

NIRPC ADA PUBLIC HEARING

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>> GAIL BARKER: Hello. My name is Gail Barker, the Disability Coordinator at Purdue North Central. I will be serving as the facilitator of this year's public hearing for the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. I would like to welcome those who are here at Purdue University Calumet for our 2013 public hearing. I would also like to welcome those that are watching on the Internet and those that are watching from the site at LaPorte, Indiana also on the Internet.

NIRPC, as the agency is called, is a Metropolitan Planning Organization that is responsible for regional transportation planning in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties.

This hearing is being held as a result of a Class Action ADA transportation lawsuit which was filed in 1997. ADA stands for the Americans with Disabilities Act, which was enacted into law in 1990. The lawsuit settlement, which was reached in 2006, requires NIRPC to have an independent ADA review each year of all its subgrantees; that is, all the public transit providers for whom NIRPC provides monitoring and oversight. NIRPC is a grantee for most of the public transit operators in the region that receive federal funds through the Federal Transit Administration; therefore, NIRPC has to provide monitoring and

oversight in keeping with Federal requirements for seven subgrantees.

Those seven transit providers or subgrantees either have fixed route services, which means full size buses running in specific routes, as well as complementary, or corresponding paratransit, which means the smaller vehicles that run on schedule 24 hours ahead of time, or they provide demand response services, which operate by different guidelines.

As I go through a list of each of the transit providers for our NIRPC subgrantees, I will ask anyone who is here or in LaPorte, representing them, to please stand, if you are able, and identify yourself. Please wait for the microphone to come to you before you speak.

East Chicago Public Transit, fixed route and complementary paratransit.

>> SANDY MARTINEZ: Sandy Martinez, East Chicago Public Transit, Director.

>> GAIL BARKER: North Township Dial-a-Ride, demand response.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Not present.

>> GAIL BARKER: Opportunity Enterprises, demand response.

>> CLAUDIA TAYLOR: Claudia Taylor, Opportunity Enterprises. I'm the Transit Manager.

>> GAIL BARKER: Porter County Aging and Community Services, demand response.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Is not present at this time.

>> GAIL BARKER: South Lake County Community Services, demand response.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Is not present at this time.

>> GAIL BARKER: V-Line in Valparaiso, deviated fixed route.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Not present at this time.

>> GAIL BARKER: LaPorte TransPorte, demand response for the City of LaPorte.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: If you could make a presentation there in LaPorte, we would appreciate that.

>> GAIL BARKER: At this time I will introduce the other NIRPC staff that is present: Ty Warner, Executive Director; Angie Hayes, Director of Finance and Administration; Allen Hammond, Transit Program Compliance Officer; Belinda Petroskey, Transit Planner.

We want to hear from you today about any of the transit

services that are provided to individuals with disabilities as they pertain to the ADA. Please tell us about any problems you are experiencing or any concerns that you have.

We would also like to hear anything good about public transit services in the region as they pertain to the ADA.

Before we begin, I would like to make sure everybody knows where the facilities are located, and if someone could do the same for those in LaPorte.

The women's restroom is located on the first floor; the men's restroom is also located on the first floor and both are fully accessible. There are alternate accessible restrooms located on the third floor with the water fountain positioned just outside the restrooms.

We ask that everybody be respectful of others and pay attention to what is being said by those who are making comments. Please silence your cell phones and excuse yourself if you must use them.

We have a podium up here at the table. You may come up to speak whenever you are ready. We will also have someone in the audience with a microphone if you prefer to speak from where you are seated. Simply raise your hand when you are ready to speak.

There are comment sheets located at the table at the back of the room. You can use them for notes today, or if you're not comfortable with speaking, you can leave that in the box on the table, or I will read them out loud today, if you like. We have someone on hand to help out if anybody needs help with writing their comments down.

Remember that you are also welcome to submit any comments for the next 30 days. You can either submit them in writing to NIRPC or by email to Allen Hammond at ahammond@NIRPC.org, or by calling and leaving the comments on the NIRPC comment line at 219-763-6060, extension 160.

One last thing. If anybody uses an acronym and you want to know what it means, please don't hesitate to ask exactly what those initials mean.

Before we begin taking your comments, we have Belinda Petroskey coming to make a PowerPoint presentation about the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission.

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: Good afternoon. Thank you. My name is Belinda Petroskey. I'm the Public Transit Planner for the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission. We have a PowerPoint on basic information about NIRPC, and I'll be happy

to answer any questions.

What are we? The Regional Planning Commission is a creation of the Federal Government. And they created agencies like ours all over the country back in the '60s and early '70s. And we were created as a way to coordinate federal spending from different departments and agencies. They found themselves building roads through parks that had been funded with Department of Natural Resources money and that wasn't going to work. So they set up this network of agencies like ours meant to bring all of the people together who have responsibility for public roads and streets and transit and make some sense out of it all. So they created us.

They call us the Metropolitan Planning Organizations, MPOs, and our specific charge originally was the planning and programming of all the transportation funds.

Later on, and in our lifetime, we are also designated as a Council of Governments under our state legislative act, which also then expanded our responsibilities to include environmental and economic development planning.

Who are we? Who is on our Board? The staff answers to a Board of elected officials, so we implement policy set by the

Board.

Who's on that Board? Every city and town in the three counties -- that's 41 -- has an appointment. Every County Council and Board of Commissioners has an appointment. All three of the County Surveyors are, by law, required to serve directly on the Board. They cannot appoint someone to sit in their stead. Interesting anomaly. Porter County, in Porter County, the two Townships are Union and Porter County, each have an appointment. The Governor has an appointment. And then the transit operators select someone among their membership to sit in an advisory capacity on the Board.

How do we make decisions at Regional Planning? It's a pretty simple process, sort of, initially, where we work with stakeholders. And virtually anyone who's interested in how money is spent, where it comes from, what to do with it, anybody is welcome to join that effort. And it starts out, if we're doing a planning process, we put together a working group or a taskforce of volunteers who have time and want to help us put together a plan or a process from the start. It's open. It's not just for elected officials. It's for anyone who wants to put in the time and effort and help work through some of these

things.

From those working groups or taskforces, their recommendations are taken to one of the standing policy committees, depending upon the subject matter. For transportation, initial plan recommendations, policy recommendations, sometimes if there's a problem that we can't resolve, staff, working with the stakeholders, we'll take problems to the Transportation Policy Committee, TPC; and on that Committee are all the highway people from all the municipalities, their engineering firm representatives. We have some citizen members, and they all constitute that policy group. And then their recommendations go on up to the Board of Commissioners who finalize the decisions. And that is the last "Board of Appeal", so to speak, is the full Board.

How do we fund public transit in Northwest Indiana? Basically, our very basic unit of support is called Section 5307. It comes from a law that it was originally contained in, and that's administered through the Federal Transportation Administration, FTA.

State support has changed a little bit in the last two years. Right now it still exists from the state under a line

item in the budget, what they call Public Mass Transit Fund. And there's a very small proportion of the state sales tax that is set aside to share among all of the public transit providers in the State of Indiana.

The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, NICTD, or South Shore, has a separate sales tax apportionment that's dedicated to them. So that's the state's participation.

Local support is generated in several areas. Some of the smaller operators will get assistance from Township Trustee offices. Municipal property taxes are the sources of support for some of them for that local match. Other Federal programs can be used in certain circumstances to match FTA money for transit. Community Economic Development Income Tax in Porter County has supported the creation and ongoing existence of the Valparaiso V-Line and Dash. And then the County. I'm not sure, frankly, is Lake County still contributing transit money?

>> Yes.

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: I lost track of that. I know in Porter County, Porter County Aging and Community Services and Opportunity Enterprises, they get County -- also contributions from the county governments.

Other Federal funds that help support current public transit in the region include the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Programs, CMAQ. North Township right now is working on a special grant under CMAQ to expand the demand response. So we try to plug the hole left in Hammond when the Regional Bus Authority went out of business. So they've gotten a grant to try and fill some of that need.

Gary Public Transportation Corporation also has a CMAQ grant in the amount of 1.4 million. That's for two routes. They are doing a demonstration program to show whether or not these two new routes are good routes that are going to be feasible, they'll continue beyond the demo period. The CMAQ is a good source of money to start those new routes, see how they perform.

Valparaiso Dash. Dash is the Chicago commuter service operated by the City of Valparaiso. And they are also the recipients of a CMAQ grant that is supporting -- just added a fourth bus to their Chicago service that runs five days a week for the commuter train. And they have grown since they started it a year -- no, 2009, from 2009 in one bus to four buses today. So they are doing about 47,000 trips a year right now.

There's a special pot of money called Section 5337 that is state of good repair money that only NICTD qualifies for. That's kind of their basic federal contribution that only they get. So nobody has to compete with them, which is a good thing.

Another source of federal funds we're currently operating under in the region is called New Freedom. That was a special program created by the Feds a couple of years ago that made additional money available to support services that expanded demand response for the disability community particularly. Whether that was an expansion of capacity by adding vehicles and operation and drivers for extending your hours of operation, we have two -- we don't get a ton of money. It's less than \$300,000 a year that comes into the region under the New Freedom program. And South Lake County Community Services currently has a grant for those funds. And Porter County Aging and Community Services is running an extended hours project on those funds.

How much do we get? Where does it all go? You can see on the chart how everybody fared. This is 2013. I made the correction on my copy but not the copy that got reprinted, David. The GPTC number, Gary Public Transit number, is incorrect. And it's like 4.4 million, right? 4.4? 4.24? I

was going for the floor amount.

>> 4.2

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: I thought that was the number we said that was more -- I know. We've been working on these for a while. Anyway, so GPTC gets between 3.9 and 4.2 million.

And you see the other totals. Now, this is just a portion of their funding. They also get state money. And they also get local money. And they have to stay within the budget. There's no such thing as running over budget in the world of Federal transportation. They just simply don't allow it. They'll shut you down first.

Okay. So you've heard a list of our subrecipients. We have several more folks that have come in since we started, and we will be introducing all of them. But real quickly again, we covered the City of East Chicago, North Township Dial-a-Ride, South Lake County Community Services, Opportunity Enterprises, Porter County Aging and Community Services, Valparaiso V-Line and Dash; and then in the City of LaPorte, the TransPorte, which is a demand response provider there.

Finally, we wanted to give you some information in case you're interested: How do you become involved with us? What

should you do?

First thing you can do is sign up and give us your contact information, your phone number, your email, your address, where you want to get mail from us. Just make a mark or tell me and I'll make a mark. "I'd like to become more involved." And we'll get in touch with you, believe me.

We invite you to attend our meetings. They're always open to the public. We have a website that has our calendar right on the front page. Our website is www.NIRPC.org. And you can always see what meetings are going on that are of interest to you. Come.

We have, finally, established a presence on the Internet through Facebook and Twitter. So if you're using those mechanisms, please add us and check us out there.

Can't come to a meeting? Don't want to come to a meeting? I get tired of our meetings, believe me. Send us a note. Send us a note. Your comments are always looked at and considered. So you don't necessarily have to be there in person; you're more than welcome to communicate with us any way that works best for you. And you can communicate any time by using the general agency email at NIRPC.org. Our website has a staff list with

the individual email addresses and names and subject areas that we're responsible for. That's on there and available. We're not hard to find. We're there.

And, finally, you have on the last page, you see our website there, our address is there, our phone number is there. And we are happy to come out and talk to you any time, come out to your community, your organization, talk about what we do, talk about how you could become involved, or talk about what you think. If there's an issue, you have a group that wants to express an opinion on, please call us. One of us are always available. We'll be happy to answer any questions.

>> GAIL BARKER: Thank you. We've had a few more transit providers arrive. I will ask you to identify yourself. And please stand if you're able and wait for the microphone. North Township Dial-a-Ride? Demand response.

>> JERRY SISKA: Jerry Siska, Director of Transportation for the North Township Dial-a-Ride.

>> GAIL BARKER: South Lake County Community Services, demand response.

>> MARGOT SABATO: Margot Sabato.

>> GAIL BARKER: V-Line, Valparaiso, deviated fixed route?

>> TAYLOR WEGRZYN: Taylor Wegrzyn, Assistant Planner for the City of Valparaiso.

>> DON MORRISON: Don Morrison, Manager for V-Line.

>> GAIL BARKER: Is there anybody here from Porter County Aging and Community Services?

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Not yet.

>> GAIL BARKER: We have someone from Gary Public Transit?

>> DAVID WHITE: David White. I'm Planning and Marketing Director.

>> GAIL BARKER: Thank you. Let's begin with hearing your comments. And thank you for coming today.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Who would like to go first?

>> GAIL BARKER: I do have a comment that we received on June 7th that I was asked to read. Maybe I'll start with that first?

"To whom it may concern: My name is Angela Syslesky. I'm a 55-year-old woman with two sons and two grandsons. I have been chronically ill for 15 years now. I have heart and lung disease as well as osteoporosis and osteoarthritis and several other issues. I have been using Opportunity Enterprises for a long time now. If it weren't for their service, I would be in

serious trouble. I have to go to several doctors frequently as well as regular blood work and frequent testing. I do not have a car, and my mother is too old and sick herself to take me all the time. I have no other way to get the help I need. I can honestly say that if it weren't for the good people of Opportunity Enterprises, I probably would not be here. These tests I have to take, et cetera, save my life. If I could not get to these doctors on a regular basis or get the necessary tests done, I would have passed away long ago. I depend on Opportunity Enterprises to get me where I need to go, and they are a very necessary service. All the drivers and Shelly have gone way beyond the call of duty to help me.

"So I'm writing this letter to you in hope that you will realize that this service and others of the same are a very much needed service for people like me who depend on them for their very lives. I know there are many people that need the service and even more that would be using the service if they know about it. I am very grateful to have them. And I hope that you will realize how desperately we need this service.

"Sincerely, Angela Syslesky."

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cameraman, as I roam around the audience, if you could follow me, I'd greatly appreciate it.

>> RICKY DeVOSS: Could I speak?

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Absolutely.

>> RICKY DeVOSS: Hello, everybody. My name is Ricky DeVoss. I'm a resident of the City of East Chicago, Indiana. And I'm reading some information here. My main topic for the information today is I have the schedules that are given for the city buses of the city transit for East Chicago. As you notice, they're paper, this piece of paper; but I've been noticing, that a friend of mine took these papers of the schedule and they put them on laminated material which I would recommend that every passenger would do. These schedules then won't break and deteriorate. They're good for the weather. Your schedules never break or tear like papers deteriorating because they have nothing covering them.

So I would recommend that all city transportation passengers who have schedules and they want to last the longest, to laminate them by taking them to the OfficeMax and they can laminate them there. And this way the schedules can last for the longest. Thank you.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Anybody else like to go next? If you'd like to go to the front public speaking table or if you'd like me to come to you, please feel free to do whatever you like.

>> DIANA WILLIAMS: Purdue Calumet Public Transportation. The question that I have: Is there any additional funding? Has Hammond stepped forth with any more information about funding or transportation, bus service, anything? Does any representative from Hammond ever come to any of the meetings? Or why are they not required like Porter County and other places are?

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Actually, the City of Hammond has the Mayor that is on our Executive Board. They come to our NIRPC meetings or the full Commission meetings which are held every month.

As far as for public transit within the City of Hammond, it's a very good question. NIRPC does not actually do the funding -- get public transit within the city, whether it be county or town. We do monitoring and oversight.

But it's the local officials that actually determine where public transit is going to be. The question is a very good question, but the best person you could address it to would be the Mayor or the City Council of Hammond. They're the ones that

are in power for the public transit within the community.

>> DIANA WILLIAMS: Great, thank you.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Who else would like to go next?

>> OTILIA RODRIGUEZ: Otilia Rodriguez from East Chicago. Concerned about the Hammond Transit System, it totally closed down, and Hammond was vague on exactly what happened there to the transit system because I did use it quite often. I actually got extremely upset about it because walking from where I am at to like the bank that I use, which is in Hammond, is quite a trip.

East Chicago Transit, are they going to be coming back? If so, when?

The EasyGo system, was that what took out the Hammond Transit System? Because they were very careless with what they were doing with the buses as far as the service is concerned. There were times when there were one or two buses going in the same direction, and I felt that that would just waste money. There were places they didn't go, which is why I think East Chicago kept their transit system.

So, is Hammond going to come back again, and when?

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much for coming. Miss

Belinda will go to the front microphone and address that.

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: It's very difficult to understand why transit comes and goes in Hammond. The impact was devastating in Hammond. The Federal Government is very specific about how you fund yourself as a transit operator.

My organization doesn't have the authority to force a city or an agency to provide service. That's not what we're about. When a community opts to spend the money for a public service, then we participate and help create that service, which is what happened when the Mayor of Hammond a number of years ago, for those of you who have been around for a while, recall when the Regional Development Authority was created. One of their early charges was to support public transit. And the Mayor of Hammond took that very seriously. And he was a big proponent of a regional system, a regional provider, one big provider rather than all these individual ones. So he was out front on turning over his service to the -- become kind of a beginning of a regional system. Great thought.

Unfortunately, the Regional Development Authority's support only was good for a couple of years. They provided the local match. Hammond stayed in the game financially and kept

contributing for a while. And the Regional Development Authority contributed.

But then it became the Development Authority looking for a long-term source. So at that point, the region decided multiple counties or one county to create a funding source to support that service, it would have continued. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. We ran into the whole property tax reform movement. People felt so bad about paying what the perception was too much in property taxes, and there was no political support.

In fact, to this day, there is no support among the politicians to ask for another tax to support the local match needed to access the Federal money. So we're kind of at the moment between a rock and a hard place.

You had the North Township Trustee, Frank Myrvan, stepped up to the plate when the RDA killed -- the RBA excuse me, too many acronyms. When the Regional Bus Authority ceased funding, ceased providing services, Frank Myrvan and North Township stood up and said, "I'll help do whatever we can." So we were successful in getting a three-year, 100% Federal grant under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program to support

expanded demand response provided by the Trustee's office as a way to try to replace some of the service lost when the RBA went out of business.

Now, yet Mr. Myrvan's service can't replace all of those rides. The service operates only in North Township. And with the Regional Bus Authority service, you could access somewhat some of the other communities.

But until we're successful as a region in creating that dedicated source of local money that we need to match the Federal money, until we're successful doing that, we're going to be, you know, kind of stuck with a really inadequate public transit system for everybody. It doesn't work well for anybody.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: One minute, please. Because there are people in LaPorte that are watching and they can't hear.

>> A lot of hardship when the Hammond Transit System went under. A lot of jobs lost.

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: Yes.

>> And I just think they were careless about how they scheduled their routes. They should have kept the Red/Green one if nothing else. Thank you.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much.

>> DIANA WILLIAMS: Diana Williams, Purdue Calumet. What is the fund amount that needs to be matched?

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: Most of the money the operators use the Federal 5307 is 80/20 money. So if you hit 80% for certain kinds of expenses, what they call "preventative maintenance," that's everything but drivers' salaries. That doesn't pay for that. But it's 80% Federal and 20% local. And they buy replacement buses, they buy new buses, those are 80/20 funds.

North Township, we were able to pull off something at the last minute before this funding source went away, it was 100% money.

The law has changed. The transportation law changed October of last year. So that money is no longer available.

>> DIANA WILLIAMS: So if I understand correctly, if Hammond would come up with 20%, then the Federal percentage of 80, they would match 80? Or they would come up with 80%?

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: There are Federal funds available that could go back to Hammond, yes. Whether it's Hammond or whether it's Lake County or some other entity that comes along, as long as they qualify. You have to be a public entity to get the money. It can't be a private provider. But, yeah, the City

could do it again if they chose to.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: We have a comment from our Independent Monitor, Shelley Sandow.

>> SHELLEY SANDOW: Belinda, I want to understand thoroughly your last response. You said that the 80/20 was for purchasing vehicles and maintenance and repair, but it sounds like the cost of the vehicle operators' salary is not covered?

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: Right.

>> SHELLEY SANDOW: So an agency wanting to take advantage, they would have to find money for the operators?

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: Right. There are still operating costs that would have to be picked up and that are covered when you start combining the state money available and the local money, so, yeah.

Some operators, you know, they -- it's a highly subsidized service, just like roads. Our taxes do not pay the total cost of your road maintenance and construction. It's just as likely subsidized as public transit.

So your ridership, your fare collection might be 30% of your total costs. Your state tax might come up to be another 30%. And then your Federal contribution would be a third. So

that's the total funding package.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much.

Who would like to go next? I'm on my way.

>> PATRICIA HARLE: Good afternoon. My name is Patricia Harle, and I would like to thank NIRPC for the funds that they have made available to the Township for people who are handicapped, for other people. It is godsend. It is wonderful. And the township works very hard to make service as accommodating as possible. It is wonderful, and I thank you very much that it's available. Without it, I wouldn't be able to get to the doctor. I wouldn't be able to get anyplace, to get food. I am most grateful. Thank you.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much for your comments. We appreciate that.

And just so to let everyone know, we do actually have with us multiple of our -- I'm trying to get where I don't get feedback -- our transit operators that they really go the extra mile. I mean, they're not just doing this because it's a real good money making profit. I mean, anybody that knows, public transit does not make money. It takes a lot of money to operate it. But a lot of these people, they put in very long days.

They put in past the 9 to 5 hours. We ask them many times when we go out to do these reviews, "Why do you do this?" It's "because it's needed within my community. It really makes a difference." As we just heard from this person here. The quality of living would definitely be much less if it were not there. So we thank you for that. And we thank you for coming out, too.

Who would like to go next? We are still expecting some more people from Porter County to come. They were bringing a bus. So I'm just waiting for them to come.

Whenever you are ready, we will bring the mic to you, or if you want to come on up to the front, that's up to you.

>> PATRICIA HARLE: Again, my name is Patricia Harle. And I want to commend NIRPC for their repeated efforts to work with different groups such as Everybody Counts. I know that that has not been easy. And it has not been pleasant. But I really admire you for continuing the effort to do it. And I really believe that it's possible to make some headway.

I think if we could just meet civilly and listen to each other, that would be a great help. But I really appreciate your continued effort to work with the disabled community.

True, we have not fully implemented the ADA transportation. And I know that we're not in full compliance with the court order, but I appreciate so much what you had been able to accomplish. And I want to thank you again and again. Thank you.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you.

Now, I could let you know that the reason why we have this public hearing is to make sure that when the transit operators providing the service, whether it be fixed route, complementary paratransit, demand response, is that they are really making sure that the Americans with Disabilities Act is followed very thoroughly.

None of us are perfect, and I understand that. But this public hearing actually allows our independent monitor to hear from the public regarding issues that may be brought to our attention.

We actually had last year some information brought to our attention that we investigated during the Independent Monitor's review process where she actually reviews every single transit operator that receives Federal funding through NIRPC. It's a very thorough process. And I know that many of the transit

operators that are here that get their Federal funding through NIRPC actually know that the process is very thorough.

But the bottom line is that this is a process where we really need to hear from you. Because if there's any issues besides good, we want it to be brought to our attention because you guys are the ones that are receiving the public transit and, really, it's very necessary.

And as a NIRPC Compliance Officer, it's what my position is, I am actually out riding the buses just the same as you, interacting with the ridership, making sure that if there's any issues, it doesn't have to wait until June or November to hear about it. I can hear about it right there and can bring it to my attention.

That's one of the things we ought to do is get input from you. Because when I speak to the ridership on buses, I can really see that if there is fear, I can take my card out, I can say, "Why don't you call me?" Nine times out of ten they do.

After our last public hearing, which was in November of 2012, I had a lot of phone calls from Porter County, from LaPorte County, and also from Lake County. And turning this information over to our Independent Monitor is then investigated

very thoroughly to make sure.

I will tell you that through all of these different reviews that we've had over the past -- since 2007, the issues that were brought up were mainly an ADA concern have always been met. Each transit operator that receives money from NIRPC, but they actually were able to say hey, they met the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and they are compliant with that. So they are not perfect, but they do work very hard on that, too.

That's it for me. Who would like to go next? Whenever you're ready.

Just to let everybody know, it's about 10 minutes to 2:00. We do have some free water stations here for refreshment. So let's take a 10-minute break. If you want to get something to drink or stretch your legs, and we can reconvene at 2:00.

(Short break held.)

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: If we could have everybody reconvene, I would appreciate that.

All right. We noticed during our break here, we actually have a few people that are watching the public hearing on the Internet. And I just wanted to reiterate that if you are

watching this on the Internet, whether you be at home or someplace else or if you're in LaPorte and you'd like to make a comment, you can do so by emailing me and we can actually receive your comments via the Internet, if you email me at ahammond@NIRPC.org and we will be able to receive those emails and we can actually read them right into the comments. Even though you're not here, we can actually understand that you are here and read your comments. So we welcome those.

But now that we're back together here, if anybody would like to make another comment, we would just like to entertain that. We're here for you.

>> PATRICIA HARLE: Good afternoon again. My name is still Patricia Harle. I hope that I have a suggestion that might be useful.

When I was a passenger in a AAA cab, there was a lady in the front seat, passenger seat, that had a seizure. And this disturbed the driver terribly. Fortunately, she had a companion in the back seat who reached around and restrained her flailing arms and helped her in other ways. But I was just thinking that it might be very useful -- I know they have training for use of wheelchairs and walkers and other kinds of training, but I

thought that maybe some suggestions about how to handle the usual situation that might endanger the lives and safety of the driver and the passengers, such as a seizure, some training like that might help.

I asked one of my bus drivers and he said oh, no, they have not had that kind of training. And he said it would really freak him out if that happened. So possibly one improvement might be some direction about emergency situations that could arise.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much.

And, Shelley, would you like to address maybe some of the different things that are covered in the monitoring process? That does resemble the training process that is being done.

>> SHELLEY SANDOW: Again, this is Shelley Sandow. There is a checklist of all kinds of measures for all the different transit agencies depending upon whether they're fixed route or demand response or deviated fixed route or commuter, as in Valparaiso. And among those is a review of the kinds of training that is provided -- the kind of training that is provided.

There are two categories. One is basically they know how

to operate the vehicle, particularly the accessibility features: The lift, the securement, all those things, as well as, of course, operating everything on the bus. So that's the ADA purview. Somebody else is double checking that.

But the other kind of training we look for is training on how to treat people with disabilities appropriately and respectfully. So that would mean things like not leaning on someone's wheelchair, knowing as much as possible appropriate terminology.

I don't think I've seen a training that talks about handling a seizure disorder. I will get to that in a second, but some of the bus operators have other training that's not part of ADA, and that may include -- I know some of them, but not all, include first aid training. And I'm not familiar with how first aid training is given, if it covers how to handle things, if there's a seizure disorder, somebody having a seizure.

But I think that's a good idea. And I made a big note of that because I know there are materials that can help put people at ease if they are around somebody who has a seizure disorder and also training someone what not to do because I know people

who have been seriously injured by some well-meaning but uninformed person intervening, meanwhile, putting the people within harm.

Or what I have also heard is that a lot of people who have seizure disorders -- and maybe others in the room can confirm this -- but they're used to having seizure disorder, to some extent. They know what it's like. And it may not be the severe kind, I can't remember the name of it, grand mal, whatever. But it's a seizure and it's very disturbing to everybody else, and some people will call an ambulance right away, meaning well. But then the person who doesn't need the ambulance, they just need a couple minutes for the seizure to go away, a few minutes of privacy to relax, recover, then they are hit with a \$500 ambulance bill and emergency room bill.

So I think that's a very good suggestion that we'll get to. It probably won't be hard to find some materials or some speakers that NIRPC can make available or identify who they are for the different transit operators, because I do think the vehicle operator would like to be ready for anything. So that's a very good suggestion. And it's definitely noted and we'll follow up on that. Thank you.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Also to let you know, too, that I have already given one of our transit operators brief warnings, like, hey, I would like you to speak about your service that you provide, it's demand response, but many of the transit operators utilize the Easter Seals Project Action resources because they are free. And they are really good quality training materials that they can utilize that's very practical. And it's very easy to understand. And they really encourage questions.

So if you're on a webinar or you're able to go to a place where they will have a training within the community in the local area, they actually attend those and are able to take that information back and train the staff, like the monitors.

Dispatchers are very, very important because the fact that drivers are -- have 20 things going through their mind every single second. They may have a situation, call the dispatcher and say, "I need your help." Two minds, three minds would be better than just one.

But I asked Jerry to talk about the training that he ensures and entails because of the fact that all of his drivers receive training every single year.

>> JERRY SISK: Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Various things that we put our drivers through is some of the stuff Shelley touched on with regards to ADA training and sensitivity training: How to properly use the equipment on the vehicle, how to make -- and especially in the case of ADA situation -- the rider feel comfortable as you're doing the necessary things that you need to do, trying to properly tie down without kind of getting into that personal space, trying not to be over the top, communicate with them at eye level instead of looking down over them. So we train them to do things like that so that the rider will be comfortable.

We have put our drivers through the first aid training. We have put them through CPR. But we have done that with our drivers so that they're equipped to handle some medical situations. They are trained that when they see a situation, that as quickly as possible to safely pull to the side of the road so they can assess the situation and see what they need to do. In many cases, if they're not sure, they're told to immediately call 911 so that we could get an officer or medical staff there and then inform the officer right away, as well.

We have had situations in the past with one of our riders that would have those grand mal seizures every now and then.

One of the things you really want to try to do for them is just make sure they don't fall off the chair and hurt themselves and get them in a position where they will be safe so that there aren't any injuries that occur.

We go through drug and alcohol training. We make our drivers aware of effects, different kind of things they take, including prescription medicine. Not every one of us think of the effects of prescription medicine. We think, okay, it's not a problem, the doctor gave it to us, but there is medication that could make you sick and that you shouldn't be operating a vehicle during this time.

So we do this so they understand if they're taking something regularly, they're responsible for making sure that I know that and we can assess the situation, physician to see if they should continue to drive or hang off that until they are off the medication.

So those are just some of the things that we do with our drivers to try and make sure that they're able to handle the situation. They know what they should do. And most of all, it's to make the rider comfortable and their trip pleasant when they're with our services.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much, Jerry.

So there's more than what goes into the fact that you have a bus, you have a driver, and they're just making one stop from Point A to Point B. And if it's a fixed route like East Chicago Transit has or Gary Public Transit has, or if it's demand response, it's not just getting a ride; there's more that goes into it than just getting from Point A to Point B.

And a lot of these situations and instances that come up are really, really important because people, they need to have public transit. They need to have the ability to be able to go to the grocery store, to be able to go to the doctor's, to be able to go to have entertainment, okay, whether it be out to a restaurant or to a show or even to come to meetings like this. It is very, very important that people have this resource.

And that's why the public transit is involved today, especially down by Crown Point and by Merrillville. There's only one transit operator that operates in that area, South Lake County Community Services. And they have really expanded their service over the past three years because of the fact that the Northwest Indiana -- I am forgetting what -- Northwestern Indiana Community Action Corporation, thank you -- that when

they ceased to provide service, South Lake County Community Service expanded their territory to provide services.

Just like North Township. Are they able to replace everything when Hammond Transit and the RBA went out? Well, unfortunately not. Would they like to? Oh, sure, absolutely. But the resources have to be there.

Next thing that I can share with you guys, the review process is really intense because of the fact that we monitor and review all the different operators.

And one of the things that is really important to me in my area is a preventive maintenance. The preventive maintenance is like a very, very key aspect because of the fact that if the equipment is breaking down or if it's not good, people will not desire to use it, even if they have to.

But I can say of the seven transit operators that we have, they really take pride and very seriously the preventive maintenance practices and policies and regulations that are in place to make sure that their equipment is reliable, it's dependable and people aren't ashamed to get on it.

I mean, I remember back in 2005 when East Chicago Transit first - we had some meetings together. I wouldn't ride the

buses because they were in very, very poor shape. But if you look today, the East Chicago Transit fixed route and complementary service has very good equipment, has very clean equipment and a gentleman that is really in charge of the preventative maintenance program has taken great pride over the last eight years that "I want my buses in the condition that they would be able to -- anybody would be able to get on and not say, 'I don't want to use public transit.'" I'm very grateful for that, too.

Preventive maintenance is very key. We know other operators that are here that have really valued and feel that it's very important that preventative maintenance is being performed on all their equipment.

But would anybody else like to make a comment? Come up here or I can come to you.

I'll tell you what. It's about 2:20. If you'd like to take another break, we can do that for another 10 minutes. And let's reconvene at 2:30, then, okay? And feel free to get some more water. It's real good. Socialize and we'll convene in about 10 minutes.

(Short break held.)

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: All right. If we could reconvene. Hopefully over the last few minutes, you have had time to think about if you are making other comments.

We also have been informed that Lakeshore Public TV is here for the public that we have, so we're grateful for that. And we also have the Post Tribune, is that correct? Yes. Grateful to have them here, also. And I think our public is going to be on TV. So we'll just wait for a few more minutes in case they want to come back and make any more comments.

We do want to reiterate that this is being recorded and also with the webcast that is being done, it is very important - we notice that we have more observers watching the public hearing via the Internet and the webcast. So, please, if you feel that you would like to make a comment from your computer, we'd greatly appreciate that and your involvement. You can do that by just sending an email to ahammond@NIRPC.org and we're just waiting to hear from you. If you'd like to make comments via the Internet, we would entertain those.

Also, to reiterate that we will be accepting comments on our comment line at NIRPC. You can actually do that 24 hours a day by calling Area Code 219-763-6060 extension 160.

I want you to know that you can also email me your comments in the next 30 days, also. That would be until July 11th. Or you can send them in through the U.S. Postal Service, too. So we will entertain anyone that would like to make a comment regards the Americans with Disabilities Act, please feel free to do that. You can do it through the U.S. Postal Service, email, or our comment line. Thank you.

It was also brought to my attention -- and I apologize to let you know that our physical address is Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, 6100 Southport Road, that's in Portage, Indiana, 46368. And you can put it to my attention, Allen Hammond, or you can just put on the envelope "ADA Public Hearing" and I'll get that, also. Thank you.

One thing I'd like to bring to everyone's attention is that we do have some materials over at our table, or you can find out some information that Belinda Petroskey talked about, at the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, who our Executive Board is. Also, you can find out some different information about our presentation that we're going to be giving you here later on. Just to make sure that anybody that may come in later this afternoon or be watching it from the Internet, that they can

actually see the PowerPoint presentation.

But if you'd like to receive a hard copy of that being either in large print or regular format, just bring it to our attention, and I'll make sure you get a copy of that before you leave or we can send it to your home address or your business address, whichever you would like.

Little feedback session there. I wanted to let you know that we still do have a few minutes. But we have been monitoring the Internet activity. We know that there's other people that are watching it. Please, do not hesitate. We would like to hear from you via the Internet. And if you could please just email any comments that you'd like to have, either right now or even later on today, tonight or for the next 30 days until July 11th, we'd really appreciate that. Email those to ahammond@NIRPC.org and we'd greatly appreciate that.

We have probably 50 minutes -- 45, 50 minutes to go. But if we could, for those people that may not have seen the PowerPoint presentation on the Internet, if we could actually have Belinda Petroskey come on up and do the PowerPoint presentation, we'd greatly appreciate that.

And if I would ask one more request for the people that are

here from the public and ridership, if you'd like to make any comments, be thinking about those, but we'd like to wrap up the public hearing at 4:00.

So, Belinda, if you could please come on up and do the PowerPoint presentation, I'd greatly appreciate that. And hopefully you can see that on the Internet from where you're at. Thank you very much, Belinda.

>> BELINDA PETROSKEY: Thank you. Okay. For the third time, I am Belinda Petroskey, Public Transit Planner at NIRPC. And we put together a PowerPoint presentation, a little one, just to give you some background information on the Regional Planning Commission.

On the first page under, "What is NIRPC?" We talked a little bit about what our federal responsibilities are, why we were created. We were created by Federal Government by funding. We are a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, an MPO, as are many organizations around the country. And we came out of that Federal creation to coordinate funding.

Several years ago, state legislation was produced that also expanded the Council of Governments. The difference between the MPO and the Council of Governments is that the MPO had certain

required representation that was spelled out in legislation.

Under the Council of Governments, that vastly expanded the "membership," quote/unquote, of NIRPC, who sat on the Board and who had appointments. As a Council of Governments, it also elected -- it also specified that all of our people on the Board have to be elected officials. So that was something new for us.

We also, when we became a Council of Governments, were also given additional planning responsibilities. That was economic development and environmental planning.

Who is on our Board right now? Every city and town in the three-county area has an appointment. So there's an elected official from each of the 41 -- and there are 41 of them -- cities and towns in Lake, Porter and LaPorte County. And each of the Board of County Commissioners and the County Council, each County Council has an appointment. All three of the County Surveyors serve directly on the Board. Theirs is the only elected position, interestingly enough, that is required to be on the Board. They cannot appoint a different elected official to represent the state Surveyors' office. The Surveyors have to be on there.

It also expanded membership to two Townships in Porter

County: Union and Porter. And that was done because those are the only Townships, virtually, in the urban area, which is the boundary about north of U.S. 30 and north in both counties, the only urban area that doesn't have an incorporated place in it. So where there are some sizable compilations in each of those townships. It's all unincorporated areas. So each of those Townships was given an appointment. It has to be an elected official. The Governor has an appointment. It has been a Legislator ever since this appointment was created. It previously was State Representative Chet Dobis, who has retired and moved on. It is now State Representative Ed Soliday who is from Valpo, our appointment.

Also transit operators get together periodically and select one of their members, through their representative also on the Board, to represent the operators.

How are decisions made at NIRPC? Starts out basically with citizen input, either through a taskforce or a working group that is created to address a specific activity.

We most recently finished our 2014 Comprehensive Plan, and overseeing that whole process was a committee of about 50 people that worked for probably about two years, I think it was, to get

our three-county comprehensive, regional, long-range transportation plan done. And that was -- there were a lot of other people that came in under other processes, and that's how it went. So those are basic ways to involve the public.

Those groups work up recommendations, policies or plans, and then those are taken to the responsible policy committee. We have three standing Policy Committees: Transportation, Environmental and Economic Development. So they get the first fruit of public participation in development of a policy or a plan and then make recommendations or accept it or whatever and then pass it on to the Board of Commissioners who is responsible for making plan decisions, setting policy; and essentially what Regional Planning staff does, we turn around and implement what the Commission adopts.

How are public bus and demand response funded in the region? Very good question. A lot of misunderstanding out there about who controls where transit comes from or where it's available.

For the Federal money, it is apportioned annually by Congress. Our transportation money comes through Chicago. It's apportioned for north Lake and Porter Counties, first of all,

through the Chicago Regional Transportation Authority. And then using formulas which are proposed by the Feds in Washington, they come up with a formula distribution of the money between Chicago and Northwest Indiana. So then we work with the Regional Transportation Authority up there to split the pot, if you will, based on these formulas.

And then we take that money, and with the local transit operators, following the priorities set up in our long-range transportation plan, then turn around and fund services that are here. So that's how the Federal money is handled.

The state support is a Public Mass Transit Fund, which is a dedicated -- used to be until very recently was a dedicated pot of money for all of the operators in the state. However, the last couple of years, they've taken that away from the operators. They've made it a line item in the state budget, which means every transit operator now has to go down and secure their money from the budget agency. Not the ideal way to deal. Those funds can fluctuate depending upon what kind of a year Indiana is having budget-wise; whereas, with the original Public Mass Transit Fund, that was less vulnerable to that.

Anyway, still working with the state to straighten that

out.

Local support comes from a variety of sources, including fares, municipal property taxes, other federal programs; County Economic Development Income Tax, that's what Valparaiso uses; and county budget through property taxes.

In certain parts, for instance, in South Lake County, the three Township Trustees - oh, there's more than that, there are seven down there, I believe, seven -- that contribute to the South Lake County Community Services. They help provide that demand response transit service in south Lake. So she has an additional source of money that not everybody gets.

And of course the North Township, we know the Township Trustee supports the demand response program here.

Other Federal funds also help support. North Township has been awarded an equal grant that they are provided that expanded demand response component with right now.

GPTC, Gary Public Transit, also has CMAQ funds that they are using to support two demonstration routes. And those are routes that are new service area and they'll run for a period of time using the CMAQ funds. And then they will be evaluated to be rolled into regular service or changed or dropped depending

upon the experience.

You see, we had a meeting yesterday with the operators, and they're having a very good experience on both of those routes. So that's encouraging.

Valparaiso Dash has a grant right now to fund the fourth bus on their commuter service. Dash is a commuter service through Chicago. They started out with one bus in 2009, and they are up to this fourth one the first of this year. That's the experience over there that arose in demand for that service, doing very well.

The Section 337 money, the state of good repair, that is reserved exclusively for NICTD, for the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District. They are the only ones eligible for that pot of money. And that, again, comes out from Washington through the RTA. And there are agreements that are signed with all three -- four organizations, including GPTC that shares that money with Chicago and Metra, between Metra and NICTD.

New Freedom is another program that was created separately to help provide more access to transit for the disability community and low income. So we get less than 300,000 annually,

and that was split, after a process of soliciting projects and looking at proposed new services, with South Lake County providing standard service down there; and Porter County Aging and Community Services has done the expansion of service in Porter County using those funds.

Who gets what in terms of the Federal Section 5307? That's the basic money that provides basic costs support to each of our operators. And you can see the amounts there.

GPTC's amount is a little bit off. It should probably be close to a 4.4 million rather than the 3 million.

And the others cover primarily preventative maintenance costs and vehicle replacements, other capital costs that they need to raise, facility work. They are doing work, I know now, on a metro center in Gary. Those kinds of costs come out of that program.

You've heard about the Subgrantees, and you've met several of them. They are again: The East Chicago Public Transit, North Township Dial-a-Ride, South Lake County Community Services, Opportunity Enterprises, Porter County Aging and Community Services, Valparaiso V-Line and Dash, and LaPorte TransPorte.

Something I didn't mention before is how did NIRPC get to be the recipient of this money for those operators? This is not a typical relationship that we find nationwide, unfortunately.

A number of years ago, I'm talking 30 years ago, that was back in the '80s when -- before FTA there was ALTA, and they came up with the program, a new program proposed to help provide public transit money to some of the -- human services agencies that were trying to provide especially for the elderly and disabled transit where it didn't exist.

So in Northwest Indiana, we had a handful of businesses and some not, of human service providers, agencies like South Lake, Tradewinds was an original member of that group, LCEOC now called NICA, they were an original participant in that program. Well, the problem was that the FTA staff in Chicago decided -- that was waived to many operators in one geographic area. In two counties, they were trying to deal with five or six, and that was more than they could deal with.

So they approached us and asked us to become the designated recipients, so we now have three in the region. One is Gary Public Transit. They're their own grantee. They apply for their own grants directly. And then their oversight is between

them and FTA. We don't perform any oversight functions for GPTC.

We do, however, for everybody else except NICTD and Michigan City. So we've picked up LaPorte when LaPorte joined us. After they joined us a number of years ago, we picked them up. We are in talks with Michigan City right now thinking about if they want to come in and be a sub recently. So we were asked by the Feds to do it. And that's where we get our oversight function, which led to our monitoring of the ADA situation. That's how that came to be. It wasn't something we sought.

And when we do get reviewed every four years, we get these consultants who work in other parts of the country, and they don't have a clue what we are, what NIRPC is. They want to know where our facilities with our vehicles are. They want to come and see "it". We say, no. There are seven sites we will go visit. Oh my goodness, they are blown out of the water by that.

Anyway, so how does one get involved in the NIRPC activities? There are a variety of ways. You can sign up and get on our meeting notice, notification lists. And how many times depending upon our agenda, our monthly meeting list is on our website. If you want to come to a meeting, you can

volunteer that way through that activity. For the working group or taskforce, whatever's going on at the moment.

We're getting into social media. So we have a Facebook presence. And I understand we're getting into Twitter. So if you like to communicate that way, please do so. Check it out.

Shared rides. We realized public transit can be very difficult to come by and get to a meeting. But if you know folks that want to go, put a car pool together. That's always helpful. And you can always call us at any time and find out -- and we can give you any tips on how to get around. But you can always give us a yell and volunteer for anything, too. We'd like to have active participants. We invite you and encourage you to please share with us what you think about the regional planning, regional transportation and certainly if you're having any problems.

While NIRPC cannot force anyone to provide public transit, we cannot go into a city or town or a county or anywhere else and demand that entity provide public transit. That's just not our function, and the law does not allow us to do that.

So if you want transit in your area, you must first start with your local elected officials: Your mayor, your town or

City Council, your County Commissioner, your County Councilman.

The local match requirement is a tough one for entities to support public transit. The Federal funding is not 100%; it's mostly 80/20. So that 20% local match makes all the difference in your community's ability to fund public transit. It must come from a local start. Local, if you look back to the region, the City of Valpo creating public transit is the newest one. That's the best experience we've had in the last 25 years. They started that.

Mayor Costas was elected, and he was a big proponent of public transit and wanted it for his community. So he got some people involved. They came to NIRPC and said, "Let's make this happen." And he did. But they came up with the money to support it. So that is critical.

And I understand North Township, Hammond certainly stands -- it was difficult because the Mayor pulled out. But the hope was, in all fairness, the hope -- a Regional Bus Authority or a regional entity, whatever it was going to be, would have been created and funded. That hasn't happened yet. So we keep trying.

I'll be happy to answer any questions.

>> ALLEN HAMMOND: Thank you very much, Belinda.

And just to let everybody know, we have about 25 minutes before 4:00. So if you have any questions or if you want to email us any comments that may come over the Internet via email, please do that as quickly as possible. Otherwise, you have until July the 11th to make your comments known to us. And they will become part of the official record and transcript that will be reviewed.

And if there's any ADA compliance issues of the independent monitor, we'll take those into account and we will be reviewing all seven transit operators that receive funding from the Northwestern Regional Transportation Commission to make sure that they're in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If you'd like to say anything, please feel free to. Otherwise, we will be here until 4:00 to receive those emails, public comment or from here in our attendance, but we'd like to thank you very much for your time. And we appreciate everybody's input to make this public hearing go as smoothly as it does.

One thing I was pointing out, I remember when the City of

Valparaiso actually started their public transit. And it was really a privilege to work with the administration of the City of Valparaiso to see what they could do as far as providing public transit. Even though they don't provide a fixed route complementary paratransit, they do provide deviated fixed route service. So if anybody is able to get to a bus stop, then they can call the V-Line, which is the local transit service that is provided there in Valparaiso, and it will deviate from the fixed -- from the route that it's on to go pick up individuals within a 3/4 mile radius.

They have been very successful with their ridership. They have grown in the ridership numbers since starting. And then even, as Belinda said, they provide a commuter service from the City of Valparaiso to Chicago, which has grown exponentially with all the people that are commuting to Chicago for employment. First they started with one bus. Now they are up to four buses. And the people that use that service, from Valparaiso, many people from Portage and from Chesterton and from the areas utilize that service to get to downtown Chicago. And it's very popular.

We wait for your emails to come in. we will read those

until 4:00. Or if someone will make a comment here at Purdue University Calumet. Thank you.

[Pause.]

I would like to thank each and every one of you who have come out to the public hearing today. I'll let you know that it is currently 4:00. But this completes our 2013 ADA Public Hearing here at Purdue Calumet, and I would like to thank our sign language interpreters for coming out and being a part of this session.

I'd like to also thank Gail Barker, our Public Hearing Facilitator, from coming out from Purdue University North Central and being with us.

I'd also like to thank Kathy Cortopassi for being our CART service provider.

And I'd also like to thank our broadcast and services this afternoon.

But also I'd like to thank you there on the Internet and here at Purdue University Calumet for being a part of this public hearing. And we look forward to your input.

Remember that you have the next 30 days to send input to us via our comment line 219-763-6060 extension 160 or via email or

via the U.S. Postal Service.

Thank you and have a great day.

[End of public hearing.]

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UNEDITED/UNCORRECTED PUBLIC COMMENTS ATTACHED HERE:

From: kathy [katherine65fietz@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 13, 2013 12:37 PM
To: Nirpc
Cc: jfietz@cegecom.lu
Subject: my thoughts about public transit services I would like and use

hi

I live in Valparaiso, Indiana (Porter county)

I use the V-line, the senior citizen porter county bus I call at least 48 hours in advance, and occasionally the Dash bus to Chicago which leaves Valparaiso at 7:15 a.m. which is the last bus leaving Valparaiso for the day/weekdays only.

I use the Vline on Fridays occasionally which picks me up at the Dunes Station at 5:30pm which is great but there is no transportation

to the South Shore Station at all during the week and on Fridays nothing until 2pm going there. So on Friday mornings I take the

PCACS bus which I have to call at least 48 hours in advance and often it is full so I usually call a week in advance, just for a ride to the train station to go to Chicago.

I wish there was transportation to Chicago, via the South Shore or ? train station thruout the week and starting in the mornings like they have on the VLine on Saturdays and Sundays.

Also it would be great if from morning until late at night 10pm at least, there would be transportation/buelines going from Jamestown Apartments where I live, during the week and weekends, to other surrounding towns such as Crown Point, LaPorte, Portage, Chesterton, Merriville, South Bend , etc and surrounding counties also.

Or/and the vline etc buses could hook up with the busllines of these and other cities and counties with them waiting for passengers

who are tranferring from the other cities buslines

I tried to go to school at the University of Indiana Northwest in Gary, Indiana but I had no transortation there since I don't

have a car or drivers license and couldn't afford a car, insurance, etc. and missed classes because the person who gave me a ride and picked me up at 8pm there couldn't anymore because of a new full time job and the long drive, so I flunked out and had to withdraw.

There is virtually no transportation from/to Valparaiso to any surrounding areas unless one drives and has a car. It's very limiting.

* * * * *

Public Comment Line - Message #1 - Monday, June 10, 2013 4:03 PM

I would like to leave comments for the meeting on June 11th of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, the NI RPC. I would like to tell you that I have used the South Lake County Community Services Incorporated Bus to take me to my dialysis appointments three times a week and bring me home again, and I received excellent service and for senior citizens the rates are affordable. I would encourage you to please continue this service. I don't know how I would get to and from dialysis without bus service. And please continue any support for South Lake County Community Services. They do an excellent job and their drivers are very good and helpful to senior citizens. And you may record my name it's Rachel Hernandez. Thank you very much. Bye.

Public Comment Line - Message #2 - Tuesday, June 11, 2013 9:57 AM

My daughter, Megan Maser, goes to the Innovation Day Care Program. And she is transported twice a week by South Lake County Buses. I just wanted to leave the comment that it is a life saver for us. She couldn't go to the program if she could not go on the bus. And the bus service—everyone that has anything to do with the bus service that I've talked to has been courteous, they're helpful and they're prompt. I have nothing but good things to say about them. I just wanted to leave that comment. My daughter's name is Megan Maser, thank you.

I, Kathy A. Cortopassi, hereby certify that I personally provided CART (Communication Access Realtime Transcription) Services for the Public Hearing on June 11, 2013, and that I personally edited and do hereby attest that this transcript is a verbatim record of said hearing to the best of my ability given audio difficulties.

Kathy A. Cortopassi, RPR, RMR, CRR, CCP, CBC
Sworn to before me this ___ day of July, 2013.

Notary Public