



Committee Meeting ~ Construction Advancement Foundation
December 10, 2015
Minutes

Members & Guests – Bob Huffman, Shannon Eason, Walter Lenckos, Don Parker, Greg Vitale, Mark Schreiber, Jan Dick, Alex Brown, Jim Mandon, Mark Heintz, Chris Nesper, Craig Zandstra, Steve Antonetti, Katie Holderby, Ericka Dahl, Phil Gralik, Chuck Ventura

Staff – Mitch Barloga, Meredith Stilwell

Chairman Dick called the meeting to order at 1:37 pm.

Ped

A. South Shore Trails Update

Don Parker reported that the planning meeting for their 2016 work plan will be at 7:00 p.m. on December 14 at First Unitarian Church in Hobart. They will be determining their 2015 Connection and Connector of the year for the person and organization that did the most to advance the cause of recreation trails and non-motorized transportation in 2015 and also holding officer elections. RSVPs should be submitted to Don Parker.

B. Greenways + Blueways 2020 Plan – Presentation

NIRPC is in the process of updating the ped and pedal plan and the greenways and blueways plan. An online survey and an on the ground trail intercept survey were both conducted and feedback gained from public meetings held in the summer. The online survey gained feedback for land trails, natural areas and water trails, while the intercept surveys were conducted solely on trails with no data on parks or water trails. 300 or so intercept surveys were completed and with the assistance of South Shore Trails about 100 were completed at the Valpo Night Ride alone. 539 online surveys were completed. The survey is statistically relevant at 5% error based on the region's population.

Survey response graphs were presented by Mitch. In the natural areas section of the survey, the majority of respondents indicated they visited parks in the region with their primary motivation enjoying nature and outdoors followed closely by exercise and fitness. The number one activity enjoyed in the parks was walking with recreation biking second and hiking third. Most respondents engaged in these activities weekly. When asked about activities on streams and lakes, the majority swim with paddling and boating a close second and third respectively. The majority of people using the facilities are only 0-15 minutes away from the location with most getting there by driving with biking to get there a distance second. There is a need in the region to allow people to access these places without driving.

The land trails section of the survey reflected the favorite mode of travel while using the trail as bicycling around 44% and walking at 29% with over 50% stating the primary reason for using the trails being exercise. Average time on the trail was 1-2 hours with the average distance per use being 5 plus miles. While most respondents indicated they do not make expenditures while on the trail, around 36% stated they make purchases with the majority of the money spent on beverages. 56% of respondents had purchased equipment in 2015 related to the trails. When asked how many times they used the trails in the last seven days the majority indicated at least once a week. The Erie-Lackawanna trail was the top response for which NWI trails have been visited over the last year. The majority of those taking this portion of the survey stated the nearest trail to their home was less than 1/2 mile. When asked to rate trail characteristics, most people appeared to be satisfied.

The water trails section of the survey reflected the majority of users do so in kayaks and most do so for recreation. Lake Michigan and the Kankakee River water trail were the most popular paddling areas.

There was also a separate survey distributed to the municipalities regarding their trails. About 27 surveys have been returned.

C. G&B Map – 2016 Edition Update

Sponsorships have been received. A couple of the new sponsorship for this edition are NICTD and the national lakeshore. The attempt will be made to get an RFP for a consultant out by early January. Mitch indicated he is looking to host a complete streets seminar in April with Mark Fenton and hopes to release the bike map at that event.

Pedal

A. Feature Presentation: USBR 36 – A Reality!

The United States Bicycle Route was started in 1982 by AASHTO with two routes and was dormant for 20 years until 2003. The prime mover, Adventure Cycling Association developed the national corridor plan and 50,000 plus miles of potential routes were identified on roads and trails. Today there are over 11,000 plus miles designated with three in Indiana alone this year. Benefits of the USBR are direct, safe bicycle routes for national, regional and local travelers; they are officially recognized by State Departments of Transportation; they boost bicycle tourism which is an up and coming niche in the tourism business and increase overall bicycle ridership, improving one's health and our environment.

USBR 50 runs through the middle of Indiana and USBR 35 & 36 are the new designations in NWI. USBR 35 runs from Sault Ste Marie through Michigan, Indiana and eventually to the Mississippi. It has not all been designated at this point, but the portion that runs through Michigan and Indiana has been. The route stays away from high traffic areas. USBR 36 is contained within the NIRPC region of Lake, Porter and Laporte and runs 59 miles from Michigan to Chicago. 35 miles of route is on off-road trail and the majority of the road segment is on US 12 from Porter to the Michigan state line. The route comes in from New Buffalo, connects along US 12 to the Brickyard Trail. Using the Brickyard Trail it continues on the Prairie Duneland, the Oak Savannah, the Erie Lackawanna then coming up through Hammond eventually taking riders into Chicago. While not a national route, it connects major regional communities. 35% of the route in Indiana is on trails. Once the Calumet Trail has been rebuilt, the Singing Sands gets online in Michigan City and the Marquette Greenway is finally connected up to New Buffalo a petition will be filed with AASHTO in the attempt to get the route off of US 12. The State route signs will be paid for by INDOT. Funding for local signs will have to be found as they are paid for separately.

B. Double Feature: New FAST Act Update

Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) is the new federal transportation act, after 36 short term extensions. The funding will be \$305 billion for five years, but the actual need is an estimated \$2.2 trillion. Some of the changes brought about by this bill include increases local STP allotment from 50% to 55% over the life of the act; converts STP to block grant which increases flexibility; streamlines environmental reviews; eliminates or consolidates US DOT offices; increases dedicated bus funding by 89%; and requires feasibility study for drivers under the influence of marijuana. Non-profits are now eligible for this money; there will be minor funding increases over map-21; flexibility in state and local design for complete streets; and prioritizing bike and ped safety through education and enforcement programs are also changes with this new bill. Rulemaking will happen soon from the Federal Highway Administration. FY 2016 is the first year of funding with the FAST Act with expiration in 2020. It doesn't appear that there will be another NIRPC funding call until 2017. At that point, all funding sources will be out there.

Paddle

A. NWI Paddling Association – Update

NWIPA is still robust and have submitted their take on the Greenways and Blueways Plan.

Grab Bag

A. Project Updates

- Valparaiso Pathways will be extended further down Evans Avenue.
- The opening of the Old Plank and Tri Creek Trail took place on November 1. You can now travel 31 to 32 miles continuously from Lansing to Joliet.
- Michigan City – Negotiations are still being held with the railroad in regards to Singing Sands Phase I. Language is being tweaked at this point. Phase II went through the INDOT consultant selection and BFS was chosen. A meeting will be held with INDOT by the end of the year for an early coordination meeting. Phase III has money for engineering.
- Highland – Met with NIPSCO who has stated they do not want to discuss Highland's bridge projects until their project is done and complete.
- The Chessie Trail in LaPorte is still in the engineering phase. Bidding out for construction will probably take place in fall of 2016 and involves about two miles of trail.
- Lake County Parks hopes to let their connector project in spring of 2016. Construction drawings are being prepared. The project runs to Colfax in Griffith and Griffith will take it about a quarter mile from the C & O to the Erie Lackawanna. Land acquisition has begun for Phase II of Veterans Memorial from Iowa to Broadway and also a mile and a half trail around Big Maple Lake and Deep River will be constructed this summer.
- Hobart – INDOT is proposing a roundabout at Cleveland and North Hobart Roads where 51 turns north and meets 130. They will be reaching out to the country parks. They are proposing 2021. With the safety project at Colorado and US 30 it appears there is not enough room for a grade crossing there with a refuge island in the middle. For the C & O, a route is proposed to run from basically behind Walmart, down the north/south road and then a tunnel under US 30 toward Home Depot. There is open space that could be used even though it is paved. The trick will be getting through the Home Depot area back onto the railroad right of way and crossing Colorado. It is preliminary now.

B. General Announcements (upcoming rides, events, etc.)

- There will be a bikes on trains meeting Tuesday, December 15 at 9:00 a.m.
- As outgoing Chairman of 3PC, Jan Dick was presented with an award by Mitch for his service as Chair since 2008.

C. The Next Meeting is Thursday, January 28, 2016

The meeting was adjourned.