COORDINATED HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN

FOR

NORTHWEST INDIANA

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

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COORDINATED PLAN FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT AND HUMAN SERVICES

Introduction

In the transportation bill SAFETEA-LU Congress established a new requirement of a coordinated plan for funding projects under the FTA Special Needs of Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC – 5316), and New Freedom (5317). The new plan, called the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan is to identify transit needs, gaps and strategies. It must also identify priorities for use of the three grant programs.

Transit needs, gaps and strategies were reviewed and updated in the adopted 2007 update to the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan using the 2006 Regional Bus Authority Transit Needs Analysis and Strategic Plan (Lake and Porter Counties) and the 2007 La Porte County Feasibility Study on Consolidated Human Services Public Demand Response Transit. The new coordinated plan uses this transit component to meet the needs, gaps and strategies requirements. The identification of priorities was completed with a committee of public and private transit operators, representatives of human services agencies that provide client-based transit and those whose clients need transit, and the Regional Bus Authority.

Where We Were

In 1999 public transportation operators in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties, INDOT and NIRPC co-sponsored a regional transit needs analysis to determine transit improvements for Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties. Completed in June of 2000, the Regional Transit Needs Analysis (RTNA) identified transit needs and recommended solutions to improve service and use existing resources more efficiently. It also provided cost estimates for expanding transit and identified funding strategies to implement them. Throughout the planning process the consultant team worked closely with local public policy officials and transportation stakeholders including riders, citizen and social services groups, employers, and businesses to obtain consensus on and support for the recommendations. Transit service improvements and expansions were identified for each county. Additional strategies to be applied region-wide were also identified. The RTNA's findings and recommendations were amended into the Vision 2020 Regional Transportation Plan and formed the basis for prioritizing federal transit funding in the FY 2001-2005 and FY 2003-2007 Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP).

2000 RTNA Summary Findings and Recommendations

Regional Transit Needs

The RTNA discussed both the choice and transit dependent markets in Northwest Indiana. Transit dependent riders are those individuals that due to socio-economic and/or other limitations are unable to use other modes of transportation. For transit dependent riders, public transit provides mobility and access to employment, education, medical care, basic needs' shopping, and social/recreational activities. Choice riders have access to other modes of transportation but use transit for reasons of convenience and/or preference. Based on the 1990 census demographic data, the Needs Analysis identified concentrations of low income and working poor households, households receiving public assistance, seniors, and mobility limited. The RTNA found that transit services needed to be expanded to underserved communities in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties. In Lake County, the communities needing local services and/or connections to the northern urban areas were Hobart/Lake Station, Merrillville/US 30 corridor, Crown Point and areas in rural Lake County. Several other communities, including Highland, Hobart, Merrillville, and Munster also had significant numbers of senior citizens. In Porter County, local transit alternatives were recommended in Portage, Valparaiso, and in the rural communities to the south. North-south service connecting Valparaiso, Chesterton and NICTD was also recommended to provide access to NICTD for the transit dependent and to ease station parking congestion. Valparaiso also had a higher concentration of senior citizens. In La Porte County, local service alternatives targeting La Porte and the rural areas were recommended. Regionally in 1990 the areas with the highest numbers of residents with mobility limitations were concentrated in northern Lake County and the rural sections of all three counties. Existing transit across the three-county region was estimated to be meeting 23% of the total regional need for public transportation.

Summary of the Implementation of the RTNA Recommendations

Funding, particularly operating subsidies, has proven to be a major barrier to improving existing or implementing new transit services in the urban areas. In Gary, service reductions were made in response to the fiscal crisis faced by the operator, Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC). The cities of Hammond and East Chicago, operators of the Hammond Transit System (HTS) and East Chicago Public Transit (ECPT), focused on merging the two systems before implementing system improvements. Ultimately, the merger did not take place.

Increasing the region's capacity to deliver more public demand response service continues to be a focus for transportation stakeholders in all three counties.

As recommended, initiatives in all three counties were undertaken to improve demand response by coordinating and consolidating existing services, including those provided by the human services agencies. The initiatives are currently on going. Lake County stakeholders have gone so far as to incorporate an entity, the Transit Consortium of Northwest Indiana, to serve as the oversight board for a consolidated service.

Great progress was also made in Lake County when, in 2001, the County Council voted to create a regional transportation authority for the express purpose of improving and expanding public transit. Unfortunately, efforts to create a funding mechanism to support the authority have so far been unsuccessful.

Porter County also recently opted to voluntarily join the Lake County Regional Transportation Authority discussed above, a step which can only lend strength to the region's ability to provide mobility and access for all of its citizens.

NICTD in the Regional Transit Needs Analysis

Recommendations for improvements to the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District's commuter rail service included increasing capacity, increasing spares to improve reliability, and customer service training and information displays to improve passenger information. Currently NICTD is in the process of implementing a $70 million dollar capital improvement program that will address the recommendations as well as the need to upgrade the South Shore's 100- year old infrastructure. NICTD also lacks a dedicated source of local revenue but has been successful in obtaining needed matching funds through the state budget.

Other Regional Recommendations

The RTNA also contained recommendations to be approached on a regional basis. Included were employer sponsored services such as commuter buses, shuttles and/or vanpools; fare subsidy programs in cooperation with groups such as employers or social service agencies; and a regional approach to service information and marketing. Consolidation of administrative and maintenance functions among the fixed route operators was also recommended.

Few of these recommendations have been implemented. As was noted earlier, East Chicago and Hammond did explore consolidating the two systems, and Lake County stakeholders have gone the furthest in attempting to coordinate human services client transportation and expand availability of public demand response transit. Together with the current initiatives among human services agencies in Porter and La Porte Counties, expanding the availability of public demand response transit is an on-going implementation activity of the RTNA recommendations.

Transit Needs Updated

Demographics

A detailed review of the region's demographics from 1990 to 2000 is contained in Chapter 2 of this document. From the transit planning perspective, of particular significance are the updated locations by traffic analysis zones of concentrations of people who typically need transit – minorities, unemployed and working poor, the disabled, senior citizens, and households without vehicles - and workplace travel patterns. As noted in Chapter 2, the locations of concentrations of typically transit dependent persons have changed very little from 1990 to 2000. Urban Lake County and the rural portions of all three counties remain the areas of highest concentrations of people who need transportation. Northern Lake County and Michigan City in La Porte County have the highest concentrations of minorities, which was also the case in 1990. Persons with disabilities, who comprised 17.4 percent of the total 2000 population, share the same geographic concentrations. What has changed slightly is the developing concentrations of elderly all over the region. While the 1990-2000 change in the age distribution seems small it takes on greater meaning when compared to the change from 1980 to 2000. The regional median age in 1980 was 28 and the proportion of the total population under 18 was 31 percent; persons over 65 were 8 percent of the total population. In 2000, the median age was 35.9 in Lake County, 36.3 in Porter, and 37.1 in La Porte County. Persons under 18 were 26 percent of the total regional 2000 population and seniors constituted 13 percent. The aging of the region's population will have a definite impact on the transportation infrastructure.

Also discussed in Chapter 2 are the shifts in employment by sector and work travel patterns, both of which have potential impacts for choice riders as well as the transit dependent. The shifts in employment and work travel patterns occurred primarily away from the industrial sector, which was heavily concentrated in north Lake and Porter Counties, to the trade, entertainment and service sectors in the center of both. The entertainment sector changes include five riverboat casinos located on Lake Michigan in East Chicago, Hammond, Gary, and Michigan City. However the growth in service and trade sector jobs has taken place away from the urban core further complicating access to jobs in the region for the unemployed, low income, mobility limited and minorities.

Another shift in the work trip pattern was the increase in trips to Northeast Illinois. The number of Northwest Indiana residents working in Illinois increased 22 percent from 1990 to 2000. In 2000 16 percent of all workers living in Northwest Indiana worked in the Northeast Illinois region. The significance of the Northeast Illinois job market takes on an added importance in that public transit to Chicago already exists via the South Shore commuter rail, directly accessible to the urban core cities of Hammond, Whiting, East Chicago, Gary, and Michigan City. However public transit access to the commuter rail from the balance of all three counties is generally lacking.

Of the remaining workforce, most worked in the county they lived in, which was similar to 1990. In Lake County 72 percent of the residents lived and worked in Lake County and another 22 percent worked in northeast Illinois. The remaining 5 percent worked in Porter or La Porte County. In Porter County in 2000 56 percent of the residents lived and worked in the same county. 27 percent of Porter County workers worked in Lake County, 8 percent worked in northeast Illinois, 6 percent in La Porte County, and 3 percent in other areas. La Porte County in 2000 had 74 percent of its residents working in their home county, 9 percent in Porter County, 4 percent in Lake, 2 percent in Illinois, and 11 percent in other areas.

Another important piece of demographic information in transit planning is travel time. It has implications for demonstrating transit potential in choice markets. As detailed in Chapter 2, the mean work travel time increased in each county. Lake County increased from 23.8 minutes to 27.1 in 2000. Porter County went from 23.5 to 25.9 minutes, and La Porte County increased from 19.5 minutes to 22 minutes.

The 2000 journey to work data also reveal an increase in percent of workers living in the region driving alone to work(82.2% from 79.9%), and a decrease in the percent of workers using public transportation to access jobs (2.4 % from 2.8 %). The shift in mode choice was greatest among those who walk to work with an increase to 5 % in 2000 from 1.7 % in 1990.

Citizen and Stakeholder Input

Lake County RTA Outreach Sessions

Over the past four years there have been multiple opportunities for public input on needed transit improvements in the region. In the fall of 2002 the Lake County RTA sponsored eight outreach sessions geographically spread all over Lake County. Transit needs most often cited were for access to jobs along US 30 from both north and south Lake County; access to medical facilities in the I-65-US 30 corridor from both north and south Lake County; and more capacity for disabled consumers needing demand response services. Jobs access issues included more late night and weekend service all over Lake County. There was also interest expressed in Sunday service to attend worship. These same issues were also articulated during the RTNA process.

The RTNA did not address expanding commuter rail. This issue was new to the RBA outreach discussions of needed public transit improvements. Reasons for supporting new commuter rail included desire to avoid traffic congestion, air quality concerns, need for increased access to the Chicago job market, and its economic development impact. A new commuter bus service to Chicago similar to the one that used to serve Lake County was also recommended.

NIRPC Open Houses
In the spring of 2004 NIRPC held a series of seven public open houses throughout the three -county area. Access to jobs, medical facilities and basic life-needs shopping, from the north and south sections of all three counties to employment centers and major commercial and personal services corridors, continues to be the major regional transit issue for persons with mobility limitations of any type. Other issues identified included affordability, the need for cross-county line service, improvements to service quality, and the need to promote transit friendly development practices. Support for expanded commuter rail was also articulated in all three counties, including expansion of service to Valparaiso, south Lake County and the City of La Porte.

Human Service Agencies Surveys
As noted earlier, transportation stakeholder committees have organized in all three counties to address increasing demand response public transit through coordination with human service agencies whose clients need transportation. A survey of these and other transportation stakeholders was done for each county. It included questions on barriers to transportation faced by people served by the agencies, and asked for most needed improvements. In Lake County the survey (2002) was conducted as part of a feasibility study by RLS & Associates, sponsored by NIRPC. The Porter (2003) and La Porte (2004) Counties' surveys were done by NIRPC staff in cooperation with the respective stakeholder committees.

Barriers to Mobility

The barriers faced in Lake County included the following:
-Cost of out-of-county service, if you can get it.
-No transit to employment in south Lake County
-Unreliability of service
-Poor connections
-Lack of service for disabled individuals
-Cost of service
-Difficult to use three existing fixed-route services with uncoordinated fares --and hard to understand transfers
-Lack of funding reimbursement
-Lack of north-south travel ability
-Racism and politics
-Lack of cohesive plan where a person can connect between communities
-A dedicated funding source to provide required local match
-More appropriate allocation of state and federal resources
-Lack of coordination among 3 largest transit systems
-Lack of transportation from major population centers to the bulk of employers
-Lack of regional cooperation

-Funding for the population that is not eligible for Medicaid and can't afford -- transportation due to limited resources
-Communities' resistance to public transit

In Porter County the responses identified the following barriers:
-Lack of an affordable public transit system
-Lack of access to doctors, medical facilities, (particularly for low –income, --the uninsured, the elderly and Medicaid patients), basic shopping, day care and - employment sites
-Lack of early a.m. and later p.m. service
-Lack of awareness of available services
-The cost of owning and operating a car for the low-income, the homeless and the mentally ill
-Lack of transit options for linked trips (work and day care).

La Porte County survey participants listed these barriers:
-Lack of public transit service between Michigan City and La Porte
-The limited availability and coverage overall of existing public transit
-Limited operating hours and routes of the existing fixed-route provider
-Lack of regularly scheduled and routed service in the City of La Porte.
-Lack of transit to other La Porte County communities, including service to - Westville and Kingsford Heights.
-Limited capacity of the La Porte demand-response system
-Lack of Sunday service
-High cost of automobile ownership.
-Lack of service from southern La Porte County to Valparaiso

Most Needed Improvements

Most needed improvements identified in the Lake County survey were:
-More demand response service county-wide
-Cross-county (east-west) service
-Regional transportation system
-Affordable service
-Access between the northern sections and southern sections
-Coordinated maintenance service
-Weekend hours
-Extended weekday hours
-Professional demand response service run on time with clean vehicles and drivers in one recognizable uniform
-Unigov to help coordinate services between North and South Lake County
-Any new service must be cost effective, efficient, timely and trustworthy
-Consistent and reliable county- wide service
-Coordinated effort among all existing transportation resources
-More funding
-Dedicated funding source for local match

-Fund the RTA
-Expand public transit to other communities (Schererville, Hobart, Dyer, Munster, Highland)
-Two-county service area (Lake-Porter)
-Regional system with consistent fares
-Taxi service that would run county-wide

Porter County's most needed improvements were as follows:
-more public transit that was wheelchair accessible and affordable
off hour service for medical and jobs access
-more operating subsidy,
-more Medicaid reimbursable public transit
-weekend and evening service in Valparaiso
-service between Portage and Valparaiso
-small group transit
-train service to Valparaiso
-better networking.

La Porte County's most needed improvements were:
-Public transit service between Michigan City and La Porte
-Services linking all communities
-Lower fares
-Extended hours
-Holiday service
-More capacity for wheelchair-bound riders
-Regular fixed-route service in La Porte
-Regularly scheduled routes that link residential areas to commercial areas, -especially for public housing and poor neighborhoods
-Public demand response service from southwest La Porte County to Valparaiso

Public Transit Policy in Connections 2030

Two major sets of recommendations relating to improving public transit in northwest Indiana were developed for inclusion in Connections 2030. The first set outlines regional strategies that NIRPC and those interested in improving public transit may undertake to improve existing services, increase market share, promote multimodal connections, and build community support for a dedicated source of local funding. The second set of recommendations is a conceptual plan of what a regional and local system of public transit may look like. All of the recommendations are based on the four-year public dialogue described above.

Regional Strategies for the Improvement of Public Transit

A. Continue supporting the Regional Transportation Authority's efforts to secure a dedicated local source of funding for improving and expanding public transit.

B. Emphasize market development to increase ridership by expanding operator and regional marketing and consumer education, and enhancing service quality.

C. Establish service evaluation, planning and development programs with the RTA for Lake and Porter Counties, and with the transit operators for the Michigan City-La Porte UZA.

D. Solicit, evaluate and implement proposals to address needed and desired public transit services based on citizen and operator input, including the following:

i. Enhance and improve existing service, both fixed route and demand response

ii. Initiate community services in established denser communities

iii. Initiate regional services between communities and counties

iv. Coordinate human service transportation and serve general public needs to qualify for transit funding

v. Target services that access jobs for low-income residents

vi. Initiate services that feed rail and regional services.

vii. Develop market-based services developed in coordination with universities, schools, hospitals, employers and others.

E. Incorporate transit supportive design considerations, facilities and pedestrian and transit passenger improvements for streets with existing or planned routed transit services giving weight to proposals on streets with transit supportive measures.

F. Establish a state legislative agenda that:

i. Supports increasing statewide Public Mass Transit Fund (PMTF) so that all operators receive state funding equal to local commitment (fares plus subsidies)

ii. Establishes a program for state participation in funding of vehicles equipment and facilities and large-scale transit projects

iii. Coordinates with transit operators statewide, regional and metropolitan planners and, in particular, with Indianapolis and other areas with major transit proposals

G. Develop and implement financial strategy to implement West Lake Corridor

i. Interim financing to finance project development to receipt of Federal Full Funding Agreement

1. $10 million in addition to the $4 million for the Preliminary Engineering/ Environmental Impact Assessment

2. 3-7 year timeframe

ii. Financing of non-federal share

1. Currently estimated at $ 170 million of the total $ 340 million estimated capital cost.

2. 30 year bond repayment would be $11 million per year.

iii. Financing of operating cost

1. Operating Costs currently estimated to be $12-14 million

2. If fares cover half (NICTD currently 49%), public funding is $6-7 million

H. Develop proposals for high-level services such as Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail Transit in conjunction with:

i. Regional sustainable growth strategies

ii. Marquette Greenway Plan

I. Address transit access needs of Gary/Chicago International Airport

i. Short term – Gary Chicago Airport (Clark Road) Station Improvement and shuttle service.

ii. Long-Term – Potential new NICTD South Shore service to pass in or near expanded airport terminal.

Conceptual Public Transit Expansion Plan

Using the policies stated in item "D" above a conceptual regional transit plan was developed. Following is a summary of the proposal as it relates to the policies.

Enhance and improve existing services

Fixed Route: Currently operated by Gary Public Transportation Corporation, Hammond Transit Service, East Chicago Public Transit, and Michigan City Municipal Coach

1. Service standard: 15 minute intervals between buses for peak am and pm, and 30 to 60 minute headways and flexible routes during off peak on appropriate routes

2. Systems visibility: Bus shelters, signage, shared marketing, consumer education

3. Systems connectivity: common fare cards, shared transit transfer stations

Demand Response: Currently operated by NICA, North Township Trustee, South Lake County Community Services, Porter County Council on Aging and Community Services, Opportunity Enterprises, and City of the La Porte TransPorte.

1. Increase capacity in all three counties

2. Centralized dispatching of NICA, North Township, and complimentary paratransit requests of the three fixed-route operators in Lake County; centralized dispatching among human services providers in La Porte and Porter Counties

3. Coordination of human services providers' transportation with public transit to improve delivery effectiveness

Initiate community services in established denser communities

1. Create flexible route/local circulator services in Hobart, Ross, Center and St. John Townships, and the 45th. Avenue corridor between Munster, Highland and Griffith in Lake County; Portage and Westchester Townships and Valparaiso in Porter County; and the greater Michigan City area in La Porte County

2. Connectivity: develop transit transfer stations in coordination with fixed route providers and intercommunity routes

3. Develop shared marketing tools and consumer education material, common logo and coordinated fare structure

Initiate regional services between communities and counties

1. Add 5 north-south and 4 east-west corridors in Lake County; 3 north-south and 3 east-west corridors in Porter County; and 1 north-south and 1 "triangle" route in La Porte County

2. Add planned demand response service from rural areas of all three counties to appropriate destinations within each county and to adjacent counties

Initiate services that feed rail and regional services

1. Express / subscription services to South Shore commuter train from St. John Township, Crown Point, Ross/Hobart Township and Valparaiso

2. New routes when expanded commuter rail stations identified

3. Transit transfer stations:

a. Along major routes and transfer points between routes;
b. In or adjacent to larger destinations, and
c. At hubs for community circulators and rural demand response services.

Develop market-based services in coordination with universities, schools, hospitals and other major employers

1. Subscription service to Chicago

2. Employee shared rides – van pools, subscription routes, shuttles for hospitals, large employers

3. University student passes- prepaid fares

The Regional Bus Authority

The RBA was enabled by state legislation and enacted by county ordinance first in Lake County (2001) and then in Porter County in 2005. La Porte County may be added in 2007. The RBA is charged with the planning, funding and operation of a regional bus system including fixed route and demand response. Since its inception the RBA has worked with local and state officials without success to find the right mix of infrastructure dollars and organizational structures that would allow the RBA to fulfill its stated purpose of supporting the operation of a regional public transit system.

In 2006 the RBA undertook a regional bus study for Lake and Porter Counties to determine the best delivery structure and services for a regional bus and demand response transit system. It included significant stakeholder involvement and multiple opportunities for public participation. In December 2006, the Regional Bus Authority accepted a Strategic and Operations Plan that describes a package of routed and demand response service, offers two management options and determines the new local funding needed to implement the plan. The study reflects work that over the past five years has included regional and local needs and service analyses. The RBA study findings were consistent with the 2000 Regional Transit Needs Analysis, the Vision 2020 Long Range Plan, and the Connections 2030 Plan as amended (2006). Municipal bus service operators, through their individual surveys and collective discussions, continue to identify additional access destinations outside of their respective fixed route service areas as a principle deficiency in the existing system. Additionally, the desire for more frequent bus service, expanded hours of operations (including late night and weekend service), better consumer marketing and service information and increased coordination among existing transit services remain as major issues to be addressed.

The regional bus study findings related to demand response bus services found the same issues related to accessing and providing demand response transit services. Improved and increased transit services for employment access as well as access to medical, social, educational and other services are the same themes expressed by all of the affected stakeholders through the previous RTNA and long range planning processes. Transit users and providers alike continue to identify the need for improved public information and education for existing and potential transit users. Continued coordination and cooperation between transit providers to establish a more efficient regional system of transit services has consistently been cited by stakeholders as a goal for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of regional transit service in Northwest Indiana.

The major barrier to proceeding with implementation of improved and expanded public transit remains the lack of a regional or county-wide dedicated source of local funding. Creating such a fund remains a priority of the RBA and the MPO.

Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Planning

As noted earlier in the chapter, coordinating demand response services among the human services agencies and public operators has been a consistent recommendation emanating from the regional transit planning process beginning with Regional Transit Needs Analysis in 2000 right up to and including the RBA's 2006 Strategic and Operations Plan.

Lake County transit operators and human services providers participated in a consolidation study in 2003 that recommended the formation of a consortium to deliver demand response service. While the consortium was incorporated it was never implemented. Demand response service continues to be provided by several human services agencies and six public transit operators, including the complementary transit services provided by the fixed route operators.

In Porter County public demand response is provided by two social services agencies and one township government. While consolidation is not as major an issue in Porter County, funding existing services and expanding services is. However there is potential for consolidating and coordinating that will be explored as the RBA moves to implement its strategic plan.

In La Porte County, a study on the consolidation of human services and public demand response is nearing completion. Under the leadership of the Transportation Council of the Healthy Communities of La Porte County stakeholders undertook the consultant-led initiative to determine a course of action that would result in more service, especially in un-served areas of the county. A draft plan for new services based on consolidating human services providers and expanding public demand response is currently being circulated for review by the participating agencies and stakeholders. It is anticipated that a decision to consolidate and expand will be made by July, 2007.

In each of the counties the participating stakeholders were and are consistent with the regulations on the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation plan (49 U.S.C. 5310, 5316, and 5317). The transit planning work undertaken over the past five years has consistently solicited participation from and listened to the disability community, low-income persons, minorities, and the elderly on what they need to be mobile in northwest Indiana. The duplication of services in north Lake County, the inefficiencies of multiple providers and client-based services, the uneven quality of customer service, the lack of a central information and dispatching function, and the desperate need for expanded capacity have been identified in every public forum, on agency surveys, and in stakeholder interviews conducted since 1999-2000. As noted above, strategies to meet the needs of the demand response riders have been and remain a vital part of the regional transportation planning process. The major barrier to improving demand response transit has been and remains the lack of local financial resources dedicated to public transportation.

Assessment of Transit Services in Northwest Indiana

Several public and private operators provide transit passenger services in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties. The public transit system includes five municipal services in the cities of East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Michigan City and La Porte, and five demand-response providers. The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District operates Indiana's sole commuter rail service between South Bend and Chicago's Randolph Street Station.

Municipal Transit Services

East Chicago Public Transit

East Chicago Public Transit (ECPT) currently operates a fixed route transportation service with four routes within the city of East Chicago. ECPT operates the routes with six - thirty foot buses, all of which are handicap accessible. The City began providing its own complementary paratransit service in 1997 with one modified van. It now uses three vans to meet the demand in East Chicago.

Total passenger trips for ECPT in 2003 were 277,670, a slight decrease over 2002 (279,430). Complementary paratransit trips accounted for 6,095 of the 2003 trips. Vehicle miles for 2003 were 249,301, including both fixed route and demand response. Over the past five years ridership has increased significantly (238,841 in 1999 to 277,670 in 2003) mainly due to a route restructuring and improved connections with the adjoining cities and the South Shore commuter rail.

There is no fare charged for using the ECPT system, including the complementary paratransit service. Funding is provided entirely through the municipality, federal grants and the Indiana Public Mass Transit Fund (PMTF).

ECPT connects with both the Hammond and Gary transit systems and the South Shore commuter rail. Service is available Monday – Friday 6:00 a.m. to 8:40 p.m., and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:40 p.m. There is no service on Sundays and holidays.

Gary Public Transportation Corporation

The Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC) is the third largest bus operator in the State of Indiana. GPTC operates 16 routes with a fleet of 24 buses. GPTC also operates a complementary paratransit service with a fleet of 11 vans.

GPTC ridership in 2003 was 743,001. Ridership on the fixed route system has declined steadily over the past five years from a high of 1,336,241 in 1999. Complementary paratransit ridership

was 7,372 in 2003. The base fare for GPTC is $1.25. Youth fare is $1.00, and the fare for the elderly and disabled is $.60. The South Broadway Express route carries a $2.00 fare. GPTC is the only transit operator in the region with local taxing authority. It is also funded through federal grants and PMTF. GPTC had a 15% fare recovery rate in 2002. Service is available Monday through Friday from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., and on Saturdays from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Service is not available on Sundays and holidays except for the Martin Luther King holiday.

The GPTC intermodal transit facility, the Adam Benjamin Metro Center at the junction of Indiana Route 53 (Broadway) and U.S. Route 12 in Gary, connects riders with the South Shore commuter rail service and Greyhound, Trailways and

Indian Trails intercity buses. GPTC also connects to the East Chicago and Hammond transit systems. This "Tri-City" route also connects to the Gary Chicago International Airport.

GPTC operates two routes that connect its riders to destinations outside of the three urban cities. Its South Broadway route offers connections to Merrillville, Hobart, and Crown Point, and the US 30 Shuttle provides for east-west travel along the US 30 corridor from Schererville to Merrillville.

Hammond Transit System

The Hammond Transit System (HTS) currently operates a fixed route bus transportation service covering five routes within the cities of Hammond and Whiting and parts of the towns of Munster and Highland. There is also one route operating on Saturdays along the Indianapolis Boulevard corridor from East Chicago to Highland. HTS also provides a complementary paratransit service compliant with ADA through contractual arrangements with a local cab company.

Ridership on HTS has remained fairly steady over the past five years. The 2003 ridership was just over 350,000. From 1999 to 2002 it ranged from 346,617 (1999) to 339,711 (2002). Complementary paratransit trips numbered 7,000 in 2003, which is subcontracted to a taxi cab company.

Fares for the Hammond system are $1.25 base, $1.00 for youth, and $0.60 for elderly and disabled. HTS is also funded from city, federal and state funds. The fare recovery ratio for 2002 was 15%. Service on the Hammond system is available Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Saturday service start times vary from 7:00 a.m. to 9 a.m. All services end at 7:00 p.m. Service is not available on Sunday.

HTS offers interconnections with all transit operators serving the greater Hammond area. These include PACE Suburban Bus Services (serving northeastern Illinois), the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), South Shore commuter rail, Amtrak and the Tri-City Connection bus route with transfers to ECPT and GPTC. Service is also provided to the adjacent communities of Whiting, Highland and Munster.

Michigan City Municipal Coach

Michigan City Municipal Coach (MCMC) operates four fixed routes and demand response service with a fleet of six buses and three vans.

Ridership has remained fairly consistent over the past five years. 2003 ridership was 177,887. From 1999 to 2002 it ranged from 196,713 (1999) to 184,940 (2002).

MCMC service is funded through fares, federal grants and PMTF. The base fare is $0.50. Youth, elderly and disabled citizens ride for $0.25. The MCMC fare recovery ratio for 2002 was 9%.

Transit service in Michigan City is available Monday through Friday from 6:30

a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Saturday service is available from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. There is no service on Sunday and holidays.

MCMC connects with the South Shore commuter rail and Amtrak. There are no other fixed route systems in La Porte County to connect with.

TransPorte

TransPorte, operated by the City of La Porte, provides service on a demand-response basis only, having formerly operated as a fixed route system. It operates five vans at peak times and has a total fleet of 8 vans. All are wheelchair – accessible.

Ridership for 2003 was 50,799. The system has remained very stable since 1999, with ridership ranging from 55,758 to 56,334 in 2002.

The base fare on TransPorte is $2.50. Youth ride for a $1.00, and the elderly and disabled pay $1.75. The 2002 fare recovery ratio was 20%.

Service in the City of La Porte is available from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. during the week. Saturday service runs from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm. There is no Sunday service.

There are no other systems operating in La Porte for TransPorte to connect with.

Demand Response Bus Services

Demand response services are provided by several social services agencies in the three-county area. In most cases these services are provided only to the agencies' clients, while in other cases service is accessible to the general public. The four providers of publicly accessible demand response services covering Northwest Indiana are Northwest Indiana Community Action, Inc. (NICA), South Lake Community Services, Inc. (SLCS), North Township Dial-a-Ride, the Porter County Council on Aging (PCCA), and Opportunity Enterprises (OE).

Northwest Indiana Community Action, Inc.

NICA is the Area Agency on Aging for a six - county service area. It is also a Community Action Agency for Lake, Porter, Jasper and Newton counties, providing a variety of services authorized under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965. NICA operates demand response transportation service open to the general public. It is used primarily by elderly and disabled persons. Its service area for trip origination is Lake County north of US 30, but NICA serves destinations in all of Lake and Porter Counties and portions of La Porte County. NICA currently operates a fleet of 23 vehicles in the north Lake County service area. All are wheelchair accessible. Most of the fleet is 10-12 passenger buses with spaces for two or more wheelchairs.

In 2003 NICA provided 99,223 trips. Previous years' ridership figures for NICA included South Lake County Community Services' and Porter County Community Services' trips. These agencies separately reported trips of 17,063 and 39,579 respectively for a total of 155,865. Over the past five years the combined ridership decreased significantly from a high of 276,700 in 1999 to just under

150,000 in 2002. NICA experienced both an agency management crisis and a funding crisis during that time period and both problems impacted negatively on the agency's transit services.

NICA's public demand response transit is funded through fares, federal and state grants, and local government subsidies. Local fund sources include the cities of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago, the Lake County Board of Commissioners and the Lake County Council. NICA has a two–tiered fare structure: $2.00 for elderly and disabled riders, and $4.00 per trip for all other riders. The 2002 fare recovery ratio was 6%, including South Lake and Porter County figures.

The NICA demand response service is available Monday through Saturday from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

South Lake County Community Services

South Lake County Community Services provides social services under contract to NICA. It serves the seven southern townships of St. John, Winfield, Center, Hanover, Cedar Creek, West Creek and Eagle Creek. South Lake operates a fleet of four 12-passenger buses, all of which are wheelchair accessible. The transit service is available to the general public. It is funded through state and federal grants and local contributions from the townships it serves. In past years service statistics for South Lake were previously reported in the NICA total. Separate trip statistics are available for 2001-2003. South Lake provided 12,674 one way trips in 2001; 13,483 in 2002; and 17,063 in 2003. South Lake also has a two-tiered fare structure of $2.00 for elderly and disabled and $4.00 for all other riders. Service is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There is no service on weekends, holidays or evenings.

Porter County Community Services

Porter County Community Services (PCCS) also provides social services under contract to NICA. The agency provides public demand response for elderly and disabled persons in Porter County. They receive federal, state and local (county) funds to operate.

Ridership in 2003 was 39,579. PCCS operates a fleet of seven vehicles to provide service Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Fares are $2.00 each way.

Opportunity Enterprises

Opportunity Enterprises (OE) provides a range of services within Porter County for persons with physical and cognitive impairments. OE receives federal and state funds for its human services programs primarily through the FSSA.

Opportunity Enterprises operates a demand-response transit service that is open to the general public, although persons using other agency facilities primarily utilize this transit. Service is provided directly by OE utilizing a fleet of nineteen vehicles. OE does receive a small amount of federal funding and local support from the county. Fares are $15.00 for in-county trips and $20.00 for out-of-

county service. Service is available Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ridership has remained fairly stable over the past five years ranging from 110,160 in 1999 to 112,450 in 2003.

North Township Dial-a-Ride

The North Township Trustee's office operates a demand response transportation service for all residents of the township, which is located in the northwestern most corner of Lake County. It includes the Cities of Whiting, East Chicago and Hammond, and the towns of Munster and Highland. Service is limited to destinations within the township.

North Township does not charge a fare for its service with funding provided primarily through the township's property tax revenues. It does receive a small amount of federal funding.

Service is available Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with a fleet of five vehicles. There is no service on weekends, holidays and evenings. Ridership remained stable from 1999 to 2001, ranging from 10,780 to 10,956. Ridership increased in 2002 to 11,555, and in 2003 to 15,089.

SHORT TERM PRIORITY

Support existing services to prevent further loss of either public or client-based demand response and fixed-route transit for the low income, elderly and disability communities.

- Maintain and replace existing fleets of public and client-based transit services
- Foster partnerships between and among transit providers and human services agencies to maximize service availability, especially where public demand response has been discontinued.
- Increase system capacity to improve existing service reliability where local capital and operating matching funds are available.

LONG TERM PRIORITY

Create the financial and operational capacities to expand public demand response and fixed-route transit in northwest Indiana, especially to improve access to employment centers for evening and night jobs, and increased system capacity to improve rider accessibility.

- Extend hours of operation; ideally 24; initially 5AM to Midnight
- Extend days of service; ideally 7; initially 6
- Provide service regionally crossing county lines.
- Consolidation of systems where feasible.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Framework for Project Selection Process for Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317

Call For Projects

A call for projects for funding under the JARC and New Freedom programs will be issued by the MPO after consultation with the public and human services transit providers. The Coordinated Plan and the priorities it identifies serve as the basis for the project selection criteria.

Criteria

Proposed projects will be ranked based on the total score received after application of the following criteria:

1. Responsiveness to the priority the project proposes to address – 25 points
2. Demonstrates coordination - 20 points
3. Evidence of local financial support - 30 points
4. Includes partnership(s) between (among) providers - 15 points
5. Accesses funds from other federal agencies or programs - 10 BONUS POINTS

There are 25 federal programs identified as being significantly involved in providing transportation services to their recipients. They are:

- Department of Education:
  Vocational Rehabilitation Grants
  21st Century Community Learning Grants

- Department of Health and Human Services:
  Grants for Supportive Services and Senior Centers
  Head Start
  Medicaid
  Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Community Health Centers
HIV Care Grants
Social Services Block Grants
State Children's Health Insurance Program

- Department of Labor
  Senior Community Service Employment Program
  Workforce Investment Act Adult Services Program
  Workforce Investment Act Dislocated Worker Program
  Workforce Investment Act Youth Activities
  Job Corps

- Department of Transportation
  Capital Investment Grants
  Urbanized Area Formula Program
  Nonurbanized Area Formula Program
  Capital Assistance Program Elderly and Disabled Persons
  Job Access and Reverse Commute
  New Freedom Initiative
  Capital and Training Assistance for Over the Road Bus Accessibility

- Department of Agriculture
  Food Stamp Employment and Training Program

- Department of Housing and Urban Development
  Community Development Block Grant Supportive Housing Program

- Department of Veterans Affairs
  Veterans Medical Care

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RESOLUTION 09-03

A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPTING THE COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT HUMAN SERVICES PLAN

WHEREAS, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission has an adopted long range transportation plan that addressed transit needs, recommended policies, and identified a regional transit plan with specific service expansions and improvements and;

WHEREAS, the adopted long range plan was updated in 2007 to incorporate the findings of the Regional Bus Authority Needs Analysis and Strategic Plan and;

WHEREAS, the findings on transit needs and public preferences for improved and new services have consistently remained the same from the Regional Transit Needs Analysis of 2000 through the 2007 RBA Strategic Plan and;

WHEREAS, the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Grant program and the New Freedoms Grant program require the adoption of a separate Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Plan; and

WHEREAS, transit stakeholders representing public and human services transit providers and riders in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties did meet to address prioritizing types of projects eligible under the JARC/New Freedom grant programs and the Section 5310 grant program.

Resolution 09-03

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission adopts the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Plan in order to qualify eligible applicants for funds under Section 5310, JARC and New Freedoms programs on this twenty-sixth day of February, 2009.

Chairperson

ATTEST:

Secretary