

PRESSRELEASE

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Michigan City Project Approved By NIRPC's Transportation Improvement Program

Michigan City, IN (September 17, 2004) –John Pugh, director of the Michigan City Planning Department, announced the approval of a \$3.7 million non-expansion project by the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) is responsible for developing a 20-year, regional, transportation plan for Northwest Indiana. The Plan identifies a network of multi-modal, regionally significant transportation corridors, within which projects will be implemented that will cost-effectively improve access, safety and mobility in the region. The Plan underwent extensive public input and review during its development. It supports the development of a multi-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), providing a commitment to projects and policies upon which projects are selected.

Gary Evers, Transportation Planner at NIRPC, said, "Submitted projects have been reviewed, and approvals were determined today. Michigan City has been approved for \$3.7 million to be used for a reconstruction project on Coolspring Avenue from Wabash Street to Roeske Avenue. NIRPC uses a competitive scoring process, and LaPorte County will receive funding for four projects: two in LaPorte, one on Johnson Road, and the Coolspring Avenue reconstruction. These projects must still be approved by the Indiana Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation. We should receive notification within 30 days."

Coolspring Avenue carries large volumes of traffic; the roads are narrow and have had multiple layers of pavement applied over the years, Pugh said. "In some places, the street is higher than the curb, and there are areas where there are no sidewalks. The street needs to be widened, and curbs, gutters, sidewalks and lighting need to be installed."

Mayor Chuck Oberlie said, "Adequate, safe and attractive transportation corridors contribute substantially to a community's economic development future. Business owners seeking relocation sites and tourists visiting the lakefront quickly notice the capabilities of the city's main thoroughfares. It is vital to a community such as Michigan City to not only maintain our streets and roads, but to improve traffic flow and update transportation modes on a regular basis. The TIP funds significantly contribute to our ability to provide these updates."

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the adopted list of public transit, highway and trail projects that will be implemented in the near future with federal transportation funds in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. These are state and local highway projects and local public transit and bicycle/pedestrian trail

projects. They are sponsored by a local government (a city, town or county), a public agency (such as a transit operator) or the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). Project sponsors spend federal, state and local funds (public tax dollars) to build and implement transportation projects.

The TIP is a prioritized list of projects that has been identified through a participatory process, limited to fit the available local, state and federal financial resources. Both the Plan and the TIP have to be fiscally constrained, that is, there must be a reasonable expectation that projects that are identified will have the necessary federal and local funding. When ready for programming, there is a criterion by which local highway and transit projects are evaluated and ranked. First, projects have to be located in regional priority corridors, which are identified in the Plan. Other criteria include access, travel time, safety, congestion, air quality, the effect on minorities and low-income people, and other factors.

Indiana receives about \$700 million in federal highway funds annually. Including state and local projects, over \$100 million is annually spent on federally-supported transportation projects in LaPorte, Porter and Lake counties.

Ken Dallmeyer, Director of Transportation Planning at NIRPC, said, "Michigan City, the city of LaPorte, and LaPorte County now qualify for a \$1 million funding stream because of growth. This new source of funding is available to urbanized populations of 50,000 or more. There are vital reconstruction areas, like the Ohio Street and Coolspring Avenue reconstruction projects submitted by Michigan City, which qualify for this new funding source. NIRPC will collaborate with the governments of the northeastern corner of LaPorte County toward accessing those funds to update vital transportation thoroughfares."

Previous TIP projects in Michigan City include resurfacing U.S. Highway 35 from Meer Road to U.S. Highway 12 at a cost of \$1,346,000; modernizing traffic signals at intersection of CR 400N and U.S. Highway 421 at a cost of \$76,398.12; and pavement repairs and rehabilitation at that same intersection with a cost of \$259,000.

Michigan City Municipal Coach will receive funding for two ADA-approved buses for the Dial-A-Ride program and for one large bus in addition to \$420,000 for operations assistance in 2005, according to Evers, and \$431,000 for operations assistance in 2006.

"The City of Michigan City will submit plans for expansion projects to NIRPC in December of this year," Pugh said. "The expansion projects, which will become part of the 2005-2009 TIP plans, will likely include updating of CR 400 N and Kieffer Road as well as extensions of Springland Avenue and Karwick Road."

"We congratulate Mayor Oberlie, John Pugh, Walter Gipson and their staff members for their wonderful cooperation," Evers said. "This is a very time consuming process, and the City of Michigan City is to be commended for their successful efforts."

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