

Part II: TIP Development and Project Selection Processes

MPO Planning Process

The NIRPC Board of Commissioners is the final decision-making body of the MPO. Transportation-related decisions made at the Board level almost always originate in the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC)¹.

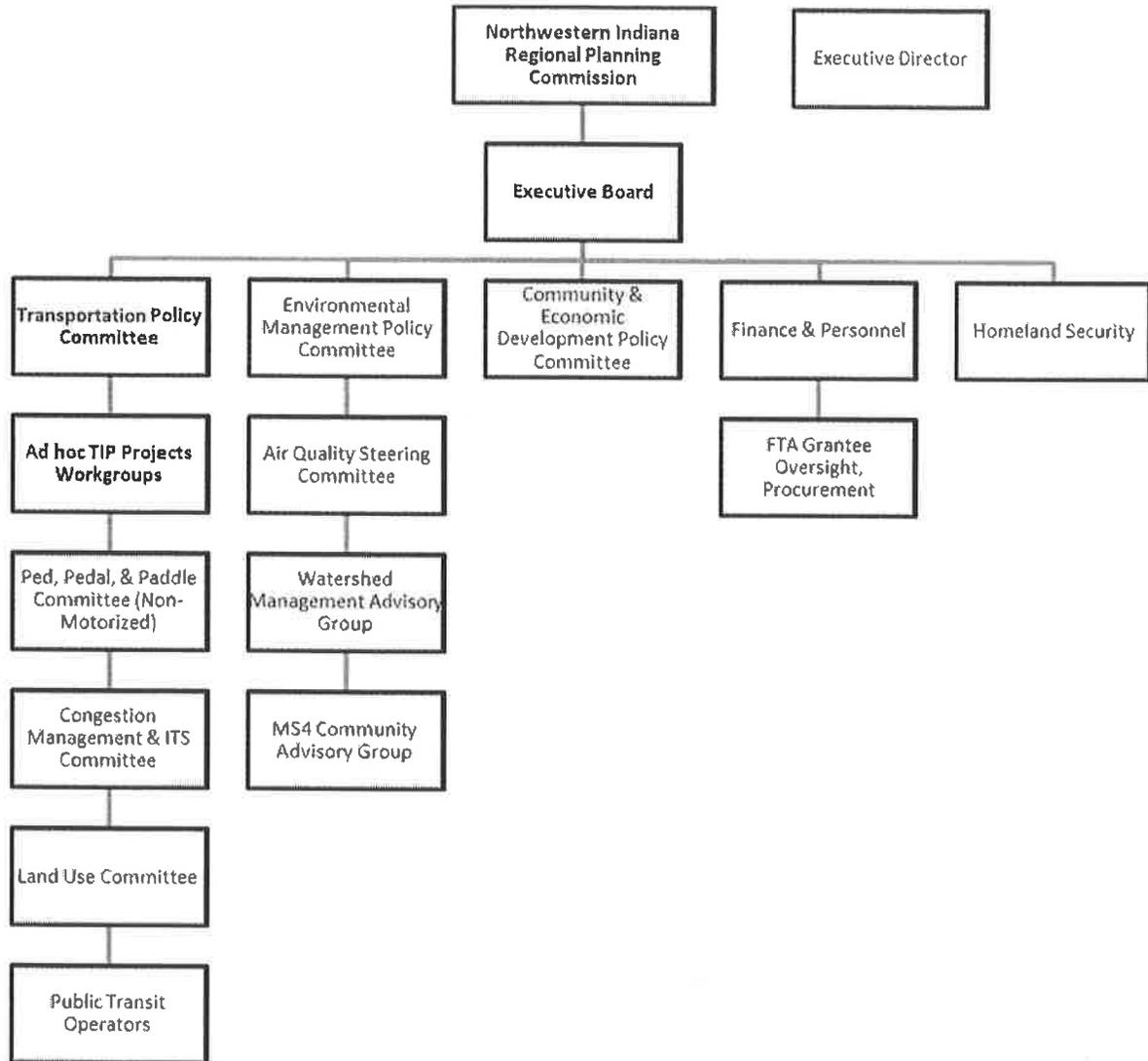
Transportation Policy Committee. The Transportation Policy Committee is one of five standing policy advisory committees to the Commission. The purpose of the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) is to oversee the development of a multi-modal system of transportation in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties and recommend appropriate regional policies. This is primarily done through TPC actions on a regional transportation plan, transportation improvement program, studies, analyses, work program and other special programs. The TPC receives input from transportation stakeholder subcommittees and then makes recommendations to the Commission or Executive Board. It functions primarily as a technical committee.

Functions of the metropolitan area transportation planning process of particular interest to the TPC are:

- identifying and analyzing transportation problems
- developing and recommending solutions
- fostering the development of projects, monitoring progress
- allocating available federal funds
- selecting and prioritizing projects of regional significance
- coordinating activities and projects among local units of government within northwest Indiana, with adjacent areas, and with state and Federal agencies.
- conducting an open, public, and participatory planning process;
- keep transportation planning certified through a comprehensive, cooperative and continuous process.

¹ However, the Commission may, under Indiana law, act on any matter brought before it for consideration.

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission: Organizational Chart and Planning Process



Commission and TPC Membership. Membership on the Commission is established by state statute (I.C. 36-7.7.6). Membership on the TPC is open to all local units of government, transit operators, organizations which represent various interests (persons with disabilities, environmentalists, senior citizens, etc.), federal and state agencies, and other persons representing a group or groups of people. The contact list for the NIRPC Commissioners and TPC is contained in Appendix F.

MPO Planning Area. The MPO planning area covers all of Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties, Indiana. This means that any surface transportation construction project funded through the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must be listed in our TIP as well as the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Urbanized Areas and Federal Funds. The Chicago Urbanized Area (Urbanized Area) extends into Lake and Porter Counties. In Lake County it includes the area north of Lowell and Crown Point to Lake Michigan. In Porter County, most of the area from Valparaiso to Lake Michigan is also part of the Chicago Urbanized Area. Most of northwest La Porte County (and a small portion of extreme northeast Porter County) lie within the Michigan City/La Porte Urbanized Area.

Congress appropriates several types of Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation annually to both states (primarily highway-oriented funds) and urbanized areas (primarily transit funds). MPO's have the responsibility of allocating these funds to specific transportation projects. NIRPC oversees a number of locally adopted project selection processes that involve stakeholder participation in the development of the selection system and in the selection of projects recommended for inclusion in the TIP.

MPO Project Selection. The TIP development process for MPO-selected projects is largely carried out by groups of ad hoc stakeholder committees. Stakeholder committees are convened for each federal funding program: Highways, Public Transit, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Transportation Alternatives, and Highway Safety. Membership on a given stakeholder committee is open to the general public. Meeting notices are posted on the NIRPC Website and also mailed to all transportation stakeholders of record.

Each stakeholder committee reviews and reaches consensus upon the project selection criteria and relevant selection policies to be used in the selection process. Staff then conducts the solicitation(s) and convenes the stakeholder committee(s) to review results of the project application

process and recommend lists of projects to be selected for funding. Funding recommendations are reported to the Transportation Policy Committee in a draft version of the new TIP. The NIRPC Commission or Executive Board is informed in the same manner. In instances where a solicitation for projects is conducted outside of the development of a new TIP, the new projects will be reported to the Committee and Commission in the form of a TIP amendment.

Types of Federal Funds. Federal surface transportation funds come from two operating administrations of the U.S. DOT: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). FHWA funds are allocated to the state and suballocated to NIRPC. FTA funds are usually allocated to urbanized areas. The specific federal funding programs from FHWA and FTA are as follows:

Surface Transportation Program (STP). Each year the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) makes apportionments of FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) contract authority to each Urbanized Area for highway improvement projects. The area within the Chicago Urbanized Area is apportioned STP Group I (large Urbanized Area) funds; the area within the Michigan City/LaPorte Urbanized Area is apportioned STP Group II (small Urbanized Area) funds.

FTA Section 5307. Each year the FTA apportions Urban Area Formula Grant (Section 5307) funds to each Urbanized Area for public transit projects. These funds are used for public transit operating and capital projects involving both bus and commuter rail transit services. Separate apportionments of Section 5307 funds are received by each of the two Urbanized Areas.

Section 5307 funds apportioned to the Chicago Urbanized Area are for the entire Urbanized Area, including both Illinois and Indiana portions. NIRPC maintains a Letter of Understanding with the Northeastern Illinois Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) that specifies how these funds are to be split among the two states.

Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ). The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) apportions FHWA CMAQ funds to each county in an air quality non-attainment (or maintenance, if attainment has been achieved). Funds are received on the basis of population and the severity of the air quality problem. CMAQ projects are transportation projects which, if implemented, will result in lower emissions from internal combustion engines. For 2013 and 2014,

CMAQ funds are made to the combined Lake/Porter County area and to La Porte County. Beginning in late 2014, INDOT will discontinue allocating CMAQ funds to LaPorte County.

FTA Sections 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program). Section 5310 funds are intended to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Like the Section 5307 funds, some Section 5310 funds are apportioned to the Chicago Urbanized Area for the entire urbanized area, including both northeastern Illinois and Lake and Porter Counties in northwestern Indiana. NIRPC maintains a Letter of Understanding with the Northeastern Illinois Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) that specifies how these funds are to be split. LaPorte County applicants have access to Section 5310 funds by submitting applications to INDOT.

FTA Section 5337 State of Good Repair Program (Existing Commuter Rail). These are FTA formula funds that are used by the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) for improvements to the commuter rail facilities all along NICTD's rail corridor. Chicago Urbanized Area SGR funds are divided between Illinois and Indiana under an agreement with the RTA. NIRPC's TIP also displays SGR funds allocated to the South Bend Urbanized Area. Listed SGR projects may be undertaken in any of five counties, including Lake, Porter, LaPorte, and St Joseph Counties, Indiana, and Cook County, Illinois.

FTA Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program. These are FTA formula funds that are used by public transit operators to replace, rehabilitate, or purchase buses, bus-related equipment, and bus-related facilities. Chicago Urbanized Area Bus funds are divided between Illinois and Indiana under an agreement with the RTA. LaPorte County public transit operators have access to Section 5339 funds by submitting applications to INDOT.

Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP). These FHWA funds must address critical safety needs on local roadways which have a history of crashes. Separate allocations are made to each Urbanized Area but funds may be used for projects anywhere within the county served by the MPO.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). These FHWA funds may be used for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; and safe routes to school projects. TAP funds may be used for projects anywhere within the county served by the MPO.

High Priority or Demonstration Project Funds. The TIP also includes other transportation projects which are selected by Congress (i.e., Demonstration or “High Priority” Projects).

The TIP also includes Regionally Significant transportation projects that involve no federal funds, and INDOT-selected local projects that are usually located outside of the urbanized area but within the three-county metropolitan planning area. These projects are not selected by NIRPC.

INDOT System Improvements. The TIP also includes projects that are undertaken by the state of Indiana. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) selects projects that will occur on state-owned roadways, which include Interstates and US-marked and State routes.

INDOT conducts its own project selection processes for those funds that it controls and provides NIRPC with a list of projects to include in the TIP.

INDOT also assists other state agencies such as the Indiana State Prison, Westville Correctional Center, Indiana Dunes State Park, Ports of Indiana at Burns Harbor, Purdue and Indiana Universities, and others by listing road and parking lot construction projects in the TIP and bidding them out through INDOT’s letting system.

Road Improvements on Federal Lands. The FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division (EFLD) maintains its own TIP process and document for transportation projects within or affecting federal lands in the region (e.g., Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore). NIRPC staff would normally download the list of projects from EFLD and insert it into our TIP. There are no EFLD-funded projects in this TIP.

Major Projects Implemented from the Prior TIP.

0501143	Relocation of Railroad track at Gary-Chicago Airport
0500704	US 30 Reconstruction (Lake/Porter Counties)
1173428	Kennedy Ave Reconstruction (174 th Ave to 169 th Ave) Hammond
0501142	McClung Road Reconstruction (LaPorte)
1173428	Casino Access Road & Rail Overpass (Gary)
0200739	133 rd Ave Reconstruction (Cedar Lake)

TIP Development Process

Introduction. Development of the TIP for the period July 2015 through June 2019 began following an October 2014 announcement at the Transportation Policy Committee meeting. At that meeting, a tentative schedule for the 2015 Plan Update, new TIP, and accompanying Conformity Determination was distributed. INDOT had already announced that it would be developing a 2016-2019 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) at approximately the same time.

Unlike all prior TIPs that we have developed, this one was not immediately preceded by a mass solicitation for new FHWA-funded projects. This was done primarily to speed up the development of the new TIP to ensure its adoption in May 2015.

Our October 2014 announcement was followed by our NOFA 2014-2, which solicited CMAQ, HSIP, and STP II projects for inclusion in our two, five-year spending plans. The original submission deadline was extended to February 2015. Projects submitted in response to this NOFA will not be included in the original 2016-2019 TIP.

However, a solicitation for new Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funded projects for 2016-2019 did occur in conjunction with the development of this TIP. That selection process is described in the following section.

A brief discussion of the project selection processes for our 2014 solicitations as well as the solicitation materials are shown on the following pages.

NOFA 2014-1: Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

NIRPC's Ped-Pedal-Paddle Committee (3-P) began the development of project selection criteria for this program in March 2014. Consensus was reached on the selection system and a solicitation for projects was issued in April 2014. This solicitation was designed to select new TAP projects using funds from 2014-2021. The programming limit was set at the 2013

apportionment of \$1,056,750 per year (both UZA's combined) times eight years—the programming limit was set at \$8,454,000.

There were five new bicycle/pedestrian facility projects recommended for selection (one with partial funding), two Safe Routes to Schools projects, one Stormwater Mitigation project, and one historic preservation project. As of this writing (March 2015), eligibility had not been determined on all projects and DES numbers have not yet been assigned for those which have been determined eligible. Therefore, none of the new TAP projects are included in this original TIP.

NOFA 2014-2: HSIP and CMAQ (both UZA's); STP Group II (Michigan City UZA).

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). A single (two-UZA) Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) stakeholder committee was convened in 2013 and drafted a single project selection process statement. Our project selection process document was approved by INDOT in July 2013.

Following development of our multi-year Federal-Aid Spending Plans in September 2014, we determined that approximately \$9.9 million in Chicago UZA HSIP funds and \$1.5 million in Michigan City HSIP funds were available for programming for the period 2016-2021. Our October 2014 NOFA was issued with the full intention of allocating these funds to projects using our July 2013 selection processes.

The submission deadline for applicants responding to this NOFA was February 13, 2015. Therefore, there are no new HSIP projects included in this original TIP.

Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program (CMAQ). Following development of our multi-year Federal-Aid Spending Plans, we determined that approximately \$13.4 million in Chicago UZA CMAQ funds and \$2.6 million in Michigan City CMAQ funds were available for programming for the period 2016-2021. Our October 2014 NOFA was issued using a simplified selection process and application form that required applicants

to self-calculate their emissions and the cost per Kilogram. (For prior CMAQ solicitations, NIRPC had performed the emissions calculations work for all projects.) Projects will be selected on the basis of the total weight of emissions reduced over the life of the project and cost-effectiveness factors within each of four modes (Bicycle/Pedestrian, Transit, Highways, and Other).

The submission deadline for applicants responding to this NOFA was February 13, 2015. Therefore, there are no new CMAQ projects included in this original TIP.

The 2013 STP Group I, HSIP, and TAP solicitation materials used for this process are displayed on the following pages. Additional materials, including scoring sheets, are displayed in Appendix E.

Public Transit NOFA 2015: All FTA-funded projects in both Urbanized Areas.

A TRANSIT NOFA was issued on February 11, 2015, with project applications due on February 25. Applications were solicited for FTA Sections 5307(Capital and Planning), 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities), and 5337 (State of Good Repair). The solicitation covered both the Lake-Porter urbanized area and the Michigan City –La Porte urbanized area. It should be noted that Michigan City and La Porte must compete at the state level for Section 5339. Only the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) is eligible for the Section 5337 funds.

The Transit Operators Roundtable is the stakeholder committee for drafting the transit TIP. Using the Feb. 9, 2015 published partial apportionments (which were not available at the time the NOFA was issued), the consensus of the transit operators was to use the FY 2015 100% amounts as the constrained planning numbers for FY 2016 and FY 2017 and to not constrain FY 2018 and FY 2019 at this time. Funds available for Lake Porter UA for FY 2016 and FY 2017 were \$16,975,471 for Section 5307; \$456,570 for Sec. 5339; and \$12,808,618 for Section 5337. For the Michigan City La Porte UA the Section 5307 amount is \$896,664.

There are ten eligible public transit operators in northwest Indiana. A total of 132 projects for Section 5307, 12 for Section 5339, and 124 for Section 5337 were received for the FY 2016-2019 TIP by the submittal deadline of February 25. Michigan City and La Porte each submitted operating assistance projects for each program year, a total of 8 Section 5307 projects.

The Transit solicitation materials used in this process are displayed on the following pages. Included are the project selection criteria. The Transit Operators met following the submittal deadline and approved a draft TIP constrained for FY 2016 and FY 2017 for public comment and review.