



# **CREATING TOMORROW TODAY**

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## ***CREATING THE PLAN***

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission 6100 Southport Road Portage, Indiana 46368 (219) 763-6060

### **2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan Steering Committee Meeting NIRPC Auditorium June 24, 2010 Minutes**

#### **Members**

Vanessa Allen, Mike Aylesworth, Joan Bliss, Dale Engquist, Jerry Halperin, Rich Herr, Jim Jessup, George Malis, Bryant Mitol, Richard Morrisroe, Kay Nelson, Charles Oberlie, Mark Reshkin, Daniel Suson, Garry Traynham

#### **Guests**

AJ Monroe, Pat Carlisle, Bob Carnahan, Kenneth Lakin, Lisette Guillen, Maria Guillen, Michael Bool, Jacqueline Turner,

#### **Consultants**

Phil Hanegraaf, Spencer Gardner of HNTB

#### **Staff**

Mitch Barloga, Gabrielle Biciunas, Bill Brown, Joe Exl, Kevin Garcia, Eman Ibrahim, Kathy Luther, Bob Niezgodski, Ryan Sagar, Stephen Sostaric, Mary Thorne, Tom VanderWoude

Chairman Chuck Oberlie called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. with and self-introductions. Bill Brown reminded the group that NIRPC is required by INDOT to circulate voluntary surveys at each public meeting; the surveys are voluntary. Daniel Suson asked that sentence 5 on page 3 of the May 27 minutes regarding the Illiana be stricken from the minutes as the comment was never made in the steering committee meeting. Mary Thorne responded that the comment was made at the cluster workshops; Dale Engquist said he was at many of the workshops and he was against striking the sentence. Mary Thorne offered to listen to the tape of the meeting and edit the minutes if necessary and then resubmit them to the committee via email. On a motion by Daniel Suson and a second by Mark Reshkin, the minutes and summary of the May 27 meeting were approved contingent upon clarification of the Illiana discussion.

#### **2010 Draft Ped & Pedal Plan**

Mitch Barloga presented a brief history of the Ped & Pedal Plan which is designed to help increase pedestrian access and address safety and health issues. There are currently 80 miles of off-road trails and 50-60 miles are funded for development within the next two to five years. Public comment of the plan will begin shortly. The adoption of the 2010 plan is scheduled for October 2010, prior to the adoption of the region's 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan. The plan update will be on the NIRPC website later today. In answer to a question from a committee member, Mitch said that a policy on a Michigan City trail project issue was drafted by FHWA and is currently being reviewed by INDOT for final approval. The policy would also impact several other trail projects including the Calumet Trail paving project. The issue should be resolved by the end of the next TE funding cycle.

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Scenario Development

Phil Hanegraaf began a report on regional scenario development. Bill Brown said the scenarios will help identify and evaluate consequences of different futures for the region. There are four major scenarios. The Trends Scenario represents the continuation of past development patterns. Initial runs of the transportation network model have been completed for this scenario. The Local Plans Scenario is nearly complete with base and future land uses put in GIS. For the other two, the *CommunityViz* software tool will play a role in helping to identify the interaction of variables. The Livable Centers Scenario will identify a focus for each community with supporting infrastructure. The Urban Core Revitalization Scenario is being formed and input was sought from the Steering Committee.

Using GIS layers of population and employment, as well as areas unsuitable for development and areas with developmental constraints, we intend to study impact on the region from enhanced public transportation and the Illiana Toll Road. The Transportation Model is being prepared for the analysis of travel and related impacts of these scenarios. Climate change affects rainfall intensity and impacting what we do and where we live. When complete, information will be available for review. After all the analysis and receive public input, we will be able to produce a draft final preferred scenario for 2040.

Kathy Luther and Joe Exl presented conceptual maps on the environmentally sensitive areas of the region which need to be identified without prioritizing them. Managed lands are not available for any type of development. Streams, flood plains and wetlands were shown. A 25 foot buffer for wetlands and a 100 foot buffer for streams were suggested as they are the national average determined by the EPA. Kathy's answer to a question about flooding in a certain region was that the sewersheds were created to move stormwater in the Little Calumet watershed. Various factors are in watershed management plans. Modeling will be done for runoff and impervious surfaces. Hydric soil areas were identified. Each would be prone to flooding and represents the wetlands lost in the region. Restoration of some of those areas would reduce flooding impacts. These areas would be subject to erosion. Added as another layer is biodiversity and high-priority forested areas which would be important natural resource areas and subject to federal regulations. High-priority forested areas have been mapped by the Shirley Heinze Land Trust. A layer of prime agricultural land will be tracked as an indicator in the region's future. NIRPC staff could also look at using some of the Calumet Summit data. The *CommunityViz* tool will be able to monitor the impacts. Brownfields are difficult to map; some information will be available, some will not be identifiable. At the 30,000 foot level used in *CommunityViz*, it will not be site specific, but it can show some areas. Tagging brownfields can be detrimental as the property may not be a contaminated site. Nationwide, communities do not have realistic reuse policies. Brownfields will be able to be redeveloped only when communities can get properties listed on the State of Indiana's database. Agricultural land may look like prime development area but there is no infrastructure and it would not be cost-effective to develop.

Phil Hanegraaf said that people in the cluster workshops saw that urban core areas need revitalization. US Census Bureau Datasets show population loss from 2000-2008. The US Postal Service provides data on business and residential vacancies of three years or more.

Areas losing the highest concentrations of population along with the most vacancies in residential and business are East Chicago, Gary and Michigan City. Griffith, Hammond, Lake Station and New

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Chicago follow with losses in both population and business vacancies. A recommendation was to look at the communities historically. The consensus was that the core communities are worthy of reinvestment in order to be successful. Testing in the scenarios can be done through *CommunityViz* to see what percentage shifts should be recommended based on existing infrastructure. A meeting will be held on July 14 with the northern communities to discuss this issue.

Other Business

**Staff Announcements:**

- An all-day meeting sponsored by the Great Lakes Restorative Initiative will be held on July 1 at the Portage Yacht Club to discuss the freshwater future; reservations are required.
- The latest CRP Newsletter is available.

**Steering Committee Announcements:**

- Urban League chamber luncheon will be held tomorrow at Marquette Pavilion with scholarship awards and a brief tribute to the past presidents of the Urban League. Call 887-9621 for more information.

**Public Comment:**

- Cedar Lake Chamber of Commerce will host the Northwest Indiana Symphony on June 26 at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Complex.
- The Caring Center will host an open discussion meeting at IUN on Monday June 28 on toxic chemicals.

The next Steering Committee meeting will be on July 22 at 9:00 a.m. at NIRPC.

Mayor Oberlie adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

Handouts and materials provided:

- Agenda
- May 27 Meeting Minutes
- May 27 Meeting Summary
- INDOT Questionnaire

*Due to technical difficulty with the recording equipment, audio tapes of this meeting are not available.*

Requests for alternate formats, please contact Mary Thorne at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 131 or at [mthorne@nirpc.org](mailto:mthorne@nirpc.org). Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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