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New transit map helps riders with a disability plan trips on NWI public transportation

NIRPC launches interactive web feature allowing NWI transit riders to locate, determine physical disability access at every bus stop in Northwest Indiana

PORTAGE, INDIANA—Many transit riders take their access to public transportation for granted. For riders with disabilities, small challenges, like the size of a doorway or the softness of the gravel at a bus stop, can throw a wrench in their plans. Region urban planners hope to help riders through a new online map, the Northwest Indiana Transit Map, which details the accessibility of every bus stop in Northwest Indiana. Map details will allow region transit riders to navigate bus stops across all municipal and regional systems, find directions, and determine the level of accessibility for riders with a disability—all before leaving on their trip.

The interactive map, found on the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) website, launches this week. The Northwest Indiana Transit Map can be found at <https://www.nirpc.org/northwest-indiana-ada-transit-map>.

NIRPC data analysts Peter Kimball and Kevin Polette traveled to each bus stop in Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties—a total of 561 locations—during 2020 to assess many criteria for the inventory. The new tool provides Google Map directions to the location of a stop, photos, a physical description, accessibility details—like sidewalk measurements, curb types for wheelchair access, and amenities like covered or heated structures—and the proximity to nearby bus routes across all three counties.

The Northwest Indiana Transit Map provides the following details:

Location information

- Bus stop location, nearby cross streets, and the directional location on the intersection, such as the northwest or southeast corners or mid-block
- The presence of restrooms within a short distance

Physical environment

- Details about the landing area, such as length, width, and material
- The presence of a shelter and its size
- Attributes such as trash cans, bike parking, seating, or heat

Accessibility details

- Ground conditions and material at the landing, such as grass, concrete, dirt, or gravel
- Whether the curb slope was cut was to ADA standards
- The width of a shelter entryway
- The interior space available in a shelter

Connections to adjacent transportation

- A bus route or train station within 2 blocks of the bus stop
- Connections like Park-and-Ride and transit facilities

Informational tools

- Signage
- Visible availability of maps, a hotline, or timetables

The Northwest Indiana Transit Map is the only map incorporating all transit systems, routes, and bus stops within the region.

“The Northwest Indiana Transit Map is a place to view all bus stops from every transit agency in Northwest Indiana. We collected data on every stop, with pictures and the conditions of the bus stops,” said Kevin Polette, a technical assistant with NIRPC. “While collecting the data, we were also able to take public comments from the riders about the bus stops and routes.”

NIRPC staff received public feedback about the bus stops, which they passed on to transit operators. NIRPC’s urban planners hope the map will contribute to municipal and county transportation planning and will influence the decisions of municipal transit operators.

The team also included Allen Hammond, NIRPC’s coordinator for Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.

About NIRPC

NIRPC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Council of Governments for Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties in Northwest Indiana. Working collaboratively across the region, NIRPC coordinates regional comprehensive planning and programming for transportation, economic development, and environmental policy.

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