

NIRPC Executive Board Meeting  
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN  
September 21, 2017  
Minutes

**Call to Order**

Chairman Michael Griffin called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

Executive Board members present included Michael Griffin, Geof Benson, Justin Kiel, Tom McDermott, Jr., Diane Noll, Ed Soliday, Greg Stinson and Jim Ton.

Commissioners present included Kevin Breitzke, Robert Carnahan, Christine Cid, Bill Emerson, Jr., Don Ensign, Will Farrellbegg, Richard Hardaway, Mark Krentz, Tom Schmitt, Dave Shafer, Mary Tanis and George Topoll. Rick Powers was present from INDOT.

Guests present included Lyndsay Quist, Dorreen Carey, David Wright, Randy Strasser, Don Oliphant, Ismail Attallah, Zully Alvarado, Christopher Murphy, Teresa Torres, Andrew Steele and Tim Zorn.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Kathy Luther, Mitch Barloga, Scott Weber, Gary Evers, James Winters, Jody Melton and Mary Thorne.

**Minutes**

On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Geof Benson, the minutes of the July 20, 2017 Full Commission meeting were approved by the Executive Board.

**Appointment to the NIRPC Board**

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointment of Mark Krentz to the NIRPC Commission by the City of La Porte.

**Report of the Chairman**

Michael Griffin said the task force on by-laws consists of Justin Kiel, Dave Shafer, George Topoll, Will Farrellbegg and Michael Griffin. A draft document will be sent via email and a report given at a later date once our attorney has reviewed the draft. He asked the Commissioners to see the Executive Director if they have not yet received their NIRPC membership pin.

**Report of the Executive Director**

- Ty Warner thanked Kathy Luther and other NIRPC staff for their efforts to cover other duties held by former staff members who have left the agency.
- Scheduling efforts are underway to get all communities to the table for a meeting regarding the LakeShore South route to address the funding situation.
- Ty Warner was on a panel in Chicago on Midwest MegaRegion Freight Issues hosted by FHWA, with FHWA Division Administrators and other MPOs in from multiple Midwest states. A common theme was the difficulty in situations with important regional projects falling on state boundary lines that could greatly benefit from more flexible federal funding across state lines; northwest Indiana of course is a prime example where this would be beneficial.
- Further discussion is taking place with the Northwest Indiana Forum on partnering better with brownfield economic development. The Calumet Collaborative is a newly formed bi-state organization that also has this as an initiative.

- Ty Warner welcomed Mark Krentz, the new Mayor of the City of La Porte, to the Commission, replacing Blair Milo who was appointed Indiana's Secretary of Career Connections and Talent.
- The US Forestry Service held a CommuniTrees Program workshop at NIRPC with staging. About 335 trees are being planted throughout the region.
- In answer to a question from Tom McDermott, Ty Warner said NIRPC does partner with OneRegion, which serves best as a hub to connect the regional agencies but does not need to "reinvent the wheel." The region already has a strong vision for northwest Indiana, reflected in the *2040 Plan*, and we all need to get behind it, though One Region can accomplish some things NIRPC cannot, given their source of private funding. Mayor McDermott said that NIRPC already convenes entities from across the region to move forward together.

### **Finance & Personnel Committee**

- Vice Chairman Dave Shafer reported that the committee met this morning. NIRPC's finances are solid. NIRPC is hosting the annual MPO Conference this year and registration revenue is anticipated to be spent on that conference. Proposed budget amendment 5 would add an additional \$27,000 in new funds to the budget generated through these registration and sponsorships for the conference. On a motion by Diane Noll and a second by Jim Ton, the Executive Board voted to adopt amendment 5.
- Dave Shafer said Procurement Recommendation #17-14 is to purchase computers, upgrades and a sound system through 80% FTA grant and the local share provided by NIRPC. Procurement Recommendation #17-18 is a contract with the Stardust Event Center in Michigan City and items necessary to hold the conference in an amount not to exceed \$30,000. On a motion by Tom McDermott and a second by Diane Noll, the Executive Board voted to adopt 17-14 and 17-18.
- A contract with Eco-Interactive Inc. for Electronic Transportation Improvement Program (e-TIP) System services was approved on a motion by Diane Noll and a second by Greg Stinson. Ty Warner commented that the software enables LPAs to track the TIP for status of their projects, and is already used by CMAP in Chicago as well as the Indianapolis MPO.

### **Environmental Management Policy Committee**

Geof Benson welcomed Dorreen Carey, DNR Coastal, who presented on SepticSmart Week September 18-22, 2017.

- On a motion by Tom McDermott and a second by Geof Benson, the Executive Board voted to adopt Resolution 17-18 in support of SepticSmart Week.
- On a motion by Jim Ton and a second by Justin Kiel, the Executive Board voted to adopt Resolution 17-19 in support of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and Indiana Dunes State Park request to be designated as a Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association.

The next EMPC meeting will take place on October 5 at 9 a.m. at NIRPC.

### **Technical Planning Committee**

Kevin Breitzke reported that the Technical Planning Committee met last Tuesday and heard a presentations from staff on the safe and secure transportation goal of the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* and an update from Lyndsay Quist on INDOT's Next Level Plan.

- Gary Evers explained Resolution 17-20, Amendment #2 to the FY 2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program for local projects as recommended by the TPC. On a motion by Geof

Benson and a second by Greg Stinson, the Commission voted to adopt Resolution 17-20, FY 2018-2021 TIP Amendment #2.

- Gary Evers explained Resolution 17-21, Amendment #3 to the FY 2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program for INDOT projects as recommended by the TPC. On a motion by Greg Stinson and a second by Geof Benson, the Commission voted to adopt Resolution 17-21, FY 2018-2021 TIP Amendment #3.

Geof Benson thanked Ed Soliday for his work on the General Assembly. He also thanked the Indiana General Assembly and Gov. Eric Holcomb for the 20-year funding package for infrastructure.

The next meeting of the Technical Planning Committee is scheduled for September 12 at 9 a.m. at NIRPC.

### **Indiana Department of Transportation**

Rick Powers said the Community Crossings grants were just announced and thanked Ed Soliday for his work. INDOT is taking on an asset management plan and is also moving forward with maintenance and winter preparations. INDOT is hiring seasonal CDL employees. Rick Powers conceded the rest of his time to Ed Soliday.

Ed Soliday said local governments around the state applied for almost twice the \$150 million available for the Community Crossings program. While the application was simple, a lot of applicants' forms were incomplete.

Ed Soliday said a bipartisan group of legislators met with NIRPC about the emissions testing program in Northwest Indiana. Lake and Porter counties have the cleanest air but can't get out of the testing program because they are lumped together with the Northeastern Illinois and Southwestern Wisconsin MPOs. The elderly and poor suffer the most because they cannot afford newer cars. The delegation will probably send a letter to Congress asking that Lake and Porter become their own environmental district.

There have been several stakeholder meetings on autonomous vehicles. General use of these vehicles will not happen quickly due to several variables on safety, recognition of lighting, ethics, regulatory, insurance, etc. Technology is developing faster than regulatory laws. Ed Soliday also touched on building infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Some new infrastructure will need to be hybridized, integrating both physical and digital features and capabilities.

### **Other Business**

Bob Carnahan mentioned the Coca Cola plant in Portage will discontinue delivery operations from the facility. The site is not closing, according to the company, but some jobs will be eliminated.

### **Public Comment**

- Michael Griffin said a letter was received from Kim Irwin, Executive Director of Health By Design, Indiana Citizens Alliance for Transit in support of a "...renewed, collective approach to accessibility and mobility in Lake County and beyond". Michael Griffin said under general consent, the letter will become part of the Public Comment section of the meeting's minutes.

- David Wright, GPTC, reiterated his request for a partnership with local governments in the communities to find sustainable funding for the Lakeshore South system which services in portions of portions of Hammond, Highland and Munster. GPTC would need \$73,000 annually to continue the Lakeshore route or it will be forced to cut services in December. Tom McDermott commented that transit should be funded regionally.
- Teresa Torres, Everybody Counts, renewed her plea for access to public transportation for the 20% of the population with disabilities. A meeting will be held on October 4 at the Hammond Public Library for residents and riders and Kim Irwin will be in attendance.

Michael Griffin said he will contact the Legislative Committee and ask them to if they consider some advocacy for some statutory construct. We still have a Regional Bus Authority statute and at the time of its operation, there was support by the City of Hammond.

### **Announcements**

Bob Carnahan said OneRegion is holding their annual luncheon on October 5 at Avalon Manor.

### **Adjournment**

Hearing no other business, Michael Griffin adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

*A Digital MP3 of this meeting is filed. Contact Mary Thorne at the phone or email below should you wish to receive a copy of it. DVD recordings will be available once they are received by NIRPC from the videographer.*

For requests for alternate formats, please contact Mary Thorne at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 131 or at [mthorne@nirpc.org](mailto:mthorne@nirpc.org). Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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September 21, 2017



Dear Members of the Commission,

Please accept this letter as my public comment for this morning's meeting. I had hoped to be with you in person to speak, but am unable to be, so offer this communication instead.

I am the executive director of Health by Design. We are a coalition of partners working to ensure that communities throughout Indiana have neighborhoods, public spaces and transportation infrastructure that promote physical activity and healthy living. We work to increase funding and develop policies that support increased options for walking, biking and public transit. Through our efforts, we convene the Indiana Citizens' Alliance for Transit (ICAT).

We are aware of and monitoring the important conversations you have underway related to transit service and funding in Northwest Indiana. We recognize that you are at a critical juncture, simultaneously facing momentum and excitement around system expansion and the harsh reality of potential service cuts. We strongly support a cooperative, equitable solution that preserves service to Lake Shore South riders.

The evidence base is clear: transit benefits communities and the people who live in and visit them. We support transportation options because they are good for public health. Walking, biking and transit options help people incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. They reduce air pollution and help to protect our environment. As transit service increases, the overall transportation network becomes safer and total crashes are reduced. Lastly, transit provides access to people of all ages, abilities and income levels. Whether that means access to medical care or healthy food, access to school or work, improved mobility through transit service means improved quality of life for residents and improved economic vibrancy for cities and towns.

The collaborative energy and approach that has been demonstrated for the Broadway Metro Express and South Shore expansion projects must be harnessed to maintain paratransit and fixed route service in other communities, as well. Local investment in transit is critical, both by providing direct financial support, but also by maximizing available federal and state funding as leverage.

We strongly encourage a renewed, collective approach to accessibility and mobility in Lake County and beyond. We request continued leadership by NIRPC staff in convening appropriate decision-makers, providing data and statistics, facilitating dialogue and seeking solutions that will not just maintain, but expand regional transit service. Please know that we are happy to come alongside you and assist in that process, building on more than ten years of experience in advocating for better transit policy and funding.

Please don't hesitate to let me know of any questions. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kim Irwin'.

Kim Irwin, MPH  
Executive Director