to one lane in each direction. The Columbia Ave. overpass is currently being rebuilt. Indianapolis Boulevard and Burr Street interchanges to be rebuilt in 1992 and Cline in 1993. The improvements were part of the recommendations of NIRPC's mid-1980's Borman Task Force.

The 3rd airport study consultant was told not to recommend a site but instead to evaluate the sites on several criteria, comparing but not ranking the sites, and present the information in a selection matrix; based on this, the bi-state airport committee will select a site. It was suggested that there will be competing interpretations of the study, depending on who favors which site, injecting even more politics into the decision.

NIRPC, NICTD, and the State of Indiana study the feasibility and costs of continuing the Amtrak commuter rail service from Valparaiso, which might be operated by NICTD. There are rumors of Amtrak discontinuing service. The Amtrak rider survey showed that some would consider a shuttle bus from Valparaiso to the South Shore's Dune Park station.

NIRPC Executive Board acts to program local and state highway projects, including reconstruction of bridges on I-94 in Porter County. Also approved was a legislative package for the 1991 General Assembly, which included support for casino gambling in Gary; approval of \$20 million for Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission; \$3 million for Little Calumet River Basin Commission; support for Operation Bootstrap, which would increase local sales tax for transportation projects; increase in current sales tax distribution formula for mass transit from 0.7% to 1.2%; amend state law that created NIRPC to make the governor's representative a voting member; increase minimum per capita of counties to 70 cents; to change the name of the commission if it wants; and allow for multi-year Commissioner appointments instead of annual appointments.

NIRPC receives \$104 million federal transit grant from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. Most of the money - \$580,300 - will be used for 1990 operating expenses. The rest will go for some short-term planning projects, to buy six replacement vans and four replacement buses, and to rehabilitate eight buses and a van, all used to transport the elderly and handicapped.

Ridge Road becomes a five lane road in Highland. The long-term plan was to make Ridge Road more accessible as a detour route for cars when construction work is being done on the nearby Borman Expressway, and five-lane it from the Illinois state line east into Porter County.

August – NIRPC asks for a 34 cent per capita county tax increase for Lake County to 95 cents. The current amount is 61 cents. Porter and LaPorte counties also have been asked to raise their tax rate for NIRPC to 95 cents. The 95-cent rate would raise \$113,825 in Porter County and \$103,200 in LaPorte County.

Little Calumet River Basin Commission initial levee construction project begun.

NIRPC adopts \$1 billion transportation plan, adding more than \$620 million in road construction and improvement projects to the list for possible construction.

November – NIRPC issues a Legislative Proposal named Operation Bootstrap of Northwest Indiana. Operation Bootstrap was a lengthy, collaborative effort by a 37-member Task Force to identify Northwest Indiana's infrastructure needs and find ways to pay for them. Operation Bootstrap includes NIRPC representing local officials and the Northwest Indiana Forum representing the business community. An Infrastructure Needs Analysis indicated that in the next 10 years, local and regional infrastructure costs are estimated to be over one billion dollars for transit, local airports, local bridges and roads, water distribution systems, and wastewater treatment systems. The Task Force agreed that a regional source of revenue is necessary to begin to address the needs, and that the state legislature would be required to raise funds on a regional level. NIRPC executive board discusses various allocation options and acted on some allocation changes for a sales tax proposal to support infrastructure improvements proposed in the Operation Bootstrap recommendations. Operation Bootstrap committee will approach the General Assembly with the proposal to support utility, road and transit infrastructure improvements. The General Assembly and Governor Evan Bayh would have to grant the local 1% sales tax option in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties, which would generate an estimated \$34 million annually.

1991 The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) is enacted, giving more responsibility to the nation's Metropolitan Planning Organizations like NIRPC.

NIRPC releases its study by consultant Ken Cypra, "Access to Health Care and Human Service Facilities by Disadvantaged Individuals in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties." Only 60% of the health and human service facilities in the region are accessible by public transit. The study provides some transit recommendations. The study supports NIRPC's desire to create a regional bus system that is sustained by local funding, potentially a 1% county sales tax.

March – Marina development along Lake Michigan remains a top economic goal in 5 Northwest Indiana lakefront communities. Hammond is about to open its \$23 million facility this spring. Part of it includes the Clipper, and 86-year-olds Great Lakes steamer the City bought for \$330,000 at a federal court auction last year. East Chicago hopes to build a breakwater, creating a large harbor off Jerose Park and add hundreds more wet slips to the Pastrick Marina. Gary is planning to begin infrastructure work for its marina on the east end of USS Gary Works on 400 acres it would lease from USS. It will be the front end of a waterfront complex that will include hotels, a theme park and other attractions. Two marinas have improvement projects. In Portage, a state agency continues to look for a way to excavate sand that would clear the way for construction of a marina on the Portage-Burns Waterway. The mayors of the lakefront cities said they were promised \$5 million from the lottery-generated Build Indiana Fund by Gov. Evan Bayh more than a year ago. State funding is also being pursued through the Indiana General Assembly. NIRPC staffs the Marina Development Commission.

NIRPC performs a Lake Michigan Shoreline study.

Congressman Pete Visclosky Commemorates NIRPC's 25th anniversary with a statement in the Congressional Record.

INDOT'S Hoosier Helper service begins responding to incidents along the Borman Expressway.

The Senate approves increasing the per capita tax for NIRPC by 67 percent to 50 cents per person in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties.

1992 Northwest Indiana gets 68 percent more federal highway money in 1992 than in 1991.

February – A bill to increase the amount counties pay to participation in NIRPC passes the Senate and appears headed to the governor for final action. The stickiest part of the bill, which has been before the state legislature twice before, would raise the minimum per-capita contribution of property tax dollars counties must pay to be a part of NIRPC from 30 cents to 70 cents. Other provisions of the bill would allow the governor's appointee to have voting power and allow the agency to change its name.

June – A NIRPC survey showed that 17 cars out of every 100 on the road during the morning rush hour are occupied by someone other than the driver. NIRPC has been coordinating efforts to develop local trip reduction programs, which include a vast increase in carpooling. Transit is also key in reducing trips by automobile. Employers with more than 100 employees are asked to participate in reducing trips, particularly single-occupant vehicle trips, and develop a Trip Reduction Program that accomplishes that.

July – Funding for the Cline Avenue interchange reconstruction and the congestion management system on the Borman Expressway is approved as part of a House Appropriations Committee legislation that recently passed. About \$41 million is included in the 1993 transportation appropriations bill for Northwest Indiana with \$38.5 million of that going for the Cline Avenue project and \$1.4 million for the freeway management system. The total cost of the Cline interchange is estimated to be \$88 million. Work could start in 1994. The Calumet Avenue interchange with the Borman is complete and the Kennedy Ave. and Indianapolis Blvd. are now under construction. The bill also includes \$2 million toward a congestion management system for the region, and \$9.5 million for bus service improvements in Northwest Indiana.

July – At a news conference in LaPorte, city and town leaders tell the audience why the county should not pull out of NIRPC.

August – The Association of Beverly Shores Residents wants to restore the commuter train station, which was built in 1929. NICTD, which operates the South Shore commuter trains is in the process of applying for \$250,000 - \$400,000 in grants. Proposals for funding are being reviewed by NIRPC, which will prioritize and select the projects to be funded with federal dollars (80%) that would be matched by local funds (20%).

August – An agreement has been reached to link the central business districts of Gary Hammond, and East Chicago with bus service, with implementation pending on acquiring state or federal money. Gary PTC would provide a new bus, which would operate hourly from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday – Saturday.

September – The Federal Transit Administration has rejected Hammond's plan to study a high-tech, high-speed monorail system. NIRPC submitted a proposal on behalf of the city in July for the study. Initially, a test portion would have been built from 129th Street in Hammond to the marina. It would have later been expanded to serve a corridor from Lowell to the Illinois state line.

September – It is reported at a NIRPC board meeting that federal money for road and other transportation improvements is shrinking. Therefore, local officials have to carefully decide which projects are selected for funding. An informational meeting was held by NIRPC about ways to reduce automobile traffic. The Employer

Trip Reduction program, mandated by the Clean Air act of 1990 requires companies in Lake and Porter Counties that employ at least 100 people to develop ways to reduce their employees' car trips. It was also reported that the Army Corps of Engineers plans \$52 million worth of levee construction between Gary and the Illinois line from 1993 to 1995.

September – The LaPorte County Council decides to pay the county's membership dues to NIRPC. The county was faced with the question of whether to pay the \$74,946 in dues for 1993. The dues to NIRPC doubled from 1992 because LaPorte County was paying less than Lake and Porter Counties.

October – A NIRPC Main Street Task Force was told that the Federal Highway Administration has approved an environmental study of a project to convert Main Street into an east-west artery from Griffith into Illinois, eventually connecting with Joe Orr Road, which would be extended to the east from Linwood.

November – The Indiana Department of Transportation opens a local land acquisition office at the site of the former Black Oak Church of the Nazarene on West 25th Ave. in Gary to provide service for property owners who live in the path of the planned reconstruction of the Cline Ave. interchange with the Borman Expressway. The land acquisition is to be completed in 1993. Some 250 properties, including 178 homes and businesses are to be taken by the State. Most of those affected are in the Hessville section of Hammond. Construction would span two years and cost \$80 million. Reconstruction of interchanges on the Borman in west Lake County were recommended as part of the NIRPC Borman Task Force in the mid-1980's.

November – Bidding for the widening of U.S. 30 through Dyer and Schererville has been delayed from July, 1993 until January, 1994. The project calls for the State to widen U.S. 30 to five lanes from Illinois to U.S. 41 in Schererville. A second project, the extension of Calumet Avenue from Hart Street at the Munster border to U.S. 30 has been put on hold until 1995. One reason for the delay was that NIRPC did not give the Calumet Ave. project as high a priority as other projects. Therefore, NIRPC did not grant Dyer \$600,000 to acquire the right-of-way.

1993 February – NIRPC considering move to Portage if city agrees to \$1.1 million revenue bond. The location is more central to the area served by the agency. The Northwest Forum, located in Merrillville, also serves the three-county region and would move to a wing of the new building.

March – The Lake County Council was considering withdrawing the County from NIRPC because of the agency's move to Porter County, which should take place in December when the new building in Portage is ready. The vote was 4-3 against the withdrawal. Also considered were reducing the County's financial contribution or form a new agency with Jasper or Newton Counties. Lake County's annual

contribution is \$366,076 (77 cents per capita); Porter County \$90,252 (70 cents per capita); and LaPorte \$70,946 (66 cents per capita).

April – The Portage Redevelopment Authority opened bids for the new NIRPC/ Forum building. Bids for the 24,000 square foot building came in well under the \$1.5 million budget. Seven bids were received. A contract is expected to be awarded by late April, with construction beginning by June 1.

May – A NIRPC Ridge Road Task Force released a draft report describing travel issues and making recommendations. The part of Ridge Road that the Task Force studied, stretches from the Illinois State line to S.R. 49. The eastern part remains designated as U.S. 6. A four-lane road is recommended for the entire length, with either turn lanes at intersections or a fifth lane in the center for turns. Developing cost estimates for improvements is the next step.

June – A groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 11 for the new \$1.5 million offices of NIRPC and the Forum at the site of the new building that will be under construction in Portage. The program was followed by a barbecued lamb lunch. The building is funded with revenue bonds, lease payments from NIRPC and the Northwest Indiana Forum will pay off the bonds.

September – A newspaper editorial called for a regional system of public transportation. It says that regions that prosper have a viable, regional transit system. NIRPC has a plan for transit calls for a regional system, one that is market-driven with a major role played by the private sector, and would include traditional and non-traditional transit. It should give commuters some options. A dedicated revenue source is needed.

October – A casino boat planned for Hammond has city officials and residents concerned about traffic, and need a more accessible Lake Michigan. There is discussion of an overpass connection to the marina from Indianapolis Blvd.

November – Porter and LaPorte Counties may join Lake County in the search for a solid waste landfill site. NIRPC is involved in some data collection.

November – Jim Ranfranz says that the relationship between NIRPC and the State DOT is changing for the better on account of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991. It is federal authorizing legislation that sets out programs and funding levels. ISTEA gave Metropolitan Planning Organizations around the country, including NIRPC, a larger role with state DOTs. The states are to work together

with MPOs in planning and allocating funds for transportation projects in more of a partnership relationship.

November – Construction of the NIRPC/ Forum building is nearing completion. It was designed by Portage architect Cleon Stutler, who said that construction is on schedule and on budget. NIRPC will pay \$9,000 per month rent, instead of the current \$5,000 in Highland. The square foot cost is the same, however.

NIRPC approves 1994-1996 three-year Transportation Improvement Program.

December – NIRPC moves to 6100 Southport Road in Portage in the Southport Business Park at SR 249 and I-94., moving from Highland where the agency was located for 22-23 years. Portage is considered a more central location to the three counties NIRPC serves.

1994 NIRPC holds its first meeting at its new location in Portage.

NIRPC's value to LaPorte County was questioned by some officials, while the benefits of being a part of NIRPC were expressed by others. The County Commissioners had voted to cut membership in NIRPC from the 1984 budget, but the County Council reinstated it. The board of Commissioners again cut it and will consider a final decision later in the month.

May – A U.S. House transportation committee approves \$5.4 million for projects in Northwest Indiana, including one to build an access road to the East Chicago Marina. It also includes \$600,000 for a feasibility study on an Indiana lakeshore drive linking Michigan and Chicago. Congress had already authorized \$1 million for the project. It would provide a link between the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Lakeshore Drive in Chicago, casinos and current and proposed marinas.

May – An editorial in which NIRPC is mentioned suggests that the Indiana Toll Road could be a significant cog in the transportation network of Northwest Indiana if more travelers used it. Instead, it is a stretch of highway used mostly by out-of-state motorists rather than the people in whose backyard it sits. It should eliminate tolls from Portage west and the Chicago Skyway should eliminate its tolls. That would ease congestion on I-80/94, and eliminating tolls would be a cheaper alternative to widening it or building a parallel southern expressway across the region.

May – There is discussion about the state of public transportation in Northwest Indiana. Noted was the recent link between East Chicago, Gary and Hammond and extensions of the Hammond Transit System into Highland and Munster.

June – NIRPC’s planning for bikeways throughout Northwest Indiana is reviewed, with a list of segments that have been constructed or committed to being built. The review was presented by NIRPC’s Shawn Pettit addressing the Hobart Chamber of Commerce.

June – An editorial discusses the three day tour of Northwest Indiana, sponsored by NIRPC and the Forum that was arranged for members of the Indiana General Assembly. The legislators should return to law-making in Indianapolis with a greater knowledge of the region’s challenges and a greater commitment to solve them.

July – NIRPC develops an Employee Commute Options program, encouraging carpooling to work. Other options are walking, biking and flexible work schedules, so travel is spread out longer and not just concentrated in peak periods. The purpose is to reduce single-occupant vehicles being driven to work places employing 100 or more people. Lake and Porter Counties exceed the federal ozone standard, and reducing the number of vehicles on the road for work trips is one way to reduce emissions.

August – After more than a year’s work NIRPC adopts a proposal for a regional bicycle network. The network includes 5 abandoned railroad lines, 2 east-west paths on the levees of the Little Calumet and Kankakee Rivers, county roads, and town and city streets.

In an August 18 letter to NIRPC from INDOT Commissioner Frederick P’Pool, on behalf of the Governor, the revised Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary was approved to include all of Lake, LaPorte and Porter Counties. “The new boundary will now be used to support all MPO planning activities and for the NIRPC Transportation Plan and NIRPC Transportation Improvement Program.” (This was when LaPorte County officially became part of the MPO Planning and Programming carried out by NIRPC.)

The NIRPC Environmental Management Policy Committee deactivated.

NIRPC hosts the annual Indiana MPO Conference at the Indian Oak Inn in Chesterton.

October – NIRPC instituted a new project ranking system in the selection of transportation projects to program that will be funded with federal money. The new system, for example did not rank the Willowcreek project in Portage as highly as it once scored, which will leave that project to find other funds to complete the improvements.

October – NIRPC is updating its long-range transportation plan for the year 2010. The plan includes \$850 million for roads and \$750 million for transit improvements.

A major issue is how it will be funded, which the updated version must include. A gasoline tax increase and a regional sales tax are two proposals to increase revenue.

October – A special newspaper report describes the traffic issues along U.S. 30. A U.S. 30 Task Force was formed to find ways to alleviate growing traffic, crashes and delays. A variety of suggestions were offered.

NIRPC approves “rails to trails” greenways plan.

1995 President Clinton's new budget cuts transit operating funds by 30 percent, from \$710 million to \$500 million.

February – The Northern Arts Association opens up exhibit space at the NIRPC/ Forum building. It is seen as an opportunity to provide Northwest Indiana with a link to its cultural assets by transforming the building’s lobby into a showcase for regional art.

April – NIRPC’s new Safety Advocacy Committee is to plan for safety improvements at the region’s railroad crossings. Made up of local, county officials, railroad and trucking company representatives and two citizen members, the committee is to identify the area’s most hazardous railroad grade crossings, and to recommend safety improvements.

April – The Indiana General Assembly creates a study commission to determine if Northwest Indiana needs two new commuter rail lines to Chicago.

June – The 2-mile Marquette Trail is dedicated and open in Gary. It runs along the former Indiana Harbor Belt right-of-way.

June – The NIRPC Safety Advocacy Committee learns that the Indiana Office of Traffic Safety is funding a study on the feasibility and cost of shifting the Norfolk Southern railroad route between Hobart and Hammond.

June – INDOT is removing a bridge on I-65 just north of U.S. 30, lowering the roadbed and replacing the bridge with a box culvert, which will be available for a future recreation trail as it passes under I-65. The trail would use the abandoned C&O Railroad. This is in keeping with the NIRPC trail plan.

June – NIRPC agrees to support a task force proposed by the Northwest Forum to address regional problems, such as illiteracy, high tax rates that threaten the region’s economic health. It would be a regional effort comprised of both business and elected leaders.

July – NIRPC estimates 50,000 vehicles daily at U.S. 30 and Mississippi Street in Merrillville. INDOT to add turning lanes and widen parts of Mississippi to accommodate the large volume of traffic and reduce long delays at the intersection.

July – NIRPC is part of a forum at the Gary Career Center, sponsored by Everybody Counts, which is an organization that supports independent living for people with disabilities, and the Gary Mayor's Organization on Disabilities. The main issue is transportation and the lack of a regional system. NIRPC purchases vehicles, with federal and transit operator funds, for agencies that transport people with mobility limitations, but those services do not fully meet the need for transportation.

August – Porter County Board of Commissioners considers eliminating NIRPC from the county budget for 1996. The county's annual support for NIRPC is \$90,252.

NIRPC becomes a charter member of the Partners for Clean Air.

The Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission is formed to discuss transportation and infrastructure.

The Federal government experiences two shutdowns in 1995-1996, seriously impacting project funding, especially public transit.

September – Hammond Yellow Coach ends its Chicago commuter service. The service was assisted in part, with buses from NIRPC purchased with federal transit funds.

October – NIRPC's Transportation Policy Committee adopts the West Lake Corridor Study's recommendation to turn the old Monon rail line into a commuter passenger service to Chicago, with NIRPC board adoption to follow. The CSX Corp., the Chessie System's parent company, petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission in late September to abandon a five-mile section between Airport Junction in Munster and downtown Hammond. A key to the building and operation of a commuter service on the line would be a local tax to support it.

October – Hammond Yellow Coach was to return its NIRPC-leased buses to NIRPC. Yellow Coach had leased buses from NIRPC since 1986, equipment purchased with FTA capital funds and Yellow Coach's local share. One of the buses that was to have been returned to NIRPC by October 6, was instead on a charter trip in Indianapolis on October 14, and was involved in a fatal crash. NIRPC's public-private partnership with Yellow Coach ends.

November – The US Department of Transportation suspended Hammond Yellow Coach from traveling across state lines due to safety and maintenance violations.

NIRPC conducts a new Household Travel Survey, which will inform the travel demand forecast modeling in transportation planning.

NIRPC staff is part of a panel discussing the region's economy, employment, investments.

December – NIRPC Executive Director Jim Ranfranz provides a guest commentary in the newspaper supporting the concept of Planet park, a proposed year-round entertainment and sports development in northwest Lake County, which would include a football stadium, which could house the Bears or another professional team. An economic development tax is proposed to help finance the development.

1996 February – A State Senate proposal to have Lake County withdraw from NIRPC was eventually not pursued. A State Senator from Northwest Indiana felt that Lake County should be receiving a better share of funds that NIRPC distributes, that Lake County has paid far more into NIRPC than the other counties, but has not received a “fair share of return.” Other elected officials come to NIRPC's defense.

March – Thirteen projects are competing for federal enhancement funds, projects that will be prioritized and selected by NIRPC. The State DOT uses NIRPC priorities in helping determine which local road and other transportation projects it will fund. The ISTEA federal authorizing legislation, passed in 1991, requires states to use 10% of its highway funds for transportation enhancement projects, which are mostly trails. The entire NIRPC Transportation Improvement Program for 1997-1999 will be available for public review in late March.

March – NIRPC assists the Town of Schererville in the development of a park master plan. NIRPC will compile surveys, complete a needs analysis based on demographics and prepare an action plan.

March – Dave Schulz addresses the NIRPC *Vision 2020* transportation plan committee. Schulz is the director of Northwestern University's Infrastructure Technology Institute. He advocates the use of public transportation, understanding that most people's preference is the automobile.

April – Replacement vehicles are delivered to the Hobart Township/Lake Ridge Community Services by its parent organization the Lake County Economic Opportunity Council, based in Hammond. NIRPC purchased the vehicles with an 80% federal grant with LCEOC paying the 20% local share. They will be used to transport people with mobility limitations.

NIRPC's legislation is again amended to provide a seat on the Commission for all of the mayors in the three county region. The legislation was again amended in 2003 to provide for representation of all 41 cities and towns in the Tri-County area, and to specify that representatives must be elected officials.

May – A meeting called by State Rep. Chet Dobis brings together representatives of local, regional, county, state, federal agencies and utilities to hear what the Town of New Chicago needs and how they could help. For example, NIRPC could help the town write grant applications.

New Portage Marina opens in the spring.

The development of the *Vision 2020* regional transportation plan begins.

NIRPC completes accident study of data from 1988 to 1992; adding data from 1993 and 1994.

NIRPC adopts Interim Transit Development Plan which analyzed needs and recommended strategies for improved transit.

Northwest Indiana hosts the IACT conference, with NIRPC providing major support.

Environmental Management Policy Committee reactivated. The committee discusses air quality and the impact on the health of the region's residents. Public education is needed regarding air quality

June – Part of a state response system, INDOT's Hoosier Helper service will soon be expanded to 24 hours a day. The service started in 1991 and covers the Borman Expressway (I-80/94) in Lake County and I-65 south to U.S. 30. The State's incident response system was one of the recommendations of NIRPC's Borman Task Force in the mid-1980s.

August – The U.S. EPA addresses NIRPC's Environmental Management Policy Committee about growth and development. The message is that EPA is reluctant to address the issue of sprawl, and will not impose federal control over land use. However, it is evident that development, particularly unchecked development, can increase erosion from subdivision construction sites and clog streams. The problem is exacerbated by runoff from roofs, streets, parking lots, etc. More people means more cars, trucks and therefore greater air emissions.

August – The NIRPC board acts to apply for a State Department of Commerce grant to pay for public information programs on sustainable development, including developing a video. The board also voted to apply for an EPA grant for a wetlands study for the three county region, along with wetlands mapping in Lake County. The Process of notification to the public for NIRPC public meetings and hearings, especially regarding paratransit is discussed.

NIRPC adopts resolution to insure all transit providers are included in the TIP.

December – The NIRPC household travel survey was completed and the results are discussed. From September to November, 1995 about 25,000 households were randomly selected to receive a questionnaire, which had an 11% return rate.

December – NIRPC receives criticism for the region's transportation system not being as accessible to people with disabilities as it should be. Federal and State officials say that NIRPC needs to correct deficiencies in how it selects projects and needs to improve public participation in the planning process.

December – An editorial urges the region's politicians to work toward common goals, that NIRPC should take a more active role in regional cooperation, and do more than just divvying up the federal funds for the area.

1997 February – NIRPC is to create an Action Plan in response to concerns about meeting and hearing notifications.

NIRPC creates Sub-grantee Advisory and Demand Response Transit Dependent Advisory Committees to help with resolution of complaints.

April - People with disabilities complain about poor public transit system in the region, and lack of participation in NIRPC planning process.

Congestion Management System developed.

NIRPC adopts a resolution, which will provide a transcript, letter and written comments from public hearings to be submitted for funding. A sound system is being sought for the auditorium.

NIRPC adopts resolution to encouraging the three county region to join the Partners for Clean Air Program and commit to specific actions on Ozone Action Days.

NIRPC adopts resolution to support the creation of a Quality of Life Council.

The Transit Operators Roundtable is established to improve communications between the public operators, the not-for-profit transit operators, and NIRPC.

October – A nationally-known expert in regional planning, Bruce McDowell, is engaged by NIRPC to review the agency. During his research, he visits with INDOT and FHWA, NIRPC, FTA, Chicago planners, CATS and FHWA. He presents his findings at a Commission meeting. He finds some external and internal problems, such as public misunderstanding and distrust, as well as low staff morale. The agency is working to correct the issues McDowell found, and will also step back and redefine its mission. His observations of NIRPC include a need for change and

greater regional leadership; more than the usual intervention from state and federal agencies; distrust in some of NIRPC's processes; and NIRPC has too many meetings which may result in overlapping of, or over reliance on, committees. He stresses that communication is very important.

1998 NIRPC endorses Indiana's participation in the Great Lakes Protection Fund.

February – NIRPC receives full federal certification of the transportation planning process for Northwest Indiana, having complied with recommendations of a 1996 federal planning certification review. A group of local critics still feel NIRPC falls short, particularly in public participation. Those people were in attendance at a NIRPC board meeting where the certification was announced and expressed their concern.

A class action lawsuit was filed by Everybody Counts against the Indiana Department of Transportation, NIRPC, and a group of local transportation providers alleging multiple violations of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Porter Superior Court enjoins NIRPC from taking action on the TIP at a request by Everybody Counts. An agreement bifurcates the process to allow passage of the two TIP amendments and a timely submission to avoid loss of dollars.

The self-certification was approved by State and Federal agencies.

NIRPC adopts Consumer Complaint Requirements and Procedures from the Transit Dependent Advisory Commission (TDAC). The committee will respond to all complaints by certified return receipt mail.

The federal reauthorization (TEA-21) was enacted, providing \$600 million in highway funds. Transit operating assistance is gone for large urban areas in Lake and Porter Counties. It also provides for \$10.6 million in transit funds.

September – A NICTD consultant studies route options for proposed Westlake commuter rail line. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky secures \$500,000 for the study and NICTD contributes the \$125,000 local share. Options are at the abandoned Monon line through Hammond, Munster and to Lowell on CSX right-of-way; to Crown Point on Conrail right-of-way. The option via Canadian National to Valparaiso would be studied later.

A one day workshop on Clean Air Act is held by NIRPC.

NIRPC adopts its first Public Involvement Plan.

Due to lack of extended funding by the state, NIRPC discontinues the rail safety program. It researches safety money in TEA-21.

1999 NIRPC adopts the *Vision 2020 Plan*, Air Quality Conformity Determination, the Air Quality Manual, the Transportation Program and the Transportation Improvement Plan.

The Air Quality Public Education Program begins.

NIRPC adopts the Smart Growth Initiative.

NIRPC's Congestion Management System is lauded by FTA as an example to other MPOs.

The Lake County Regional Transportation Authority bill signed by Governor Frank O'Bannon.

NIRPC assists Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in planning on a new, combined Visitor Center the Porter County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

NIRPC becomes a member of the Brownfield Project Executive Board.

A Federal bi-state environmental assessment study of the Kankakee River is performed.

June – A new state law allows for the creation of a regional transportation authority in Lake County, with action by the County Council. An ordinance to create the RTA is expected to be introduced at a Council meeting in July. Many questions about organization, operation and funding will have to be dealt with.

NIRPC adopts employee handbook changes, which include flextime, awards and recognition program, and grievance procedure changes.

NIRPC approves support for Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan.

NIRPC participates in a series of cable TV programs entitled "On the Trail in Northwest Indiana", on Michigan City marina, Youth Golf Course in Hammond, and Transportation enhancement and trail project in Valparaiso.

The regional transportation planning process for northwest Indiana, which NIRPC conducts, is certified by USDOT subject to three corrective actions: 1) expedite signing of MOU for air quality coordination within 3 months (approved by NIRPC

in February 1999); 2) improve TIP development process; and 3) identify and address environmental justice issues by September 2, 2000.

NIRPC publishes Regional Transit Needs Analysis, with 71% of those surveyed indicating they would use public transportation if it were available.

Federal Planning Certification Review of the metropolitan transportation planning process for Northwest Indiana conducted by FHWA and FTA.

2000 NIRPC approves INDOT's Northwest Corridor Study, marking milestones to be used by INDOT for future projects.

NIRPC produces "Whatever Happened to that Project?" which is a list of transportation projects implemented in 1999.

TradeWinds discontinues its public demand response transportation service, effective August 1, triggering stakeholder and public discussion of service and funding impacts. TradeWinds had received vehicles and operating assistance through NIRPC since the early 1980s.

NIRPC adopts Governance Documents to help Commissioners be more effectively involved in Commission activities, qualify the responsibilities and expectations of the Executive Director and provide a reference tool for new Commissioners.

NIRPC is one of four agencies throughout the country to be selected for the \$25,000 Environmental Justice planning grant award.

NIRPC receives an award from the FHWA, EPA and FTA for efforts to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion. NIRPC is also recognized by the US Dept. of Commerce US Census Bureau for its part in the 2000 census. NIRPC is recognized by Quality of Life Council for its work with the Council.

NIRPC satisfies 1999 Certification Review corrective actions and receives approval of its self-certification.

2001 NIRPC's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) qualifies for a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.

NIRPC's *Vision 2020 Transportation Plan* is adopted, along with the Fiscal Year TIP.

The Lake Michigan Shoreline Development Commission is established.

Lake County creates a new Regional Transportation Authority, a concept NIRPC has been advocating.

The tri-state Wingspread Regional Accord, signed in June, is a pledge for the regions in SE Wisconsin, NE Illinois and NW Indiana to work together to compete in a global economy that puts a premium on regionalism.

August – NIRPC is considering asking for an amendment to its state enabling legislation to become a three-county council of governments and broaden its focus from transportation alone.

Federal Planning Certification Review of the metropolitan transportation planning process for Northwest Indiana conducted by FHWA and FTA.

2002 January – NIRPC is part of a tri-state meeting discussing linking IL, IN and MI with a system of bicycle trails.

January – The Indiana General Assembly is asked by the Lake County Regional Transportation Committee to pass a one percent food and beverage tax to support public transportation in Northwest Indiana.

March – The Center for Neighborhood Technology provides NIRPC with a “Framework for Public Involvement. CNT was employed by NIRPC through a federal transit Environmental Justice Challenge grant as a follow up to the 1999 Federal Planning Certification Review findings. The report offered options to engaging the public in the regional transportation planning process.

April – The first bill to change NIRPC into a council of governments was introduced in the Indiana General Assembly but failed. It will be reintroduced in next year’s long session. The idea grew out of studies done by the Quality of Life Council, which concluded that the area needs something to hold it together as a region. It would be a place for local governments with diverse interests to address common problems more effectively.

April – NIRPC adopts the Wingspread Accord, a tri-state agreement between NIRPC, the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC). It was developed at the Wingspread conference center in Racine, Wis. The group’s initial work project will: develop a tri-state regional website; analyze the tri-state economy; sponsor workshops to identify common coastal management issues of the Lake Michigan shoreline.

June – NIRPC takes up the issue of homeland security on a regional basis, initiating the Regional Preparedness Committee.

November – NIRPC had once recommended shuttle bus service from Valparaiso to the South Shore Dune Park station. LCEOC, formerly known as the Lake County Economic Opportunity Council, had proposed to operate the service, and was approved for a grant to do so, but LCEOC decides not to go ahead with it.

November – In a letter from Governor Frank O'Bannon to the Regional Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, Region V, Michigan City Municipal Coach and NIRPC were designated to administer FTA Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307) funds in the Michigan City Urbanized Area.

December – LCEOC has financial problems and will operate at least through the first half of 2003 with support from Lake County. A transit consultant hired by NIRPC makes recommendations, one of which was that a new not-for-profit agency be set up as an alternate to LCEOC's service.

The first gas can exchange program is offered by NIRPC through its air quality public education program.

NIRPC receives Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association for 20th year.

NIRPC receives the highest possible score of 35 MPOs around the country by the Center for Community Change for its "Whatever Happened to that Project?" report, which is the annual list of obligated/implemented transportation projects that had been programmed in a Transportation improvement Program. The report went "beyond the minimum," required listing of projects, and also included an easily understood text, photos of some representative projects and a project location map.

The NIRPC Homeland Security Committee is created.

2003

The Indiana General Assembly amended NIRPC's enabling legislation. NIRPC becomes the Council of Governments for Northwest Indiana. In addition to NIRPC being the long-time designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, conducting regional transportation planning, the amendment adds the domains of environment and economic development to the agency's planning responsibilities. It also assures that all cities and towns are represented, adding 15 more members to the Commission. In addition, it restricts membership to only elected officials.

NIRPC establishes a Public Involvement Advisory Committee.

August – A flagpole is installed in front of NIRPC's building with a ceremony held to raise the flag which was flown over the U.S. Capitol in June. The flag was given to

NIRPC through efforts of Senator Dick Lugar. The newly expanded board meets for the first time and welcomes new members with an orientation to NIRPC.

NIRPC Ethics Committee formed.

October – Jim Ranfranz announced that he will retire effective January 4, 2004, which will be his 67th birthday. Deputy Director Dan Gardner is named as Interim Executive Director.

2004 NIRPC receives Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.

Work on the lane additions to the Borman Expressway begins, further implementing the recommendations from the mid-1980s Borman Task Force.

Long Range Planning Committee created.

NIRPC Rules Committee is created to deal with revision of governance documents as needed and to look at the committee structure, beginning with the Local Government Academy and Small Towns and Cities.

The *Connections 2030 Plan* is adopted. Problems with air quality conformity with short-term projects were found and staff worked to resolve them.

August – John Swanson is named NIRPC's new Executive Director. He would begin work at NIRPC on September 7.

First time federal funding is made available for the Michigan City Urbanized Area.

NIRPC approves support for implementation of the Marquette Greenway Plan.

NIRPC adopts a Legislative Agenda, partnering with Northwest Indiana Forum, Construction Advancement Foundation, Workforce Development and three county Chambers of Commerce.

2005 January – An eight-month feasibility study is completed for the Marquette Greenway Plan. Spearheaded by Congressman Pete Visclosky in the mid-1980's, the plan seeks to recapture at least 75% of the Lake Michigan Shoreline from Whiting to Portage to create an area for public use similar to the area adjacent to Chicago's Lake Shore Drive. JJR of Chicago completed the study with contributions from the lakeshore communities to match a \$160,000 grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. NIRPC Executive Director John Swanson believes the project could

extend past Porter County into LaPorte County, and would be willing to conduct another feasibility study for that portion of the lakeshore.

NIRPC adopts Ped & Pedal Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan.

NIRPC hosts the annual Indiana MPO Conference at the Radisson in Merrillville, at which the Ped & Pedal Plan receives an award.

NIRPC successfully partners with Northeastern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin in the Wingspread Tri-State Regional Accord of 2005.

NIRPC approves the Water Resources Protection and Conservation Toolkit.

NIRPC approves support for the Regional Development Authority in a joint resolution with the Northwest Indiana Forum.

July – NIRPC adopts the Vision and Strategic Directions for 2005 – 2008, which was developed with the help of more than 100 community stakeholders, one of the first major tasks undertaken by new Executive Director John Swanson.

NIRPC adopts the Regional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Architecture.

September – NIRPC and Forum hold first joint board meeting.

NIRPC's Public Involvement Task Force establishes a citizens' advisory committee.

NIRPC adopts tri-county Watershed Plan.

The Federal Planning Certification Review of the metropolitan transportation planning process for Northwest Indiana is conducted by FHWA and FTA.

2006 NIRPC approves support for Hometown Matters (optional funding sources for municipalities).

NIRPC approves support for state tax increment financing.

NIRPC approves support for maintenance of eminent domain as a municipal tool.

NIRPC approves support for creation of intermodal transportation task force with the Northwest Indiana Forum.

NIRPC approves support for a regional bus study with local match provided by the RDA.

Marquette Plan II kick off held in Michigan City.

U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration cited NIRPC for its “best practice” in how it reports the Annual Listing of Obligated Projects.

NIRPC garners a top national award when it receives the “Distinguished Achievement Award for a Mid-Sized Metropolitan Regional Council” for its co-sponsorship of the November 2005 Transportation Summit: Moving Northwest Indiana Forward. An honorary mention award also was presented to the Commission for the XRT Xtraordinary Road Trip edutainment program, which is part of NIRPC’s Air Quality Public Education Program.

The governing boards of NIRPC and the Southwestern Michigan Commission adopt a cooperative accord to coordinate planning activities between the two regions. The new agreement builds upon the successful partnerships developed with Northeastern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin in the Wingspread Tri-State Regional Accord of 2005.

NIRPC publishes “Protecting Nature in Your Community,” a guide for incorporating principles of biodiversity protection and restoration into community planning and redevelopment activities.

NIRPC receives the Indiana Metropolitan Planning Organization Council’s 2006 award for outstanding public participation to NIRPC for the Transportation Summit: Moving Northwest Indiana Forward.

NIRPC and the Northwest Indiana Forum form a joint Intermodal Task Force to engage leaders in a public/private partnership to support the economic competitiveness of the region and to advance the region’s freight movement.

September – Household travel (origin-destination) survey to get underway early next year.

NIRPC approves support for the Regional Bus Authority in pursuit of needed funding.

Norman Tufford, the founding executive director of NIRPC, passes away on October 12 at age 86 after a long illness.

The Forum and NIRPC board adopt a joint legislative agenda for Northwest Indiana for the forthcoming session of the Indiana General Assembly entitled “V-8,” supporting eight legislative initiatives encompassing such issues as local government financing, technology districts, intermodal readiness, support for the study of the Illiana Expressway and corridor planning legislation, changes to NIRPC’s enabling legislation, and support for the work of the Regional Development

Authority, Regional Bus Authority, and the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission.

NIRPC adopts resolutions in support of letters of understanding with the Northeastern Illinois RTA to establish procedures for dividing the annual apportionment of FTA funds between NE Illinois and NW Indiana.

December – A study is conducted by Indiana University Northwest to determine whether it makes sense to rebrand the region as “The South Shore.” NIRPC’s John Swanson says that the name change might warrant attention, but also that many of the changes the region needs to concentrate on are deeper and more systematic, such as the economic structure and quality of life issues like race relations and environmental issues.

A Court Order and Consent Decrees with Everybody Counts is issued.

2007 NIRPC enters into an intergovernmental agreement with CMAP for a household travel and activity inventory.

NIRPC Communications Audit approved.

An amendment to NIRPC’s state enabling legislation allows weighted voting to continue to be used by NIRPC, expands the Executive Board from 8 to 11 members, and provides that the immediate past chair serve as nonvoting member of the Executive Board.

Sensible Tools Handbook adopted. It was developed as a tool for local governments and plan commissions to develop better plans. Developed by a Ball State planning professor, the draft was edited by Eman Ibrahim of the NIRPC staff.

NIRPC approves support for “Leave No Child Inside” campaign.

NIRPC wins Indiana MPO award for “Sensible Tools Handbook.”

NIRPC approves support for Indiana adoption of the Great Lakes Compact.

NIRPC adopts Northwest Indiana Compact between NIRPC and Forum.

The Northeast Illinois Daniel Burnham Award given to East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Portage and Whiting for the Marquette Vision – Phase I.

NIRPC approves support for the West Lake Corridor extension contingent upon a plan for financing the project and the RDA’s ability to raise the necessary funding.

NIRPC opposes purchase of EJ&E by Canadian National Railroad because of the expected large increase in rail traffic along the line, negatively impacting communities and travel.

2008 NIRPC adopts the US 12-20 Corridor Plan, for the corridor in Porter County.

NIRPC plans call for 500 miles of recreational trails throughout the region. The new “Northwest Indiana Bike Map” is made available.

NIRPC receives Unity Award from Porter and LaPorte County tourism agencies.

NIRPC approves new contract with RBA to house the transit agency.

NIRPC receives Outstanding Project Award from MPO Council and an award from the Waterfront Center for the Blueways and Greenways Plan.

December – The Forum on the Future of Northwest Indiana is held with over 500 people in attendance, which was the public kick-off event to the development of a comprehensive regional plan for 2040.

2009 NIRPC receives a honorable mention award from NARC for the Sensible Tools Handbook.

NIRPC approves support for the Midwest high speed rail plan.

The Northwest Indiana Economic Development District non-profit organization is created in order to seek Economic District designation from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U. S. Department of Commerce.

INDOT closes the Cline Avenue Bridge that became deteriorated and declared unsafe. Governor Mitch Daniels promises that it will be replaced.

Federal Planning Certification Review of the metropolitan transportation planning process for Northwest Indiana conducted by FHWA and FTA.

NIRPC participates in the American Planning Association’s Upper Midwest Conference in Chicago, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the 1909 *Plan of Chicago* created by Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett. NIRPC shares its successful creation of the Marquette Plan to audiences from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

2010 NIRPC approves support for the “Jobs for Main Street” Act, consideration of vehicle fuel tax increase, federal transportation planning funding to be used for

comprehensive long-range planning, increase in funding for transit-related programs and freight transportation, and provision of adequate resources to include NIRPC's new plans and programs

NIRPC holds a two-day Environmental Justice workshop in Gary for NIRPC staff and for members of the public. Federal experts conduct the workshop.

NIRPC approves policy to move federal highway funds between project sponsors with written notice to both parties.

NIRPC approves support for Midwest High Speed Rail Association plan for a high speed rail line from Chicago to Cincinnati via Lafayette and Indianapolis.

NIRPC adopts the 2010-2013 *Vision and Strategic Directions* document.

NIRPC approves support for designation of Old Lincoln Highway as a State Historic Byway.

NIRPC adopts Complete Streets guidelines.

June – NIRPC adopts the FY 2010-2011 Unified Planning Work Program, including scope of work to update the 2007 Public Participation Plan.

2011 NIRPC adopts 2010 Ped & Pedal Plan.

NIRPC approves support for designation of Airport Road in Gary as an intermodal connector on the National Highway System, making it eligible for funding.

NIRPC certifies compliance with federal transportation planning laws and regulations as part of the annual self-certification.

June – NIRPC adopts the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, the first broad planning initiative for Northwestern Indiana encompassing the main areas of Growth & Conversation; Transportation; Environment & Green Infrastructure; Human & Economic Resources; and Stewardship & Governance. The Plan has steps for Implementation and casts a vision for a more vibrant, revitalized, accessible, and unified region.

June – The Lake Michigan Water Recreation Trail is dedicated as a National Recreation Trail by the U.S. Department of the Interior at a ceremony at Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk Site of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. This new three-state water trail is based in large part upon the *Greenways and Blueways Plan* of developed by NIRPC with OpenLands.

NIRPC approves support for obligation of funding by the Federal Railroad Administration for the Indiana Gateway Project, which is a congested railroad junction in northern Porter County.

NIRPC approves review and prioritization of certain categories of CMAQ applications by Environmental Management Policy Committee.

The NIRPC Commission unanimously approved a resolution in support of the “Calumet Connections” project. Calumet Connections is a broad, bi-state initiative between Northwest Indiana and the South Chicago suburbs in Illinois seeking to expand safe non-motorized connections, and in turn linking residents to key destinations.

NIRPC receives the National Association of Regional Council’s Outstanding Achievement Award for *The Marquette Plan: A Vision for Lakeshore Reinvestment, Phase II*.

2012 The first Norman E. Tufford Award for regional leadership was presented posthumously to Norman Tufford, NIRPC’s founding Executive Director.

The *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* received the APA Indiana’s Hoosier Planning Award for the “Outstanding Plan.”

At the annual conference of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) in St. Petersburg, FL, NIRPC Commissioner and Munster Clerk-Treasurer Dave Shafer is elected as the NARC President for 2013. This represents the first time a NIRPC and Indiana official has lead this national organization. In addition, NIRPC Commissioner and Beverly Shores Town Council member Geof Benson is elected to fill the NARC board seat previously occupied by Dave Shafer, thus giving NIRPC two representatives on the organization’s Executive Board.

For the third consecutive year (and the fourth time in six years), NIRPC is awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award for a Mid-Sized Regional Council by NARC, this time for the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*.

The Regional Bus Authority ceases operations on June 30, 2012. Its office was housed at NIRPC.

A groundbreaking ceremony is held outside the NIRPC office for the City of Portage’s 1.13 mile North Side Trail, 0.7 miles of which surrounds the NIRPC/ Forum building. The NIRPC/Forum building entrance area is the trailhead for the facility.

May - August – The Public Participation Plan Task Force meets 4 times to develop a new plan for engaging the public in NIRPC planning.

Mid-October through early April, 2013 – Extended public comment period for reviewing the draft Public Participation Plan.

2013 January – Ty Warner named NIRPC’s 4th Executive Director. A reception was held at NIRPC to honor the retiring John Swanson and to welcome the incoming Executive Director. Commissioners bring food representative of their home communities for a “Taste of the Region.”

January – NIRPC is selected to receive the 2013 American Planning Association’s Daniel Burnham Award for the nation’s best comprehensive plan, for the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*. The award presentation is made during APA’s National Conference in Chicago in April. The Daniel Burnham Award recognizes a comprehensive plan that advances the science and art of planning. The award honors America’s most famous planner, Daniel Burnham, for his contributions to the planning profession and to a greater awareness of the benefits of good planning.

NIRPC develops its first Social Media Policy and formally enters the world of social media.

The Pennsy Greenway Trail opens, marking the first bi-state trail connection between Illinois and Indiana.

A one-mile connector is completed between the Dune Park South Shore Station and the entrance to the Indiana Dunes State Park, as part of the Dunes Kankakee Trail network.

May – Staff presents the draft Public Participation Plan (PPP) for consideration by the TPC, which acts to approve it and recommend to the NIRPC Executive Board. Hearing protest, the NIRPC executive board does not hear the staff presentation or act on PPP but appoints an ad hoc committee of five Commissioners to meet with representatives of Everybody Counts to further discuss the contents of the PPP.

November – NIRPC Planning staff releases a “white paper” about the proposed Illiana Expressway, assessing how the proposal meets or does not meet the many goals and objectives of the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*. Given the complexity and scope of the project and the multiple plan goals affected, the paper does not contain an overall staff recommendation, but rather provides extensive information for the NIRPC board of Commissioners to make a decision whether to include the project in the *2040 Plan*.

December – Action is taken by the full Commission, in a weighted vote, to amend the Illiana Expressway into the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*. To accommodate

the large anticipated crowd attending, the meeting was held at Woodland Park in Portage.

As a result of the federal Planning Certification Review, NIRPC receives four commendations by FHWA/FTA as a model for other MPOs: 1) through its *2040 Plan*; 2) for trail development; 3) for environmental justice; and 4) for ADA compliance.

NIRPC begins to implement the Creating Livable Communities Program.

NIRPC's 2012 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) qualifies for a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.

Federal Planning Certification Review of the metropolitan transportation planning process for Northwest Indiana is conducted by FHWA and FTA.

2014 NIRPC received the APA-IN State Award for Best Practices for the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* — the seventh award the *2040 Plan* has received.

NIRPC begins its plans for a complete office remodel.

December – The new Public Participation Plan is adopted by NIRPC, enhancing public engagement and involvement in the regional planning process.

December – Mayors on NIRPC reiterate desire to address the need for a truly regional transit system.

2015 NIRPC's enabling legislation for weighted voting is updated to reflect the "most recent federal decennial census." The legislation had previously references a specific 2000 census year.

NIRPC partners with the Alliance for Regional Development to produce an online mapping tool of the three state Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana regions that border Lake Michigan.

NIRPC's Transportation Improvement Program exceeds \$1 billion in funds for the first time in history.

NIRPC's annual audit receives its "no negative findings" for the 11th consecutive year.

The Triangle Transit Service is implemented between Michigan City, LaPorte and Purdue North Central in Westville, something that has been included in NIRPC plans for a long time.

NIRPC offices undergo complete renovation. The new configuration allows for greater collaboration while reducing square footage and reducing leasing expenses.

NIRPC secures a grant for NICTD's Bikes on Trains Feasibility Study.

NIRPC secures two grants for transit feasibility studies for Portage and Hobart.

2016 NIRPC enters its 50th Year of serving the northwest Indiana region through collaboration, connection, and regional leadership.

Note:

Details of recent years are available in NIRPC "Year in Review" newsletters of 2011 to 2015.

Research sources include:

- NIRPC Board Minutes
- NIRPC Newsletters
- NIRPC Website
- Northwest Indiana Times archives
- Lake County Public Library electronic archives, accessing primarily the Valparaiso Vidette Messenger and the Post-Tribune.
- Indiana University Northwest
- Calumet Regional Archives

NIRPC is indebted to Steve Strains, former NIRPC Deputy Director and Director of Planning, for the original compilation, research, and personal recollections that went into this history.

Please forward errors and additions to nirpc@nirpc.org.