The draft of the NWI 2050 Plan was released for a 30-day public comment period beginning April 1, 2019. A draft of the document was made available at www.nirpc.org and emailed to stakeholders. There were four public hearings: Hammond (4/22), Gary (4/23), Michigan City (4/24), and Valparaiso (4/25).

The comments and responses to the draft are listed below. An update will also be provided at the NIRPC Commission meeting on May 16, 2019.

NWI 2050 Plan Draft Comments & Responses

Commenter: Thomas Fath  
Comment: Is the Westville Correctional Facility is included in the population of Westville?  
Response: Yes, these numbers come from the U.S. Census Bureau which takes into account correctional facilities. See the attached documentation for further reference: https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/methodology/2010-2017/2017-su-meth.pdf  
Significant Comment? No  
Need to Modify? No

Commenter: Tyson Lagoni  
Comment: I strongly encourage the plan to prioritize preserving open green space as that is incredibly important to our unique sense of place and quality of life in the region.  
Response: Thanks for your feedback. The Action Plan chapter includes several recommendations and strategies that support the preservation of green space.  
Significant Comment? No  
Need to Modify? No

Commenter: Betsy Tracy  
Comment: I would like to be added to your contact list.  
Response: Thank you for reaching out to us. You have been added to our mailing list.  
Significant Comment? No  
Need to Modify? No
Commenter: Regina Ruddell  
Comment: I am on the Westville Town Council and I support the action plan of the NWI 2050 Plan. It brings home the need, once again, that LaPorte County should have been a part of the RDA initially.  
Response: Thank you for your support for the Action Plan.  
Significant Comment? No  
Need to Modify? No

Commenter: Labrada Dunham  
Comment: I support the plan. I wonder what will Gary become? 1. Will the city of Gary become a large electrical panel Grid for Northwest Indiana's Transportation plan? 2. Since most of the redevelopment has already began South and South West of Gary what will the citizens of Gary have in return? 3. What is the Transportation plan for the seniors in Gary? *Please note that Mayor Karen Freeman - Wilson cannot speak for every citizen in Gary and say they are satisfied walking to a corner and getting on a bus. 4. I would like to see a Senior Center for the Senior Citizens in Gary similar to the one in Hobart but larger. 5. I would like to see a facility with programs for teenagers that include a roller rink, baseball field, Volley ball area, and bowling alley for the youth. 6. The facility should be centrally located like at Roosevelt High School. I would like to see a community center that includes the children and has after school programs. *Please note there is still a lot of money in the pockets of the citizens of Gary. Asking for recreation facilities for seniors and youth is nothing when all of our hard earned money will be going South and Southwest. Give Gary something besides a big boat!! I have been to the Hartsfield village in Munster. I have been to Hobart's Senior facility at the school. Gary will lose a lot and buses don't come to your house and they do not run forever. Seattle Washington has a program for seniors with disabilities. This program called Sound Generations has free transportation through Medicare for seniors with disabilities. They use a company called Hyde Shuttles. Hyde Shuttles will pick up seniors from their house at no out of pocket cost. At the age of 85 years with no drivers license, many Senior Citizens in Gary will not be able to walk to a corner and stand on a bus stop in the rain and snow to go to a grocery store. What is your transportation plan for the senior citizens in Gary?  
Response: Thank you for your support and comments. The following are the answers to your questions: 1. Will the city of Gary become a large electrical panel Grid for Northwest Indiana's Transportation plan? Answer: As discussed in the NWI 2050 Plan, there will be an increase in the number of electric vehicles on our region's roads. Regardless of how our region's key stakeholders view electric vehicles, many of the world's largest automakers have pledged either fully or largely electrified vehicle fleets in the not so distant future. In order to accommodate the increase in demand for electric vehicles, all of our cities and towns will need to expand their charging infrastructure. The City of Gary would not be uniquely burdened with this responsibility, and there are still opportunities for grants and attracting private investment toward expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure." 2. What is the Transportation plan for the seniors in Gary? *Please note that Mayor Karen Freeman - Wilson cannot speak for every citizen in Gary and say they are satisfied walking to a corner and getting on a bus. Answers: NIRPC developed a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan in 2018. The purpose of the plan is to improve the accessibility of the overall transit system in Northwestern Indiana to individuals with disabilities, people who are low income, and people who are elderly. The plan has to be coordinated and written in order to receive Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities funding from the FTA. The 2050 plan Action Plan includes number of strategies that are driven from the above plan and here is the link of this plan:  
Answer to Comments 2, 4, 5, and 6: Currently, the City of Gary is working on developing a new
comprehensive plan for the city. It is a good timing now to provide feedbacks to the City staff regarding the future of Gary.

**Significant Comment?** No  
**Need to Modify?** No

**Commenter:** Michigan City Public Hearing Participant – Comment Made by Form  
**Comment:** Pg. 97 - "Preservation of a traditional community" - Traditionally people with disabilities have been excluded and institutionalized, not accepted in community... How will NIRPC encourage, promote, inclusivity, integration, acceptance of all?  
**Response:** Thank you for your feedback. The entire strategy in question reads: “Develop form-based code rezoning to allow higher densities and mixed-uses to create more livable communities and maintain more human scale environment and spaces with the preservation of a traditional community character.” In this context, the strategy is referring to the “traditional character” of communities - not the outdated nature of traditional building practices in infrastructure. The “traditional character” in question, is primarily referring to the “look and feel” of a community’s downtown with pedestrian-scaled storefronts, lighting, sidewalks, and other essential components to create a welcoming environment for individuals regardless of their physical abilities. However, in the spirit of your comments we have revised the language to respect the nature of the word “traditional” in regards to individuals with disabilities. The passage will now read: “Develop form-based code rezoning to allow higher densities and mixed-uses to create more livable communities and maintain more human scale environment and spaces that create an inclusive, accessible, and pedestrian-focused community character.”

In regards to the rest of your question, the NWI 2050 Plan addresses furthering the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, both in broad conceptual terms as well as through specific strategies to be implemented. The guiding framework for NWI 2050 Plan were four vision statements established through extensive public outreach: Connected, Renewed, United, and Vibrant. These four vision statements became the backbone of plan goals, strategies, and even scoring criteria for projects that may receive federal funding. The vision statement for “Connected,” is the most related to accessibility for people with disabilities: “NWI’s people have accessible, safe, and equal opportunities, for working, playing, living, and learning.” This is a vision statement that guides the direction of the plan from today through 2050. Further, these four vision statements were matched with the four planning focus areas: Economy and Place, Environment, Mobility, and People and Leaders. Together, the vision statements and plan focus areas create sixteen unique critical paths that are a guiding source for the plan. The critical paths that are directly related to accessibility for people with disabilities are:

- Update land development policies and strategies to emphasize accessibility between people and opportunities  
- Complete roadway, bicycle, sidewalk, and transit networks across municipal and county lines to enhance safe and efficient access to opportunities for all.  
- Commit to removing barriers and obstacles to guarantee equal and accessible opportunities

In terms of individual strategies, several of the strategies identified in NWI 2050 Plan address accessibility. The following is a list of all strategies that directly reference the needs of individuals with disabilities, however several other strategies also address the needs of people with disabilities, albeit indirectly.

- Promote importance of natural area protection, connectivity and accessibility with local governments and agencies to encourage local implementation.  
- Improve the accessibility of transit by using universal design standards when developing new transit infrastructure like bus stops and other signage.
• Increase the accessibility and overall ridership of the transit network by implementing the ADA transition plans and improving its transparency so transit operators can coordinate with their goals, and region residents are aware of the plan.
• Improve accessibility to the transportation system for all users by expanding shared mobility awareness and opportunities regionally.
• Incorporate when feasible universal designs standards for non-motorized access.
• Work with local entities on the development of a sidewalk maintenance plan which inventories facilities in need of repair or missing segments.
• Prioritize transit investments that connect communities in environmental justice areas, people who are elderly, low-income, people with disabilities, and veterans.
• Improve the accessibility of regional pedestrian and transit infrastructure by allocating funding for the implementation of locally-developed ADA transition plans, and incorporating universal design standards so all public infrastructure meets or exceeds ADA standards.
• Monitor and update ADA transition plans by LPAs with NIRPC assistance on a routine basis.
• Hold annual workshops training for local officials on benefits of universal design and Complete Streets, including policy development.
• Improve safety through street design standards and traffic calming treatments to accommodate the movement of pedestrian, bicyclists, elderly people, and other vulnerable users.
• Improve economic opportunity for prosperity particularly for EJ residents and people with disabilities to ensure that NWI is a destination for business and diverse human capital.

Lastly, the NWI 2050 Plan also has already taken steps for the further inclusion of individuals with disabilities. One method of evaluating possible transportation projects to invest in was to use available data on where individuals with disabilities live to contribute to NIRPC’s Environmental Justice analysis. Now, a project that is eligible for federal funding can receive a higher priority is located where it may have a higher chance of benefiting individuals with disabilities. Likewise, nearly every project seeking federal funds has to describe how the project will utilize universal design standards, or advance ADA transition plans to also get additional points in its evaluation. The NWI 2050 Plan also added a new project type to the TIP with a dedicated funding source. “Transportation Projects for ADA compliance with Universal Design,” is a project type nestled within the Complete Streets program. This project type targets federal funds specifically for the implementation of strategies defined in a municipality’s federally-required ADA transition plan.

Significant Comment? No

Need to Modify? Yes: Page 97. Instead of reading: “Develop form-based code rezoning to allow higher densities and mixed-uses to create more livable communities and maintain more human scale environment and spaces with the preservation of a traditional community character.” Please revise to: “Develop form-based code rezoning to allow higher densities and mixed-uses to create more livable communities and maintain more human scale environment and spaces that create an inclusive, accessible, and pedestrian-focused community character.”
Commenter: Michigan City Public Hearing Participant – Comment Made by Form
Comment: Include affordable and accessible housing - want to see an increase of accessible housing.
Response: Thank you for your comment. The word "accessible" will be added where affordable housing is referenced and recommended.
Significant Comment? No
Need to Modify? Accessible added where affordable housing is referenced.

Commenter: Clarence Hulse
Comment: Improve: state and county road snow removal technology; roadway reflectors / lines non-existent; signage to communities.
Response: Thank you for your comment. The Plan prioritizes federal transportation funds for use throughout the region for eligible activities. Snow removal, as an activity, is not eligible for federal funding, however purchasing new vehicles replacing older models, like snow plows, that improve air quality can be eligible under certain funding programs, specifically Congestion Mitigation Air Quality. The rest of the activities mentioned primarily relate to the “Roadway Improvements” category of funding within the 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program. In the next five years, the Region is expected to spend over $48 million on roadway improvement projects, similar to what you described. By 2050, the region is expected to commit over $550 million on roadway improvements.
Significant Comment? No
Need to Modify? No

Commenter: Zully JF Alvarado
Comment: Some comments were given during public session, I will add to those. pg. 97. #2 High Schools need to be included as not all students pursue higher education, vocational training as part of transition plan for students with disabilities; #8 housing besides being affordable needs to be accessible and integrated/inclusive; Pg. 103 #9 Vocational Rehabilitation Centers; Pg. 106 #6 at best where readily achievable that it comply with ADA Standards; #7 sidewalks and curb cuts/ramps functional auditory signaling; Pg. 110 #6 based on accessibility; see page 111 #7 is repeated; Pg. 130 #1 to increase affordable, accessible housing #2 to promote an inclusive, healthy environment ...; #3 by promoting universally designed placemaking in addition to local artists include accessibility specialists; Pg. 131 #1 include the words: people with disabilities, avoid language such as : vulnerable populations. Who creates the vulnerable populations but society?; Pg. 138 encourage businesses to apply universal design principles when establishing new businesses, to comply and go beyond minimum ADA Standards in existing businesses; Support Employment First Coalition and Self-Employment of persons with disabilities; Pg 139 # 10. allows for sufficient, accessible...; #13. include as a place to find the most qualified and dedicated employees; Pg. 141 paragraph next to Project Evaluation Criteria, instead of ...their is best? should read theirs is best?
Response: Thank you for your comments and support. Your suggestions and comments have been edited into the Plan where they were noted. Additional language and strategies have been included based on your comments: (see page 111 #7 is repeated) – Thank you for identifying the repeat error, the change has been made and now the language under People and Leaders Pg.111 #7 states: Provide technical assistance for TOD. New strategy added to Connected/Plan for smart land uses and quality of place/People and Leaders pg. 98 #23 - Encourage businesses to apply universal design principles when establishing new businesses, to comply and go beyond minimum ADA Standards in existing businesses. New strategy added to Renewed/Plan for Main Centers & Transit-Oriented Development/People and Leaders pg.111 #8 - Support Employment First Coalition and Self-Employment of persons with disabilities.
**Significant Comment? No**

**Need to Modify? Yes:** pg. 97 #2 - Add “high schools, vocational schools,” universities... to strategy; Pg. 97 #8 – Add to this strategy: Provide incentives to developers to include affordable, “accessible, integrated and inclusive” housing as part of the development of market-rate housing.; Pg. 103 #9 – Add “vocational rehabilitation centers” to list of destinations.; Pg. 106 #6 – Add to this strategy: Incorporate when feasible Universal Designs standards for non-motorized access “that comply with ADA standards.”; Pg. 106 #7 – Add to this strategy: Work with local entities on the development of a sidewalk maintenance plan which inventories facilities in need of repair or missing segments, “sidewalks and curb cuts/ramps and functional auditory signaling.”; Pg. 110 #6 - Add “accessibility” to list; **Pg.111 #7 under People and Leaders – Change strategy language to say “Provide technical assistance for TOD.”; Pg. 130 #1 – Add affordable, “accessible” housing near job centers...; Pg. 130 #2 – Add green infrastructure to promote “an inclusive”, healthy environment...; Pg. 130 #3 – Rewrite strategy to say: Improve quality of life by promoting universally designed placemaking that creates a vibrant environment through architecture design, public art, local artists, accessibility specialists and historic preservation.; Pg. 131 #1 – Change vulnerable uses to “people with disabilities.”; **Create new strategy under Connected/Plan for smart land uses and quality of place/People and Leaders pg. 98 #23 - Encourage businesses to apply universal design principles when establishing new businesses, to comply and go beyond minimum ADA Standards in existing businesses.; **Create new strategy under Renewed/Plan for Main Centers & Transit-Oriented Development/People and Leaders pg.111 #8 - Support Employment First Coalition and Self-Employment of persons with disabilities.; Pg. 139 # 10 – Add efficient, reliable, “accessible,” and environmentally...; Pg. 139 # 13 – Add language to strategy - Support regional efforts to maintain NWI’s economic and business competitiveness and raise the profile of the region for a good place to do business “and to find the most qualified and dedicated employees.”; Pg. 141 – Correct language to theirs is best.

**Commenter: Cflan [sic]**

**Comment:** This plan’s focus is centered too highly on environmental and inner city/urban initiatives and does not address our region’s roadway infrastructure repair, replacement and expansion needs. A closer look at how the region’s population travels to and from our jobs and family lives is warranted in our long range plan. The critical pathways matrix has been criticized by the full commission at public commission meetings in regard to the aforementioned shortcomings yet NIRPC staff has not acknowledged or acted upon said deficiencies.

**Response:** Thank you for your comment. The NWI 2050 Plan and the corresponding FY 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) have allocated a significant level of funding towards roadway infrastructure. Through the “Roadway Improvements” investment program of the TIP, over $48 million has been committed to roadway infrastructure. This category is expected to receive over $550 million by 2050. The $550 million of investment over the 30-year period covered by the NWI 2050 Plan is the second-largest funding category in the plan. In regards to over-the-road travel to-and-from work; this topic was explored in the “Connected” section of the document. This section discusses commuter data and population flows at length and provides data on commuter traffic in, out, and throughout the region. The section also indicates that while commuting data is important, it only accounts for two daily trips of the working population. The number of overall road trips taken in NWI, is far more significant, and must be explored holistically, rather than only through the lens of commuter needs. Every major section of the document addressed road-related issues. The Connected, Renewed, United, and Vibrant sections of the document all had a “mobility” section to explore issues of connectivity that relate to road traffic. Land use, transit, bike/ped trails, freight all have an impact on the road network and congestion. As such, each of these topics need to be explored in tandem with roadway improvements. Additionally, roadway improvements were indicated by the public as
being important to the region as well as many other transportation-related topics. The NWI 2050 Plan is a balance of priorities from all people in the Region, and as such explores all transportation-related topics. The Critical Paths were preliminarily adopted by the Commission on July 19, 2018. Since then, no public discussion or criticism by a commissioner is on record for any of eight Commission meetings that have been held, nor any of the public meeting related to NWI 2050 Plan.

Significant Comment? No
Need to Modify? No

Commenter: Jeff Huet
Comment: This plan does not address the roadway infrastructure needs of the region adequately.
Response: Thank you for your comment. The NWI 2050 Plan and the corresponding FY 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) have allocated a significant level of funding towards roadway infrastructure. In the “Roadway Improvements” investment program of the TIP, over $48 million to roadway infrastructure has been committed. This investment program is expected to receive over $550 million by 2050. The $550 million of investment over the 30-year period covered by the NWI 2050 Plan is the second-largest funding category in the plan. In terms of funding, the only funding category receiving more funding than roadway improvements is “Transit Asset Management,” which includes the significant investment in the South Shore’s Double Track and West Lake Extension projects. Additionally, many other funding categories, namely “Complete Streets,” “Quality of Place,” and “New Roadways;” all support project types that help contribute to the roadway infrastructure needs in the Region.

Significant Comment? No
Need to Modify? No

Commenter: Mary Ellen Slazyk
Comment: I've been a lifelong Hammond resident. I'm in the school zone. High school here (indicating), train track over there (indicating). Edgars is a big mess. My concern is for the safety with this plan and also the people who will be affected. Safety-wise, well, I have grandchildren. I have four grandchildren who are across the alley from me. I've also got all my children here. My youngest lives with me. My oldest is disabled. She lives in Park Place. And my middle one is across the alley with four grandkids, and I'm worried about their safety. And I'm worried about the quality of life for all of us. The quality of place is not quality of life. I'm worried about children getting hit by a train. I'm worried about what they're going to do with the area. Will it make the grandchildren stay when they are looking for work. I have a lot of concerns. This train especially, I'm very worried about. I see how stupid the high school kids can be, and the middle school kids are worse. They'll cross the tracks, and I'm worried a kid is going to get killed. I'm also worried about the people being disgraced. Where my daughter lives at The South Shore comes through. I'm worried about the quality of life for everybody living in the affected areas. I know some things have to be done. The single track of the South Shore is ridiculous. But some consideration needs to be given to the people impacted by all of this here. And Chicago is not where it's at when it comes to jobs most of the time, as I can attest to that. I was offered a job in Chicago years ago. By the time I subtracted my transportation costs, I was making a few dollars more a year. So I stayed. Same thing with my youngest. My youngest daughter does not have any disability. She's a financial analyst and a recruiter for ArcelorMittal, and she drives to work from here in Hammond. She was offered a job in Chicago. The transportation was horrible. It was a long South Shore ride. And then after she got done riding the South Shore -- this is just the interview. She didn't take the job -- it was a brisk 15-minute walk. Like I say, she's an accountant and financial analyst and recruiter for ArcelorMittal. This was not ArcelorMittal
that she was working in Chicago. She's very happy where she's at, and I can tell you she'll never go to Chicago. She found out how rough the commute was. After a long train ride, a brisk 15-minute walk, and you throw in the transportation costs, it wasn't worth it. Plus, the starting pay was $20,000 less than she was getting from ArcelorMittal. She would have been a fool if she took that job. I also did not take the job in Chicago because of transportation cost. Who wants to go that far when there are opportunities here. That's something that needs to be marketed. There are opportunities in the area. My youngest daughter has a fantastic job. My middle daughter is a manager of a local grocery store here. She's happy. The oldest one has her disabilities but she's independent. Because of the South Shore extension, my grandchildren are in jeopardy. It might affect transportation for my youngest daughter going all the way to Burns Harbor, by Chesterton over there, for her job. I don't know. But it will impact everybody. I'm also worried about not just my child that's disabled, my adult child that's disabled, I'm worried about seniors. I don't see anything addressing senior citizens. I'm a senior. I hate to admit it but I am. I'm worried about, for me, the impact all this is going to have on me. I'm worried about taxes. I know this is federal money, but, still, where does the government get the money from? Us. How will this impact us? The quality of life issues, the road construction, possible jobs, the gaming jobs lost. Just the whole picture. I don't see that here. I don't want anybody left behind; not a senior, not somebody like my daughter that is working or my daughter that is disabled. And everything needs to be in consideration here. Is there any kind of special program for anybody that's low income or disabled? My daughter is not a homeowner. She is renting. I know if she was a homeowner and the South Shore was going to take her house, she would get compensated. Maybe not fairly, because people I know that have had their houses taken for South Shore, they're not getting that much. Where is the safety net for these people? I don't see any. If all these grand plans are using our tax dollars, where is the safety net? The people that are the most vulnerable deserve no less than a safety net but a solid one and all the backup they can get when they're affected by projects like this. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The NWI 2050 Plan supports the South Shore Line project as a Transformative Investment, see Strategy on pg. 118 in the Action Plan. Modern rail projects such as South Shore have several safety regulations they need to follow such as Positive Train Control. Your safety comment will be shared with the South Shore Line.

Significant Comment? No
Need to Modify? No

Commenter: Lorrell Kilpatrick
Comment: Are we all employees back here? So we're four of us in an area that is going to be very heavily affected by whatever it is that's going to be talked about tonight, because it's disappointing that we decided to follow the trend of having public comment before anything has actually been said. I know a lot of people do that, but they do it because they usually don't want to deal with what people say after they present what they present. So maybe take that into consideration for next time. I work for Everybody Counts, Inc. I'm the director of advocacy there. My office is located right around the corner at Everybody Counts North. There are four people here, and that's a problem that continues to be an issue. It continues to be an issue that we haven't seen any substantial report back from the 2020 plan, the 2030 plan, the 2040 plan, in terms of not just the review of what was said, but how these things have been implemented. It's almost 2020. What has happened in that 2020 plan? Who had a part in it? Who gave feedback? And what's coming into fruition? I can't really think of anything else to say that hasn't been said in many other meetings, but it needs to be said again: This does not seem like a venue where you want people who are most affected by what it is that NIRPC does to provide a voice. This has to be one of the most inaccessible locations in Hammond, yet we are surrounded by senior living communities in this area. We're flanked on all sides by them. They all have community
spaces. They can definitely come from -- and fit the four people that came from the public here tonight, easily. So, you know, perhaps think about that. I know we're also going to be at IUN, right? And I'm intimately acquainted with IUN. Intimately acquainted with the access issues there. They've gotten better, right? But also just on the cusp of a community that has ample space where you can actually meet with people where they are. Ample, right, that people would actually be able to wander into; right? But it's not pleasurable to once again sit in this meeting where so much is being determined and so few people are able to give a voice. And for people who are here, the voice gets shrouded by the acoustics in this building. So that's it, I suppose. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your comment. In regard to the tasks that have been completed since the 2020, 2030, and 2040 Plans. You can refer to the implementation matrices of these plans on the NIRPC website at nirpc.org. In regard to utilizing the Hammond Civic Center over smaller community spaces, we wanted to make sure we had the ability to accommodate a large audience, as Hammond is one of our largest cities in the region via population. As we continue to improve and utilize various methods for outreach and engagement, we want to make sure that space is not an issue when it comes to meetings. In the future, we will continue to explore and adapt our methods to meet the needs of the communities.

significant Comment? No.

Need to Modify? No.

Commenter: David Wright
Comment: I am the planning and marketing manager for Gary Public Transportation and I am a Gary resident. A couple of comments. First, I have taken a look at the plans and one thing I did notice, there is the employment heat maps -- and it's something that I think I mentioned in the past, via e-mail -- that still seems to be missing a good deal of some of the employment that is out there. Just a couple of examples -- the reason why I'm asking and advising this is because these maps are going to become justification for criteria for future projects in different modes. I was sitting here looking at the heat maps and I was punching numbers for areas that were showing moderate employment that should be much higher. It was missing 5,000 people that work at USX north of downtown Gary. It was missing over 500 people, possibly 700 people, working here at University Park. I found 500 employees for IUN, and didn't get the data for Ivy Tech. So if you add the data, you're probably hitting a new level of employment for there. There are 2500 people total working in the Methodist Hospital system between Southlake and Northlake; so if you allocate half of that for Northlake campus, you're also missing a higher level of employment at that location. And then there's Buffington Harbor. I'm guessing maybe with the casinos that's 2,000 employees right there. So those are areas that we know we take employees to and from on our transit system and they're not being -- at least from the numbers I see -- aren't being adequately reflected in the heat map. Secondly, we have been having this conversation with a couple of the transit partners and mobility partners and access partners about finding a way of grading the progress and the performance of the 2040 plan as part of this plan here. It may be something I haven't seen in the current document yet, but from everything that I've seen in the various meetings and presentations during the public comment period, I've not seen it and it is not there. If I'm wrong, tell me. But we would like to see point-for-point analysis of how the 2040 plan did; and how, if at all, 2050 is going to be addressing some of the inefficiencies and goals that weren't touched in the 2040 plan. More than likely, this won't be the end of my comments. I'll probably put them online. So far in my review of the 2050 plan, those are the items I would like to see addressed in the public comment portion. Thank you.

Response:
Significant Comment? No.
Need to Modify? Yes: revised employment map.
Commenter: Jodi Hawn  
Comment: I'm Jodi Hawn with Everybody Counts. Most of you are familiar with me. I did take a look at everything and I'm actually not going to comment right now on the 2050. I'm going to stick with the comment now on the public hearing. This was for the public. And if you look around the room, you don't see a lot of public here. Yesterday's meeting, no public as well. My biggest concern as we're addressing paratransit, demand/response to regional transportation is that the public is not getting to these meetings, not being informed of these meetings, or can't get to these meetings for their voices to be heard. I think that it is a tragedy for us to continue with the 2050 plan, finalizing it without actually hearing the voices of the people whose lives depend on public transportation and a lot of what the 2050 plan stands for. And I would ask that somebody at NIRPC please somehow contact or get ahold of somebody to learn how to get word out to these people and get people whose lives are depending on this plan and who need to use that transportation for their voices to be heard and stop making decisions without them. That's all.

Response: Thank you for your comment. As stated previously in this report, NIRPC is adapting and evolving their methods of outreach and engagement. NIRPC advertised the public meetings over a month in advance, sent out public meeting information via direct mail, utilized radio, public access television, legal ads, display ads, social media, and went to businesses, community meetings, met with various community and municipal groups and attended community events across the region to get the word out as well as put flyers on seats of buses in the City of Gary. The importance of public participation is understood but it is also the public's choice and autonomy to participate and not participate. NIRPC aggressively reached out to the public, trying to get the word out for these meetings.

Significant Comment? No.
Need to Modify? No.

Commenter: Jim Pratt  
Comment: My name is Jim Pratt. I'm retired. I worked in government -- two Ts -- and I've been active and I am still on a number of community organizations. It was interesting talking about transit, I was talking to a friend of mine today about some event. He lives in the Hegewisch area of Chicago's southeast side, and he plays chess at the Hammond library. I said, "I'm going to this hearing on transit." He said, "You know, it's a shame that a city the size of Hammond doesn't have public transit." We used to have a shoreline system years ago. It kind of died, one of the resources for buses for downtown Hammond. And if you were coming from one of the mills at midnight you had to sit down there for ten minutes; so it wasn't the most efficient system. But I wish Hammond could get a public bus system going. The other suggestion I got, it's not a big suggestion, but I think one suggestion to improve traffic flow and air quality in this region is to get rid of the flood of four-way stop signs and unnecessary traffic lights. The two worst defenders are my City of Hammond and East Chicago. Hammond, every time somebody asks for a four-way stop sign, it goes up. It's been that way for probably the last 40 years, no matter who was mayor. They just can't say no. Legally, they are supposed to do a traffic study that it's needed. Somebody looked it up once. These traffic studies do not exist. I think there are standards that I believe the EPA and Indiana IDEM asks for I think they should make them justify these signs, and if it's not there, they should be made to take them down and they should sign a consent decree not to put up more four-way stop signs. Some of them are even three-way stop signs like you have in Hammond at 172nd and Tapper. 172 ends there; there's a three-way stop. Hardly anybody is going out onto Tapper there, and they know that's where you stop because Tapper is a continuous street. The same thing exists at 145th and Homerlee in East Chicago. And I see so often traffic is backed up because of four-way stop signs or stoplights. There's one at River Drive and Calumet Avenue, coming off the Borman Expressway. It creates terrible traffic buildups. It was put there because some councilman thought they
needed one. And all these stops, they add to air pollution and traffic congestion. The pollution, obviously the gas that's wasted idling. And also every time you hit the brake, there's some fibers from the brake line that wears away. I think taking out any future four-way stop sign and traffic light would be maybe not a major improvement but it would certainly help improve traffic flow and the air pollution problem. Go down Calumet Avenue from south Hammond to Munster during rush hour and the backups are just terrible. There are too many stoplights.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Currently, the City of Hammond is provided fixed route bus service and complementary paratransit by the Gary Public Bus Corporation. The North Township Dial-A-Ride also provides demand response transit to some portions of Hammond. In July of 2018, the City of Hammond contributed $50,000 and Lake County contributed $150,000 to allow GPTC’s Lakeshore South bus line in Hammond to maintain its operations. Funds from local communities like Hammond and Lake County are essential to expanding and maintaining transit operations in NWI. In regards to four-way stops can assist communities with developing priorities for projects that may receive federal funds. Currently, many federally-aided roadways in Hammond and Northwestern Indiana are eligible for funding that includes four-way stops However, many alternatives can also be funded, including: roundabouts, traffic lights, grade separations, yielded intersections, and a number of stop sign configurations besides the “four-way.” Ultimately, it is up to local decision-makers and members of the public to determine what projects are submitted to request federal funds.

Significant Comment? No.
Need to Modify? No.

Commenter: Nancy Moldenhauer

Comment: So I'll have to say that I do love the four planned focus areas. I think you've done a great job of identifying the key areas. I'm especially drawn to the environmental one, because that's my area of interest. And I think you're on the mark with that also. My grave concern is enrolling the mayoral and city council and town council leadership in what's down here as far as plans go. Brings back to me nightmares of the Illiana, and how NIRPC at that point in time had a very strong vision of keeping development in the northern municipalities, towns, and cities. And that particular highway would have taken away from those northern areas and certainly, I think, would have contributed to a suburban sprawl. So I'm hoping this time around that somehow we're able to really enroll our elected officials that will work with NIRPC and will also take these areas of focus and the vision back to their communities and really institute it. I noticed quite a bit about diversity, and what I'll have to say is I hope it's not in name only and that we're really reaching out to those communities and finding out from them what type of programming is going to work for them, and that we're involving not only the leadership from those communities but also the individual people that live in those communities' opinion. I do have a question about ADA access. I may have missed something but I don't think I saw it on any of the big boards, and I know there are federal regulations that demand that access be in place. And not only just access but also we're talking quality of life activities. So that's a question I'm going to leave with you. To what extent is our differently abled community included in this plan?

Response: Thank you for your comment and support. Each community has a representative on the Commissioners. The Action Plan has a number of strategies that address how local governments, stakeholders and partners can help implement the 2050 Plan. Under the United strategies starting on pg. 124, a number of initiatives are identified for an engaged public and shared best practices. The NWI 2050 Plan addresses furthering the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, both in broad conceptual terms as well as through specific strategies to be implemented. The guiding framework for the NWI 2050 Plan were four vision statements established through extensive public outreach: Connected, Renewed, United, and Vibrant. These four vision statements became the backbone of plan goals, strategies, and even scoring criteria for projects that may receive federal funding. The vision statement for “Connected,” is
the most related to accessibility for people with disabilities: “NWI’s people have accessible, safe, and equal opportunities, for working, playing, living, and learning.” This is essentially a mission statement that guides the direction of the plan from today through 2050. Further, these four vision statements were matched with the four planning focus areas: Economy and Place, Environment, Mobility, and People and Leaders. Together, the vision statements and plan focus areas create sixteen unique critical paths that are a guiding source for the plan. The critical paths that are directly related to accessibility for people with disabilities are:

- Update land development policies and strategies to emphasize accessibility between people and opportunities
- Complete roadway, bicycle, sidewalk, and transit networks across municipal and county lines to enhance safe and efficient access to opportunities for all.
- Commit to removing barriers and obstacles to guarantee equal and accessible opportunities

In terms of individual strategies, several of the strategies identified in the NWI 2050 Plan address accessibility. The following is a list of all strategies that directly reference the needs of individuals with disabilities, however several other strategies also address the needs of people with disabilities, albeit indirectly.

- Promote importance of natural area protection, connectivity and accessibility with local governments and agencies to encourage local implementation.
- Improve the accessibility of transit by using universal design standards when developing new transit infrastructure like bus stops and other signage.
- Increase the accessibility and overall ridership of the transit network by implementing the ADA transition plans and improving its transparency so transit operators can coordinate with their goals, and region residents are aware of the plan.
- Improve accessibility to the transportation system for all users by expanding shared mobility awareness and opportunities regionally.
- Incorporate when feasible universal designs standards for non-motorized access.
- Work with local entities on the development of a sidewalk maintenance plan which inventories facilities in need of repair or missing segments.
- Prioritize transit investments that connect communities in environmental justice areas, people who are elderly, low-income, people with disabilities, and veterans.
- Improve the accessibility of regional pedestrian and transit infrastructure by allocating funding for the implementation of locally-developed ADA transition plans, and incorporating universal design standards so all public infrastructure meets or exceeds ADA standards.
- Monitor and update ADA transition plans by LPAs with NIRPC assistance on a routine basis.
- Hold annual workshops training for local officials on benefits of universal design and Complete Streets, including policy development.
- Improve safety through street design standards and traffic calming treatments to accommodate the movement of pedestrian, bicyclists, elderly people, and other vulnerable users.
- Improve economic opportunity for prosperity particularly for EJ residents and people with disabilities to ensure that NWI is a destination for business and diverse human capital.

Lastly, the NWI 2050 Plan also has already taken steps for the further inclusion of individuals with disabilities. One method of evaluating possible transportation projects to invest in was to use available data on where individuals with disabilities live to contribute to NIRPC’s Environmental Justice analysis. Now, a project that is eligible for federal funding can receive a higher priority is located where it may have a higher chance of benefiting individuals with disabilities. Likewise, nearly every project seeking federal funds has to describe how the project
will utilize universal design standards, or advance ADA transition plans to also get additional points in its evaluation. The NWI 2050 Plan also added a new project type to the TIP with a dedicated funding source. “Transportation Projects for ADA compliance with Universal Design,” is a project type nestled within the Complete Streets program. This project type targets federal funds specifically for the implementation of strategies defined in a municipality’s federally-required ADA transition plan.

**Significant Comment?** No.

**Need to Modify?** No.

**Commenter:** Dalia Zygas

**Comment:** I have a couple comments, first of all, about transportation access. I was just wondering if some of the funding might be usable for not as much as transportation planning but analysis of what is needed in the community. Like, what are the needs? Where are we not meeting the needs? And possibly adjusting -- in my case, Michigan City -- to make sure we get everybody involved in public transit. So I'm interested in that. The second point I have is anything you can do to foster bike trails, as well as walking trails, of course will help people's health and make the community more desirable. And I think the more separated paths we have the better, but I know those are expensive. So I think we need that more in Michigan City, and I know we've applied for some grants, and I'm going to look into how to get a little bit more federal money or grant money for that. And my third point is, I don't know if you can spend your money on marketing. But I think marketing is an important tool because it will take a cultural shift to have more people ride the bus. It takes a cultural shift for people to abandon their cars and take bike paths and see that as a viable way of transportation. We probably need some infrastructure to help with bicycling. Like maybe a bike shop that will pick you up or change your tire or help you out if you're stuck somewhere. But I think a cultural shift is necessary. And I'm not sure you can use marketing dollars, but I think that would be nice. Thank you.

**Response:** Thank you for your comment. Transportation studies are encouraged and implemented in several ways. The NWI 2050 Plan and the corresponding FY 2020–2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) has allocated approximately $3 million in the next five years to planning projects that will examine one aspect of transportation planning and analysis. By 2050, the NWI 2050 Plan targets approximately $31 million on planning, studies, and other analyses. These funds are targeted for local communities to take advantage of to prepare for and understand transportation challenges and identify solutions. In addition to making these funds available, NIRPC routinely releases transportation studies related to regional connectivity through its Unified Planning Work Program. For instance, in 2018 NIRPC released the Coordinated Transit Plan. This document explored the needs of individuals reliant on transit, and how to improve the overall accessibility of the transit network. Other similar planning documents and studies include: Creating Livable Communities, Smart Growth Handbook, NWI Corridor Study, Greenways + Blueways, and many others. These documents are available on NIRPC’s website (www.nirpc.org). Additionally, regional plans such as the NWI 2050 Plan, provide an inclusive catch-all platform to take the data from these smaller, individual plans and apply them region-wide. Trails are an important component of a multi-modal transportation system. Since 1990 Northwestern Indiana has grown from 13 miles of dedicated bike-ped trails, to 168 miles of trail today. This investment in trails was possible because of local commitments from communities like Michigan City that were able to leverage federal grants through NIRPC. The NWI 2050 Plan also addresses the need to expand the trail network and working in conjunction with the FY 2020 – 2024 TIP, $23 million in trail funding is approved in the next five years, and $146 million is targeted by 2050. Marketing is an eligible activity under some of the funding sources provided by the Federal Transit Administration. However, NWI transit operators that seek to use federal funds on marketing often have to choose between
using those funds for marketing or for essential transit operations. Unfortunately, the amount of federal funding available in NWI is often stretched very thin.

**Significant Comment? No.**

**Need to Modify? No.**

**Commenter: Laurel Izard**

Comment: I have a couple comments, first of all, about transportation access. I was just wondering if some of the funding might be usable for not as much as transportation planning but analysis of what is needed in the community. Like, what are the needs? Where are we not meeting the needs? And possibly adjusting -- in my case, Michigan City -- to make sure we get everybody involved in public transit. So I'm interested in that. The second point I have is anything you can do to foster bike trails, as well as walking trails, of course will help people's health and make the community more desirable. And I think the more separated paths we have the better, but I know those are expensive. So I think we need that more in Michigan City, and I know we've applied for some grants, and I'm going to look into how to get a little bit more federal money or grant money for that. And my third point is, I don't know if you can spend your money on marketing. But I think marketing is an important tool because it will take a cultural shift to have more people ride the bus. It takes a cultural shift for people to abandon their cars and take bike paths and see that as a viable way of transportation. We probably need some infrastructure to help with bicycling. Like maybe a bike shop that will pick you up or change your tire or help you out if you're stuck somewhere. But I think a cultural shift is necessary. And I'm not sure you can use marketing dollars, but I think that would be nice. Thank you.

**Response:** Thank you for your comment. Currently, the City of Hammond is provided fixed route bus service and complementary paratransit by the Gary Public Bus Corporation. The North Township Dial-A-Ride also provides demand response transit to some portions of Hammond. In July of 2018, the City of Hammond contributed $50,000 and Lake County contributed $150,000 to allow GPTC's Lakeshore South bus line in Hammond to maintain its operations. Funds from local communities like Hammond and Lake County are essential to expanding and maintaining transit operations in NWI. In regards to four-way stops can assist communities with developing priorities for projects that may receive federal funds. Currently, many federally-aided roadways in Hammond and Northwestern Indiana are eligible for funding that includes four-way stops. However, many alternatives can also be funded, including: roundabouts, traffic lights, grade separations, yielded intersections, and a number of stop sign configurations besides the “four-way.” Ultimately, it is up to local decision-makers and members of the public to determine what projects are submitted to request federal funds.

**Significant Comment? No.**

**Need to Modify? No.**

**Commenter: Zully JF Alvarado**

Comment: I have several comments. Number one, just looking through, to start with a few pages, at page 97 of the plan, when I read the words "preservation of traditional community." That, for me, is a concern because for me "traditional" means the status quo and what the community has always been as such. So when we look at disability, people with disabilities are typically being excluded, institutionalized. And just now, I would say not even in the past 30 years of ADA, we continue to be marginalized. So the word "traditional" for me is problematic. Starting with that. Number two, when we talk about economic development, we talk about housing in particular to make it include affordable, and I would say to make sure that it's also accessible. Housing is a major problem for people with disabilities. As you know, if we do not have developers or construction companies to ensure that accessibility is part of that, otherwise again we go into nursing homes, institutionalization. So I would encourage you to include the word "accessible" and "housing" as part of the economic development plan, and not just
being affordable. Other items on some of the pages -- and of course I have to read more in depth – is ecommerce. Referring to ecommerce, we know that a lot of the businesses are closing, and we're looking at universities being typically the ones that will be involved in the educational process. Particularly when it comes to people with disabilities, children that are in the educational system again, typically, are cast aside or not provided the right type of education. So when we look at the companies with ecommerce, I would say a lot of people with disabilities are very savvy when it comes to technology, using computers. So I would say to go to the high school career vocational p
Response: Thank you for your support and comments. The intent of preservation of traditional community is to preserve the character and the identity of a community. It is written in the report as “the preservation of a traditional community character.” However, the strategy will be reworded to include universal design. Strategy # 3, under Plan for smart land uses and quality of place- Economy and place, will be changed to: 3. Develop form-based code rezoning to allow higher densities and mixed-uses to create more livable communities, maintain more human scale environment and spaces that are modernized to include universal design with the preservation of a community character and identity. The word “accessible” will be added to the affordable housing. Regarding e-commerce and education, that is addressed in strategies # 5 in the Action Plan under “Plan for E-commerce Landscape” “5. Establish partnerships between educational institutions, e-commerce leaders, and workforce development, to explore job training to meet the future skill demands that includes IT expertise, call centers, distribution centers, warehouses, packaging, online web content writers, photographers, designers, telecommuting, home-based business, freight drivers, etc.” The action plan is the next step to implement the NWI 2050 Plan and seize opportunities along the way. the Action Plan identifies stakeholders and partners who hold the responsibility to advance these concerns that are beyond NIRPC’s domains.
Significant Comment? No
Need to Modify? Modified language in strategy.

Commenter: Marek Vojtala
Comment: I was excited as I read through the plan. The focus on transportation, and this is really an awesome focus for NIRPC, as well as all the municipalities that participate. And I'm excited to see it included in the plan and also really hopeful that as the plans come along that we see increased involvement in active transportation. Especially bicycling and kind of as it relates to making our region more accessible to more folks. I was excited to see that and hope to see more of that in the future."
Response: Thank you for your comment. If you are interested in learning more about how NIRPC is involved in active transportation, please visit our website (www.nirpc.org) and navigate to the “Transportation” tab, and select “Greenways + Blueways.” You can also use NIRPC’s website to sign up for information, alerts, and updates by subscribing to updates from the “Ped, Pedal, and Paddle Committee.”
Significant Comment? No
Need to Modify? No.

Commenter: Labrada Dunham
Comment: I had some concerns after speaking with Mr. Weber and finding a little bit more about it. I was listening to him as he spoke with some of -- and I also spoke with Dominique -- about the transportation plan and how even now we’re thinking forward about not only the seniors but about electrical cars. So he wants to keep it -- well, we’ll keep in the plan or keep in mind that a lot of people will be driving these electrical cars. And I realize this has nothing to do with the plan that you have, and I think it is great that -- because I hadn't even thought about that, electrical cars. But my nephew called me up and told me he's working on the project for the
ones they're building. What I was going to say is I'm concerned about the actual residents, and being a citizen how will this effect us for the electrical cars, although this has nothing to do with you, it's still a concern of mine, is it going to be set up like parking meters where they'll just park their cars and have to pay for having them recharged for a certain amount of time? Or will that cost be pushed back on the residents? That also goes for the transportation that's being done. And I know at this moment it hasn't even been voted on, but those are some things I'm concerned about. I think it's a great idea. And I know that 23 years from now, I won't have a driver's license if I'm still alive. I'll be 90. But I am concerned about how that's going to effect us financially. I understand the Gary residents are supposed to have more transportation bus-wise to help us, and I'm wondering how is that going to affect us financially. All of this has nothing to do with you. But I'm just saying I'm laying it on the table, how will that affect us financially? So I'm just getting it on the books, that's all, as far as property taxes and everything. But I think it's a great idea, and I'm glad that you guys are taking the time to th

Response: Thank you for your comment. While we are still unsure what the future may hold for the future of electric vehicles, there are some current trends that are relevant to your comment. Currently, most electric vehicles are charged at the residence of the individual that owns the vehicle. The cost to charge the vehicle is paid through the owner's electric bill. Third-party charging is becoming more common. This is where a business, a municipality, or some other organization will have a publicly-available charging station for anyone's use. The third-party that sponsors the charging station is ultimately responsible for how the cost of the electricity is compensated. Some third-parties are trying to incentivize the use of electric vehicles, so they will provide electricity free of charge. Others will charge the driver at the cost of the electricity consumed, or may even turn a profit. In some instances, if a municipality chooses to install a charging station, and decides to provide the charging for free, the local taxpayer may be paying for the cost of electric vehicles. However, in most instances, municipal-sponsored charging stations charge for their use.

In regards to the bus service: local funds are required to qualify for most federal grants. This means that transit funding is a great way for the City of Gary to multiply the funding available for transportation. For every dollar the City of Gary spends on its bus service the federal government puts in four dollars for capital projects like buying or maintaining buses. For operating the buses, the federal government will match the City of Gary dollar for dollar. So, while maintaining the Gary bus service does cost the residents of Gary, the cost comes with an immediate net-gain for its residents.

Significant Comment? No.
Need to Modify? No.