

Technical Planning Committee
Virtual Meeting via Webex
May 12, 2020 10:00 a.m.
Minutes

This meeting was convened as an electronic meeting, pursuant to Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 20-04 and 20-09, extended by Executive Order 20-25, allowing such meetings pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-3.6 for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency. All persons were meeting remotely on a Webex platform that allowed for real time interaction and supported the public's ability to observe and record the proceedings. When the agenda item was provided for public comment, this was supported as well. A roll call was taken to motion and approve the agenda items.

Kevin Breitzke called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and Self-introductions.

Committee members present were Kevin Breitzke, Blossom Mabon, David Wright, George Topoll, Dean Button, Kay Nelson, Robin Barzoni-Tillman, and Kelly Wenger.

Others present were Amy Curtis and Kate Zale from the Etica Group, Lauri Keagle, Jessica Miller, Steve King, Terry Martin, Deb Backhus, Doug Ferguson, Tim Werner, Kathryn Vallis, and Craig Philips.

Staff present were Mitch Barloga, Candice Eklund, James Winters, Scott Weber, Kevin Polette, Charles Bradsky, Dominique Edwards, Kathy Luther, Ty Warner, Peter Kimball, and Flor Baum.

The minutes of the March 3, 2020 meeting were approved on motion by Dean Button and a second by David Wright.

Public Comments

Kevin Breitzke shared with the committee on the Covid-19 impact on gas tax projects, and how it is affecting all communities. On April 30, 2020, LTAP released the effects of motor vehicle highway, road and street accounts, and the local bridge. The Road Bridge Match Grant Fund that is known as Community Crossings is also being affected. There will be substantial reductions this summer on the amount of funding received because of the reduction gas tax.

Planning

Mitch Barloga presented on the Living Streets Resolution draft policy that is merging the Complete and Green Streets elements into one policy. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the approval process has been delayed. The draft policy will be presented and reviewed at the July Technical Planning Committee (TPC), for a vote to be recommended to the Commission in July. If approved, the policy will be used for the next Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA).

Scott Weber presented on the draft Conformity Planning document. The air quality conformity requirements that Northwestern Indiana Planning Commission (NIRPC) must demonstrate to advance certain major projects in accordance with our planning and programming processes are required because Northwest Indiana has been designated as nonattainment for ozone. It is one of the criteria pollutants by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as part of the Clean Air Act. These items deal with the Air Quality Conformity requirements triggered by the NWI 2050 Amendment #1, as well as 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendment #7. The major projects that these actions will deal with, pertain to the 45th Ave added center turning lane in unincorporated Lake County, as well as the Kennedy Avenue expansion project in the Town of Schererville. The public comment report was released and made available on March 6th and there were no comments received in the 30 days that it was posted. Roll call was announced, and the following present members voted to recommend the Resolution: Kevin Breitzke, George Topoll, Dean Button, David Wright, Blossom Mabon, Robin Barzoni-Tillman, Kelly Wegner, and Kay Nelson. There were no members who opposed. On motion by Dean Button and a second by Kay Nelson, the Technical Planning Committee unanimously voted to recommend Resolution 20-10 to the NIRPC Full Commission for adoption.

Scott Weber presented on the draft changes included in Amendment #1 to the NWI 2050 Plan. Nearly one year ago, NIRPC adopted a long-range plan for the entire Region, and the implementation portion of the plan is recently getting started. The public comment report was released and made available on March 6th, and in the 30 days that it was posted, one comment report was received. However, the report was determined to not be significant and not require any modifications. The three changes to the NWI 2050 Plan are as follows: 45th St Added Center Turn Lane from Colfax St to Chase St., costing \$9,928,142.00 in federal funds and \$2,482,036.00 in local funds. Remove the Kennedy Ave Expansion project from Complete by 2025 projects and combine into the Complete by 2030 projects. Kennedy Ave Added Travel Lanes from Main St to Route US 30 Complete by 2030 costing \$17,401,579.00 in federal funds and \$4,350,395.00 in local funds. Roll call was announced, and the following present members voted to recommend the Resolution: Kevin Breitzke, George Topoll, Dean Button, David Wright, Blossom Mabon, Robin Barzoni-Tillman, Kelly Wegner, and Kay Nelson. There were no members who opposed. On motion by Dean Button and a second by George Topoll, the Technical Planning Committee voted to recommend Resolution 20-13 to the NIRPC Full Commission for adoption.

Kathy Luther presented on the draft 2021-2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP is a core document required of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and it functions as the scope of work for the annual planning grant. The UPWP offers transparency and accountability to stakeholders and the public in how NIRPC is using Federal funding, as well as local county tax dollars for transportation. A link was provided to the committee of the complete Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The committee discussed that the CARES Act funding (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) is currently not in the UPWP because the grant has not yet been received. Staff indicated that when NIRPC does receive the grant, the UPWP will go through the amendment process. Roll call was announced, and the following present members voted to recommend the Resolution: Kevin Breitzke, George Topoll, Dean Button, David Wright, Blossom Mabon, Robin Barzoni-Tillman, Kelly Wegner, and Kay Nelson. There were no members who opposed. On motion by Kay Nelson and a second by David Wright, the Technical Planning Committee voted to recommend Resolution 20-15 to the NIRPC Full Commission for adoption.

Programming

Charles Bradsky presented on the draft changes included in Amendment #5 to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) in FY 2020-2024. The public comment report included amendments #5, #6, and #7 to make it easier for the public to make any comments in one step. However, no public comments were received on any of the three amendments. A technical comment was received from The Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) on amendments #5 and #7. Federal Highway Association (FHWA) had asked for a better description of several INDOT and local projects; and had asked if the scope on any of the bridge work on I-65 included widening (INDOT responded the bridge work is based on need, and currently there are no plans to widen these bridges.)

Amendment #5 comprises 48 different projects for FY20-24, and a copy was provided to the committee. The projects include the following: Additional funds towards the Burns Harbor trail project, additional funds towards two roadways in Crown Point, Hammond received an addition of a new roadway project, additional funds towards a roundabout in Hobart. The City of La Porte eliminated two projects (one pedestrian and one roadway). LaPorte County had additional funds to one trail project and two bridge projects. Portage had additional funds towards two roadway projects, an additional phase for one trail project, and the elimination of a bridge project. INDOT had the addition of 33 new projects. Lake County has additional funds for one roadway project. Charles inadvertently included a road project in Merrillville (hasn't been discussed or approved at TROC) that was not included in the amendment. That project will be addressed in TROC's August meeting. (Note: Upon further review, a technical correction is not required for Resolution 20-11 to approve a recommendation to The Commission.) Roll call was announced, and the following present members voted to recommend the Resolution: Kevin Breitzke, George Topoll, Dean Button, David Wright, Blossom Mabon, Robin Barzoni-Tillman, Kelly Wegner, and Kay Nelson. There were no members who opposed. On motion by Dean Button and a second by George Topoll, the Technical Planning Committee voted to recommend Resolution 20-11 Amendment #5 to the NIRPC Full Commission for adoption.

James Winters presented on the draft changes included in Amendment #6 to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) in FY 2020-2024. \$200,000 was taken from East Chicago's preventative maintenance line item, and applied it to the operating systems line, (where there could be a budget shortfall). Currently RTIP does not have the functionality to demonstrate a project will be paid with existing in-grant funds, so a placeholder maintenance project was left in RTIP for \$1. Roll call was announced, and the following present members voted to recommend the Resolution: Kevin Breitzke, George Topoll, Dean Button, David Wright, Blossom Mabon, Robin Barzoni-Tillman, Kelly Wegner, and Kay Nelson. There were no members who opposed. On motion by George Topoll and a second by Dean Button, the Technical Planning Committee voted to recommend Resolution 20-12 to the NIRPC Full Commission for adoption.

Charles Bradsky presented on the draft changes included in TIP Amendment #7 to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) in FY 2020-2024. The amendment is for Schererville's Phase 1 project of Kennedy Ave. The project is being moved out of the TIP from FY-2021 to beyond FY-2024. This project is on a separate amendment because it affects NIRPC's long range plan for conformity in the NWI 2050. It is Shererville's intent to submit this project to NIRPC at the Next Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), and to be constructed between 2025 and 2027. Roll call was announced, and the following present members voted to recommend the Resolution: Kevin Breitzke, George Topoll, Dean Button, David Wright, Blossom Mabon, Robin Barzoni-Tillman, Kelly Wegner, and Kay Nelson. There were no members who opposed. On motion by Dean Button and a second by Kay Nelson, the Technical Planning Committee voted to recommend Resolution 20-14 Amendment #7 to the NIRPC Full Commission for adoption.

Topical Committee Reports

There were no committee reports for May.

Other Business, Staff Announcements and Upcoming Meetings

Announcements and upcoming dates were shared with the committee. The next Transportation Resources Oversight Committee (TROC) will be on August 25th, which will include the Merrillville project. Laurie Keagle announced that grant funding assistance information can be found on the South Shore Clean Cities website: www.southshorecleancities.org.

Next Meeting

The next Technical Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. in the Lake Michigan Room at NIRPC offices.

The meeting concluded at 11:18 am.