

Munster Listening Session, June 4, 2015

<p>The concept of "green burials" should be considered as a more environmentally friendly way of interring the deceased while creating new natural open spaces.</p>	<p>NIRPC does not have expertise in house regarding the regulatory or engineering difficulties associated with this use of conservation or recreational land. The recommendation is duly noted.</p>
<p>Jeorse Park in East Chicago should be connected via trails to the systems in Whiting/Robertsdale as well as the ones planned for the south end of East Chicago in order to provide a different way to connect to the lakefront and the improvements that have been done at the park.</p>	<p>A major Regional Development Authority project to connect Jeorse Park to East Chicago with a pedestrian bridge is in the works.</p>
<p>There should be even more connections with Illinois, such as between Hammond and Calumet City.</p>	<p>Currently there is one connection at 112th, with another funded at the former State Line Generating Plant into Calumet Park scheduled for 2018. Another connection south of Wolf Lake into the Burnham Greenway is also being considered.</p>
<p>A connection needs to be figured out under the US41 (Indianapolis Boulevard) overpass in Schererville.</p>	<p>This is the route of the future extension of the Pennsy Greenway, slated to open in 2018.</p>
<p>There needs to be at least a bike lane if nothing else that connects downtown Hammond to the trails in the Wolf Lake/Robertsdale area.</p>	<p>The City of Hammond is working to make this a reality with the new trail along Sheffield Avenue, and a proposed bike lane to downtown Hammond from the South Shore Station</p>
<p>Build more water fountains and restrooms for trail users (something nicer than just a Porta-Potty).</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>What is happening with the building of a connection between the Erie-Lackwanna and the Oak Savannah Trails in Griffith? A connection between the two is greatly needed.</p>	<p>Lake County Parks and the Town of Griffith will be working together to construct this critical link in 2017.</p>
<p>Identify historic bridges throughout the region that can be used for trails.</p>	<p>Duly noted, but these retrofits can cost far more than new bridges.</p>
<p>The abandoned Norfolk-Southern/Indiana Harbor Belt corridor on the north side of Gary could be an opportunity for an elevated trail corridor.</p>	<p>The condition of this elevated line makes a trail conversion very questionable due to costs.</p>
<p>Investigate the impact of proposed development in St. John along West Creek on recreational opportunities and the proposed water trail.</p>	<p>This is part of the West Creek Priority Trail Corridor area.</p>

Lake County has plans to acquire land along West Creek. Talk to them about that and be sure to review their plans.	See above. West Creek has also been identified as a Priority Riparian Conservation Corridor in Chapter II.
The Dean Mitchell power plant site on Lake Michigan near Buffington Harbor could be an opportunity for access.	This opportunity was one that was documented in the Marquette Plan update. The Dean Mitchell property is still owned by NIPSCO and they have not yet expressed interest in selling the property.
Coffee Creek in Porter County is not deep enough for use as a water trail.	Has been removed as a water trail opportunity.
Salt Creek has a maintenance issue in Portage.	City of Portage has been notified.
South Haven Hollow is a potential launch site along Salt Creek.	Duly noted.
There is the potential for a water trail on Crooked Creek in Porter County.	This was not identified as a water trail opportunity, but will be investigated for future use.
Who owns land at the end of Trail Creek in LaPorte County?	Further research needed. Check with LaPorte County Surveyors office.
There is the potential for a water trail on Mill Creek in LaPorte County.	See above. Mill Creek has also been identified as a potential Riparian Conservation Corridor in Chapter II.
There is the potential for water trails on Upper and Lower Fish Lakes in LaPorte County.	See above.

Crown Point Listening Session, June 16, 2015

<p>The sidewalk gap on 113th in Crown Point near the Pentwater subdivision prevents pedestrian access to downtown, forcing residents to drive instead.</p>	<p>This has been addressed in a recent bicycle and pedestrian plan adopted by the city in 2015. City officials should be contacted about this issue.</p>
<p>Cedar Lake is considering trails that connect north to Crown Point and south to Lake Dalecarlia</p>	<p>This would be part of the Cedar Creek Priority Trail Corridor.</p>
<p>Work is being done to create a limestone walking path in Freedom Park in Lowell.</p>	<p>Duly noted.</p>
<p>There is a goal in Lowell to connect Freedom Park to Reservation Park, with possible paths along the active rail corridor along the back of Freedom Park and through adjacent subdivisions and along 173rd.</p>	<p>Duly noted.</p>
<p>The desire for a connection between Cedar Lake and Lowell has been expressed, but the focus needs to be on developing connections within Lowell first before branching out.</p>	<p>NIRPC is chiefly concerned with regional connections between municipalities and our federal funding is tailored for this specific goal.</p>
<p>Crossing roads like SR2 in Lowell continues to be a major safety hurdle. This is especially a safety issue for kids biking to school.</p>	<p>The Town of Lowell should work with the school city on Safe Routes to School programs and infrastructure improvements.</p>
<p>A "seasonal" designation should be considered for potential water trails as not all of them are usable every day. Cady Ditch and Turkey Creek are examples.</p>	<p>To this end Cady Marsh Ditch and Turkey Creek have been removed as blueway opportunities.</p>
<p>The Grand Calumet River is an example of a water body that always has sufficient flow, helped along by cooling water from the US Steel Gary Works.</p>	<p>The Grand Calumet River is identified as a prime blueway opportunity in the plan.</p>
<p>Does the Marquette Plan show a launch for the Lake Michigan Water Trail at Whihala Beach Park?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Consideration should be given to separating paddlers and powered boats when considering water trail launch sites. The East Chicago Marina on the Lake Michigan Water Trail is a particular example.</p>	<p>Duly noted.</p>

<p>The Little Calumet River Trail on the levee has connectivity and maintenance issues that need to be addressed.</p>	<p>The trail is undergoing a significant repaving, and new tax revenue will help with ongoing maintenance.</p>
<p>The Erie-Lackawanna Trail in Hammond is starting to show the need for maintenance in some places.</p>	<p>Municipal entities have been notified of this issue along the trail.</p>
<p>When planning, building, and maintaining trails, we need to be mindful of natural areas and assets and achieving a balance between them. For example, mowing of wildflowers at 165th and Calumet in Hammond along the Erie-Lackawanna.</p>	<p>The plan recommends that naturalized maintenance should be considered along all trail corridors, which would improve wildlife habitat and promote connectivity.</p>
<p>There needs to be more facilities along the trails, even if it's just Porta-Potties.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>Signage along the Erie-Lackawanna is still lacking.</p>	<p>NIRPC has entered into an Interlocal Agreement with all trail entities to design and construct unified signage along the entire route.</p>

Valparaiso Listening Session, June 18, 2015

<p>Creating a separate map app (for phones) may be a stretch for a lot of people. It might be better to make sure things are clean and organized on existing navigation tools such as Google Maps.</p>	<p>Duly noted.</p>
<p>There are several paths in Valparaiso that are waiting for the Dunes-Kankakee Trail to make it far enough south to connect into the regional system, as well as to locations such as Porter Hospital, Sunset Hills Park, and Lakewood Park.</p>	<p>This is part of the Dunes-Kankakee Regional Priority Trail Corridor.</p>
<p>A potential trail corridor exists along the old interurban lines between Chesterton and Valparaiso.</p>	<p>This has been explored as a potential route of the Dunes-Kankakee Trail, but property ownership is difficult to reconcile.</p>
<p>Will this new plan set criteria so that things that might not be in the plan could potentially get funded, or will it work as it always has?</p>	<p>The <i>G&B 2020 Plan</i> has incorporated as many ideas and concepts that are reasonably achievable on a regional level, and promotes new projects as they fit with the goals and objectives of the plan.</p>
<p>The completed trails are still Lake County-heavy. Porter County only has one east-west regional trail connection. More regional trails are needed in Porter County.</p>	<p>This is true, but the majority of trail corridors follow where the population and opportunities are. These also are in-line with available funding avenues.</p>
<p>Creative funding through the private sector should be explored. Local major businesses could "adopt-a-mile" of trail to be built.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>Involve the private sector by getting them to realize the benefits of connecting, such as an alternative way to commute and how the promotion of an active lifestyle helps with healthcare costs and could be good PR for the company.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>Another hurdle is that not everyone is a road rider that is comfortable with riding country roads, nor should everyone ride country roads.</p>	<p>The plan makes clear that municipalities must do a better job in creating routes that are safe for all cyclists.</p>
<p>While it is more difficult, Valparaiso needs to investigate rails WITH trails since there aren't abandoned rail corridors to use to create regional connections.</p>	<p>Duly noted, and part of the Wheeler Corridor from Hobart to Valparaiso.</p>

Road diets are another possible solution to helping expand the network.	Duly noted.
There is a 90 foot wide easement along State Road 49 that could be used for trail development. Didn't President George H.W. Bush allow for trail easements along interstates?	This is part of the Dunes-Kankakee Regional Priority Trail Corridor.
We need to be better about getting information out about how to get around and the amenities that we have on and around our trail network. This could be done through social media, high quality maps, and videos. Other areas do similar things.	A recommended action item in the Implementation section
Awareness of the need for better bicycling opportunities needs to be created and marketed, much like what is done for other causes.	A recommended action item in the Implementation section
Always be sure to consider all users, especially children, the elderly, and the disabled.	A recommended action item in the Implementation section
Try distributing the bike maps to real estate agents to promote the trails as a quality of life feature to potential buyers.	A recommended action item in the Implementation section
A connection between north and south Porter County is needed. Valparaiso needs to be connected and riders in Kouts have expressed the desire for connections out of Kouts to the rest of the county.	This is part of the Dunes-Kankakee Regional Priority Trail Corridor.

Gary Listening Session, June 23, 2015

<p>Gary's First District needs to be better connected. US 12/20 and I-65 are major barriers between the Emerson, Aetna, and Miller neighborhoods. 12/20 prevents access to the lake from Aetna. When US 20 was rebuilt, it didn't include sidewalks, which is a safety issue.</p>	<p>The G&B 2020 Plan calls for Complete Streets policies to be followed by all governmental entities. As for the Miller area, the Marquette Greenway is planned to run through the heart of it with several connections planned to spur north and south of the route.</p>
<p>Abandoned properties could be demolished and repurposed for non-motorized green space.</p>	<p>Duly noted.</p>
<p>Gary Green Link needs to be picked back up and re-emphasized. Bicycling advocates need to push for it again.</p>	<p>Major elements of the Gary Green Link are represented on a number of Priority Trail Corridors.</p>
<p>Better accessibility is needed for all users, especially non-drivers, children, the elderly, and the disabled.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>Are there any potential NIPSCO corridors in the Miller/Aetna area that could be used?</p>	<p>This is represented by the East Lake Priority Trails Corridor.</p>
<p>The elevated rail line in Emerson is a possible way to connect as well.</p>	<p>As noted above, retrofitting these elevated lines are most likely cost prohibitive.</p>
<p>Road and trail maintenance are key to any plan. Currently, riding on roads in Gary is hard because the potholes are so bad.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>Once the Lake Street corridor is addressed and fixed up, a bike share/bike rental facility at the Miller South Shore station could be a possibility.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>Citizens in the Aetna/Miller/Emerson area have expressed the desire for a Safe Routes to School program.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>Entities that NIRPC works with need to be sure to hear what is being said too.</p>	<p>These comment reports are sent to NIRPC's various committees, which include representatives and elected officials from the various communities and entities NIRPC works with. What these communities decide to do with this information and the adopted NIRPC regional plan is up to those entities.</p>
<p>Government needs to not only advocate and inform, but use its expertise to get things done.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>

Portage Listening Session, June 24, 2015

<p>Robinson Engineering has been hired by both Gary and East Chicago to write a transportation element within a livable community grant which both cities have received. We are looking for the best location to tie both communities together along the north border of each. The area is highly industrial with numerous railroad crossings, heavy truck traffic, and distressed neighborhoods. How do you address these impediments and install an attractive, safe regional trail which will be used?</p>	<p>This is part of the proposed Buffington Priority Trail Corridor. Because of the high density of industrial uses, routing a trail is highly complicated. Further communication is needed between both Gary and East Chicago to figure out the best route. In the meantime both communities should keep working on the development of the Marquette Greenway along the Indiana Toll Road.</p>
<p>Better signage is needed throughout the regional trail network.</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>
<p>A better connection between the Oak Savannah and the Erie-Lackawanna is needed.</p>	<p>Lake County Parks and the Town of Griffith will be working together to construct this critical link in 2017.</p>
<p>Is there a central information source to know if a blueway is open enough for paddling?</p>	<p>As part of this planning effort, NIRPC is looking to establish an online database. Currently, the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association (NWIPA) is the best source.</p>
<p>How is the National Park Service (NPS) involved with blueways?</p>	<p>The National Park Service (NPS) has been working with NWIPA, especially on the east branch of the Little Calumet River. NPS has been involved in the process for environmental assessments and they are also looking at launch locations.</p>
<p>The lamprey barrier in Porter County at Praxair/Lynde is a barrier to paddling.</p>	<p>Several area partners have been seeking funding for feasibility studies to address possible solutions to this problem. NIRPC will continue to support these efforts as appropriate.</p>
<p>Is Coffee Creek viable as a water trail?</p>	<p>It would have limited usability because it is mostly shallow and narrow. That corridor could be better suited for other passive recreation such as trails and nature watching.</p>
<p>The elevated rail line in the Emerson area of Gary would be great for a bike trail.</p>	<p>As noted above, retrofitting these elevated lines are most likely cost prohibitive.</p>
<p>There is great tourism potential in a well-connected regional trail system (both land and water).</p>	<p>A recommended action item in the Implementation section</p>

<p>What opportunities/potential are there with the idea of the Calumet Heritage Area?</p>	<p>NIRPC is an active partner in the Calumet National Heritage Area development work. The existing network of greenways, waterways, and ecologically unique conservation lands are a primary asset we promoting as part of the potential designation.</p>
<p>Ogden Dunes has expressed interest in rerouting the Marquette Greenway between West Beach and the Portage Lakefront Park using the old Indiana Harbor Belt rail corridor and Hillcrest.</p>	<p>This route is a major connection in the Marquette Greenway Priority Trail Corridor.</p>