



BUILD INDIANA COUNCIL

Infrastructure Media Summary

October 8, 2013

NIRPC sets public hearings on Illiana Expressway

NWI Times
Keith Benman
10/8/13

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission has set four hearings on the Illiana Expressway for November to precede two votes at the agency scheduled for December. The hearings will take place as follows:

- Nov. 2: 10 a.m. to noon, John W. Anderson Library, Indiana University Northwest, 3400 Broadway, Gary
- Nov. 5: 6 to 8 p.m., Lowell Middle School, 19250 Cline Ave., Lowell
- Nov. 13: 4 to 6 p.m., NIRPC headquarters, 6100 Southport Road, Portage
- Nov. 19: 2 to 4 p.m., Michigan City Hall, 100 E. Michigan Blvd., Michigan City

On Dec 3, the agency's Transportation Policy Committee will vote on amending its 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan to include the Illiana Expressway. On Dec. 12 the full NIRPC board will take a vote on the same issue. The full board must approve including the Illiana Expressway in its 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan in order for the Indiana Department of Transportation to receive federal approval for its portion of the toll road. The Illiana Expressway would run 47 miles from Interstate 65 just northeast of Lowell to Interstate 55, near Wilmington, Ill.

[NIRPC sets public hearings on Illiana Expressway](#)

Ridership helps save rail service

Palladium-Item
10/8/13

A cost-benefit analysis released (last month) probably didn't make Indiana Department of Transportation officials any happier about the thought of picking up the cost of Amtrak's Hoosier State line. The price for the four-day-a-week passenger train between Indianapolis and Chicago — with boardings in Lafayette — didn't get significantly less expensive in any of the scenarios that included keeping the service going. Congress voted in 2008 to pull funding for Amtrak's shortest routes, including the Hoosier State, starting Oct. 1. (The Cardinal line, which runs three days a week through Lafayette (as well as Connersville, is a longer route and still has federal money.) Indiana has dragged its feet, letting the issue bump up to the deadline as a passive protest against the \$2.9 million cost for current service. What the report did show, though, was that with some effort, marketing and additional departure times, the chances of attracting riders would increase. Two scenarios laid by INDOT's consultant included adding second daily trains running that route. In both cases, the report projects the number of passengers climbing from 37,000 to between 86,000 and 88,000. The cost of each of those would be \$2.8 million to \$2.9 million — roughly the same as it is today — shrinking the per-passenger subsidy by more than

half. That's been part of the argument made by those who launched a Save the Hoosier State campaign, which has pulled support from local governments and businesses. If service improved, more people would use it. Any subsidy for rail service is likely to get stuck in INDOT's craw; no one there is exactly happy about how Congress dumped the expense. But it's been good to see the state grudgingly come along to hammer out a deal with Amtrak and local players to keep the Hoosier State running — and possibly make it better in the deal.

[Ridership helps save rail service | Palladium-Item | pal-item.com](#)

Build Indiana, not Illiana

NWI Times

10/8/13

Yes, we understand the construction industry wants to build things. Yes, it creates (temporary) jobs. But there is a cost. The proposed Illiana tollway has kept this construction industry in jobs (studies and engineering) for about four years at a cost to the taxpayers at about \$25 million. (That could feed some of our homeless in America)! After sitting in all four PowerPoint presentations to sell the toll road, they have failed to prove a need for a toll road. By their own studies, the road would reduce traffic on the Borman by only 2.4 percent. At first we were told that it was about cross traffic; then later that was dismissed because information later proved there wasn't as much as anticipated. Then we were informed it was because of "truck traffic" from an intermodal facility in Wilmington, Ill. and Elwood, Ill. Elwood is suing the intermodal companies over a tax incentive financing deal that was supposed to net them profits; instead it is netting them losses, which means higher taxes and crowded local streets. Last but not least, we were informed this tollway would feed the Peotone airport which has been dead in the water for about 30 years. They are trying to revive it. Let's build Indiana! Indiana state Sen. Rick Niemeyer introduced Senate Bill 585 to study the international airport at Gary, a Lake Michigan water port and a trauma center. This would bring permanent jobs to Indiana. Other considerations, like South Shore services to Lowell and Valparaiso (right away, already in place) would relieve congestion from roads. Also, widening Ind. 10 to four lanes is already in place and would parallel the proposed tollway. Why are we building a feeder road to Illinois? Remember, to fund this road, you have to prove need, not want. Keep money in Indiana!

[Build Indiana, not Illiana](#)

WILLIAM NANGLE: Indiana must offer clear route to Cline bridge

NWI Times

10/6/13

Remember the Cline Avenue bridge? Well, it seems the Indiana Department of Transportation hopes you'll forget. It has been more than three years since Gov. Mitch Daniels stood at the site of the closed bridge pledging it would be replaced. Instead, the state plotted a detour through city streets in East Chicago. Most of the detour is in the industrial sector of the city. It's a slow, boring ride to get across the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal and resume your trip on what was designed to be an expressway. It's not at all the link to Chicago that was intended for Cline Avenue. Unfortunately, the idea of a new bridge quickly fell on deaf ears in Indianapolis. Talks designed to have a private company build a new bridge and collect tolls to pay for it have been on and off for months and months. We have reported more than once the deal was done and a bridge would be built. But with all the talk and all the announcements, there is no new bridge. Frankly, it appears we are in the wrong part of Indiana to see Daniels' pledge fulfilled. While Northwest Indiana waits for a bridge that is an important cog in its transportation network, numerous bridges are being built and paid for by the state in the Indianapolis area. For instance, several bridges have been built over Keystone Avenue between Indianapolis and Carmel. In all, the state has rehabilitated or replaced 615 of the 5,300 state-maintained bridges since 2006 – but not Cline Avenue. Keep in mind the \$300 billion lease of the Indiana Toll Road. Most of that money has gone to downstate projects, including \$700 million to build 67 miles of Interstate 69 from Evansville to Crane and

\$423 million to improve I-465 around Indianapolis. But \$30 million for a new bridge in Northwest Indiana is too much?

[WILLIAM NANGLE: Indiana must offer clear route to Cline bridge](#)

Mass-transit plan draws critics in state hearing

Indianapolis Business Journal

10/3/13

Tea party activists who are among the harshest critics of a proposal to boost central Indiana's mass transit offerings told a legislative committee Thursday they oppose any tax increases to pay for expanding local bus service or a possible light rail line in the heavily populated region. Two suburban Indianapolis business officials, meanwhile, told the panel that expanding mass transit would make the region more attractive to young professionals and help spur development. In April, Indiana lawmakers delayed action on a bill that would have allowed voters in 10 central Indiana counties to decide whether to increase local income taxes to fund the proposed \$1.3 billion plan. The Legislature instead turned the issue over to a committee to study and report back its findings. Don Bauder, the president of the Tea Party of Hamilton County, told that committee that central Indiana's tax burden is already too high and another tax increase isn't wanted. "We are tapped out," he told the panel. "That \$1.3 billion isn't available. That's my money — that's your money." Bauder also said private enterprise, not taxpayers, should pay for any mass transit expansion and that the Indianapolis area's existing bus services hasn't stifled its economic development. Bill Schneider, a former Indianapolis City-County Council member who's now a tea party activist, said many of the buses on Indianapolis' current IndyGo bus line are little-used and the focus needs to be on improving those lines to boost ridership. He also said the Indianapolis metropolitan area can't support the type of light rail system found in Chicago, New York, Cleveland and other cities.

[Mass-transit plan draws critics in state hearing | 2013-10-03 | Indianapolis Business Journal | IBJ.com](#)

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