

**Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating  
Council**



**Participation Plan**

**July 2015**

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## **Introduction**

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) is the agency designated by the Governor of the State of Indiana to perform general purpose planning on a regional basis for Adams, Allen, DeKalb, and Wells Counties. NIRCC functions not only as the regional development agency, but also as the Intergovernmental Review Agency for this multi-county area. In addition, NIRCC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Urbanized Area.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council as the Metropolitan Planning Organization is charged with performing comprehensive transportation planning in the Urbanized Area. Under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) regulations, the metropolitan transportation planning process must occur in an atmosphere of public involvement and participation. The regulations state that each “MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.”

The objective of the Participation Plan is to provide a process that assures these reasonable opportunities are afforded to all interested parties. The metropolitan planning process administered by the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council provides these opportunities for participation through a variety of activities and information sharing techniques. The participation process includes collaboration with numerous local, state and federal agencies. In addition, NIRCC will make specific efforts to coordinate with the participation processes of the Indiana Department of Transportation, Citilink, Airport Authority, Allen County, Fort Wayne, New Haven and other local public agencies. This document will discuss the participation opportunities.

## **Environmental Justice**

Environmental justice is a political and social concept that ensures all citizens receive fair and just treatment under the implementation of government policies. Environmental justice is in place to ensure that all citizens (regardless of ethnic background or socioeconomic standing), the environment, and the communities that we live in, are all treated with equal respect.

There are three functional principles to Environmental Justice with regards to transportation planning:

1. To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
2. To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
3. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

The transportation planning process administered by NIRCC adheres to the environmental justice principals. NIRCC does not practice the selection of project sites as to the affluence of the area or neighborhood of which they are located. The social and environmental impacts are also weighed against the project benefits at several phases in the transportation planning process, to ensure policies, benefits and project impacts are equitably applied. All projects are given equal consideration throughout the entire planning process.

Public input and participation is especially encouraged in the decision making process particularly by those persons traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems such as low-income, minority households and the elderly. The continuous interaction between these groups and transportation planning professionals is critical to the development of a transportation system that serves all needs within the community. The diversity of participants from various income, ethnic backgrounds, and age groups serves to strengthen the public participation process, the overall transportation planning process, and the neighborhoods and communities of the area.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council is committed to developing the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties in the transportation planning process. This involves special outreach to minority groups and low-income citizens of the community. Through several minority and low-income community leaders and neighborhood representatives, NIRCC maintains a strong affiliation with these residents of the community. NIRCC will continue to make it a priority to maintain a strong affiliation with minority and low-income groups to ensure that their opinions are heard and are engaged in the transportation planning process.

The primary components of the participation plan include: open board and committee meetings; public and agency participation meetings; meetings with neighborhood representatives; transportation planning briefs; information assistance; visualization activities and techniques; posting of information and documents on the World Wide Web (internet); and media relations. Notices and agendas of the board and committee meetings are distributed to individuals, interested parties, and civic organizations representing minority and low income populations. Notices announcing public and agency meetings are mailed to neighborhood association representatives, interested parties, and civic groups representing minority and low income populations.

Transportation Planners meet with neighborhood groups and civic organizations on a regular basis. Planners will attend and present information at neighborhood, special interest or any other group as requested. The transportation planning briefs are distributed to elected and appointed officials, civic groups, and interested individuals of which some represent minority and low income populations. Information assistance and visualization activities are available to all citizens and groups. A NIRCC website (NIRCC.com) contains agency information and various documents including the Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Information on transportation planning activities and press releases are provided to all local media including minority oriented publications.

This report documents the participation process, which has formally become a component of the metropolitan transportation planning process. This process is based on NIRCC's lengthy history of citizen participation in their transportation planning efforts that extends to all interested parties and agencies.

### **Participation Plan Design and Review**

The remainder of this report details specific activities that encourage participation in, and provide information on, the transportation planning process. The Participation Plan update and review will include consultation with any and all interested parties. Five major activity areas performed specifically by NIRCC staff, where participation is afforded and encouraged, include Board and Committee meetings, Unified Planning Work Program activities, Citizen and Agency Meetings, Transportation Improvement Program Process, and the Long-Range Transportation Planning Process (Transportation Plan).

These activities intertwine and overlap forming a seamless participation process. Jointly, these activities involve all facets of the metropolitan transportation planning process. In addition, NIRCC and the Indiana Department of Transportation are committed to coordinate local and statewide public participation processes. This cooperation maximizes participation including local elected officials and enhances public consideration of transportation issues, plans, and programs without redundancy and duplicate efforts. NIRCC also partners with local governments, Citilink, Fort Wayne Airport Authority, Indiana Department of Transportation and other agencies on public participation activities. In addition to the specific participation activities performed by NIRCC, opportunities for participation on decisions that directly and indirectly affect the transportation system are afforded through related governmental entities and their respective boards, councils and commissions. The holistic cumulative participation activities performed by Counties, Cities, Towns, Citilink, INDOT, Airport Authority and NIRCC comprise the components of the participation process.

NIRCC has consistently engaged in public participation activities as part of the transportation planning process. In 1994 the process was formally documented and made available to the public and public officials for review and comment. A comment period preceded the adoption of the public participation process. The Public Participation

Process was reviewed, evaluation and updated in 1996, 2001 and 2007. In addition, modifications have been made based on new opportunities to enhance participation. The participation process has been developed and refined in consultation with interested parties.

NIRCC staff in conjunction with the Urban Transportation Advisory Board have evaluated and discussed strategies to improve the process. These strategies have been incorporated into the Participation Plan including SAFETEA-LU regulations. As MAP-21 planning regulations and guidance regarding participation in the transportation planning process are issued, appropriate modifications will be reflected.

The SAFETEA-LU Regulations specifically require that the Participation Plan provide for the following:

1. Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
2. Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
3. Employ visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans;
4. Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
5. Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
6. Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan plan and the TIP;
7. Seek out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
8. Provide an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
9. Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes; and

10. Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open process.

In developing the metropolitan transportation plan and TIP, NIRCC consults with other planning agencies that are affected by transportation (including state and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) and coordinates its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the plans and TIPS are developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area.

The Participation Plan was open for public comment period from February 13, 2015 to April 3, 2015. A public notice was published in local newspapers and the document was posted on the NIRCC website. Notices of the comment period on the draft document were provided to agencies and agency representatives identified in Appendix B. No significant comments were received as part of the public comment period. The Urban Transportation Advisory Board formally adopted the Participation Plan on April 7, 2015.

The Urban Transportation Advisory Board and staff periodically review and evaluate the Participation Plan. The review and evaluation determines whether the intended objectives of the public involvement process are being fulfilled. Necessary modifications will be implemented. Significant revision to the public participation process will not be adopted until a comment period has been completed.

## **Section I**

### **Background**

Section I covers two main areas including Organizational Structure and the History of Public Participation. The topic of Organizational Structure describes how NIRCC administers and implements the metropolitan transportation planning process. The History of Public Participation demonstrates the existing level of public and elected official involvement in the planning process, on which the participation process is built.

### **Organizational Structure**

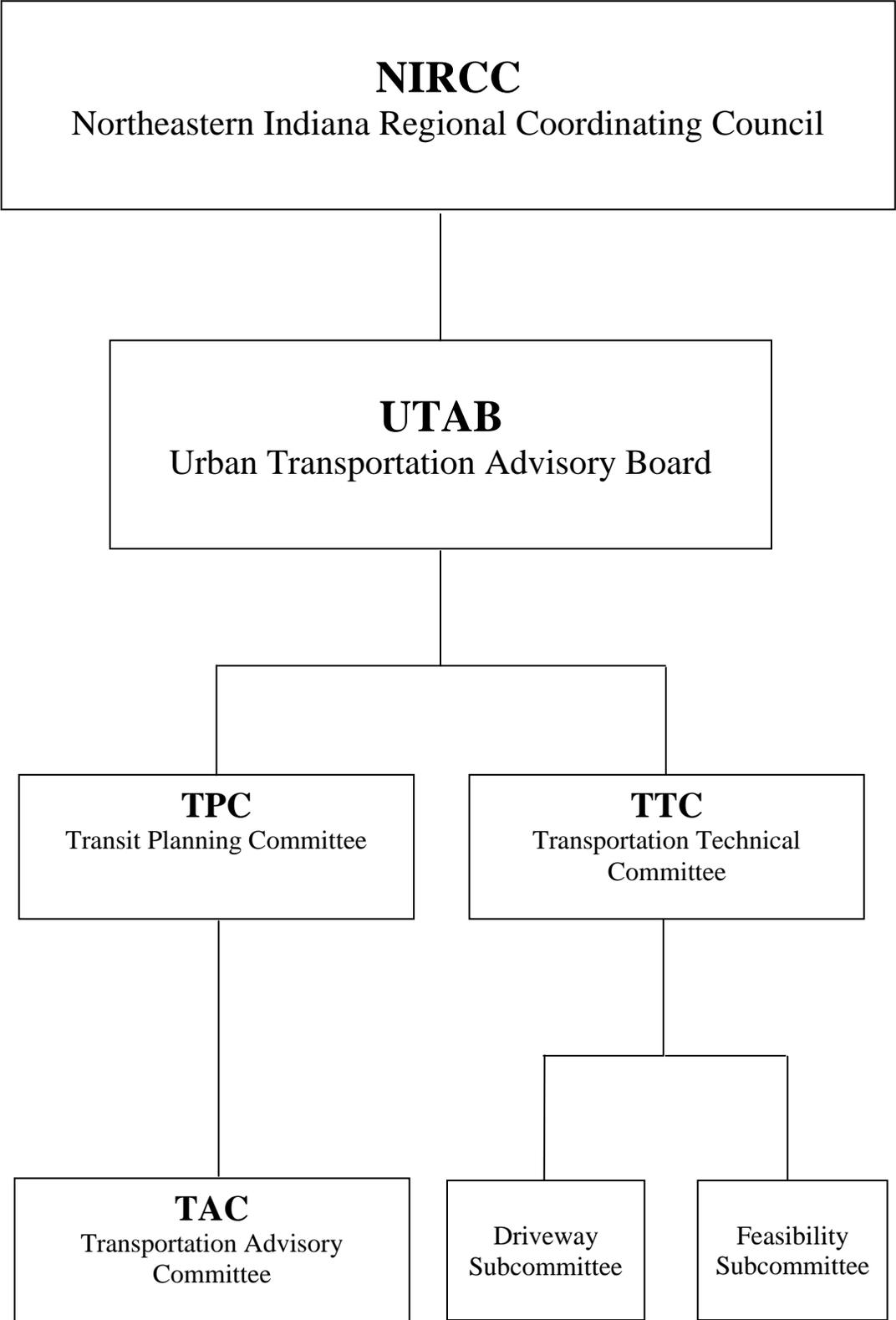
The organizational structure is important for two primary reasons. SAFETEA-LU stipulates that the participation process must include citizens, public officials, affected public agencies, and representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation and other interested parties. Understanding the organizational structure and composition of the respective boards and committees makes it evident that public officials, affected agencies, private transportation providers and the representatives of transportation agency employees all participate in the transportation planning process. The second reason is that in order to understand the entire participation process, it is helpful to first understand the organizational structure, which supports the process.

The Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) is commonly referred to as the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Metropolitan Planning Area (Figure 1). This area includes approximately 380 square miles within Allen County, and small areas of Huntington and Whitley Counties, representing a portion of the total NIRCC regional planning jurisdiction. The MPA encompasses the Cities of Fort Wayne and New Haven, the Towns of Grabill, Hometown, and Leo-Cedarville and a sizeable portion of unincorporated areas of Allen County.

NIRCC was formed in 1974 and has been involved in transportation planning since its inception. NIRCC created several functional groups to assist and advise on transportation planning issues. These boards and committees are the Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB), the Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), and the Transportation Planning Committee (TPC). The Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB) is the transportation policy board developed under NIRCC's authority to administer the metropolitan transportation planning process. Figure 2 displays a flow chart of the organizational structure of NIRCC.



**Figure 2. NIRCC Organizational Chart**



Membership of these groups includes elected officials and representatives from Adams, Allen, DeKalb and Wells Counties; the Cities of Fort Wayne, New Haven, and other smaller communities; Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority, Indiana Department of Transportation, and the Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation (CITILINK); and several additional agencies. Each board and committee is described below. Appendix A provides a membership listing of the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council, Urban Transportation Advisory Board, Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee.

### **The Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB)**

UTAB was established by NIRCC to assist with policy matters related to transportation planning within the Metropolitan Planning Area. A major function of UTAB is to manage the metropolitan transportation planning process and provide guidance to NIRCC on matters concerning the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Metropolitan Planning Area and the impacts on the regional transportation system.

The membership of UTAB is composed of individuals from various local governments who are in positions of responsibility and able to make policy decisions. Duties and responsibilities of the Board include the following:

1. The Board acts in the advisory capacity to NIRCC for the planning of highways, roads and public transportation within the Metropolitan Planning Area.
2. The Board acts as the policy board for policy decision required under Title 23, Section 134, of the U.S. Code.
3. The Board, with technical support from the NIRCC staff, performs functions listed under Title 23, Section 134 of the U.S. Code as specified in the Unified Planning Work Program.
4. The Board is responsible for administering the continuous transportation planning process and utilizes the Transportation Technical Committee, Transit Planning Committee, and the NIRCC staff for technical support and analyses. The responsibility includes the coordination of programs of the separate units of local government, and also includes the supplying of necessary information regarding land use, population and economic development, needed to successfully complete the transportation work elements of the Unified Planning Work Program.
5. Working with the NIRCC staff, the Board is responsible for developing the transportation work elements of the Unified Planning Work Program.
6. The Board reviews and appoints members to the Transportation Technical Committee and the Transit Planning Committee.

7. The Board has the authority and responsibility to approve the use of Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds and determine the implementation priority for the transportation improvement projects with the Metropolitan Planning Area.

### **The Transportation Technical Committee (TTC) and Transit Planning Committee (TPC)**

The Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee serve as working advisory committees to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board. The Committees and staff of member organizations are the agents through which transportation planning information from local governments is channeled to the planning staff. The Transportation Technical Committee oversees the day-to-day coordination activities between local governments with primary regard to highways, roads and trails. The Transit Planning Committee oversees the day-to-day coordination activities between local governments with primary regard to public transportation and para-transit operations. Both communities work with other modes of transportation in relation to their respective areas. Similarly, there are occasions where these two committees work jointly on projects of mutual interest.

The membership of these committees (see Appendix A) is composed of local government staff members authorized to provide planning information, offer comment, and report on transportation related activities within their agency's jurisdiction. State and federal officials participate on these committees and may hold voting or non-voting memberships. Public and private transit groups also sit as members on these committees. Duties and responsibilities of the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee include the following:

1. The Committees are responsible for obtaining specific planning information and data from local governments and for working with staff to integrate this information into the planning process as specified in the transportation elements of the Unified Planning Work Program. This activity may include information as related to land use, terminal facilities, traffic control features, zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, etc., and financial resources and others as necessary.
2. The Committees and their respective subcommittees address issues and provide recommendations regarding the Site-Plan and Driveway reviews, feasibility studies, project development, evaluation/prioritization processes, transit studies and other related duties.
3. The Committees and their respective subcommittees conduct coordination work activities regarding program implementation and project development within the Metropolitan Planning Area.

4. The Committees assist in the review of data and analyses performed in accordance with transportation planning activities and promote a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive process.

### **History of Public Participation**

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council through the Urban Transportation Advisory Board has established a long history of public official and citizen involvement in the transportation planning process. Since the early 1970s, the Unified Planning Work Program has included a section dealing solely with participation activities. Public meetings, meetings with civic groups, newsletters, news media outreach and website management are components of NIRCC's participation efforts. These activities will be discussed at greater length in the following section.

Boards and committees of the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council and related groups hold regularly scheduled meetings. Notifications of these meetings are provided to all interested parties including news media. These meetings are open to the public and often receive media attention.

Participation meetings are held for specific milestones in the planning process, but all comments and questions are welcomed at any public meeting. Meeting notices are mailed out to news media, neighborhood representatives/groups, community leaders, interested agencies and other concerned citizens. A survey questionnaire and/or comment form is often included. This survey questionnaire may discuss topics that will be addressed at the upcoming meeting or designed to stimulate comments. The survey/comment forms are to help citizens get more involved in the transportation planning process. Interested parties can submit questions and comments at the meetings or by mail/email if they are unable to attend. Any concerned citizen, agency or interested party is also encouraged to contact the NIRCC office directly to voice suggestions, opinions or comments to staff. The questions and comments are documented and responses are prepared.

Prior to the ISTEA legislation passed in 1991, public meetings dealing with issues related to the Transportation System Management Program were held annually since the early 1980's. These meetings were held at various locations throughout the MPA and covered a wide range of transportation planning issues. These meetings provide direct participation and interaction in local and state transportation systems focusing primarily on highways and transit. Comments were recorded and staff, working with the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee, prepared responses. Simple problems were remedied quickly by the highway, traffic, or transit departments of the appropriate jurisdiction. Complex problems or issues were thoroughly analyzed to develop viable solutions and policies. The responses were prepared and provided those who attended the meetings.

The long-range transportation planning process administered by NIRCC also has a solid history of community participation. Public meetings have historically been held at strategic stages of plan development to provided opportunity for participation and

discussion. In addition, staff attended numerous neighborhood and civic organization meetings making presentations and soliciting comments on policies and programs to improve the transportation system. This level of community participation over the years has contributed to solid, long-range transportation plans, accepted and supported by the community.

In addition to public meetings, NIRCC has always provided planning documents such as Transportation Plans, Transportation Improvement Programs and Transportation Systems Management Reports for public review. NIRCC has responded to significant written and oral comments on draft planning documents as part of the participation and interagency consultation processes. The documentation of the Transportation Plan is contained in two separate reports, a technical report and a brochure. The brochure provides a listing of transportation policies and improvement projects included in the Transportation Plan. Maps displaying project locations are also in the brochure. The brochures have been widely distributed within the region to all interested parties.

Open board and committee meetings, newsletters, brochures, agency sponsored public transportation meetings and presentation to civic and neighborhood groups have established a well-rounded public participation program. The future public participation process sponsored by NIRCC will not significantly change from the historical program. This Participation Plan documents the process and formally commits the council to extend these activities as part of the transportation planning process.

## **Section II**

### **Board and Committee Meetings**

The major NIRCC boards and committees involved in the transportation planning process include the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC), Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB), Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), and Transit Planning Committee (TPC). Elected officials, appointed public officials, consumers and transit labor representatives serve in different capacities on these boards and committees. The composition of these groups is provided in Appendix A. The official tasks charged to these groups are discussed in Section I.

The boards and committees hold regularly scheduled meetings. These generally occur on a monthly basis. Notices of the meeting time, date and place are provided to all interested parties including the news media and representatives of low-income and minority populations. The meeting schedule is posted on the NIRCC web site. All meetings are open to the public; minutes of these meetings as well as any presented reports are available for review through our offices. Requests for inclusion on the board and committee notification list can be made through the NIRCC office.

Board and Committee meetings conducted in this manner meet several primary objectives of a pro-active public involvement program with the transportation planning process. First, the membership of the Boards and Committees provides for direct participation in transportation planning by elected and appointed public officials. Secondly, open meetings provide all public officials and interested citizens the opportunity to observe and scrutinize the decision-making process. And thirdly, public involvement with these meetings and their respective contents (through minutes and reports) provides access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and Transportation Improvement Programs.

In addition to the NIRCC Board and Committee meetings, there are numerous other board, commission, council and committee meetings associated with the local units of government within the Metropolitan Planning Area. These meetings are open to the public, often governed by elected officials, discuss transportation project development and implementation, and make decisions that directly and indirectly impact the transportation system. These meetings are also critical to the participation process as they afford additional opportunities to provide input and influence the decision-making process.

## **Section III**

### **Unified Planning Work Program**

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is prepared annually to provide a guide to the work which must be accomplished to achieve a Comprehensive Transportation Plan for the region. The UPWP also provides insight to other planning activities of the Council. This program outlines all work to be performed by the Council and includes the regional, state and federally funded transportation planning activities.

The UPWP provides an administrative and management tool that allows the Council to monitor its total work effort and assure that all necessary elements of the transportation planning process are being addressed. The program is not only designed to achieve the goals and objectives of the Council, but also to coordinate with the goals and objectives of federal, state and local agencies, and make maximum use of available resources.

All phases of planning from problem identification to actual program implementation require citizen input to ensure that the planning process accurately addresses the transportation needs of the area. Citizen involvement is sought from throughout the metropolitan planning area, and includes the diverse social and economic classes within it. In order to have a diversified and complete citizen involvement; participation from elderly, disabled and minority groups is actively solicited.

The UPWP includes specific work elements with the objective to maintaining a high level of citizen involvement in the transportation planning process. These elements require a considerable measure of cooperation, coordination, and work by the Council and the staff, elected officials of local, state, and federal governments, as well as the citizens and other interested parties within the community.

The UPWP identifies six major areas of responsibility where staff will perform specific duties aimed at promoting and encouraging citizen involvement. These areas under the citizen participation category include meetings, transportation planning briefs and annual report, information assistance, visualization activities, web site maintenance and news media. These activities, as described below, will continue to serve as one component of the public involvement process.

#### **Public Meetings\Hearings**

The staff meets with various civic and service related citizen groups as well as the public at-large to gain further knowledge of specific transportation problems. By utilizing existing citizen and neighborhood organizations, high levels of continued public participation can be sustained among the community residents, local officials, governmental agencies, and the Council. Interaction with citizens is vital in keeping government responsive to the needs and desires of the community. It further enhances the ability of citizens to make suggestions regarding projects and aid in the initiation of projects.

Citizen participation meetings are held with neighborhood groups, community based organizations and civic groups as requested. Transportation information presented and discussed at these meetings may be either specific or general in nature, depending on the audience's preference. Staff will continue to meet with citizen groups and present information on transportation planning activities.

The NIRCC staff will also attend meetings of neighborhood representatives sponsored by the Cities of Fort Wayne and New Haven, and Allen County. The City of Fort Wayne sponsors Area Partnerships meetings. The City of New Haven sponsors meetings of their neighborhood association presidents and Allen County sponsors the Allen County Home Owners Association meetings. NIRCC will request the opportunity to present transportation planning information and to solicit input to the transportation plans and projects at these meetings.

In addition, the Council conducts general public participation meetings and open houses throughout the year. The number of meetings conducted each year may vary depending on specific projects and issues under consideration. Notices of these meetings are provided to neighborhood representatives and all other interested parties. One meeting will always be held each spring to coincide with the development of the Transportation Improvement Program. Public meetings will also be conducted prior to determining conformity on Transportation Improvement Programs and Transportation Plans. Special public participation meetings will be held during the development of long range transportation plans. These meetings will be discussed more thoroughly in Section IV and VI respectively.

Staff routinely attends meetings and public hearings to listen to public comment and provide information on planning support for highway and transit projects. Informative meetings and public hearings are often held at various stages of project implementation. The Public Hearings are usually specific to a highway project or transit program modification. The hearings are important components of the planning and participation process, providing information on the project scope and a forum for comment. Staff support and attend these meetings as part of the project team, which will also include representatives of the implementing agency, state officials, and consultants. Likewise, feedback through public comment is valuable information for the staff and planning committees. Staff will continue to support and attend informative meetings and public hearings.

### **Transportation Planning Briefs and Annual Report**

In an attempt to reach the greatest number of people and groups, transportation planning briefs provide an economical alternative to meetings. The briefs are sent to interested individuals and groups as well as to the local news media, governmental agencies, and elected officials. The annual report highlights the planning activities and provides information on the various studies conducted to support the transportation planning process. The planning briefs and annual report are posted on the NIRCC web site.

The staff generally prepares informational briefs twice a year. The briefs are distributed to Council members, local elected officials, state and federal legislators, local news media, governmental agencies, civic groups and interested citizens. In addition, the Council publishes an annual report summarizing the progress that has been made in transportation planning and project implementation. Copies of the annual report are distributed to board members, state and federal agencies and made available to the general public.

### **Information Assistance**

The staff will continue to respond to requests for information pertaining to Council activities and programs from interested citizens and groups. Assistance will be provided to interested individuals and groups upon request. From previous experience, requests include information concerning transportation improvement projects, Fort Wayne and Allen County air quality problems and transportation planning activities conducted by the Council. Local residents and businesses request traffic data and transportation planning information through correspondence, visits to the office, and telephone conversations. The staff responds to these requests with the most accurate and timely information available.

### **Visualization Activities**

The Council prepares visual aid presentations for civic and community groups as an educational tool to heighten public interest in the Council's transportation planning activities. Visualization techniques are developed and/or revised in-house as needed, or located from other sources to be shown to interested local groups, civic organizations, and schools regarding different facets of the Council's work activities. These materials aid in the understanding and awareness of the Council's transportation activities.

### **Web Site-Access to World Wide Web**

The NIRCC web site provides information on the transportation planning process and activities. The Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program and other planning documents are posted on the site and available for viewing. NIRCC will continue to provide current information on the transportation planning activities. Staff will evaluate available data and information for inclusion on the web site. Options will continue to be explored to provide maps and GIS related information for public consumption. Staff will post and maintain transportation planning information on the web site. The information available on the site will improve public access to the transportation planning process and related documents.

### **News Media Involvement**

The news media is continually informed of Council activities through the distribution of background information or press releases, and through media interviews on television, radio, and in newspapers. Background information and press releases are prepared and distributed to the media regarding planning work activities. In addition, the staff will remain open to the news media through interviews and other forms of active participation. This process will continue as a means to inform the public through the assistance of the news media.

### **Summary of UPWP**

The goal of the UPWP activities is to promote citizen participation, to ensure that the needs and desires of the community and affected agencies are recognized and utilized as input into the planning process. The objective is to increase citizen interaction and participation within the region. Interaction among the community-at-large, local officials, governmental agencies, representatives of low-income and minority populations, and NIRCC happens through meetings with civic and neighborhood groups, visual presentations, information on the World Wide Web, transportation planning briefs, annual reports, information supplied to the news media, and through information provided to interested citizens or groups.

Through these efforts, the staff provides technical and other supportive assistance necessary for community meetings. The purpose of this process is: to inform citizens, elected officials and interested parties about the planning activities of the Council and staff; to distribute and collect information; and to obtain public input regarding the Council's transportation related programs. These meetings are held at various locations throughout the area with local organizations and minority groups. Staff also prepares transportation planning briefs and provides information assistance to citizens; organizations and minority groups; informs the media of work activities; and prepares visual presentations in a continuing effort to provide accurate information to the entire area. The result of the citizen participation effort is to increase citizen involvement in, and interaction with public officials and others who affect local and area wide decision-making in the transportation planning process.

## **Section IV**

### **Public Meetings**

Meetings with area residents and interested parties follow several different formats. General public participation meetings are held each year in conjunction with the development of the Transportation Improvement Program. These meetings cover all issues, including local and state activities involved with the transportation planning process, and generally follow an “open house” type format. When the Transportation Plan is updated, the annual meetings include information on the Draft Plan and Air Quality Conformity if applicable. Public information meetings and public hearings are a third type of participation meeting that provide information on a specific transportation project or program. These include informal public information meetings and more formal public hearings. An opportunity for a public hearing is afforded to the public on every major federal-aid project.

Public participation meetings are held at various times throughout the year as needed. One meeting is held in the spring to obtain public input and comment on the development of the Transportation Improvement Program and corresponding Air Quality Conformity Determination issues when applicable. The meetings are designed to meet the public notice, public review and comment on the the program-of-projects notice requirements of the Federal Transportation Administration Urbanized Area Formula Program for the Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation/Citilink.

These meetings allow staff and citizens to share ideas and exchange information concerning transportation issues. Topics covered at these meetings may include: long range transportation plans; management system programs; Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); transit services; pedestrian and bicycle facilities; transportation funding and financial resource management; MPO activities and studies; air quality issues; specific improvement projects and other related topics. Citizen concerns are documented and presented to the applicable agencies, committees and the Urban Transportation Advisory Board. When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan Transportation Plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process or the interagency consultation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of the comments shall be made as part of the final Transportation Plan and TIP.

Notice of the annual meeting is done through a direct mailing to all neighborhood associations in the MPA, representatives of civic organizations, and other interested persons. Neighborhood and civic organizations representing minority and low income populations are included in these mailings. Other interested parties including affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers and providers of freight transportation services, private transportation providers, representatives of public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian groups, and representatives of disabled persons are also notified of the public meetings. Press releases are distributed to the media, and media coverage of these meetings has traditionally provided additional notification of meeting times and locations. Citizens

unable to attend the meetings are encouraged to telephone, mail, e-mail, or fax their comments and concerns to our office.

At other times throughout the year, meetings are held to discuss specific projects or transportation planning issues and provide information to the public. At all public meetings, participants have the opportunity to ask questions, exchange ideas, and share information with staff members. If a response to a question or concern cannot be provided at the meeting, staff will research the issue and through TTC or TPC assistance, a response will be provided. All comments will be documented as a part of the citizen involvement process.

NIRCC sponsors additional public participation meetings during the development of the Transportation Plan. These meetings focus on selected areas of plan development. The Transportation Plan meetings are scheduled at strategic times coinciding with the appropriate phase as the transportation plan develops. These meetings cover local and state issues important to the Metropolitan Planning Area. All interested parties and affected agencies are welcome to attend. Notices are sent to interested parties. Further discussion of these meetings is provided in Section VI.

NIRCC also conducts special outreach efforts during the development of the transportation plan. This effort includes presentations at the Neighborhood Presidents Meeting and Area Partnership Meetings. These meetings are with local community leaders from all areas within the metropolitan area, including areas with minority and low-income populations. Additional meetings are offered to individual neighborhoods, business groups, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, and agencies and advocates for disabled, minority and low-income populations.

Citizen participation meetings have worked extremely well as a forum for exchanging ideas and information amongst stakeholders, area residents and staff. Citizens and stakeholders are also encouraged to attend meetings of the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council, Urban Transportation Advisory Board, and related subcommittees. As previously mentioned, these meetings are held regularly at pre-designated times and places and are announced through the local media and posted in our office. The public participation process provides citizens access to the planning process, affording them the opportunity to participate in transportation planning and decision-making activities.

In addition to the public meetings sponsored by NIRCC, there are numerous opportunities for public involvement in planning and project development activities throughout the region. Counties, Cities, Towns, Citilink, INDOT and NIRCC perform public involvement activities in accordance with their individual policies and governing laws, rules and regulations. Each Local Public Agency, Citilink, INDOT and NIRCC have slightly different public involvement processes and procedures, however, there are common practices and inter-agency collaboration on program and project specific public participation activities. The Indiana Department of Transportation has developed a guidance document for state and local projects receiving federal funds. This guidance is provided in Appendix C. NIRCC sponsored public involvement activities regarding the

transportation planning process are inclusive of all regionally significant transportation programs and projects, regardless of their sponsorship.

The holistic combination of all planning related public involvement activities performed by Counties, Cities, Towns, Citilink, INDOT and NIRCC are valid components of the participation process. These activities include many opportunities for public engagement that have both direct and indirect policy implications on planning issues, and more specifically transportation planning activities. Examples of these activities are listed below.

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Public Information Meetings | Public Notices                   |
| City Council Meetings       | Information Dissemination        |
| Town Council Meetings       | County Council Meetings          |
| Plan Commission Meetings    | Board of Zoning Appeals Meetings |
| Commissioner Meetings       | Neighborhood Meetings            |
| Open Houses                 | Board Meetings                   |
| Group Presentations         | Public Hearings                  |
| Annual Reports              | Websites                         |
| Social Media                | Project Specific Websites/Pages  |
| Newsletters                 | Press Releases                   |
| Committee Meetings          | Listening Sessions               |
| Published Reports           | Community Workshops              |

As metropolitan transportation planning is a process, so is public involvement and participation. As such, the process should afford multiple opportunities for input, and interested citizens and agencies must participate at various levels for effective interaction that lends to appropriate transportation decisions, in the best interests of the community. Participation at all levels of the planning process are important, since many decisions made outside the metropolitan transportation planning process have substantial impacts on the transportation system, influence transportation policy, and limit transportation options.

These meetings of local public agencies, Citilink and INDOT can include discussions on funding, service levels, new developments and re-development activities. Virtually all of these meetings are open to the public and encourage public participation. Plan Commission Meetings, Rezoning Hearings, Redevelopment Commission Meetings, City Council Meetings and Public Board of Works Meetings are just a few examples of meetings where decisions are made that impact the transportation system.

## **Section V**

### **Transportation Improvement Program**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have required a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) since 1977 from urbanized areas that have a population exceeding 50,000 people. The preparation and submission of a TIP is necessary in order to obtain federal assistance for transportation projects within the metropolitan planning area. The regulations define the TIP as a staged multi-year program of federally assisted transportation projects. The Northeast Indiana Regional coordinating council (NIRCC) has determined a four-year program, updated in coordination with the Indiana Department of Transportation Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), will serve the transportation needs of the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Metropolitan Planning Area. NIRCC and INDOT will coordinate and collaborate on the development of the TIP and STIP, including public participation activities.

The TIP includes roadway, transit and bicycle/pedestrian projects selected from the Management Systems and Transportation Plan. The TIP includes projects from Local Public Agencies, Indiana Department of Transportation and Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation (CITILINK). The TIP has historically been updated annually, however beginning in Fiscal Year 2015 the TIP will sync with the STIP. The TIP will be developed under the direction of the Urban Transportation Advisory Board. The implementing agencies with jurisdiction in the metropolitan planning area have participated on UTAB and NIRCC for many years. This includes the Indiana Department of Transportation; Citilink as the only public transit operator in the urban area; and the Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority. The TIP has served the local officials of the Fort Wayne urbanized area as a transportation capital improvement program for federally assisted projects.

The primary concern for this process is to ensure that interested parties can participate in the process with a reasonable opportunity to comment before the TIP is adopted. The process is initiated through a high level of direct public involvement in the Management Systems and the Transportation Plan. The Management Systems and Transportation Plan are key areas where projects are selected for inclusion in the TIP. Therefore, projects and policies selected for inclusion in the TIP should be familiar to local residents and interested parties. In addition, specific steps to inform the public and interested parties of the development and content of the TIP are described below.

The public involvement process with the TIP includes several mechanisms to fulfill this objective. These include: open board and committee meetings; citizen and agency meetings; newsletters and annual reports; release of information to the news media; posting of the TIP on the NIRCC web site; and publication of the adopted TIP document.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council and the Urban Transportation Advisory Board hold regularly scheduled monthly meetings. The preparation of the TIP including project selection is primarily conducted at UTAB meetings. The UTAB

meetings are scheduled for the entire calendar year and are generally on the first Tuesday of each month. The NIRCC meetings are scheduled “as needed” at least two weeks in advance. The meetings of both NIRCC and UTAB are all open to the public. Meeting notices, agendas, and minutes are sent to all interested parties including: citizens; affected public agencies; representatives of transportation agency employees; organizations representing minority and low income populations; and private providers of transportation services.

Citizen meetings are sponsored by the Council to gain public input to the transportation planning process. These meetings are informal, allowing citizens to ask questions, provide ideas, and discuss all aspects of local plans, programs, and funding for both transit and highway projects. In addition, presentations to organizations and neighborhood associations are used to supplement the citizen participation program through the exchange of information. These sessions include discussion of transit and highway improvements, and afford these groups the opportunity to comment on transportation plans and programs of the Council.

The general citizen involvement meeting held in the spring of each year will have a special emphasis on presenting and discussing the TIP. During years involving TIP updates, the meeting will be held prior to TIP adoption to allow opportunity for public comment. In addition, when Air Quality Conformity and analyses are required, information on the conformity process and analyses will be available for public review and comment in commensurate with the citizen involvement meetings and comment period. A Draft TIP will also be posted on the NIRCC website for review during the comment period. Comments regarding the TIP are presented to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board. When significant oral or written comments are received, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments will be documented in the Final Transportation Improvement Program. As part of the TIP process, an annual list of federally obligated transportation projects is published and posted on the NIRCC web site.

The Council prepares and distributes to the public annual reports and newsletters. These publications contain information on a wide range of transportation planning issues. Special sections in these publications describe the Transportation Improvement Program, display maps of project locations, and list highway and transit projects.

The meeting schedules and agendas are routinely sent to the news media one week to ten days prior to each meeting. Discussion of agenda items are often conducted with the media to help them understand specifically what UTAB intends to review and approve. Special requests are made to the news media to print highway and transit projects as proposed for inclusion in the TIP. This process has been well received and the news media has provided a valuable service to the transportation planning process through its coverage of transportation planning issues. In addition, the results of board action are also covered by the news media.

NIRCC consults with agencies and officials responsible for other planning within the Metropolitan Planning Area as part of the transportation planning program. The TIP is developed with consideration of other planning activities within, and outside the Metropolitan Planning Area. This consideration includes review and comparisons with planning documents developed by other agencies. The Public Transportation operator is directly involved in the development of the TIP. NIRCC will notify affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan planning process when development of the TIP is initiated.

Finally, upon completion and adoption, the TIP is published as a document and made available for review in the NIRCC office and in an electronic format on the NIRCC website. The TIP contains highway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian projects for both local and state governments within the Metropolitan Planning Area. The TIP includes responses to comments and concerns received through the participation process.

It is also important to remember that participation and public input does not terminate at the Transportation Improvement Program phase of project development. Project development affords additional opportunities for input on final project scope, design, scheduling, traffic maintenance and many other aspects of project construction and/or implementation. Local Public Entities, Citilink and INDOT sponsor board meetings, public information meetings, public hearings and other opportunities to discuss project and program development. Many communities also have capital improvement plans that contain information of projects, and typically before funds can be committed to major projects, several boards and councils must approve the expenditures. Local agencies often hold public information meetings with affected residents and businesses prior to, and during project construction. Environmental assessments and studies also may include formal public hearings during the design and project development phase. These meetings and associated discussions provide additional forums for public participation.

## **Section VI**

### **Long-Range Transportation Plan**

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council is responsible for developing a Transportation Plan that meets existing and future travel needs of the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Metropolitan Planning Area. The development of the plan involves a variety of governmental agencies plus considerable public participation. The factors and events that lead to the selection of a plan include public participation as a critical component in the decision-making process. Public officials and local citizens have historically provided valuable and the comprehensive input throughout the development of the transportation plans and updates.

Presentations are made to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board and related committees to inform, stimulate participation, and obtain policy guidance at all stages of plan development. These meetings are open to the public and information presented at these meetings is also available to any interested party. Citizen and agency participation meetings are also conducted to inform area residents of the planning process and status of the plan development.

For over thirty years the Council has actively encouraged participation in the development of the Transportation Plan. When preparing a plan, the Council routinely holds public meetings at several stages of plan development. The purpose of these meetings is to encourage interested parties to participate and provide input throughout the plan development. Since the first Transportation Plan developed in the early 1980's, all Plans have encouraged citizen and public official participation.

NIRCC sponsors special public participation meetings and conducts outreach efforts during the development of the Transportation Plan. The Region wide meetings focus on selected areas of plan development and are scheduled at strategic times coinciding with these phases. These meetings cover local and state issues important to the Metropolitan Planning Area. All interested parties and affected agencies are welcome to attend. Meeting notices are sent to interested parties.

NIRCC engages special outreach efforts through the Neighborhood Presidents and Area Partnership Meetings. These meetings include participation of local community leaders from all areas within the metropolitan area, including areas with minority and low-income populations. Additional meetings are offered to individual neighborhoods, business groups, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, and agencies and advocates for disabled, minority and low-income populations.

Citizen and agency meetings provide the opportunity for discussing and exchanging ideas concerning the future transportation system. Questions and comments are abundant at these meetings. Valuable information is shared and the quality of the plans has been significantly enhanced through the community involvement activities. The citizen input meetings are generally held at various locations throughout the Metropolitan Planning Area during different phases of plan development.

When a Transportation Plan is under development, the general citizen involvement meeting held in the spring of each year will have a special emphasis on the Transportation Plan, in conjunction with the TIP. The meeting will be held prior to Plan adoption to allow opportunity for public comment. In addition, when Air Quality Conformity and analyses are required, information on the conformity process and analyses will be available for public review and comment. A Draft Transportation Plan will also be posted on the NIRCC website for review during the comment period. Comments regarding the Plan are presented to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board. When significant oral or written comments are received, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments will be documented in the Final Transportation Plan.

In addition to the meetings, citizens and agencies can submit comments at any time during the development of the Transportation Plan. When significant written and oral comments are received as a result of the meetings, participation process or interagency consultation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of the comments is made as part of the final metropolitan plan.

Numerous other efforts are made to inform and involve the public in developing the transportation plans and updates. When requested, staff makes numerous special presentations to neighborhood and civic groups. Citizens are also encouraged to visit our offices, mail in comments, or contact us by telephone to discuss plan development and provide suggestions. In addition, the development of the Transportation Plan has traditionally received extensive coverage by the local news media.

The finalization of a transportation plan or update has always resulted in the publication of various reports and brochures. The reports document the technical aspects of the plan including the planning process and resulting adopted policies and projects. The brochure highlights the transportation plan's policies and projects, including maps that identify project locations. These documents are always made available to all interested parties and are widely distributed.

As part of the public involvement process, NIRCC will continue to follow this format. The board and committee meetings where discussions of transportation policies take place are open to the public and all materials presented are available for public review. This provides public access to the sessions where key decisions occur and the information provided to support such decisions. In addition, through the composition of the boards and committees, public officials and interested public and private agency involvement is inherently built into the structure. Interested parties can request consultation sessions at any time throughout the plan development.

Citizen and public official involvement meetings are conducted at strategic points throughout the development of transportation plans. The meetings are held at various accessible locations (i.e. schools, libraries, public buildings, etc.) within the Metropolitan Planning Area. Notification of the meeting dates and times are provided through mailings to neighborhood association representatives, public officials, and press releases to the news media. Neighborhood and civic organizations representing minority and low

income populations also receive invitations to these meetings. Staff makes special presentations to any community, neighborhood, or civic group as requested.

NIRCC consults with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the Metropolitan Planning Area, as appropriate in the development of Transportation Plans. The consultation process includes agency meetings and comparisons with planning documents developed by such agencies including plans, maps and inventories. The public transportation operator is directly involved in the development of the Transportation Plan.

The development of the Transportation Plan must include a discussion of types of potential environmental mitigation activities for the policy and/or strategic levels that are developed in consultation with state and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation concerning the development of the transportation plan. The consultation shall involve, as appropriate, comparison of transportation plans with State conservation plans or maps, if available, or comparison of transportation plans to inventories of natural or historic resources, if available. NIRCC will consult with Federal and State land management, wildlife and regulatory agencies for the purpose of defining potential environmental mitigation strategies. A list of contacts is provided in Appendix B of this plan.

As a Transportation Plan develops, information is available through the NIRCC office to all interested parties and special efforts are taken to inform the news media. Upon completion, the transportation plan including the planning process is documented in two separate report formats. A technical report is available to board members and selected parties detailing the development process and technical aspects of the plan. In addition, a brochure is prepared highlighting the Transportation Plan, its projects and policies. This brochure is widely distributed to all interested parties. All reports and materials resulting from the Transportation Plan development process are made available to the public and are posted on the NIRCC web site.

## **Section VII**

### **Summary**

The content of this document represents the participation process implemented by Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council for the metropolitan transportation planning process. This process addresses the entire scope of the metropolitan planning process including the development of the Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This process is developed in good faith and designed to meet or exceed all Federal rules and regulations. This process is in no way exclusionary, the intent is to maintain an atmosphere of public and agency participation through an open and inclusive process, where all interested parties are encouraged and allowed to participate. The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council is committed to administering a transportation planning process where public involvement is encouraged at all levels. The citizen participation process sponsored by the Council for over twenty-five years will continue as a vital component of transportation planning. NIRCC will continue to investigate and implement new strategies which encourage public involvement to ensure our transportation planning activities are community oriented.

The periodic review and evaluation of the public involvement process will determine whether the intended objectives of the public involvement process are being fulfilled. Necessary modifications will be implemented. Significant revisions to the public involvement process will not be adopted until a public comment period has been completed.

# Appendix A

## **Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council Membership**

### Adams County Representative

Mayor, City of Decatur  
Adams County Commissioner  
Adams County Council Member

### Allen County Representatives

Mayor, City of Fort Wayne  
Allen County Commissioner <sup>1</sup>  
Allen County Commissioner <sup>1</sup>  
Allen County Commissioner <sup>1</sup>  
Allen County Council Member

### DeKalb County Representative

Mayor, City of Auburn  
DeKalb County Commissioner  
DeKalb County Council Member

### Wells County Representatives

Mayor, City of Bluffton  
Wells County Commissioner  
Wells County Council Member

### Additional Representatives

Appointment by Governor of Indiana

<sup>1</sup>Allen County Commissioners have three appointed representatives

## **Urban Transportation Advisory Board Membership**

Allen County Fort Wayne Airport Authority Representative

Allen County Commissioner

Allen County Council Member

Allen County Highway Director

Allen County Plan Commission Member

Federal Highway Administration Representatives<sup>1</sup>

Fort Wayne Board of Public Works Director

Fort Wayne City Engineer

Fort Wayne, Mayoral Representative

Fort Wayne Plan Commission Member

Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation General Manager

Indiana Department of Transportation – Fort Wayne District Manager

Indiana Department of Transportation Urban and MPO Section Representative<sup>1</sup>

New Haven, Mayor

<sup>1</sup> non-voting member

## **Transportation Technical Committee Membership**

Allen County Highway Representative – Traffic Engineering

Allen County Highway – Right of Way Engineering

Allen County Planning Representative

Federal Highway Administration<sup>1</sup>

Fort Wayne Community Development and Planning Representative

Fort Wayne Street Engineering Representative

Fort Wayne Traffic Engineering Representative

Indiana Department of Transportation – Traffic Engineering District Office

Indiana Department of Transportation Urban and MPO Section Representative<sup>1</sup>

New Haven City Engineer

<sup>1</sup>non-voting member

## **Transit Planning Committee Membership**

Allen County Plan Commission Staff Representative

Community Transportation Network Representative

Consumer-Citilink Access

Consumer-Human Service Paratransit

Fort Wayne Community Development and Planning Staff Representative

Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation (Citilink)

Human Service Paratransit Provider Representatives (2)

Local 682 – Amalgamated Transit Union Representative

New Haven Plan Commission Representative

Private Paratransit Provider Representative

Private Taxi Provider Representative

Indiana Department of Transportation Transit Section Representative<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>non-voting member

## **Appendix B**

Agencies contacted as part of the Participation Plan review.

Robert Zier  
Director of Multimodal Planning & Programs  
Indiana Department of Transportation  
100 N. Senate Ave., IGCN 955  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[rzier@indot.IN.gov](mailto:rzier@indot.IN.gov)

Mr. Mitchell Zoll, Director  
Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology  
Room W274, IGC South  
402 West Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[mzoll@dnr.in.gov](mailto:mzoll@dnr.in.gov)

Mr. Scott Hinderman  
Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority  
Suite 209, Lt. Paul Baer Terminal  
3801 West Ferguson Road  
Fort Wayne, IN 46809-3194  
[Hinderman@fwairport.com](mailto:Hinderman@fwairport.com)

Ms. Kim Bowman  
Executive Director  
Department of Planning Services  
200 E Berry Street Suite 150  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Kim.Bowman@co.allen.in.us](mailto:Kim.Bowman@co.allen.in.us)

Mr. Paul Blisk  
Deputy Director for Land Use  
Department of Planning Services  
200 E Berry Street Suite 150  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Paul.Blisk@co.allen.in.us](mailto:Paul.Blisk@co.allen.in.us)

Mr. Greg Leatherman  
Division Director  
Fort Wayne Community Development  
200 E Berry Street Suite 320  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Greg.L Leatherman@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:Greg.L Leatherman@cityoffortwayne.org)

Mr. Brian Yo  
New Haven Planning/Economic Development  
815 Lincoln Highway E  
New Haven, IN 46774-0570  
[byoh@newhaven.org](mailto:byoh@newhaven.org)

Mr. Justin Brugger  
Deputy Director  
Fort Wayne Re-Development  
200 E Berry Street Suite 320  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Justin.Brugger@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:Justin.Brugger@cityoffortwayne.org)

Mr. Mark Royse  
Deputy Director for Economic Development/Redevelopment  
Department of Planning Services  
200 E Berry Street Suite 150  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Mark.Royse@co.allen.in.us](mailto:Mark.Royse@co.allen.in.us)

Ms. Elissa McGauley  
Fort Wayne Economic Development  
200 E Berry Street Suite 320  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Elissa.McGauley@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:Elissa.McGauley@cityoffortwayne.org)

Mr. Mark Becker, CEO  
Greater Fort Wayne Incorporated  
200 E. Main Street, Suite 800  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[mbecker@greaterfortwayneinc.com](mailto:mbecker@greaterfortwayneinc.com)

Mr. John Urbahns, VP of Economic Development  
Greater Fort Wayne Incorporated  
200 E. Main Street, Suite 800  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[jurbahns@greaterfortwayneinc.com](mailto:jurbahns@greaterfortwayneinc.com)

Vince Buchanan, Executive Director  
Regional Chamber  
6714 Pointe Inverness Way, Suite 115 A  
Fort Wayne, IN 46804  
[vince@neinadvocates.com](mailto:vince@neinadvocates.com)

Mr. Bill Brown  
Downtown Improvement District  
904 S. Calhoun Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[bill@downtownfortwayne.com](mailto:bill@downtownfortwayne.com)

Mr. Michael Galbraith, Executive Director  
Architecture and Community Heritage  
Historic Preservation  
818 Lafayette Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[mgalbraith@archfw.org](mailto:mgalbraith@archfw.org)

Mr. Don Orban, Administrator  
Fort Wayne Historic Preservation Review Board  
200 E Berry Street Suite 320  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Don.Orban@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:Don.Orban@cityoffortwayne.org)

Mr. Greg Lake, District Director  
Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District  
3718 New Vision Drive  
Fort Wayne, IN 46845  
[greg.lake@IN.nacdnet.net](mailto:greg.lake@IN.nacdnet.net)

Ms. Vickie Hadley, Director  
Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service  
Allen County Office  
4001 Crescent Avenue  
Fort Wayne, IN 46815-4590  
[hadleyv@purdue.edu](mailto:hadleyv@purdue.edu)

Rod Renkenberger  
Executive Director  
Maumee River Basin Commission  
3864 New Vision Drive  
Fort Wayne, IN 46845  
[rodr@mrbc.org](mailto:rodr@mrbc.org)

Mr. Jim Newton, President  
Triple Crown Services  
2720 Dupont Commerce Court  
Fort Wayne, IN 46825  
[tcsinfo@TripleCrownSvc.com](mailto:tcsinfo@TripleCrownSvc.com)

Mr. Art Miller, Vice President  
Triple Crown Services  
2720 Dupont Commerce Court  
Fort Wayne, IN 46825  
[art.miller@TripleCrownSvc.com](mailto:art.miller@TripleCrownSvc.com)

Klink Trucking Inc  
Wayne Klink, President  
PO Box 428  
Ashley, IN 46705  
[klink@klinktrucking.com](mailto:klink@klinktrucking.com)

Brothers Express Inc.  
Samual J. Rykard, Vice President  
3227 W Coliseum Blvd.  
Fort Wayne, IN 46808  
[srykard@brothersexpress.com](mailto:srykard@brothersexpress.com)

Meyer Trucking, Inc.  
Jon Meyer, Vice President Operations  
1409 Lincoln Highway, E  
PO Box 158  
New Haven, IN 46774  
[jmeyer@meyertrucking.com](mailto:jmeyer@meyertrucking.com)

Lakeside Logistics Inc.  
Cory Blaising, Sales Manager  
[Cory.blaising@teamlndstar.com](mailto:Cory.blaising@teamlndstar.com)

JAT Fort Wayne Inc.  
Jared A Thompson, President  
5031 Industrial Road  
Fort Wayne, IN 46825  
[jared@jatoffortwayne.com](mailto:jared@jatoffortwayne.com)

Atlas Van Lines Agent Imlach  
Rob Woodruff, General Manager  
2710 Independence Drive  
Fort Wayne, IN 46808  
[rwoodruff@guardianrelocation.com](mailto:rwoodruff@guardianrelocation.com)

Specialized Transportation Inc.  
5001 US Highway 30W  
Fort Wayne, IN 46818  
[marketing@stidelivers.com](mailto:marketing@stidelivers.com)

TransWorks  
Bruce Cox, Vice President  
9910 Dupont Circle Drive E  
Fort Wayne IN 46825  
[Jerry.bell@trnswrks.com](mailto:Jerry.bell@trnswrks.com)

Coca-Cola Refreshments  
Charles Foster, Distribution Center Manager  
5010 Airport Expressway  
Fort Wayne, IN 46809  
[charlesfoster@coca-cola.com](mailto:charlesfoster@coca-cola.com)

General Motors – Fort Wayne Assembly  
Mike Glinski, Plant Manager  
12200 Lafayette Center Road  
Roanoke, IN 46783  
[michael.glinski@gm.com](mailto:michael.glinski@gm.com)

Mr. Todd Johnson  
Deputy Commissioner  
INDOT - Fort Wayne District  
5333 Hatfield Road  
Fort Wayne, IN 46808  
[tjohnson@indot.IN.gov](mailto:tjohnson@indot.IN.gov)

Dave Burian  
Deluxe Taxi  
PO Box 10266  
Fort Wayne, IN 46851  
[DAVEBURIAN@COMCAST.NET](mailto:DAVEBURIAN@COMCAST.NET)

Becky Weimerskirch  
Community Transportation Network  
5601 Industrial Road  
Fort Wayne, IN 46825  
[becky@4ctn.org](mailto:becky@4ctn.org)

Ernest Johnson, Acting President  
Local 682 ATU  
5423 Autumn Woods Trail  
Fort Wayne, IN 46835  
[ernestjohnson1004@gmail.com](mailto:ernestjohnson1004@gmail.com)

Sheila Roberson, Financial Secretary  
Local 682 ATU  
7516 Monaco Place  
Fort Wayne, IN 46825  
[lilmooer2001@gmail.com](mailto:lilmooer2001@gmail.com)

Ms. Connie Benton Wolfe  
President/CEO  
Aging and In-Home Services of Northeast Indiana  
233 W Main Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[cbwolfe@agingihs.org](mailto:cbwolfe@agingihs.org)

Nancy Louraine  
Turnstone  
3320 N Clinton Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46805  
[nancy@turnstone.org](mailto:nancy@turnstone.org)

Mr. Jonathan Ray, President/CEO  
Fort Wayne Urban League  
2135 S Hanna Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46803  
[jray@fwurbanleague.org](mailto:jray@fwurbanleague.org)

Palermo Galindo, President  
Greater Fort Wayne Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
P.O. Box 11852  
Fort Wayne, IN 46861-1852  
[palermoga@gmail.com](mailto:palermoga@gmail.com)

Ms. Lori Rose  
Fort Wayne Trails Inc.  
300 E Main Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[lori@fwtrails.org](mailto:lori@fwtrails.org)

Mr. Mike Clendenen, Superintendent  
New Haven/Adams Twp Parks and Recreation  
1125 Hartzell Street  
New Haven, IN 46774  
[mclendenen@newhavenin.org](mailto:mclendenen@newhavenin.org)

Joyce Newland  
Federal Highway Administration  
Room 254 – Federal Office Building  
575 North Pennsylvania Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[Joyce.Newland@dot.gov](mailto:Joyce.Newland@dot.gov)

Mr. Reginald Arkel– Community Planner  
U.S. DOT, Federal Transit Administration, Region 5  
200 West Adams Street, Suite 320  
Chicago, Illinois 60606  
[Reginald.arkel@dot.gov](mailto:Reginald.arkel@dot.gov)

Agencies contacted for Participation Plan review and to be contacted as part of Transportation Plan environmental mitigation consultation and participation process.

Ms. Jane Hardisty  
State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Services  
6013 Lakeside Boulevard  
Indianapolis, IN 46278-2933  
[jane.hardisty@in.usda.gov](mailto:jane.hardisty@in.usda.gov)

Mr. Tim Bomba, District Conservationist  
USDA  
Natural Resources Conservation Services  
3718 New Vision Drive  
Fort Wayne, In 46845  
[tim.bomba@in.usda.gov](mailto:tim.bomba@in.usda.gov)

Mr. John Steinmetz, Director  
Environmental Geology Section  
Indiana Geological Survey  
611 North Walnut Grove  
Bloomington, IN 47405-2208  
[jsteinm@indiana.edu](mailto:jsteinm@indiana.edu)

Ms. Patty Trap, Acting Regional Director  
National Park Service  
Midwest Regional Office  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, NE 68102  
[Patricia\\_Trap@nps.gov](mailto:Patricia_Trap@nps.gov)

Joyce Newland  
Federal Highway Administration  
Room 254 – Federal Office Building  
575 North Pennsylvania Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[Joyce.Newland@dot.gov](mailto:Joyce.Newland@dot.gov)

Mr. Reginald Arkel– Community Planner  
U.S. DOT, Federal Transit Administration, Region 5  
200 West Adams Street, Suite 320  
Chicago, Illinois 60606  
[Reginald.arkel@dot.gov](mailto:Reginald.arkel@dot.gov)

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
Environmental Unit  
Christie Stanifer, Environmental Coordinator  
402 West Washington Street, W264  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2641  
[cstanifer@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:cstanifer@dnr.IN.gov)

Mr. Thomas W. Easterly, Commissioner  
Indiana Department of Environmental Management  
100 North Senate Avenue N1301, MC 50-01  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[TEASTERL@idem.IN.gov](mailto:TEASTERL@idem.IN.gov)

Ms. Elizabeth McCloskey  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
P.O. Box 2616  
Chesterton, IN 46304  
[Elizabeth\\_mccloskey@fws.gov](mailto:Elizabeth_mccloskey@fws.gov)

Mr. Ray Willis, Director  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Community Planning and Development, 5 ADE  
77 West Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604  
[Ray.E.Willis@hud.gov](mailto:Ray.E.Willis@hud.gov)

Mr. John Dorgan, Director  
Indianapolis Field Office  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
151 N Delaware Street Suite 1200  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[John.Dorgan@hud.gov](mailto:John.Dorgan@hud.gov)

Lt. Col. Michael L. Sellers  
Department of the Army  
Detroit District, Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 1027  
Detroit, MI 48231-1027  
[lrepao@usace.army.mil](mailto:lrepao@usace.army.mil)

Mr. Les Weigum, Chief  
Environmental Analysis Branch  
Department of the Army  
Detroit District, Corps of Engineers  
ATTN: CENCE-PD-EA (Weigum)  
P.O. Box 1027  
Detroit, MI 48231-1027  
[lrepao@usace.army.mil](mailto:lrepao@usace.army.mil)

Tony Maietta  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
77 West Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604-3507  
[Maietta.Anthony@epa.gov](mailto:Maietta.Anthony@epa.gov)

Nate Yazel  
Wildlife District Biologist  
IDNR-Division of Fish and Wildlife  
2239 N State Road 103  
New Castle, IN 47362  
[NYazel@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:NYazel@dnr.IN.gov)  
[dfw@dnr.in.gov](mailto:dfw@dnr.in.gov)

Jed Pearson  
Biologist  
IDNR-Division of Fish and Wildlife  
1353 South Governors Drive  
Columbia City, IN 46725-9539  
[JPearson@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:JPearson@dnr.IN.gov)

Ron Hellmich  
IDNR-Division of Nature Preserves  
402 W Washington Street W267  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[rhellmich@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:rhellmich@dnr.IN.gov)

Dion Novak  
U.S. EPA-Region V-Superfund  
77 W Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604  
[Novak.dion@epa.gov](mailto:Novak.dion@epa.gov)

Stewart McKenzie  
FTA Region V  
200 W Adams Street Suite 320  
Chicago, IL 60606  
[mckenzie@dot.gov](mailto:mckenzie@dot.gov)

Mr. Mitchell Zoll, Director  
Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology  
Room W274, IGC South  
402 West Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[mzoll@dnr.in.gov](mailto:mzoll@dnr.in.gov)

Mr. Michael Galbraith, Executive Director  
Architecture and Community Heritage  
Historic Preservation  
818 Lafayette Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[mgalbraith@archfw.org](mailto:mgalbraith@archfw.org)

Mr. Don Orban, Administrator  
Fort Wayne Historic Preservation Review Board  
200 E Berry Street Suite 320  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[Don.Orban@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:Don.Orban@cityoffortwayne.org)

Mr. Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief  
NEPA Implementation Section  
Office of Science, Ecosystems, and Communities  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
B-19J  
77 West Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590  
[westlake.kenneth@epa.gov](mailto:westlake.kenneth@epa.gov)

Mr. Al Moll, Director  
Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation  
705 E State Boulevard  
Fort Wayne, IN 46805  
[Al.Moll@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:Al.Moll@cityoffortwayne.org)

Mr. Jeff Baxter, Superintendent  
Allen County Parks and Recreation  
7324 Yohne Road  
Fort Wayne, IN 46809  
[superintendent@allencountyparks.org](mailto:superintendent@allencountyparks.org)

## Appendix C

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION OFFICE OF  
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

**DRAFT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT  
PLAN TEMPLATE  
JANUARY 2011**

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR  
STATE AND LPA PROJECTS  
RECEIVING FEDERAL AID AS  
PART OF THE FUNDING  
MECHANISM 2**

# SAMPLE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

See INDOT Public Involvement Procedures at: <http://www.in.gov/indot/2354.htm>

This Public Involvement Plan has been developed for the \_\_\_\_\_. (Name of the Road or segment) is a (insert a description and project location). It provides connectivity between the \_\_\_\_\_ terminus at \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ terminus at \_\_\_\_\_. The project corridor is \_\_\_\_\_.

The project corridor contains \_\_\_\_\_. It is anticipated that the entire length of the project along \_\_\_\_\_ would involve a rehabilitation of the pavement, curbs and gutters and sidewalks or a multi-use trail OR (insert specific project description and features). A new storm sewer system will likely be included. The existing \_\_\_\_\_ degree curves will likely require some realignment. The project development began in the \_\_\_\_\_ of (year) and construction is currently scheduled for (year).

City/County/Municipality/Transportation Agency of \_\_\_\_\_ residents play an important role in shaping the transportation decisions that will affect their community. They rely on the transportation system to move around the community and through the state for work and leisure activities. Residents rely on this facility to reach their destinations and return safely home. Businesses rely on this facility to move products and materials. In addition to their reliance on the facility to meet transportation needs, all of these users have a stake in transportation decisions because they are taxpayers, stakeholders, and are users of the facility proposed to be improved.

As the City/County/Municipality/ Transportation Agency makes decisions on transportation improvement projects, it must integrate:

- Input from the public,
- Input from other local governmental agencies,
- Input from resource agencies (federal and state agencies which have responsibility for environmental resources, such as water resources, historic resources, air quality, and endangered species), and,
- The City's/ County's or Municipality's own assessment of transportation needs, cost, funding availability and engineering constraints.

The City/County/Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ recognizes that a key component in the success of any transportation project depends on many factors, none of which are more essential than the involvement of its community members. It also understands the importance of involving the public in information exchange when providing transportation facilities and services to best meet the City's/County's/ Municipality's transportation challenges. Therefore, the \_\_\_\_\_ supports the policy of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) in their Local Public Agency's Project Development Process (PDP) to promote public involvement opportunities and information exchange activities in planning, developing, designing, construction, operations, and maintenance of transportation projects. The public involvement procedures, as outlined in this plan, provide opportunities for early and continuing involvement of the public in developing transportation plans, programs, and projects and provide complete public information, timely public notice, and public access to key decisions.

Public involvement is a two-way communication aimed at providing information to the public and incorporating the views, concerns, and issues of the public in the transportation decision-making process. The public provides input on transportation needs, community concerns, and environmental considerations.

An open line of communication between local officials, the public and the Project Management Team is a key component in developing a transportation plan that will best address the concerns of the community. The Project Management Team involved with this project consists of representatives of the City of \_\_\_\_\_; the INDOT District Office; INDOT Central Office; the local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the consulting firm of \_\_\_\_\_. This Team will manage the overall project relative to interpretations of scope and products, achieving the project schedule milestones, resolving project issues, implementing agency and public involvement activities, and coordinating the City/County/Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ and other members of the project team.

The public involvement process begins with the gathering of information from the local officials and community members that will be involved with the project. The process continues by providing information to these same stakeholders and keeping them informed of the project's progress and direction. This exchange of information is a dynamic process that continues throughout the life of the project. Goals of the Public Involvement Plan include the following:

- Identify potential project stakeholders such as local officials and community members impacted by the project
- Develop partnering activities that assist with gathering information from stakeholders
- Foster a positive relationship with stakeholders and keep them informed of the project progress
- Adequately evaluate potential levels of controversy to address specific concerns and develop context sensitive plans
- Work together to develop a transportation solution that has broad public support
- Provide productive forums for members of the public to provide comments

The \_\_\_\_\_ Project includes an extensive Public Involvement Plan. It contains communication details such as how, when and where to expect to hear project status reports and to be involved. It is made up of a variety of activities and forums to allow many opportunities for involvement. **A PROJECT KICK-OFF COORDINATION MEETING (INDOT/LPA, MUNICIPALITY, MPO, CONSULTANT, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM) IS TYPICALLY THE FIRST STEP IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A SOUND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN.** Elements of the plan may consist of:

- Project information and updates on the City/County/Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ website
- News Releases

- Project Kick-off Meeting , possibly a Public Information Meeting, possible CAC group formation
- Project (NEPA) Public Hearing and/or Hearings opportunity
- Stakeholder meetings (small group meetings or presentations)
- Resource Agency Coordination
- Section 106 Consulting Party Coordination

Following the initiation of the project and at various key points (milestones) throughout the project development process, the Project Management Team will make the most current information related to the study available for review and comment. The Project Management Team members will review all comments received and will incorporate comments into the development of the project as appropriate.

### **I. Updates on the INDOT/City's/County's/Municipality's Website**

To provide the public with access to the most current project information available, the Project Management Team will provide project-related information to the City's/County's/Municipality's website. Information that will be available on this website includes but is not limited to:

- Project News and Updates
- Specific Project Information Such As:
  - Project Schedules
  - Listings of Project Meetings
  - Copies of Various Project-Related Documents
- Contact information for providing comments
- Project Maps
- Links to Other Websites Including the MPO, INDOT and FHWA

### **II. News Releases**

The Project Management Team will provide news releases during the study process. The releases will be distributed to regional media and will be posted on the City's/County's/Municipalities web site at key project milestones and will be the primary method for informing and involving a wide public audience.

### **III. Project Kick-off Public Meeting**

The first Public Information Meeting could be an open house-style Project Kick-off Meeting that will be advertised and held prior to beginning the project design. The Project Kick-off Meeting could be advertised in the local newspaper(s). Agency website and media coordination could be used to encourage attendance as well. An announcement/notice could also be mailed to individual

property owners within the project area and project stakeholders on INDOT's statewide and project mailing lists. This notice will specify the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting and will contain a brief description of the project. In addition, the notice provides contact information for requesting assistance for persons with disabilities.

The Project Kick-off Meeting will be held at a place and time generally convenient for persons impacted by or interested in the proposed undertaking. The meeting location will be accessible in order to accommodate people with disabilities. The kick-off meeting has two primary objectives. The first is to introduce the public to the project and to provide information related to the Public Involvement Plan. Maps of the project area as well as graphics of potential improvements to the roadway will be available for viewing. The second objective is to collect valuable information from residents related to unique features – wells, tiles, drains, etc. – that may be present in the project area and to receive comments and project-related concerns. Members of the Project Management Team (which includes the City/municipality) will be available to answer questions and to obtain public views regarding the problems that need to be addressed and the conceptual solutions that need to be considered. Receiving this information early in the development of the project provides the Project Management Team with a better understanding of the project area, issues and constraints prior to beginning design of the facility. This will lead to the development of a transportation improvement project that will best meet the needs of the community and its residents.

#### **IV. Public Information Meeting(s)**

A second public meeting could be held to present possible alternatives to solve transportation improvement issue, discuss alternatives screening process, or provide a general status update of the project.

##### **A. Public Information Meeting**

Should the requirements for a formal Public Hearing not be met, a second Public Information Meeting will be held. It will provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments on the project immediately before project decision-making. The Public Information Meeting will be advertised via a media release, website announcement, direct mail, etc. An announcement could also be mailed to individual property owners within the project area and project stakeholders on INDOT's statewide and project mailing lists. The announcement (notice) will specify the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting, contain a brief description of the project and will specify where the pertinent project documentation is available for inspection. In addition, the notice provides contact information for requesting assistance for persons with disabilities.

The Public Information Meeting will be held at a place and time generally convenient for persons affected by or interested in the proposed undertaking. The meeting location will be accessible in order to accommodate people with disabilities. Representatives of the Project Management Team will explain the following information:

- The project's purpose, need and consistency with the goals and objectives of the local transportation plan
- The project's alternatives and major design features
- The social, economic, environmental and other impacts of the project

- The availability of any appropriate project materials
- Procedures for receiving public comments for consideration as project develops

At this meeting, the Project Management Team will provide a description of the scope and location of the project, preliminary locations of new right-of-way acquisition, maintenance of traffic schemes, and a preliminary opinion of probable construction costs. A set of preliminary design plans and the environmental document will be on-hand for public review and comment. The Project Management Team will make a PowerPoint presentation to help describe the project.

In cooperation with INDOT, the City/Town/LPA/MPO of \_\_\_\_\_ is committed to providing a Public Information Meeting format that allows public participation. Therefore, the Project Management Team will provide the opportunity for an attendee to provide written comments which will be accepted in person at the public meeting, by mail or via the internet during an announced period after the meeting (typically about 2 to 4 weeks). Members of the Project Management Team will be available to address individual questions and concerns; however, verbal comments will not be accepted. A summary of public meeting proceedings will be included in the final environmental document.

**B. Public Hearing or Hearings Opportunity at NEPA stage of Development**

The Public Hearing is an opportunity for the public to make formal statements of their views on the project immediately before project decision-making. It is viewed as a specific, observable administrative benchmark for public involvement. The Public Hearing will be held once preliminary plans have been developed and a draft environmental document has been approved. The Public Hearing will be advertised via a public notice that will be run twice in the legal notice section of the local newspaper(s). The first notice will be at least 15 days prior to the hearing. The second notice will be approximately 5 to 7 days prior to the hearing. Notice will also be made on the INDOT/City/Municipality website as well as a press release distributed to local media. The notice will also be mailed to individual property owners within the project area and project stakeholders on INDOT’s statewide and project mailing lists. The notice will specify the date, time, place and purpose of the hearing, contain a brief description of the project and will specify where the pertinent project documentation is available for inspection. In addition, the notice provides contact information for requesting assistance for persons with disabilities.

The Public Hearing will be held at a place and time generally convenient for persons affected by or interested in the proposed undertaking. The hearing location will be accessible in order to accommodate people with disabilities. Representatives of the Project Management Team will explain the following information:

- The project’s purpose, need and consistency with the goals and objectives of the local transportation plan
- The project’s alternatives and major design features
- The social, economic, environmental and other impacts of the project
- The relocation assistance program and the right-of-way acquisition process
- The availability of the appropriate environmental document

- Procedures for receiving both oral and written statements from the public

At this hearing, the Project Management Team will provide a description of the scope and location of the project, preliminary locations of new right-of-way acquisition, maintenance of traffic schemes, and a preliminary opinion of probable construction costs. A set of preliminary design plans and the environmental document will be on-hand for public review and comment. The Project Management Team will make a PowerPoint presentation to help describe the project.

In cooperation with INDOT, the City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ is committed to providing a Public Hearing format that allows full public participation. Therefore, the Project Management Team will provide the opportunity for an attendee to choose from at least three methods to provide comment which will include:

- Public statements before an audience of concerned citizens, with a transcript made of these statements.
- Verbal comments made privately during the meeting to a tape recorder, which the Project Management Team will include in the hearing transcript
- Written comments which will be accepted in person at the public hearing, by mail or via the internet/e-mail.

A transcript will be made of verbal statement and comments made at the public hearing. The transcript is accompanied by copies of all written statements from the public, both submitted at the public hearing and during an announced period after the hearing (typically between 2 to 4 weeks). A summary of public hearing proceedings in addition to addressing all substantive comment will be included in the final environmental document.

## **V. Stakeholder Meetings**

Throughout the project, stakeholders – neighborhood associations, school corporations, civic organizations, local officials, community and business groups, parks and refuges and any other interested individuals – are welcome to meet with members of the Project Management Team to share information and ideas. While such meetings are intended to focus on concerns related to a specific group of individuals, they are open to the public but will not be advertised. The Project Management Team will prepare the agenda and necessary handouts for all such meetings. Project Management Team members will also have numerous contacts with stakeholders throughout the project and will answer numerous questions and address comments throughout the project via e-mail and by telephone.

## **VI. Resource Agency Coordination**

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) calls for an examination and consideration of impacts of a proposed action on sensitive resources for a project such as this McDonald Lane Rehabilitation. These resources include, but are not limited to, floodplains, wetlands, endangered species, historic and archaeological sites, parks, air quality, wildlife habitat, etc. There also are the transportation needs that must be fulfilled and socio-economic impacts that require consideration. Because of impacts to resources, socio-economic impacts and needed transportation improvements, there is a balanced decision-making process that considers a range of factors of both impacts to the resources and the transportation needs. To produce better environmental decisions, agencies with special expertise or jurisdiction by law are included in the

study process. This resource agency involvement begins early in the study to identify important issues related to the proposed action and continues throughout the study to avoid conflict later, ensuring full input from the various agencies.

## **VII. Section 106 Consulting Party Coordination**

Congress set forth the importance of historic and archaeological resources upon the fabric of American life as a part of the National Historic Preservation Act (1966) (NHPA), which states that “the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people.” As a result of the NHPA, federal agencies are required to take into account the impact of federal undertakings upon historic properties in the area of the undertaking. Historic properties include buildings, structures, sites, objects, and/or districts within the Area of Potential Effects (APE). This consulting party involvement begins early in the study to identify important issues related to the proposed action and continues throughout the study to avoid conflict later, ensuring full input from the various agencies.