

Draft Public Comment Report

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

November 5, 2014

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) convened a 45-day public comment period and one public meeting on the 2014 Public Participation Plan (PPP). The comment period began on Monday, September 15, 2014 and ended on Friday, October 31, 2014.

The process of creating the 2014 Public Participation Plan began in January 2012. The first 45-day public comment period of the PPP began on October 10, 2012, with an extension to February, 2013 following in December of 2012. During March and April of 2013, four public meetings were held to present the PPP and hear comments on the plan from the public. During the summer of 2013, an Ad Hoc Committee of NIRPC Commissioners was formed to meet with and discuss the concerns of Everybody Counts, Inc. The Ad Hoc Committee held five meetings, which culminated in a report to the NIRPC Commission. Further discussions were held, resulting in additional revisions during 2014, leading to the current draft that was out for comment during this most recent comment period.

One public meeting was held as part of the 45-day comment period. This meeting was held at the Hammond Public library on October 28, 2014 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. The meeting had four attendees.

Notification of the comment period and meeting was distributed to NIRPC's media contacts, as well as NIRPC's stakeholder and committee lists, including the Transportation Policy Committee and NIRPC Commission. Information was also distributed via the NIRPC website (www.nirpc.org) and NIRPC's social media outlets.

The comments received at the meeting have been compiled into the following report. No comments were received on NIRPC's telephone comment line at (219) 763-6060, ext. 160, via email, nor via the United States Postal Service.

NIRPC greatly appreciates all those who took the time and effort to participate and provide input toward the development of a new Public Participation Plan since this process began in 2012.

The following is a summary of comments received at the PPP public meeting held at the Hammond Public Library on October 28, 2014 accompanied by responses from NIRPC.

Two people spoke against the plan. One person insisted that the plan needed to specify which outreach tools would be used in each potential planning activity. This person also objected to the lack of opportunity to comment on the draft document. This person also objected to holding the meeting on the day before another NIRPC-sponsored meeting on transit. Finally, the speaker objected to NIRPC's claiming that the October 29 meeting was co-sponsored by Everybody Counts, Inc. The speaker claimed that the agency had nothing to do with the meeting.

NIRPC Response: *The speaker was the principal voice for the disability community in the development of the draft plan. Exclusive and direct access to the process was afforded through an ad hoc committee created to hear and respond solely to the speaker's issues with the proposed plan. This input resulted in many changes to the draft out for comment today. However, not all of the suggestions could be accommodated. The new draft plan for engaging the public in the regional planning process is an improvement over the current plan. NIRPC stands by the design and content of the plan as meeting and exceeding the Metropolitan Planning Organization's requirements for a public participation plan.*

The objection to the meeting being scheduled the day before a second meeting the next day is noted.

As stated on the introductory page of this document, an Ad Hoc Committee of NIRPC Commissioners was formed to address the concerns of Everybody Counts, Inc., and the settlement agreement between NIRPC and Everybody Counts provided opportunities for further discussion and revision to take place.

Regarding the involvement of Everybody Counts, Inc. with the October 29 meeting, a meeting unrelated to the Public Participation Plan, a settlement agreement between NIRPC and Everybody Counts, Inc. spelled out details and parameters for the October 29 meeting mutually agreed to by both parties."

The second person also objected to the scheduling of a major transit meeting on the next day.

NIRPC Response: *The objection to the meeting being scheduled the day before a second meeting the next day is noted.*

Another speaker had a question regarding upland water storage and its incorporation into the Little Calumet River Basin Commission's enabling legislation, and if there was anything in the PPP or elsewhere that provided for participation in this matter.

NIRPC Response: *The speaker was referred to NIRPC's environmental department for further information and any details regarding that work moving forward.*

The speaker also asked if the NIRPC Commission was on record as supporting the Illiana Expressway and what was happening with the project in Illinois.

NIRPC Response: *The NIRPC Commission approved the inclusion of the Illiana Expressway into the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan in December, 2013.*

Current progress on the Illinois side is outside of NIRPC's purview and falls to its sister agency, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), and the State of Illinois.