Transit-ory

Things change. Like gas prices. Congestion levels. Regional air quality. And the public’s perspective on alternative forms of transportation. This past spring and summer, transit was very much the topic on everyone’s lips as the MPO reached a milestone in DIRECTIONS, the rapid transit study to improve regional mobility, and recommended a rail-based starter system for the Northeast Corridor, our region’s busiest. About the same time, gas prices rose to, and hovered around, $4 per gallon for the first time ever in America, prompting a sharp increase in transit commuting here via IndyGo and its express service legs in Carmel and

cont on page 3, see Transit-ory

Northeast Corridor Transit Moves Ahead

After more than ten years of study, scores of public meetings, and countless print articles and hours of broadcast news coverage, it came down to this. A simple voice vote of the elected and appointed officials who make up the Policy Committee of the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council (IRTC). At issue was whether or not they supported the Metropolitan Planning Organization’s recommendation for a starter transit system in the region’s Northeast Corridor as their locally preferred alternative (LPA).

After a brief introduction by MPO Manager Mike Dearing who facilitated the meeting, and a background presentation by Assistant Manager Philip Roth, AICP, each voting IRTC member was given time to express his or her position on the issue. When the last had finished, Dearing called for a vote though, at that point, it was purely a formality.

cont on page 20, see Northeast Corridor Transit

Public Input Gathered on Transit

Sharing study information with members of the public, and hearing their reaction to it first-hand – their comments, suggestions for improvement, and concerns – is a crucial part of our transportation planning process,” says MPO Manager Mike Dearing. “We’ve been doing it for years, long before it was federally required, because my predecessors recognized that public involvement in the planning process improves the caliber of the transportation study findings,” he explains. “In 2006, our formal Public Participation Plan (PPP) was endorsed by a federal review team, representing FHWA, FTA and the EPA, among others, and subsequently was adopted (To review

cont on page 14, Public Input Gathered on Transit
In Q & A, members of your MPO staff answer questions posed to them via voice mail, e-mail, regular mail or in-person. In this issue, MPO Manager/Master Planner Mike Dearing addresses the influence planning partners have on the regional transportation planning process.

“All spring and summer, I’ve been seeing news stories about a new rail line between downtown and Fishers. I know it’s not supposed to be a done deal yet but, realistically, how likely is it that a transportation improvement won’t be built once the MPO recommends it? I can’t recall a single instance when that’s happened. So, aren’t all the public meetings just window dressing?

— Asked in-person in early August.

Nothing could be further from the truth. When you asked your question, none of us working on DIRECTIONS knew if the elected and appointed officials who make up the Policy Committee of the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council (IRTC) – the decision-making body of the regional transportation planning process – were going to approve our recommendation as the locally preferred alternative (LPA). It was very much an open question at that time. We had concluded a series of well-attended public meetings, were still facilitating stakeholder meetings with our planning partner CIRTA, and were putting the finishing touches on a Summary of Public Comment. But, we had yet to turn over that input to the IRTC (Aug. 20) and they had yet to review it and vote on the issue (Sept. 26). So, we knew all of the technical, economic and environmental reasons for our recommendation of diesel light rail along the Hoosier Heritage Port Authority route, and we knew that the majority of meeting attendees and gathered comments supported the recommendation, but that was it. The IRTC was still the final word. They could have rejected our recommendation just as the oversight committee for the conNECTions study had back in 2001.

At that time, State Senator Luke Kenley, INDOT Commissioner J. Bryan Nichol and new Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson weren’t convinced that rail transit in the Northeast Corridor was a good idea as a stand alone improvement. They sent us back to study the potential of a region-wide transit system. So, MPO recommendations aren’t rejection-proof no matter how well founded they are. All of the technical reasons that validated our rail recommendation are still true, but we made a better
This map reflects the expanded MPO Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) as determined by Census 2000 data. This new MPA was recommended for approval by the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council-Policy Committee in late 2002, and subsequently recommended for implementation by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). Final approval was given by then Governor Joseph Kernan in fourth quarter, 2003.

**Transit-ory**
(from page 1)

Fishers, and nationwide.

It was the perfect time to present information to the public concerning the region's transportation future, to gather their comments and suggestions on how to improve mobility in Central Indiana, and to share the gathered input with elected and appointed officials from throughout the area.

The result? A formal vote to move on to the next step of transit development in what could turn out to be the first of seven travel corridors in a region-wide system. Learn more about it here in *Northeast Corridor Transit Moves Ahead*, along with the practices and procedures that facilitated two-way communications between the MPO and the public (*Public Input Gathered On Transit*), the topics brought up most often (*Transit Meeting FAQs*), a sampling of comments from this summer's series of public and stakeholders meetings (*Verbatim*) and endorsements of the recommendation by two of the largest neighborhood associations located along the proposed transit route (GACC, *BRAG Endorse Transit Recommendation*).

In addition, meet the new people of the MPO as the agency expands by six planners to help meet the ever expanding needs within its 1200 square mile planning area (*MPO Staffs Up*). Plus, read how Pedal & Park set records all summer long by not only adding more program participants than ever before, but more events – a schedule increase of more than 80% (*Pedal & Park Sets Records*). It's all here, along with the latest *Irons In The Fire*. So, sit back, relax and Fall into *teMPO*!
MPO Staffs Up

Long story short, the MPO started last year (2007) with a staff of seven. It will begin next year (2009) with a staff of 13.

“We’ve worked hard to put the right people in place in a relatively short time,” says MPO Manager/Master Planner Mike Dearing. “We had been understaffed for so long that, when I finally got approval to add people, we jumped on it. We had to. Even the federal government had noticed how shallow our bench was.”

When the MPO underwent its 2006 federal re-certification review, the review panel representing FHWA, FTA, EPA and other federal and state agencies recommended increasing staff size to keep up with workload. Three years earlier, the MPO’s planning area had expanded by 528 square miles due to the 2000 Census which showed contiguous urbanization throughout the region.

“We had been working short-handed before this, but the increase meant that the MPO was now the primary transportation planner for 1,200 sq. miles and needed to work more closely with new planning partners in neighboring jurisdictions,” explains Dearing. “Clearly, we needed more people to help anticipate and address the mobility needs of the greater Indianapolis region.”

With federal funding of the MPO’s recommended regional transportation projects dependent on agency re-certification, the review panels advice was taken to heart. In late 2006, Dearing met with then Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson and secured approval to expand staff despite a tight city budget (Editor’s Note: Eighty percent of MPO staff salaries, and planning activity, is federally funded, while the remaining 20% traditionally has been funded by the City of Indianapolis. Since 2005, however, neighboring jurisdictions within the MPO’s planning area have begun to support MPO’s planning activity in relative proportion to how much they benefit from it. In 2009, even more of IRTC member jurisdictions will be contributing to the MPO’s planning fund.).

“So, we immediately began looking for qualified people and hired Andy (Swenson) and Anita (Bjork) last year. Then, early this year, we had two existing positions open up (see Irons In The Fire, page 28) that needed to be filled in addition to the four new positions planned as part of our staff expansion,” Dearing explains. “Interviewing has pretty much been a full time job this year, but it’s paid off. We’ve found six qualified people to join us.”

The Newbies

Tom Beck
Principal Planner

Tom Beck joined the MPO staff as Principal Planner of Multi-Modal Planning in July, 2008.

He grew up in Ft. Wayne, where - like everyone else in his family - three sisters along with parents who both were teachers and coaches - he stayed very active in a variety of sports and school activities. He graduated from Concordia Lutheran High School and then moved on to Indiana University in Bloomington, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in Community Development and Planning from IU’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

From 1985 through 1989, Tom worked in the Comprehensive Planning Section of the City of Indianapolis’ Division of Planning. There among a variety of activities, he was involved with analyzing transportation impacts from major new developments, conducting research for several neighborhood plans and assisting with the airport vicinity land use study.

In November 1989, Tom accepted a position in the Rail Office of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). Initially, he worked as a “rail planner” – focusing on statewide freight rail issues, multi-state passenger rail plans, and rail corridor preservation efforts aimed at maintaining statewide freight rail service. Eventually, he also served as Manager of INDOT’s Rail Office where his responsibilities included oversight of freight and passenger planning, statewide rail code enforcement, communicating information on the state’s rail programs and helping to coordinate multi-state rail planning efforts and various levels of government participation in other pertinent rail issues.

In late 2006, Tom accepted a Senior Planner position with the Hillsborough County, Florida MPO (Greater Tampa). His work there focused on freight planning, congestion management and rail-related transit studies.

“Tampa offered an exciting opportunity to work on transportation planning at the local level, focusing on freight, transit and other areas in which I had a strong interest. Experiencing a work environment in another part of the country – particularly one with warm winter weather and sandy beaches - also was an attractive idea,” Beck says. “After awhile however, for various reasons, a return to Indianapolis made the most sense. I missed family, the region, - even the changing seasons, but mostly, the vibrancy of the urban core and all of the planning and development going on in the city.”

Despite having to leave the palm trees and beautiful gulf beaches, he happily returned to Indianapolis to work on the region’s multi-modal transportation initiatives as Principal Planner. As such, Tom’s primary responsibilities include:

• Coordinating the Multi-Modal Task Force
• Assisting with rapid transit studies, including environmental review documents
• Coordinating use of the Multi-Modal Design Guidelines throughout the region
• Multi-Modal System Plan development
MPO Staffs UP
(from page 4)

- Coordination of bike, pedestrian, and transit connectivity throughout the region

“I’m glad to be a part of improving our region’s mobility options, quality-of-life, environmental condition and overall economy,” Beck says.

Tom lives in the very walkable, near south side Garfield Park neighborhood with his partner of many years and their dog Ruby.

To contact Tom, call (317) 327-5646 or e-mail him at tjbeck@indygov.org.

Stephanie Belch
Principal Planner

Stephanie Belch joined the Indianapolis MPO as a Principal Planner in August of 2008. This is Stephanie’s second term with the MPO. She had previously worked for 3 years (2000 – 2003) as MPO Senior Planner before leaving to pursue other interests. During her absence, Stephanie returned to school and eventually accepted a position with INDOT where she had also worked before.

“I seem to be specializing in return engagements, but I’m glad to have that option,” Stephanie says. “I’ve always left on good terms with my employers and apparently they’ve been happy enough with my work to invite me back. It also helps that the MPO has some exciting planning opportunities right now,” she notes, “so I can return to a group of people I’ve always enjoyed and still be challenged in new and different areas.”

Stephanie is originally from Fort Wayne where she grew up with two sisters whom are both school teachers, so public service runs in the family. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Affairs from Indiana University’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs in 1990. She has also completed courses at Purdue’s School of Engineering and Technology at IUPUI during her hiatus from the MPO.

Her first job in transportation was with the Fort Wayne District of the Indiana Department of Transportation. (INDOT) She then moved to South Bend to work for the Michiana Council of Governments (the MPO for the South Bend and Elkhart urbanized areas). Another job opportunity with INDOT enticed her to move to Indianapolis to work with public transit providers and the state’s MPOs. Her experiences at INDOT and the MPOs include everything from construction engineering assistant and maintenance worker/snow plow driver, to federal-aid coordinator, to census data coordinator and bicycle/pedestrian planning, to transit planning, to construction materials and tests database development, to her most recent position in INDOT’s long range transportation planning section.

“I’ve worn a lot of hats over the years, and some of them had earflaps,” Stephanie jokes. “But I’ve never regretted any of the work. I really feel it’s helped inform my perspective for the regional planning I do today. It’s also helped me appreciate having a warm office in the middle of January.”

Her many roles at INDOT, and her experience with several Indiana MPOs, has given Stephanie unique insights into various aspects of good transportation planning. As Principal Planner, her primary responsibilities include:

• development and maintenance of the long range Regional Transportation Plan;
• coordination of the region’s Air Quality Conformity requirements.

Stephanie enjoys living in the downtown area of Indianapolis, with easy access to the Canal, Monon and White River Greenways, and other downtown amenities. She also serves as favorite aunt to her niece and nephews, spending as much time as possible with them in her off hours.

To contact Stephanie, call (317) 327-7599 or e-mail her at sbelch@indygov.org.

Catherine “Cat” Griffith
Planner

Catherine “Cat” Griffith joined the Indianapolis MPO as a Transportation Improvement Planner in August of 2008. Her interests in planning include coordination of transportation and land use planning, design of multi-modal transportation systems, creation of opportunities to educate and involve citizens in the transportation planning process, and of course, improvement of the transportation program in the Indianapolis region.

Originally from Wabash, Indiana, Cat attended Indiana University - Bloomington for three years before transferring to Tallahassee, Florida. There, in 2006, she graduated cum laude from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology and a minor in Urban Planning.

Cat stayed in sunny Tallahassee for two more years to attend graduate school at Florida State in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, where she earned a Masters of Science in Planning in April of this year. Her area of specialization within the program was Housing and Community Development. She also earned a Certificate in Urban Design.

“I think it helped my academic work that I was also gaining real world experience at the same time,” says Cat. “If nothing else, I was learning the practical side of planning on-the-job to balance classroom academic theory. I’m able to use both now with the MPO.”

cont on page 29, see MPO Staffs Up
Rapid Transit for the Indianapolis Region:
Resolutions and Recommendations
of the Greater Allisonville Community Council (GACC)
(June 2008)

Resolutions Approved by the GACC Board of Directors
The Board of Directors of the Greater Allisonville Community Council (GACC) has voted on the following rapid transit policy resolutions and recommendations for the Indianapolis region.

Supports a Regional Rapid Transit System: The Central Indiana Regional Transit Authority (CIRTA) should begin immediately to create a rapid transit system for the Indianapolis region. The transit system should include the core transit technology as well as the supporting infrastructure, including a feeder bus system, sidewalks, paths and bicycle lanes.

1. The rapid transit system should follow one of two routes in Marion County identified by the MPO DIRECTIONS study: “Northeast Corridor Rapid Transit Alternatives Analysis Completion Study” (draft report, December 5, 2007).
   A.) The Hoosier Heritage Port Authority (HHPA) route, also called the “Nickel Plate Railroad route” from Noblesville across the Hamilton-Marion County line in Castleton to downtown.
   B.) The HHPA-North Keystone Avenue route to downtown using a combination of the Nickel Plate route and Keystone Avenue in Marion County.

2. CIRTA should use one of the three transit technologies identified in the DIRECTIONS study as being suitable to the rapid transit needs of the Indianapolis region: light rail (LRT), bus rapid transit (BRT), or automated guided transit (AGT).

Supports a Regional System to Finance Rapid Transit: Recognizing that no rapid transit system in the world is paid for solely by fare box revenues, the GACC Board recommends that CIRTA establish a long-term regional revenue system for building and operating a rapid transit system in the Indianapolis region. This funding system should include federal, state, regional and local funds for building and operating the regional transit system. The revenue system should be equitable in the sense that those areas receiving the greatest benefits should pay the largest share of the costs.

CIRTA should work with the affected neighborhoods in the region to address the unique problems that a transit system may pose for them. GACC believes that any regional transit system that does not share the advantages proportionally with the disadvantages will fail.

Opposes the Use of Commuter Rail (heavy rail): GACC opposes any use of commuter rail (heavy rail) technology as a startup system along the Nickel Plate railroad corridor.
• **Not Suited for the Indianapolis region:** Commuter rail transit technology is not suited to the demographics and distances in the Indianapolis region. It has been rejected by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) DIRECTIONS study “Northeast Corridor Rapid Transit Alternatives Analysis Completion Study” (draft report, December 5, 2007) as suitable to the demographics and land use patterns of the region.

• **Opposed by Neighborhood Organizations:** Commuter rail is strongly opposed by the neighborhood organizations represented by GACC along the Nickel Plate railroad corridor covering an area from 82nd Street on the north, Binford Boulevard on the east, Kessler Boulevard on the south, and Keystone Avenue on the west. These neighborhood associations oppose commuter rail (heavy rail) because it magnifies the problems that currently exist with the running of the Fair Train during the State Fair (the “Fair Train Problem”). These problems include increased traffic disruptions and congestion at the major rail-street intersections along the railroad corridor, increased noise from the heavy diesel locomotives and passenger cars, increased vibrations transmitted by the heavy rail equipment to the residences and businesses along the right-of-way, increased safety issues for people living along the railroad corridor or crossing the railroad at grade, and increased intrusions into the privacy of the residences whose backyards are along the right-of-way. Because of these problems, the property values of homes close to the Nickel Plate right-of-way have been affected negatively.

**Other GACC Board Recommendations**

The GACC Board recommends that CIRTA consider the following options to ease the transit crisis facing the Indianapolis area:

**Expand Intercounty Bus Service (ICE):** The bus service now operating between Hamilton and Marion Counties should be expanded. CIRTA should also promote car-pooling and explore other options to reduce congestion in the Northeast Corridor, including the use of dedicated lanes for vehicles with higher occupancy rates (HOV lanes).

**Expand the IndyGo Bus Service (IndyGo):** The IndyGo bus service should move immediately to implement its proposal to add up to 300 new buses to create a bus grid system in Marion County. This system of buses could then be used as a feeder system to the rapid transit system once it is completed.

**Build Pedestrian and Bicycle Ways to Connect Indianapolis Neighborhoods:** The City of Indianapolis should begin building a system of pedestrian ways and bicycle lanes using the pedestrian masterplan developed for the county.

**About the Greater Allisonville Community Council (GACC)**

GACC, a 501c(3) not-for-profit organization, provides a neutral public forum for members of the GACC community to discuss and establish a consensus about policy issues of general concern to the Indianapolis region. The Council’s guiding philosophy is to work toward consensus among neighborhood groups, businesses and local governments that are represented at GACC’s public meetings. The Council has been active for 11 years in matters of zoning and land use; transportation, including pedestrian ways, roadways, and rapid transit; and quality of life issues, such as healthy lifestyles, environmental quality, public safety, and beautification. GACC represents 22 neighborhood associations in northeast Marion County (City of Indianapolis) in an area bounded by 82nd Street on the north, Binford Boulevard on the east, Kessler Boulevard on the south and White River/Keystone Avenue on the west.

Comments, suggestions, or questions about this statement should be addressed to Dr. Bob Lehnen, Vice-President, Greater Allisonville Community Council at robert-lehnen@att.net. Please include the phrase “Rapid Transit Comments” in your subject heading.
Dear Ehren,

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to join BRAG residents twice to hold special public meetings with BRAG businesses and residents.

As you know, there was lively discussion about the light rail proposal. Although there are some who dislike the idea of the Nickel Plate because of their unfavorable experiences with the noise and disruption of the State Fair train during August, a considerable majority of the 35,000 residents and 20,000 workers who commute in and out of the BRAG area daily plus the 50,000 cars that travel up and down Binford on their way to jobs in Hamilton County and downtown applaud CIRTA’s recommendations.

We at BRAG would like to include six points for IRTC to consider:
1) Implementing a train stop at East 71st near Binford Boulevard. BRAG is already working with the Indiana Transportation Museum to arrange for the 2009 State Fair train to stop at the proposed East 71st Street train stop. BRAG is coordinating with local businesses to offer parking places, pedestrian and bicycle access, and a handicapped access ramp on to the train from Steinmeier Station parking lot, with the owners’ hearty approval. This pilot project will give all of us a lot of information about potential usage by northsiders. We would use this opportunity to survey train takers about their interest in having more regular commuter and weekend light rail service.

2) BRAG’s willingness to have our taxes increased to kick start funding of the Nickel Plate light rail plan on the northeast side of town.

3) Reinforcing the idea of having CIRTA go with ambition to install light rail between Noblesville and downtown Indy with above grade only at critical intersections where traffic impacts are perceived to be negative.

4) Strengthening CIRTA’s role to coordinate efforts with IndyGo to have cross street bus access available to north side Indianapolis residents to access the new East 71st Street train stop.

5) Instituting City zoning changes that will add private development in and around the East 71st Street area to take advantage of the new train stop. This would include allowance of multi-use and multi-story development that includes a landscaped round-about at East 71st Street and Graham Road, realizing BRAG’s dream of having a village center, appropriately named Binford Green.

6) Stressing the need to fund sidewalks, trails and a safe, well marked Binford Blvd pedestrian crossings to allow walkers and bicycle riders access to the train from the residents who live on the east side of Binford and East 71st Street intersection and the Graham Road/ Binford Boulevard intersection.

Thanks again. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jane M. Lommel, President
BRAG (Binford Redevelopment & Growth) Group
website: www.binford71.org
phone: 317.841.0755

Building a sense of community by
Retaining existing businesses
Attracting new businesses and residents
Growing toward a brighter future

If you would like to communicate directly with the MPO on any matter regarding the regional transportation planning process, and have your comment considered for spotlight publication in teMPO, write Mike Dearing (mdearing@indygov.org) or the MPO’s Public Involvement/Communications Consultant Joe Whitman, APR (whitman@netdirect.net) under the Subject Line: teMPO Spotlight Comment.
Transit Meeting FAQs

In June the MPO and its planning partner CIRTA (Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority) co-hosted four public meetings concerning the Northeast Corridor transit recommendation. In addition, the MPO and CIRTA also facilitated meetings with special stakeholder groups located along the rail corridor throughout the summer. Following are the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) from those meetings and their responses.

Q. How many stops would the proposed Northeast Corridor rail transit system have in Marion County and where would they be? Would Hamilton County residents have better access to the system than Marion County residents?

A. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has made a long-term transit recommendation to help alleviate traffic congestion in the Northeast Corridor, our region’s busiest. This recommendation uses the existing rail corridor between Noblesville and downtown Indianapolis, known as the Hoosier Heritage Port Authority (HHPA) corridor or the ‘fair train’ route, as the system alignment and diesel light rail or diesel multiple unit (DMU) as the transit technology. Final station locations have not yet been determined, but when fully built out as envisioned in 2035, this system would have 19 stops: 13 or 14 in Marion County and 5 or 6 in Hamilton County.

To jump start the process, the MPO has also recommended a near-term option using the same route but with traditional diesel commuter rail transit as the technology. This start-up option would be less expensive and faster to implement, costing about a quarter of what the long-term system will, but still featuring 5 or 6 stops: 3 or 4 in Marion County and 2 or 3 in Hamilton County.

Q. With as often as the ‘fair train’ route crosses existing streets, won’t frequent commuter trains make traffic congestion even worse?

A. The recommended rail transit route will cross 14 existing streets in Hamilton County (when built out to the center of Noblesville) and 30 existing streets in Marion County. The streets crossed in Marion County include a number of low volume streets, but also Allisonville Road, Kessler Boulevard and 62nd Street – all busy thoroughfares with intersections that are already controlled by traffic lights.

The passing of a commuter train at any of these intersections would take less time than the average traffic signal, because of the trains’ proposed operating speeds (40 – 50 mph) and their short length -- 2-4 cars on average. It is also possible to synchronize traffic signals to coincide with rail crossings.

The removal of single occupant vehicles from the roads as more and more commuters “get on board with transit” would do more to improve traffic flow than managed rail crossings would inhibit it.

Q. How much would the recommended transit system cost?

A. The long-term system, when fully built out in 2035, is estimated to cost about $690 million, with all 19 stations, double track, new equipment and all day service.

The near-term option featuring fewer stations, single track with sidings, used equipment (if available) and peak period service only would cost between $160 and $200 million.

Q. Is the benefit of such a system really worth that much?

A. Consider the cost of doing nothing. According to the 2007 Texas Transportation Institute’s Urban Mobility Report, Indianapolis already ranks 30th worst in congestion among the nation’s 85 largest cities with area motorists spending an average of 43 hours a year delayed in rush hour traffic – more than an entire work week! The report states that our regional congestion delay totals 24,318,000 hours, wastes 16,098,000 gallons of gas and costs more than $478,000,000 a year in regional productivity and wasted fuel. That’s nearly half a billion dollars and this figure is calculated using the most recent data available from 2005 when gas cost less than $2/gal. Imagine what the cost of doing nothing is now!

The recommended system is the lowest cost rail transit alternative that can improve mobility and reduce peak hour congestion in our region’s busiest travel corridor. The capacity it cont on page 10, see Transit Meeting FAQs
Transit Meeting FAQs
(from page 9)

Would an improved bus system that allows east-west travel and has the flexibility to change routes be a better investment than a rail transit system that’s locked into one corridor?

It isn’t an either/or choice. All travel modes and transit systems need to work together to offer area residents the benefit of maximum choice and enhanced mobility. The MPO-recommended Northeast Corridor rail system assumes the expansion of IndyGo bus service which will run east-west routes to bring rail commuters to stations along the corridor and distribute disembarking passengers to their final destinations. It is recommended that funding for this system include funds earmarked to help IndyGo grow and may be the best opportunity to provide the capital necessary for IndyGo to develop a grid-route system. Currently, IndyGo has a ‘hub & spoke’ route system that brings most riders downtown before taking them to their final destinations. Such an improvement was recommended by IndyGo’s 2004 Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) which was conducted by the MPO as part of the rapid transit study DIRECTIONS.

What can be done about the engine noise and vibration associated with traditional diesel rail to help homeowners living along the rail corridor?

A lot. The MPO’s long-term recommendation of diesel light rail is a much quieter type of equipment than most people are familiar with. It puts out an average of 20 decibels lower noise than a freight train (or fair train) when passing at a distance of 50 feet. Even the MPO’s near-term start-up option, which would use new or refurbished diesel commuter rail equipment, would likely be quieter than the fair train.

The reason is two fold: Any transit equipment that would be put into daily commuter service along the Northeast Corridor would be newer than the fair train used for excursions by the Indiana Transportation Museum. Also, the MPO’s long-term and near-term transit options both include $50 - $60 million in rail bed and track improvements that will minimize train vibration and sound, including the installation of continuously welded track that eliminates the ‘clickety-clack’ noise associated with traditional rail.

Can anything be done about the train whistles blown at crossings? I know these are blown for safety reasons, but they’re the noisiest part of the train.

There are ways to safely reduce the audio footprint of a moving train. For example, full width barricades that completely block off both sides of the street being crossed by track, and prevent drivers from risking collision by driving around partial barriers, eliminate the need for crossing whistles.

An alternative would be wayside horns that are permanently installed at the crossing site. Because of their elevated, stationary mounting, these whistles have a smaller audio footprint yet have proven an effective warning system.

Either way, the current recommendation is to spend additional money in system development to create “quiet zones” through residential areas along the route. These zones will be defined in greater detail in the next phase of the project development.

Given the poor state of regional air quality, does it really make sense to recommend a diesel rail transit system? Why not something cleaner like electric rail?

The recommended long-term and near-term diesel-based systems have the potential to be powered by bio-diesel fuel -- the cleaner, environmentally responsible alternative to traditional diesel fuel. However, even without bio-diesel, the environmen-
Transit Meeting FAQs
(from page 10)

If I live along the HHPA rail corridor, what is the recommended system going to do to my property values?

We understand the concern of corridor residents, but believe the presumption of negative impacts is exaggerated. We have been monitoring peer cities (cities similar in size, locale, population distribution, etc.) who have invested in rail transit to assess their experience with property values. In most cities, the value of properties located within the transit system corridor have remained stable or risen from 10 to 25 percent, depending on proximity to stations. Studies over the past two decades have indicated that housing within .25 to .5 mile of a transit station is worth 6.4% more than other properties in Philadelphia, 6.7% in Boston, 10.6% in Portland, 17% in San Diego, 20% in Chicago, 24% in Dallas, and 45% in Santa Clara County, California.1

In some cases, declines in property values have been observed for dwellings that are close to especially noisy transit systems. Apartments abutting Chicago’s elevated lines frequently have lower rents, unless they are close enough to stations to benefit from the location advantage of improved transit access. Reductions of as much as 10 to 20% have been observed along suburban commuter rail lines in San Francisco and Boston that do not have effective noise mitigation features. Noise impacts can be minimized or eliminated through good design features, such as modern vehicles, railcar wheel maintenance, continuously welded track, noise barriers, and landscaping. These strategies will be explored in the next phase of project development.

Would the recommended rail transit system be accessible to people with disabilities?

Absolutely. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards would be incorporated into the design guidelines of any system considered for adoption.

Incorporation of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) design guidelines would ensure maximum accessibility to the proposed rail transit system.

Has the decision already been made to move ahead with a transit system in the Northeast Corridor?

No. That decision can only be made by the Policy Committee of the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council (IRTC) -- the decision-making body of the regional transportation planning process which is made up of elected officials from throughout the area. On April 30 2008 the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the region’s primary transportation planner, recommended a Northeast Corridor transit route and technology to the IRTC which voted unanimously to proceed with public meetings to present the recommendation for public comment. Those meetings, hosted by the MPO and the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA), took place in June 2008. Public comment gathered there and from other sources was compiled in a report for presentation to the IRTC in August 2008. After reviewing the report, the IRTC voted on the transit recommendation at a special meeting in September 2008.

Still, the decision-making process is far from over. The locally preferred alternative emerging from the current process will be reviewed in greater detail (along with improved bus and “do nothing” options) in the upcoming Environmental Impact Statement. Meetings will be held throughout that process to discuss the project, and when all the facts are in, a formal public hearing will be conducted to present the project and record input. Approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement will open the way for design and construction.

Is it too late to comment on the transit recommendation?

No. Comments still can be made at three related web sites: indympo.org, cirta.us, and cleardirections.info. In addition, the MPO hosts a 24-hour bilingual comment line at 317/327-8601.

As implementing agency, CIRTA will see the recommended system through Draft Environmental Impact Study, Preliminary Engineering and funding identification if it is approved by the IRTC. There will be ample opportunity for continuing public comment throughout these subsequent phases.

Pedal & Park Sets Records

It was the program’s biggest year by far, not only in the number of people served but also in the number of Pedal & Park events,” declares Tom McCain who coordinates the program for the Greenways Foundation (GF). “With a few exceptions, most notably a soggy CarmelFest, the weather worked in our favor this year with cooler than average temperatures encouraging first-timers to leave their cars at home,” McCain explains. “Our biggest boost, though, came at the gas pumps. There is nothing like $4 a gallon gas prices to increase interest in alternative travel modes, especially pedal power.”

The results? The number of cyclists using Pedal & Park corrals jumped from 2,542 in 2007 to 3,691 this year. And, the number of spring and summer greenways-adjacent events requesting a Pedal & Park bike corral nearly doubled, from a static six each of the last three years, to a whopping eleven in 2008!

“This is the healthiest program of its type I’ve ever seen,” says new MPO Principal Planner Tom Beck who oversees the agency’s multi-modal planning. “This amount of growth in a single year says a lot about the growing bicycle-friendliness of the region.”

This is the seventh year the MPO has sponsored Pedal & Park bike corrals. The program was founded by the Greenways Foundation to encourage use of non-motorized transportation alternatives, promote activity on Indy Greenways, dispense relevant recreational literature, and raise funds for its partnering not-for-profit organizations. The Central Indiana Bicycling Association (CIBA) is instrumental in coordinating most corral volunteer supervision. However, in recent years, other volunteer groups have stepped up to add events to Pedal & Park’s seasonal roster. For instance, for each of the last three years, the season has started with Earth Day Indiana (EDI) in late April where EDI volunteers supervise the corral themselves. And, over the July 4th holiday, the Monon Trailblazers of Hamilton County have supervised the CarmelFest corral which, this year, still managed to park 326 bikes, despite rain.

Pedal & Park Season At A Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Corral Cyclists</th>
<th>$ Raised</th>
<th>Coordination Time Paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth Day Indiana</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>no reimbursement sought</td>
<td>$150††</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike-To-Work Day</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>$100†</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Ripple Art Fair</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>$452</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADA Tour de Cure</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>no reimbursement sought</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRSP Family Art Series</td>
<td></td>
<td>not reported</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CarmelFest</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>$326</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana State Fair</td>
<td>1,960</td>
<td>$2,027</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Ave. Criterium</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>no reimbursement sought</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feast of Lanterns</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penrod</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>$269</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel International Arts Festival</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>$396</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>3,691 (minimum)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Dollars, incl. Coordination Time $4,870

† The MPO pays a daily minimum of $100 to corral volunteers when corral cyclists fail to park 100 bikes. If parked bikes exceed the 100 mark, the MPO pays a sponsorship of $1/bike parked.

†† New last year, the MPO pays the Greenways Foundation $150 per event when they help coordinate the participation of other groups by lending/transporting their corral components and sharing their procedural know-how.
Pedal & Park Sets Records
(from page 12)

“We’re happy that Pedal & Park has grown beyond the Marion County border,” says MPO Manager/Master Planner Mike Dearing. “But not all of the growth has been to the north. For the first time, there have been corrals on Massachusetts Avenue (Mass Ave Criterium), in Spades Park (The Festival of Lanterns) and in the White River State Park (The Family Arts Series),” he notes. “This year, Pedal & Park has grown in all directions!”

To compensate GF for its coordination time, the MPO now pays them $150 per event in addition to the sponsorship funds paid to the volunteer organizations monitoring the corral. For this reason, and because of the recently added event, the MPO paid more in sponsorship-related fees this year than ever before -- $4,870, nearly $1,200 more than last year!

“That’s a big bite for our budget,” says Dearing, “but we could hardly pull the plug when the demonstrated need is so great. I hope we have the same ‘problem’ next year.”

In addition to parking fees, the MPO also underwrites communications/public relations support for the program as part of its sponsorship, which resulted in 2008 coverage in The Indianapolis Star, NUVO and TOPICS and on WIBC and WFYI radio, as well as elsewhere.

“Bicycling for recreation and transportation eases traffic congestion and its related air quality issues,” says Dearing. “It also helps address the region’s health concerns and demand for greater mobility options, while saving area residents money,” he notes. “For all of these reasons, we’re hoping to see similar growth in 2009.” (Contact Tom McCain for more information at tom@pedalandpark.org or 317 251-4992).

This year, Pedal & Park venues included Earth Day Indiana, Bike-To-Work Day, the Broad Ripple Art Fair, American Diabetes Association Tour de Cure 2008, the 2008 Free Family Art Series at White River State Park, CarmelFest, the Mass Avenue Criterium, the Indiana State Fair where nearly two thousand cyclists parked in the corral, The Feast of Lanterns at Spades Park, Penrod Art Fair, and the Carmel International Arts Festival -- a new Pedal & Park venue which closed the season on September 28th.

At the Carmel International Arts Festival, as at other Pedal & Park events, people parked their bikes for FREE in the fenced, continuously monitored Pedal & Park bike corral. For this event, the corral was located in Carmel’s Arts and Design District next to the Monon Trail at 2nd Avenue NW adjacent to Bub’s Restaurant. As program sponsor, the MPO paid $1 for each bike parked between 10 a.m. and 7 a.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Proceeds were shared among the participating not-for-profit organizations whose volunteers supervised the corral.

For more information on Pedal & Park, including the two new events already slated for the 2009 schedule at Ft. Benjamin Harrison and on Talbot Street, visit www.pedalandpark.org.

Did you know . . .

Nearly 16,000 area cyclists have parked in Pedal & Park bike corrals at various greenways-adjacent spring and summer events just since 2002. And, because it pays participating not-for-profit organizations a parking fee of $1/bike, or a guaranteed daily minimum of $100 (which ever is greater), the MPO’s total sponsorship commitment over the last seven years including cash, public relations support, coordination compensation and tent/shelter purchase/repair/replacement exceeds $25,000 in grass roots support.
Public Input Gathered on Transit

(from page 1)

the PPP, visit indympo.org). Still, the information gathering of this past spring and summer probably ranks as one of our most comprehensive efforts.”

The results of that process were visible on Wednesday, August 20, when elected and appointed officials from throughout the area were presented with a summary of public comment concerning the Northeast Corridor transit recommendation made by the MPO as part of the rapid transit study DIRECTIONS. The gathered input was presented by the MPO and the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA) at the regularly scheduled August meeting of the Policy Committee of the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council (IRTC) which had asked for public review before voting on the issue.

The comments presented had been gathered at public meetings co-sponsored by the MPO and CIRTA, as well as at stakeholder group meetings held within the corridor, on three transit-related web sites, through direct contact with planners, and via the MPO’s 24-hour bilingual comment line (317/327-8601). This information can be viewed on-line at cleardirections.info, indympo.org and cirta.us in recently posted documents titled a Summary of Public Comment and Frequently Asked Questions & Answers from the Northeast Corridor Transit Public Meetings. In addition, all three sites currently offer a survey intended to assess public preference among four transit options still under consideration for the Northeast Corridor during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). These options include diesel light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit or a no-build option along the Nickel Plate line, which stretches from Noblesville to downtown Indianapolis.

“We made our system recommendation, the public largely supported it, and the IRTC approved it in September, but you never know what the DEIS might uncover,” says MPO Assistant Manager Philip Roth, AICP. “That’s why these options remain ‘on the table’ throughout the impact statement and opportunities for public comment will continue.”

The DEIS will further define the preferred alternative, closely examine its neighborhood and environmental impacts, evaluate possible station locations, refine both ridership and cost estimates, and conduct preliminary engineering analyses. CIRTA staff will oversee this phase for which the MPO is currently developing a scope-of-work that is sure to include ongoing public participation opportunities.

Talking and Listening

“It sounds so simple. Present current study information in a way that engages the public as early as possible in the process,” says Public Participation/Communication Consultant Joe Whitman, APR. “That’s really the goal. The MPO, IRTC and CIRTA are all looking for informed public input. That means using all of the tools at our disposal to clearly define the issues and, in this case, identify the selection/recommendation criteria. Then, gather public responses in a way that facilitates their consideration, documenting their influence on the study process,” he says. “One great example of this was the MPO and CIRTA deciding to cost out a near-term transit option (See related story, page 26) prior to the public meetings. That was done, in part, because stakeholders were already saying, “We need something ASAP. We can’t wait until 2035!”

The list of tools used to encourage and accommodate public participation in this last phase of DIRECTIONS has grown since the study started and now includes the following:

Public Meetings

There were dozens of public meetings throughout the rapid transit study and four more were held this past June (See meeting summary, this page). The public attended by the hundreds and both local print and broadcast media covered the events, reporting back to those who couldn’t make it in-person. In addition WCTY, the government access channel, taped the fourth meeting at the Indianapolis Central Library and has re-broadcast it repeatedly over the last four months. That meeting is also available via streaming video at cirta.us, cleardirections.info and indympo.org.

Stakeholder Meetings.

Mike Dearing and Philip Roth of the MPO and Ehren Bingaman of CIRTA met with various stakeholder groups located along the recommended transit corridor throughout the summer – eight meetings, and counting. Following a
PowerPoint presentation that detailed both the study process and the resulting transit recommendation, Mike and Ehren addressed the comments, concerns and suggestions offered by meeting attendees during lively, sometimes contentious, question and answer sessions.

“We heard loud and clear what kinds of issues are important to people and that was exactly the intent of our meetings,” says Bingaman. “We got great feedback to share with the IRTC Policy Committee.”

Dearing agrees. “The issues being raised at our meetings, including environmental impacts, system accessibility within Marion County, effect on property values along the corridor, and potential funding sources, reflect big picture thinking,” he says. “Though transit, in general, still has its opponents, most of our meeting attendees agree that we have to do something to address congestion, not only in the Northeast Corridor but throughout the region. Our meetings are intended to give everyone a voice in how we do that.”

Public Media Relations
Local media -- regional newspapers and radio and television stations -- is a partner in the process of keeping the public interested, informed and involved. Its coverage offers broad message exposure (i.e. broadcast news) and detailed information (i.e. print coverage). For this reason, the MPO and CIRTA kept local media well apprised of study activity, including public outreach efforts. Between April 30 and September 26 – from when the MPO made its recommendation to the IRTC and was tasked with presenting it to the public, to when the IRTC voted to approve the recommendation after having more than a month to consider gathered input – the project team prepared nine stories to spur media coverage. Media Advisories informed recipients of upcoming events, like public meetings, to encourage attendance by the public and media alike. News Releases reported newsworthy events that had already happened, for instance when the MPO and CIRTA commissioned work to define a near-term option, or when the Summary of Public Comment and an interactive transit preference survey were posted on project-related web sites. At least two advisory/release distributions per meeting were issued to the MPO’s full media list of 40+ news outlets, as well as its self-identified stakeholders list.

Public Meeting Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 12, 2008</td>
<td>BRAG Meeting</td>
<td>110+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 16, 2008</td>
<td>Indiana Historical Society</td>
<td>65-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 17, 2008</td>
<td>Gene B. Glick Junior Achievement Center</td>
<td>135-140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 18, 2008</td>
<td>Fishers Town Hall</td>
<td>120-130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 24, 2008</td>
<td>Indianapolis Central Library</td>
<td>95-100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though it was not one of the official Public Meetings, this was the largest of the Special Stakeholder Meetings and rivaled advertised events in attendance. It was held in the activities room of Castleton United Methodist Church.

This mid-day meeting, the first in a series of four, drew a sizable crowd to the IHS (normally closed on Mondays) and was also attended by WRTV, WTHR, WISH, WIBC and The Indianapolis Star.

The largest of the advertised meetings, this event drew from north Indianapolis neighborhoods bordering the proposed rail corridor.

The northern most advertised meeting held within the corridor was the only one to take place within Hamilton County and drew significant attendance and media coverage – unusual when public meetings are held back-to-back three days in a row.

The last of the advertised meetings, and the second to be held downtown, still attracted a large crowd wanting to learn more, and be heard, on the subject of Northeast Corridor transit.

cont on page 16, see Public Input Gathered on Transit
Public Input Gathered on Transit
(from page 15)

News Coverage
The Northeast Corridor’s Transit Recommendation outreach efforts garnered impressive results. A broadcast media report prepared by Cision, an independent media survey firm, shows Total Audience Impressions of 5,825,526 (roughly four times the region’s population), indicating significant repeat exposures, or times a television viewer was exposed to a news story involving the transit recommendation and its public meetings. These exposures were from network affiliate news broadcasts only and do not include any other media source, such as the nearly 50 articles to appear in The Indianapolis Star, The Noblesville Ledger, Topics, Indianapolis Business Journal, NUVO, The Noblesville Daily Times and other regional publications between May and September. The story was also prominent on local radio including WIBC news breaks and WFYI headline re-caps. In addition, multiple internet tie-ins from Inside Indiana Business (Grow Indiana), IndyStar.com and other sites and sources served to facilitate two-way communication between the project planners and area residents by often including direct contact information.

Call-In Shows/Interviews
The news coverage results are all the more impressive because they do not include the ‘soft’ broadcast interviews, talk shows appearances and call-in programs where regional mass transit and/or the recommended rail transit option was a hot topic of conversation. These included a 7:10 a.m. Philip Roth interview with Jake and Terry on WIBC (June 12), several segments of Greg Garrison’s program on WIBC (June 13), a major call-in topic for Steve Simpson’s evening show on WIBC (June 13 and 20), Ehren Bingaman’s Sunday morning phone interview with Amber Stearns on WIBC (June 22), a Steve Rose call-in topic on WIBC (filling in for Garrison on June 23), Mike and Ehren’s in-studio interview with Amos Brown on WTLG (June 24), and a continuing stream of appearances and broadcast conversations.

June 12, Media Day
Prior to the kick-off of four Public Meeting the following Monday, June 16, the MPO and CIRTA met with various media outlets to generated interest and top-of-mind awareness – all within a five-hour period. The day, in brief:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Media Contact</th>
<th>Project Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:10 a.m.</td>
<td>In-Studio interview with Jake &amp; Terry/WIBC</td>
<td>Philip Roth, MPO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>On-camera interview with Mary Milz of WTHR</td>
<td>Mike Dearing, MPO Ehren Bingaman, CIRTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 a.m.</td>
<td>Group interview with Dan McFeely and Chris Sikich of The Indianapolis Star and The Noblesville Ledger</td>
<td>Mike Dearing, MPO Ehren Bingaman, CIRTA Philip Roth, MPO John Myers, HNTB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>On-camera interview with WXIN-FOX 59.</td>
<td>Mike Dearing, MPO Ehren Bingaman, CIRTA John Myers, HNTB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 p.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Dan Carpenter representing The Star Editorial Staff.</td>
<td>Mike Dearing, MPO Ehren Bingaman, CIRTA John Myers, HNTB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td>WRTV needed to cancel this scheduled, on-camera interview to cover the breaking story of a helicopter crash.</td>
<td>Mike Dearing, MPO Ehren Bingaman, CIRTA Philip Roth, MPO John Myers, HNTB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dearing and Bingaman capped off the day by addressing a special meeting of BRAG (Binford Redevelopment and Growth) members which drew more than 110 people – the largest of the Special Stakeholder Meetings held within the transit corridor.

A mid-day meeting at the Indiana Historical Society, the first of four public meetings to be held in June, attracted the media and public alike.
Public Input Gathered on Transit
(from page 16)

Print Advertising
All meetings were promoted via display advertising in The Indianapolis Star, Carmel Star, Fishers Star, North Indy Star, Zionsville Star, Hamilton County Star, The Noblesville Ledger, Noblesville Topics, Fishers Topics, Carmel Topics, Hamilton Topics, La Ola Latino-Americana, La Voz de Indiana and The Indianapolis Recorder.

Broadcast Advertising
Five weeks of spots, promoting the meetings and referring interested listeners to the MPO web site (www.indympo.org) or the cleardirections.info web site for more information ran on WFYI. WFYI listeners were also referred to project web sites for more meeting information. Meeting details and study information also appeared in the Indiana Business E-Newsletter and FOX, WTHR (and The Star) also listed the full meeting schedule at various locations. Subsequent weeks of radio spots have promoted traffic to the project websites and participation in the on-line preference survey.

E-vites
All meetings were also promoted via e-mail to a growing list of self-identified stakeholders who include members of the media, elected officials, neighborhood and civic organization officers and members, MPO planning partners, Public Information Officers identified by IRTC members, and interested members of the general public. The list, compiled mainly from past meeting sign-in sheets, now stands between 400-500. At least two advisories per meeting were distributed to the MPO's full media list of 40+ news outlets, as well as this Stakeholders List. Notably, no e-vite recipient has ever requested removal from the MPO's stakeholders list.

Literature
The project communications team developed three pieces of literature to focus and help facilitate the public involvement process. Northeast Corridor Transit Route and Technology Recommendation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) contained major talking points to keep elected officials informed, team members on-track and media partners up-to-speed. Since this piece was not intended for the public, it was inexpensively produced and frequently updated to reflect emerging study information and evolving priorities.

Developed in July, Frequently Asked Questions and Answers from the Northeast Corridor Transit Public Meetings summarizes the major issues raised by members of the public during the June meetings as well as project team responses to their questions. These issues include the number of stations proposed for the system in both Marion and Hamilton Counties, the effect of rail transit on existing intersection congestion, noise and vibration mitigation techniques, the environmental impact of a diesel-based system on regional air quality and the proposed system's likely effect on property values along the corridor.

Summary of Comments from Public Meetings Regarding Recommended Northeast Corridor Transit System is a comprehensive compilation of the input gathered at the June Public Meetings and Special Stakeholder Meetings, from e-mail contacts, from web site discussion boards and from the MPO's comment line. It documents not only that the public was talking, but that the project team was listening and considering what it heard. This document was sent to voting members of the IRTC prior to their regularly scheduled August 20 meeting. There the elected and appointed officials who make up the group decided to schedule their vote for late September, giving them more than a month to review and consider the input provided to them.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers from the Northeast Corridor Transit Public Meetings and Summary of Comments from Public Meetings Regarding Recommended Northeast Corridor Transit System are available for review and download at each of the project-related web sites. Hard copies are available upon request from either the MPO or CIRTA.

cont on page 18, see Public Input Gathered on Transit
Public Input Gathered on Transit
(from page 17)

Web Sites
There are three web sites offering information on the Northeast Corridor Transit System recommendation. **www.cleardirections.info** features recent information from the rapid transit study **DIRECTIONS**, as well as information on the 2007 Smart Growth Land Use Study and the benefits of transit-supportive development. **www.indympo.org** is the web site of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization and offers a view of the project in the context of being only part of the MPO’s comprehensive regional transportation planning process. Direct contact information for each of the agency’s thirteen planners is also included along with a brief description of their individual responsibilities. Finally, **www.cirta.us** is the web site of the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority where browsers can find information on the transit recommendation, public outreach efforts and subsequent vote, as well as streaming video of public meetings and details on where the study goes from here. As implementing agency, CIRTA will see the approved locally preferred alternative (LPA) through Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS), Preliminary Engineering and funding identification now that it has been approved by the IRTC.

Preference Survey
A unique addition to the project’s communications toolbox is the Transit Preference Survey that was added to the web sites in early August. It offers respondents detailed information on each of four transit options still available for consideration in the Northeast Corridor. These include Diesel Light Rail Transit (DLRT – the long-term recommendation), Diesel Commuter Rail Transit (DCRT – the near-term proposal), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and the No-Build Option. Respondents are asked to state their system preference after gaining additional information on each option through subsequent questions. Projected usage and demographic questions round out the survey to about 5-minutes. Data is still being collected and analyzed for use by MPO and CIRTA planners during the next phase of study, so interested parties are encouraged to make their preferences known.

E-mail Contact/Comment Line
All project-related communications – Media Advisories, News Releases, publications like teMPO, print and broadcast advertising, e-vites, web sites, and project literature include direct response information facilitating two-way communications between planners and the public. In addition, the MPO’s 24-hour Bi-lingual Comment Line (317/327-8601) enables interested parties to leave their questions, comments or concerns for follow-up. Input is regularly gathered by MPO Senior Planner Catherine Kostyn and MPO Administrative Assistant Anita Bjork and directed to the appropriate planner for response.

“We have a multi-faceted approach to keeping the public engaged in the regional transportation planning process,” notes Dearing. “It’s allowed us to keep everyone up-to-date when new developments (e.g. rising gas prices) shifted priorities (e.g. development of a near-term transit option) and facilitated open communications among project planners, regional decision-makers and the constituents we both serve.”

For more information on either the MPO Northeast Corridor Transit System Recommendation or the MPO’s Public Participation Plan, contact Mike Dearing (317/327-5139, mdearing@indygov.org), Philip Roth (317/327-5149, proth@indygov.org), or MPO Principal Planner Tom Beck (317/327-5646, tjbeck@indygov.org). To glimpse some of the gathered input, read Verbatim: Recent Public Comment next page.
The primary goal of the MPO’s Public Participation Plan is to solicit and accommodate meaningful public involvement in the regional transportation plan process. A measure of that involvement is the extent to which the MPO captures and considers public input, and is able to document the impact of that consideration on its subsequent process recommendations.

For this reason, this semi-regular feature was introduced in the last issue of teMPO to spotlight direct communication between the public and its MPO. The comments included here, all addressing the MPO’s Northeast Corridor Transit Recommendation, were gathered from e-mail communications, the MPO 24-hour Public Comment Line (317/327-8601) and comments cards turned in at public meetings this summer. All are transcribed here verbatim!

• • •

The time for studies is over. We need to “get on board” (literally) and move forward with light rail in Indiana. If we can come up with the funds for Lucas Oil Stadium, then we can certainly come up with the funds for public transportation that will benefit us all (elderly, low income, etc.). Rome was not built in a day and we have to start somewhere. We have recommended the best alternative for a starting place. So let’s go! Ultimately, this needs to be a total “system” for moving people where they need to go.

• • •

I have major concerns about the noise and vibrations and the effect on our property values, as I live in Berkley Grove. Our proximity to a station will not be an enhancement to our property values, but likely a negative.

• • •

I also am concerned about how single-minded this is. It doesn’t solve the traffic congestion of east and west (i.e. Fishers to the Pyramids or to Park 100). It really just perpetuates the drawbacks of the current IndyGo lines.

• • •

If $690 million will give us a limited light rail system, wouldn’t that amount give us a world-class bus system that could service the entire city? Our current bus system has riders standing in ditches with no platform, benches or shelter. Look at the big picture like in Paris, France. There is a bus system that rivals their subway!

In addition, where will these funds come from? What is the cost per taxpayer for this? I live in Marion County and I do not want to pay for all of the tax burden, while riders in Hamilton County have no tax burden.

Please respond.

(Editor’s Note: As requested, MPO Assistant Manager Philip Roth, AICP, responded via e-mail to the comment above within two weeks.)

• • •

Just build it. The city needs a line to the northeast and a line to the west (airport). This is not just about transit, it’s about economic development, and the future of the Indianapolis area.

• • •

My home backs up to Nickel Plate. I think the rail is a terrible idea. The track is a few feet from my home. I am totally against it.

• • •

I saw an editorial and want to comment. I am 100% behind Rapid Transit. I also support the routes. Best of luck getting it done and I hope it becomes a reality.

• • •

I am all for light rail in four directions (Hamilton County, Greenwood, downtown, airport). I believe we can fund this using funds from an ecological license plate or adding a 1 cent “green tax.” The tax would include light rail, trails and bike paths. I hope others will get on board. This is more important than a Colts stadium.

• • •

NO FOSSIL FUEL – even if it means we have to wait! Don’t throw away money on a system that needs to be retired. Wait for technology to catch up and spend our money on a system that runs on alternative energy. THINK LONG TERM AND NOT QUICK (or not so quick) fix. Thanks!

• • •

I just wanted to write and let you I support the idea of light rail/mass transit from Noblesville!

I have long advocated that the quickest way to get into the mass transit business is to put existing buses onto existing rail lines. This can be done by adding rail trucks to buses. The railroad has many trucks that are hybrid – rubber tired and steel rail wheels. One of the advantages is that buses can get off the track and finish the route downtown on streets.

I would be happy to discuss the concept if there is interest.

• • •

As a native, I’m so pleased that mass transit is being seriously discussed. To move forward, our city needs to take the possibility seriously.

• • •

I support the light rail recommendation (and really any of the options) just as long as we get people out of their cars. Indianapolis is 45th out of 50 cities in terms of environmental quality. Improved cont on page 32, see Verbatim: Recent Public Comment
It was clear from their comments that every voting member of the IRTC in attendance supported moving ahead with the recommendation,” says Dearing. “Though people’s specific reasons varied, their support for using the Nickel Plate rail line as a transit route between Noblesville and downtown Indianapolis, and some form of diesel rail transit as a technology, was unanimous.”

The vote was taken at a special joint meeting of the IRTC Policy and Technical Committees held on Friday, September 26, in the Grand Hall on the Indiana State Fairgrounds. The meeting was open to the public and attracted about 60 spectators, some representing vocal advocacy groups including Health By Design, whose members handed out pro-transit buttons. Local media also attended, including WTHR-Channel 13, WISH-TV - Channel 8, WRTV- Channel 6, FOX - Channel 59, WIBC Radio and The Indianapolis Star.

When the outcome was clear, and Dearing declared, “I think we’ve done it,” the room erupted in applause among IRTC members and spectators alike. Later, Dearing ceremoniously presented a bent paperclip to CIRTA Executive Director Ehren Bingaman, symbolic of handing over the project to the regional transportation authority as it now leaves the purely planning phase and enters the implementation phase, via a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Recent Background

“It’s been a long time in coming, but we’re confident that our transit system recommendation for the Northeast Corridor was worth waiting for,” says Dearing. “After more than four years of study with DIRECTIONS, we’re convinced that the Nickel Plate Line and the long-term technology recommendation of diesel light rail (diesel multiple unit, or DMU) offer the greatest value in reducing congestion in our region’s busiest travel corridor, and the air pollution that goes with it, while also providing our entire planning area with the best starter system option upon which to build (and finance) a region-wide system.”

Though the effort to reduce rush hour congestion in the Northeast Corridor began long before even the DIRECTIONS study (as far back as the late 70’s when the decision was made not to extend I-69 into downtown Indianapolis), many only tuned in to the topic this past spring, when gas prices approached $4 a gallon.

On April 30, the MPO presented a route and technology recommendation to meet the long term transit needs of the Northeast Corridor. This preliminary recommendation, a milestone of the rapid transit study DIRECTIONS, was made at a special joint meeting of the Technical and Policy Committees of the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council (IRTC). The IRTC Policy Committee, which is made up of elected officials from throughout the area, is the decision-making body of the transportation planning process. As the region’s primary transportation planner, the MPO makes all of its recommendations to the IRTC Policy Committee for consideration and adoption or rejection.

“By federal mandate, the MPO is a planning agency,” notes Dearing. “As such, we can recommend ways to improve the safety and efficiency of our regional transportation system, but we cannot implement them. That has to be done by someone else to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest. Also, it means that we can’t simply decree that a transportation-related project be added to the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Improvement Program (IRTIP) no matter how strongly its benefit is indicated from our study. The decision of whether or not to approve our recommended improvements, and add them to the IRTIP, is up to IRTC members. Sometimes, that can slow down things to the complete frustration of project supporters.”

(EDITOR’s NOTE: In 2001 cont on page 22, see Northeast Corridor Transit Moves Ahead
Why This Route?

Though members of the IRTC Policy Committee selected the Northeast Corridor as the first leg of a possible region-wide transit system back in 2004, and unanimously reiterated their choice this past September, others may still be asking themselves, “Why?” For their benefit, teMPO reprints key talking points for the rationale used to help bring new decision-makers up-to-speed on this long deliberated planning recommendation.

Why was the decision made to serve the Northeast first?

- The results of a technical regional analysis of seven corridors in Central Indiana showed that both the north and northeast corridors ranked very high in terms of projected population, employment, and development trends. The difference between the two corridors is congestion – transit can provide the most benefit in the Northeast Corridor, where the current and projected need is the greatest.

- The Northeast Corridor travels through Indianapolis neighborhoods that have significant redevelopment potential. Recently, an area northeast of downtown was identified by the Indianapolis Brownfields Committee as having the best combination of need and potential for fast-paced “smart growth” redevelopment in the City of Indianapolis. Specifically, the area centered around East 22nd Street and the Monon Rail Corridor/ Nickel Plate Rail Line would leverage the momentum from multiple independent community economic development initiatives currently underway, and provide stimulus for sustainable growth for the entire area.

- In 2006, the Indianapolis MPO invited officials from Phoenix Valley Metro, St. Louis Metro, Charlotte Area Transit System, Denver Regional Transit District, Utah Transit Authority, Houston Metro, TransLink of Vancouver, BC and Don Emerson, former FTA Administrator in Washington DC to discuss their key “lessons learned” in developing and expanding transit systems. They each noted that a key factor to success is to start small and pick the one corridor that will provide the most “bang for the buck” – start with the corridor that has the best chance for success. “If you put the route in the right location, everything else will fall into place – ridership, economic development, support for future expansions, and funding.”

- Nashville, Tennessee and Buffalo, New York are two examples of systems that did not place the initial line in the right place and their systems are failing. Key destinations at both ends of the line and the potential for significant ridership are needed to ensure success.

- A key economic development success factor for all transit routes, but especially a first line, is use (i.e. ridership). Strong use of a transit line from day one is critical to stimulate economic development in the areas along the route. Development will not occur if people do not use the line. The Northeast Corridor is the best “first chance” the region has for initial success. It can stimulate further expansion of the transit system and spread the benefits of economic development throughout the county.

With all the investment at the airport, shouldn’t we serve it first?

- Intuitively, that sounds like the right thing to do. All cities have visitors who arrive at the airport and want to go downtown. But the actual number of people doing that is small compared to the peak hour work trips that planners are trying to attract with a transit system. Transit of any kind (bus, rail, other) is most successful at serving the peak hour work trip commute. Any other use of the system beyond work trips (special events, major sporting events, visitors from the airport, etc) is “gravy.” Use of the system for these purposes is encouraged but will not provide the activity needed to sustain a system by itself.

- An airport link to the Northeast Corridor (i.e. phase B of the Northeast Corridor route) makes sense and is the probable next step, hooking out of downtown Indianapolis to the (Indianapolis International Airport) IIA.

Will Marion County residents benefit from a line to the northeast?

- Absolutely. Indianapolis/Marion County will benefit the most from any expansion of the transit system. A tour of the Nickel Plate line in northeast Marion County illustrates many areas with strong potential for economic redevelopment, starting in downtown around 10th Street and continuing at 16th Street, 22nd Street, 25th Street, Sutherland Avenue, 38th Street (near the Meadows area), 46th Street and north of 62nd Street.

- Furthermore, in order to get the full benefit of a rail line and meet the needs of the traveling public, IndyGo will need to add service and provide crosstown routes that directly benefit area residents.

- There is a strong potential for transit-oriented development similar to what has occurred in other cities. Transit stations along the line will require other amenities that can include things like child care facilities, retail establishments, dry cleaners, post office outlets, coffee shops, etc. This development will revitalize the neighborhoods around these stations -- neighborhoods like Martindale-Brightwood, and the Meadows -- and bring added employment opportunities to the immediate area, plus provide connectivity to other jobs in the region.
**Northeast Corridor Transit Moves Ahead**

(from page 20)

**NECTions**, the study of NorthEast Corridor Transportation, recommended ways to help alleviate growing peak hour congestion and improve regional air quality: 1) add lanes to the northeast quadrant of I-465 (which since have been completed), and 2) develop a rail-bus transit system using existing infrastructure. The latter option was shelved and the MPO was requested by that study’s oversight committee (then INDOT Commissioner J. Bryan Nicol, State Senator Luke Kenley and then, new Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson) to study the possibility of a region-wide transit system of which the Northeast Corridor would be only a part. Seven years later, that mission has been accomplished).

At the April 30th meeting, the IRTC voted unanimously to proceed with public meetings to present the MPO’s route and technology recommendation for review. The MPO also recommended Diesel Multiple Unit, or DMU, technology to provide rapid transit service along this route. In making its recommendation, the MPO considered technical feasibility, capital cost, speed of implementation and public input concerning selection criteria, system goals and preferred transit characteristics gathered through DIRECTIONS’ extensive community involvement program.

“The study’s recommendation, and the resulting LPA, is actually for a level of service the system will provide when completely built out,” explains Roth. “We’ve specified the route alignment and the technology that appears to offer the highest ridership (use) numbers, but it’s conceivable these elements could change during the DEIS. That’s why further study is done -- to tell us what we don’t already know.”

Four years ago, in July 2004, the IRTC selected the Northeast Corridor as the first leg of a potential region-wide transit system. Since then, the MPO has conducted an Alternatives Analysis (AA), evaluating 13 route and transit technology combinations with the aid of extensive public input. The recommended alignment, the Nickel Plate Line, is the track that is used each year as the Fair Train route linking the Indiana State Fairground and Fishers. The majority of the line is owned by the Hoosier Heritage Port Authority and is currently used by the Indiana Transportation Museum for leisure excursions.

It and three other potential alignments, finalists in the evaluation process, are shown in the aerial view on page 23. One potential alignment uses the I-69/Binford Blvd. right-of-way.

*cont on page 24, see Northeast Corridor Transit Moves Ahead*
Northeast Corridor Transit Moves Ahead
(from page 22)

between Noblesville and 38th St. at the Fairgrounds, then follows the railroad right-of-way that parallels the Monon Trail to 10th St. at Massachusetts Ave. Another uses the Allisonville Rd. right-of-way between Noblesville and the Fall Creek Parkway, following the Keystone Ave. right-of-way with I-70 on the south, between 39th St. at the Fairgrounds and 10th St. at Massachusetts Ave. The third uses the Hoosier Heritage Railroad right-of-way between Noblesville and 86th St., following 86th St. and I-465 right-of-way between the Hoosier Heritage Railroad corridor and Keystone Ave. between I-465 and 38th St. at the Fairgrounds. This route then picks up the rail right-of-way that parallels the Monon Trail to 10th St. at Massachusetts Ave.

“Our recommended alignment makes the best use of existing infrastructure, which allows us to hold down costs,” says John Myers of HNTB Corporation, the project’s lead consultant. “Of the four alignment finalists, our recommendation also offers Northeast Corridor travelers the most direct route into and out of downtown, which minimizes travel time and maximizes projected ridership.”

The transit technologies evaluated in detail for the Northeast Corridor included:

**Automated Guideway Transit (AGT)**
AGT is a flexible, high-performance technology, suited to a variety of applications including downtown circulation and shuttle service. It can often co-locate with aerial streets, interstates, rail corridors and greenway trails. AGT has the highest capital costs of any transit technology that was considered. However, being driver-less, it also offers the lowest operating costs.

**Light Rail Transit (LRT)**
LRT offers high passenger capacity and demand responsiveness, as does AGT, because of the ease with which rail cars can be added. LRT can operate in “on-street” environments, although such operating conditions result in low operating speeds and high impact on surrounding traffic flow. Of the four transit technologies that were considered, LRT is at the midpoint for both capital and operating costs.

**Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU)**
A Diesel Multiple Unit or DMU is a train consisting of multiple carriages powered by one or more on-board diesel engines. The term ‘multiple unit’ is used to describe a self-propelling train carriage capable of coupling with other units of the same or similar type and still being controlled from one cab. Because of the ease in which the rail cars can be added, DMU offers the high passenger capacity and demand responsiveness of both AGT and LRT, plus the unique environmental and economic advantages of diesel operation. For these reasons, it was recommended as the long-term transit technology.

**Bus Rapid Transit**
BRT uses exclusive guideways, such as a reserved lane

Unlike Metrolink, the Light Rail system investigated by the project team in St. Louis, the Northeast Corridor Recommendation would run on diesel fuel, not electricity.

AGT, like the system in Vancouver, BC which the project team investigated, is the least expensive form of transit to operate, but the most expensive one to build.

Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) is a form of diesel light rail transit which offers economical operation and less noise and vibration than traditional commuter rail.
Northeast Corridor Transit Moves Ahead
(from page 24)

on the highway or exclusive rights-of-way to enhance its level of service over those of buses operating in mixed traffic. Accommodating this technology requires larger amounts of right-of-way to allow optional system performance. BRT offers the lowest capital costs of any transit technology being considered, if its length of guideway is minimized. However, BRT also has the highest operating costs of the transit technologies that were considered.

“We studied all of the options and recommended the one that offers maximum benefit for minimum investment,” notes Dearing. “The IRTC and the majority of the public who participated in our planning process seem to agree with our conclusion.”

Next Steps
The IRTC’s affirmative vote on September 26th was not the final decision point for a “go/no go” determination of whether or not the Northeast Corridor starter system as recommended will be built. Rather, it is a decision to narrow the focus to save time and money for more detailed studies in one corridor. Other corridors are still under study by the MPO. Proceeding with the environmental study process will give planners the information they need to make an informed decision as a community in this corridor. While the environmental study is being conducted, details about the corridors elsewhere in the region can be more fully examined, reflecting the original mandate of developing a system to benefit the entire region.

The “Yes” vote by the IRTC positions CIRTA, as overseer of the DEIS, and the MPO whose staff will work on the on it to define the project in greater detail, determine its level of use and formulate a funding plan. When this information is in place and the community has had further opportunities to weigh in on a specific proposal, area decision-makers will be in a position to make the go/no go decision.

The MPO is currently developing a scope-of-work for the environmental impact statement to be reviewed by CIRTA. As this transportation study goes forward, the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development will be formulating plans and identifying policies that leverage the greatest benefit for our neighborhoods.

For more information on the proposed DEIS scope-of-work, contact MPO Principal Planner Tom Beck (317/327-5646, tjbeck@indygov.org). For more information on the start date, timeline or funding of the DEIS, contact Ehren Bingaman of CIRTA (317/327-7585, info@cirta.us).

Ottawa Ontario provides public transportation via a combined bus/rail system. The project team investigated its BRT component in 2004.

YOUR MPO STAFF
... includes these people who would be happy to address your comments or questions on any aspect of the transportation planning process:

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For more information on our regional transportation planning process, visit the MPO web site at www.indympo.org.
The MPO’s long-term transit system recommendation for the Northeast Corridor uses the existing Hoosier Heritage Port Authority (HHPA) rail corridor between Noblesville and downtown Indianapolis as the system alignment and diesel light rail or diesel multiple unit (DMU) as the technology. When fully built out, as envisioned in 2035, this system would have 19 stops: 13 or 14 in Marion County and 5 or 6 in Hamilton County.

The long-term recommended rail transit system would cross 14 existing streets in Hamilton County (when built out to Noblesville) and 30 existing streets in Marion County, including Allisonville Road, Kessler Boulevard and 62nd Street – all busy thoroughfares whose intersections are already controlled by traffic lights. The long-term system, when fully built, would cost about $690 million in 2035 dollars and feature double track, new equipment and all day service.

To jump start the process, the MPO also recommended a near-term option using the same route but with traditional diesel commuter rail transit (CRT) as the technology. This start-up option would be far less expensive and much faster to implement, possibly in as little as two to four years, and would still offer 5 or 6 stops: 3 or 4 in Marion County and 2 or 3 in Hamilton County. This near-term option would feature single track with sidings, used CRT equipment (if available) and peak period service only. It would cost about a quarter of what the long term system recommendation would cost, between $100 and $160 million.

Both rail options would rely on bus transit to provide cross town access to potential passengers as well as final destination passenger distribution service from each rail station along the corridor.

Two other options for Northeast Corridor transit development, though not recommended, will continue to be studied during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. They are Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), which would require the HHPA rail corridor to be paved over -- a process that would cost about the same as the long- and near-term options dedicate for track improvements -- and a “no-build option.”

“Doing nothing is always a possibility in transportation planning,” explains MPO Assistant Manager Philip Roth, AICP. “That option must remain available to insure a truly objective study process. In fact, despite MPO recommended improvements, that is the course the region has taken over the last 20 years,” he notes. “Now, however, we have a better understanding of the true cost of this option (See “Transit Meeting FAQs,” on page 9).
There are some significant differences with our draft 2009-2010 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP),” notes MPO Assistant Manager Philip Roth, AICP, who oversaw development of the document. “For one thing, it is intended to cover the next two years of our planning activity. We’ve never done that before,” he notes.

Like most everyone, the MPO prepares a “to do” list before budgeting and scheduling its activity for the coming year. Previously, this list was called the Overall Work Program. Eight years ago, however, in the fall of 2000, its name was changed to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to better reflect the cooperative and interdependent relationship the MPO’s work has with that of its many planning partners.

“That interdependence remains a focus of our current document,” says Roth, “though it covers information not found in previous work programs, including a detailed presentation of issues raised by our 2006 Strategic Plan such as staffing needs, data development requirements, possible consolidation with adjacent MPOs, and new sources of operating revenue,” he explains. “It also has a new format this year that I think people will find a little more reader-friendly.”

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The MPO's 2006 Strategic Plan is available for review and download at www.indympo.org.)

The UPWP is multi-modal in scope and includes highways, transit, pedestrian, and airport related projects as appropriate. Essentially, it documents the use of Federal Planning Funds and MPO activities for state and federal agencies, public officials and the public. The document is normally developed throughout the previous year and finalized by year's end following approval by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and adoption by the Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC). (EDITOR’S NOTE: The 2008 UPWP was adopted by the MDC in November, 2007. The draft 2009-2010 UPWP is scheduled for official review and adoption by the MDC on November 19, 2008.

Transportation planning in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Area is an interactive process conducted by the MPO and involving elected and appointed officials, planners, engineers, and citizens of Central Indiana. The 2009-2010 Unified Planning Work Program sets forth the major transportation planning initiatives and activities for the 2009-2010 program years (January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2010.) It consists of transportation program elements which contribute to maintaining and implementing the region’s transportation plans in compliance with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 and the Mission of the IMPO.

UPWP Goals

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program results in plans and programs for highways, transit, and other means of moving people and goods in compliance with federal transportation requirements to guide the development of an efficient multi-modal transportation system within the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Area. Its goals include:
Irons In The Fire

Sweson Yang: An Appreciation

On March 1st of this year Sweson Yang, AICP, retired as Principal Planner of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization after nearly 37 years of planning service there and to the City of Indianapolis. He joined the then newly consolidated city-county planning staff on March 8, 1971. For many years, Sweson carried the title Chief Transportation Planner and served as the MPO’s in-house technical expert regarding federal regulations, travel simulation and air quality conformity modeling. Included among his many responsibilities was serving as project manager for Federal/State Reporting Requirements, various Indianapolis Regional Transportation Plan Updates, Air Quality Conformity Analysis and the Intermodal Freight System Plan Airport Deployment Study.

“It doesn’t seem possible that it has been nearly four decades,” says Sweson, “I can certainly remember some very long days, but the years . . . they just flew by. I always enjoyed the people I worked with, so it wasn’t hard time.”

As evidence by his recent attendance of a national conference of Transportation Engineers in Anaheim, CA, Sweson plans to “keep his hand in” at the MPO, on an as-needed basis. He has kept both of his professional memberships in the American Institute of Planners as a Certified Planner (AICP) and the Institute of Transportation Engineers. He is willing to assist the Indianapolis MPO and transportation planning professionals “in whatever appropriate capacities.”

“There’s just too much knowledge and experience there to let go of,” says MPO Manager Mike Dearing. “We’d like to continue having Sweson’s perspective available to us as long as he’s willing.”

That doesn’t mean Sweson and his wife, Chien-tai, aren’t serious about taking things a little easier now, though. “We enjoy going to the YMCA three times a week and volunteering at NCAA or Big Ten Sporting Events and at Taiwanese and International Community functions,” Sweson recently noted from his eastside home. “We also have two grown sons, both Notre Dame graduates, we see as often as possible, too. Robert lives in Simi Valley, CA and Andy lives in Niceville, FL. Andy and his wife have a beautiful daughter, Kailey, and are expecting my grandson in January of 2009,” he said. “In addition, we have traveled to the Baltic Sea countries recently and plan to visit our native Taiwan on a fairly regular basis to keep in-touch with extended family.”

If you’d like to touch base with Sweson, you can e-mail him at sweson@sbcglobal.net.

Kostyn Promoted

Earlier this year, Catherine Kostyn was promoted to the position of MPO Senior Planner. As such, her current responsibilities now include:

- Assisting with Data Development and management of all GIS resources
- Assisting with the Travel Simulation Model and Microsimulation
- Assisting with the Transportation Enhancement Grant Program
- Managing the MPO web site
- Providing technical support as needed
- Other projects, as assigned.

“I appreciate the vote of confidence,” she says, “and am already enjoying my expanded duties.”

Catherine joined the MPO staff in February 2002 as a Transportation Planner. Her varied interests include GIS, data development, cartography, and web site development. In 2000, she graduated from the University of Tennessee.
MPO Staffs UP
(from page 5)

While attending graduate school, Cat worked part time with the Florida Department of Community Affairs conducting reviews of development orders and comprehensive plan amendments that affected state-designated environmental protection areas, such as the Florida Keys and the Green Swamp in central Florida.

“This is a very unique experience to work in a different part of the country in which we find ourselves living and working. Florida gave me the chance to realize that, and Indiana has given me a chance to make a difference,” she offers with a smile.

As one of the MPO’s new Transportation Planners, Cat will work with the guidance of Principal Planner Steve Cunningham. Her primary responsibilities include:

- Maintaining the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Improvement Program
- Conducting Thoroughfare Plan Studies
- Photographing Transportation Projects

Cat lives in Broad Ripple with Scott, her husband-to-be, and their rescued border collie, Chloe. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, playing guitar, and relaxing with friends and family. You are likely to see her on the Monon Trail biking, blading, or walking the dog.

To contact Cat, call (317) 327-5137 or e-mail her at cgriffit@indygov.org.

Wendy DeBoard joined the Indianapolis MPO as a Transportation Planner in September of 2008. A native of Indianapolis, she grew up on the city’s east side with one sister. In 2004, Wendy earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Geography from Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis. She is currently completing her Masters Degree program in Geographic Information Science (GIS) at the same institution. Her main area of interest is in the use of Geographic Information Systems in urban planning applications, particularly the beneficial relationship of the urban tree canopy on the health of urban environments.

“I think we’re used to investigating the possible man-made impacts that proposed transportation improvements and land use development can have on the natural environment. But we’re not as familiar with how nature can improve the man-made environment it is in proximity to or exactly how to quantify those benefits,” says Wendy “That’s of particular interest to me and can lead, I think, to re-ordering environmental planning priorities based on self-interest and health concerns.”

As one of the MPO’s new Transportation Planners, Wendy will work closely with Principal Planner Andy Swenson on data base development, maintenance and analysis, putting her GIS and technology background to good use for transportation planning purposes. As such, Wendy’s current responsibilities include:

- Assisting with the Travel Demand Model and Micro-simulations
- Assisting with socio-economic forecasts and land use trends
- Assisting with data collection efforts and GIS data development
- Other duties, as assigned

“I’m eager to put my years of education to work on the MPO’s various planning initiatives,” she says. “Everything I’ve been studying has led me here and I’m glad to be a part of a team that’s growing to meet the challenges of our region’s future.”

Wendy lives with her daughter, Grace, in Lawrence Township, northeast Indianapolis. In her free time, she enjoys music, painting, reading, and playing with her daughter at Fort Harrison State Park.

To contact Wendy, call (317) 327-5431 or e-mail her at wdeboard@indygov.org.

Anna Tyszkieicz joined the Indianapolis MPO as a Senior Planner in October of 2008. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 2001 and Masters in Public Administration in 2003, both from Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI.

Prior to joining the Indianapolis MPO, Anna worked in the public sector as a Transportation Planner for the Grand Valley Metro Council – (the MPO for the Greater Grand Rapids area) from 1999 to 2005. In this position, she was responsible for public involvement, Ozone Action, Westrain (a passenger rail collaborative) and safety planning.

“It was a great first job out of school,” Anna says. “I worked on a varied menu of issues and saw, first hand, how important transportation planning is to a region.”

In 2005, Anna moved to the Indianapolis area to accept a position with The Schneider Corporation, one of the largest survey and engineering firms in Indianapolis. While there, she served as Sales Support Manager and Interim Marketing Manager, working on a wide range of projects.

As a new Senior Planner with the
MPO Staffs UP
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MPO, Anna will be working closely with Principal Planner Tom Beck in the area of Multi-Modal Planning. Her primary responsibilities include:

- Coordinating the Multi-Modal Task Force
- Assisting with rapid transit studies, including environmental review documents
- Coordinating use of the Multi-Modal Design Guidelines throughout the region
- Developing the region’s Multi-Modal System Plan
- Coordinating bike, pedestrian and transit connectivity throughout the region

“I’m glad to be working on something that has so much demonstrated need,” she says. “After this past summer, with gas prices hitting $4 a gallon, it is important that area residents have more mobility options that allow them to leave their cars at home. Now that the Northeast Corridor transit recommendation has been approved for DEIS study,” Anna notes, “I think I’ve joined the MPO at just the right time.”

Anna lives with her husband Chad and daughter Ella in area Historic Meridian Park. In her off-hours, she enjoys running, gardening and reading.

To contact Anna, call her at (317) 327-5487 or e-mail her at atyszkie@indygov.org

Kiran Avadhanula
Senior Regional Planner

Kiran Avadhanula joined the Indianapolis MPO as a Senior Regional Planner in October of 2008. He comes to Central Indiana with an exotic cultural background, a wealth of academic training and unique work experience.

Kiran is from Visakhapatran (Vizag), a coastal city in southern India, where he grew up with one sister and many cousins.

“My father, Subrahmanyam had five brothers and four sisters and my mother, Suryakala had three brothers and five sisters,” he explains. “Annual family gatherings were fun and a time to reconnect with.”

In 2001, Kiran earned a Bachelor’s degree in Architecture (B. Arch) in from Andhra University, Vizag. In January 2003, he earned a Masters in City Planning from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kharagpur -- the first of India’s seven premier technical universities. For the next 21 months, Kiran worked as a planner for the Administrative Staff College of India, a think tank for developing government policy, before joining the Office of the Chief Minister, equivalent to the Governor’s Office here.

“My parents have always stressed the importance of higher education and hard work,” says Kiran. “So, it was not difficult to stay busy given their example. My father worked more than 60 hours a week as Regional Manager of a control automation industry while my mother divided her time between teaching high school science and household activities.

In 2005, Kiran came to America to do post-graduate work at University of Cincinnati’s School of Planning. He earned his Masters in Community Planning this past August. Now, as a new Senior Planner with the MPO, Kiran will work closely with Principal Planner Stephanie Belch in the area of regional long-term planning. His primary responsibilities will include:

- Developing the Regional Transportation Plan
- Coordinating air quality conformity throughout the Region

Kiran currently resides in Bloomington, where his sister Vasanti is doing post-doctoral work and his brother-in-law, Vijay, is an Associate Professor at the Indiana University. In his free time, Kiran enjoys sketching and painting, playing with his nephew and music.

“I’ve always favored devotional and soft contemporary music,” he notes, “but since being here, I’m developing a taste for hip-hop and R & B.”

To contact Kiran, call him at (317) 327-5495 or e-mail him at kavadhan@indygov.org.

Q & A
(from page 2)

case for it now. And, it didn’t hurt that the public, now feeling the pinch of $4/gallon of gas at the pumps, actively supported a transit initiative. This is the perfect answer to your implied question – whether or not public input influences the planning process or are the public meetings just window dressing? Early in our information gathering process, we heard loud and clear that people weren’t willing to wait for our long-term rec-ommendation. They wanted help ASAP. In response, we developed a “near-term” option utilizing Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) that could be implemented in 2-4 years for about 20% of the cost of our long-term option. There are trade-offs to be considered between the near-term and long-term system options but we were prepared to talk through them in detail because we listened and considered public input.

No window dressing here. Facilitating a comprehensive public involvement program has been critical to the success of the MPO’s regional Transportation plan for nearly 15 years – long before it was required by the federal government.
with a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography and, in December 2003, earned a Master of Arts in Geography from Indiana State University. Catherine currently resides in Speedway.

Inman Moves On

Former MPO Senior Planner Amy Inman moved to Virginia this past February to accept a planning position there. While at the Indianapolis MPO, her responsibilities included coordinating the Multi-Modal Task Force and overseeing the development of the Regional Pedestrian Plan, the Smart Growth Land Use Study, and the third phase of the rapid transit study, DIRECTIONS.

“We appreciated all of Amy’s hard work and wish her the best in her new endeavors,” said MPO Manager Mike Dearing.

2009-2010 UPWP - Overview

(from page 27)

- Identification of future transportation needs by analyzing existing conditions and trends and making projections of future changes.
- Providing a factual basis for comprehensive public policies to meet the transportation needs of the region.
- Preparation of plans in which roadways, public transit, airports, bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities and other means of moving people and goods are properly related to plans and programs for physical, social, economic, environmental and energy needs of the region.
- Maintain a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process that will enable plans to be kept current in response to changing conditions while meeting the requirements of SAFETEA-LU and its predecessor TEA-21, 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAA), Title VI and Environmental Justice.
- Achieve all program goals in the context of actively involving all social and economic groups of the community in the transportation planning process.

“Though these goals have been refined over the years, their intent remains essentially the same,” says Roth. “Development of the UPWP, first annually and now every two years, helps us identify and prioritize exactly how we’re going to continue to meet the region’s anticipated transportation needs to move people and goods safely and efficiently through the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Area.”

To do this, the work plan incorporates the funding and project priorities of six transportation-related sub-elements. In the current draft, these sub-elements are:

- Planning Process Administration
- Data Development and Geographic Information Systems
- Multi-Modal Planning and Freight
- Regional Transportation Plan, Air Quality, and Freight
- Regional Transportation Improvement Program
- Planning Studies and Intelligent Transportation Systems.

Under each sub-element is a list of related projects planned for the next two years, detailing the proposed work of the MPO in conjunction with its many planning partners. For more detailed information on the specific projects listed there, look for 2009-2010 UPWP Projects in the Winter issue of teMPO, due early 2009. Or, review the draft document now at www.indympo.org. For additional information on the development of the 2009-2010 Unified Planning Work Program, contact Philip Roth at 317/327-5149 or proth@indygov.org.
Verbatim: Recent Public Comment
(from page 19)
mass transit will help immensely. Thank you for your research.

• • •
NOISE ISSUES: Please do more on the noise study. You gave it short shrift at the meeting. This IS an important issue to those who have invested in building in Indy. Please look into this in detail and don’t take downtown residents for granted. STOPs: If there is only one stop and none near the 16th and College corridor, we will not support the project.

• • •
I really support transit and want good options as quickly as possible. Please create a stellar system that offers excellent service and mobility that is “fresh and green” to inspire people to make a change in their lives.

• • •
Yes to diesel light rail. Stops at 106th, 22nd, and 16th are VITAL. Thank you!

• • •
NOISE ISSUES: Sound barriers need to be investigated as additions to decrease noise in residential areas adjacent to the rail line. Initial stops: Which stops will be part of the initial investment? If not evenly spaced throughout the rail line, the cost will not serve those not near a stop (and I predict all stops will be north of I-465!!). This doesn’t help those near downtown and will bring LEGAL CHALLENGE!! Buses seem to be the viable option right now.

• • •
I enjoyed (the meeting). Cost-effective is a good point. Flexible for future. Networking is good thing for future. With Super Bowl, we need something! Use Beechgrove yards again!!

Want to participate in the region-wide transportation planning process? Here are four ways:

• Visit the MPO web site at www.indympo.org and attend the public meetings listed there
• Call the 24-hour MPO Comment Line at 317/327-8601
• E-mail or call any of your MPO staff using the contact information contained in teMPO
• Visit clearDirections.info