



# Transportation Times

## Adams-Allen-DeKalb-Wells

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## Northeast Indiana Trail Branding and Wayfinding Initiative

Miles of paved paths existing within Northeastern Indiana have the goal of one day becoming a connected regional network for families, health advocates, and commuters to utilize and take them to various regional destinations. Still evolving, this Regional Trail System requires an identity that captures all of its assets, character, uses and potential. The Trail System is used in many ways by many people, but at its core, CONNECTIVITY to different areas of the Northeastern Indiana Region is what makes the trail special and a huge asset to the Region.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) has contracted the consultant firm Merje to provide services that assist in preparing a comprehensive branding initiative for the regional trail system in Northeast Indiana. Merje has experience in market research, strategic planning, corporate identity/branding (including logo development and graphic standards), creative, interactive market-

ing, promotions and wayfinding. The services they provide will result in a regional trail system name, logo and signage design/sign templates for trail identification, trail gateways, trail information and other wayfinding signs. A number of logos for specific trail sections within the regional trail network will also

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## Northeast Indiana Water Trails Funds



In February 2015 NIRCC took on a new project for the Region: the Northeast Indiana Water Trails. Water Trails have increasingly become more popular across the nation as individuals are looking to escape the technological world we live in and connect with nature. In northeast Indiana, individuals are starting to view our rivers as an asset rather than an obstacle we must work around. This is evident with the investment made from the City of Fort Wayne in Riverfront Development.

Last February, NIRCC brought representatives from regional government departments, watershed groups, business owners and outdoor recreationists together to brainstorm on how we can better utilize our rivers, and entice individuals to be more active and reconnect with nature. Out of that February meeting, the Northeast Indiana Water Trails Initiative (NEIWTs) was born. The mission of the NEIWTs is to increase recreational opportunities on our rivers by installing and maintaining boat access to

(Continued on page 4)

## Pedestrian-friendly diverging diamond interchange, Indiana's first, honored with engineering award

[Article from:](#)  
[Equipment World's  
Better Roads,](#)  
[Written by Chris Hill,](#)  
[March, 08 2016](#)

The American Council of Engineering Companies of Indiana (ACEC Indiana) awarded Indiana's first diverging diamond interchange (DDI) with its Grand Project Award during the association's recent 2016 Engineering Excellence Awards.

Engineering excellence awards go to "outstanding engineering achievements that demonstrate a high degree of merit and ingenuity," and are judged on several factors including technical innovation and social and economic value.

ACEC Indiana had also previously named the \$3.5 million project its Civil Engineering Project of the Year.



SR 1/I 69  
Diverging  
Diamond

SR 1/I 69  
Diverging Dia-  
mond: Looking  
west along SR 1



Burgess & Niple, based in Columbus, Ohio, designed the DDI as a means of adding traffic capacity and relieving congestion at the I-69 and State Road 1 interchange in Fort Wayne.

Roughly 40,000 motorists are estimated to travel the interchange every day, and the new design, in addition to helping with traffic volume, has improved access for emergency vehicles to two nearby hospitals.

The interchange opened in October 2014.

Additionally, the DDI includes a median designed for pedestrians. Officials say the barrier-separated feature “has proven to be a safer path for pedestrians to navigate the interchange and connect to Fort Wayne’s existing trail network”.

*By Chris Hill, March, 08 2016.  
Equipment World's Better Roads*

## Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) and the Traffic Count Program



2015 Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT)

NIRCC has completed the Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) report for 2015. In 2015 there was 7,445,728 vehicle miles traveled. This is 2.48% higher than in 2014 (7,265,884 Vehicle Miles of Travel).

To calculate VMT statistics NIRCC utilizes traffic count data collected throughout the year. In 2015, approximately 1,160 locations were counted throughout Allen County. NIRCC also collects count data for other counties. NIRCC plans on working in Allen County, Adams County, and Wells County for the 2016 traffic counting program.

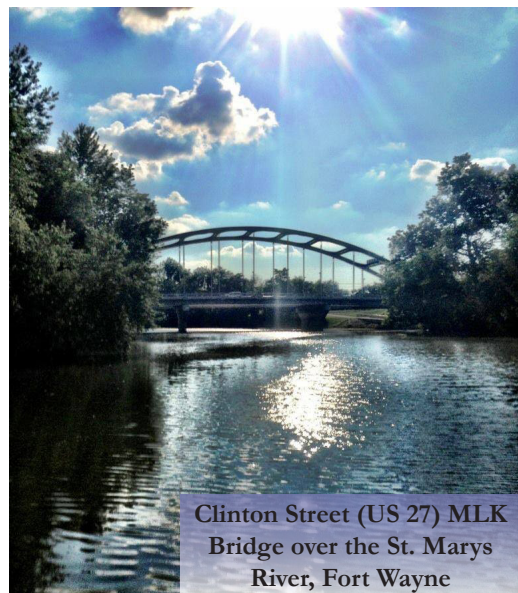
## Northeast Indiana Water Trails Funds continued...



the rivers, promoting water safety and stewardship, and developing regional water trails that will empower our region's citizens to become more active and to unite as one community. Specific goals of the NEIWTs are to increase access to the rivers for individuals of all abilities; install interpretive signage at all access sites; develop an interactive water trails website; produce water trail maps; provide education and outreach on how to safely recreate on the water and on water quality and stewardship; and to provide opportunities for underprivileged youth to experience our rivers from a new vantage point.

An event is planned for June 11, 2016 in downtown Fort Wayne at the Historic Wells Street Bridge and

Fort Wayne Outfitters and Bike Depot to connect people to nature and get them out on the water. The Northeast Indiana Water Trails Pedal, Paddle, and Play event sponsored by 3Rivers Federal Credit Union, will serve as a public release of the project and the Water Trail maps, as well as a fundraiser to help NEIWTs accomplish its goals. Sponsors are still needed for this fun event. If you are interested in sponsoring the event, or would like more information about it contact Kyle Quandt at (260) 449-7309 or at [kyle.quandt@co.allen.in.us](mailto:kyle.quandt@co.allen.in.us).



Clinton Street (US 27) MLK Bridge over the St. Marys River, Fort Wayne

## Connecting Communities – The Northeast Indiana Trail Plan

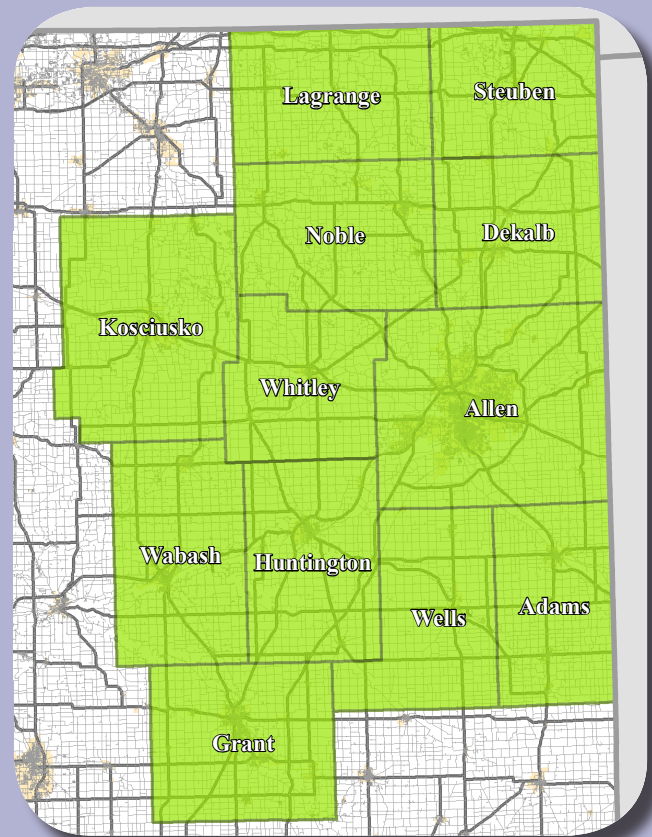


In 2015 NIRCC recognized the need for the Northeast Indiana region to come together and discuss trail plans as well as regional priorities. With help from NIRCC's partners, which included Region 3A Development and Regional Planning Commission, East Central Indiana Regional Planning District (ECIRPD), Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG), and the National Park Service, an event was planned to bring together 12 counties for a one-day trail planning event. The event titled "Connecting Communities – The Northeast Indiana Trail Plan" was held on November 6, 2015 at the Eagle Glen Event Center in Columbia City, IN.

Adam Garland presenting during the morning session



This one day planning event included several guest speakers, free food, and trail planning exercises to identify regional priorities and help update the Northeast Indiana Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Over 100 people from 12 counties and representatives from



state, federal, and regional planning agencies participated in the event. Participating counties included Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Grant, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, & Whitley. With the help of our dedicated moderator, Rory Robinson from the National Park Service, the event went smoothly and was a success!



Our moderator, Rory Robinson!

Presentations ranged from "A Millennial's Perspective on the Importance of Trails in the Region" by Adam Garland, to "The Road to One Million and Regional Trails", by Alan Tio (Senior VP of Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership) who talked about the importance of trails to the economy of Northeast Indiana. Lori Rose (former Executive Director of Fort Wayne Trails, Inc) gave an impressive presentation titled "Trails, A Catalyst for Community Transformation". We also heard some real examples of how regional trail development has impacted business development in a positive way from prominent figures of the

Alan Tio presenting during the lunch session



business community who have witnessed firsthand the benefits of trails and connectivity on economic development and community transformation. These testimonials were given by Jill Ostrem (Senior Vice President, Health and Well-Being at Parkview Health), Brad Bishop (Executive Director of Ortho Worx), and Darren Reese (President/CEO of SESCO Group). We also heard an update on the State Visionary Plan from Dale Brier (Section Chief for the Streams and Trails Section, Indiana DNR) and a presentation of how much progress Northeast Indiana has made in trail development since 2006 by Dan Avery (Executive Director of NIRCC) and Rory Robinson (Outdoor Recreation Planner, National Park Service).

The last time Northeast Indiana came together for a trail planning event similar to this was November 17, 2006. NIRCC along with Region III-A Economic Development District and Regional Planning Commission, City of Fort Wayne, the National Park Service, and Aboite New Trails organized the first trails charrette to be held in Northeast Indiana. Close to 100 people from 11 counties including Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Grant, Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, & Whitley Counties took part in the “Northeast Indiana Trails and Greenways Charrette” which was held at the World War II Victory Museum in Auburn, Indiana. This organized planning and brainstorming session was organized to explore regional coordination of trail and greenway development throughout the



Group planning exercise

Northeast Indiana area. The purpose of bringing together people from 11 different counties was to better coordinate the regional development of trails and greenways across county boundaries connecting communities and people by alternative means of transportation and to provide a plan that would add continuity throughout the Northeast Indiana region. The results of the charrette produced the first regional trail plan for Northeast Indiana which became the “Northeast Indiana Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan”.

With The Regional Cities Initiative (RCI) on the horizon NIRCC and its partners realized the importance of updating the plan and prioritizing regional corridors to create another tool for continuing the momentum that Northeast Indiana has generated over the past 10 years. The maps shown on the next page showcase the kind of trail development that has occurred since



Group planning exercise

**Connecting Communities**  
(The Northeast Indiana Trail Plan)  
**Sponsors - Thank You!**

  
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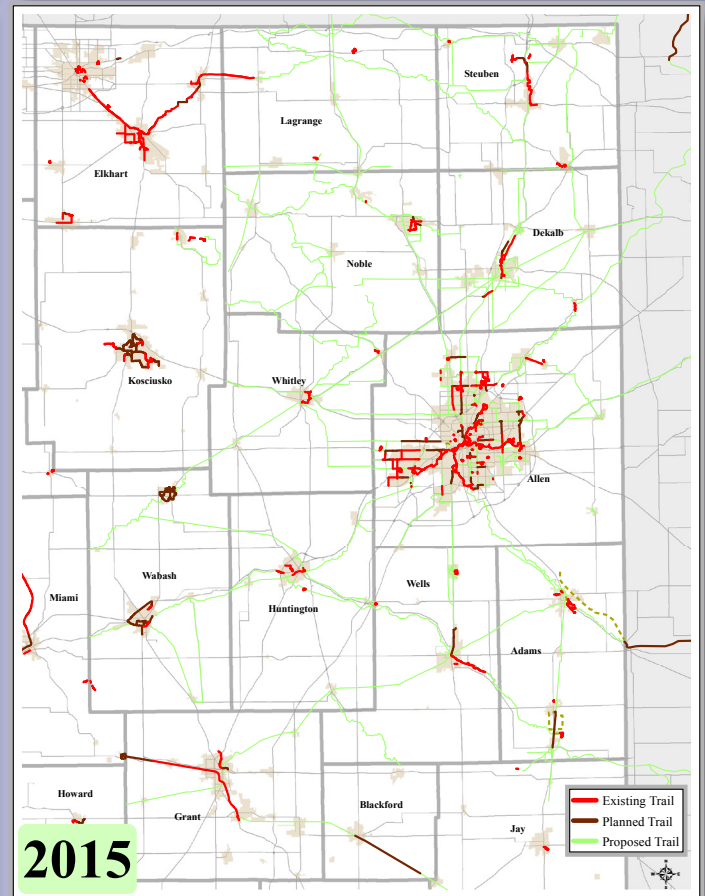
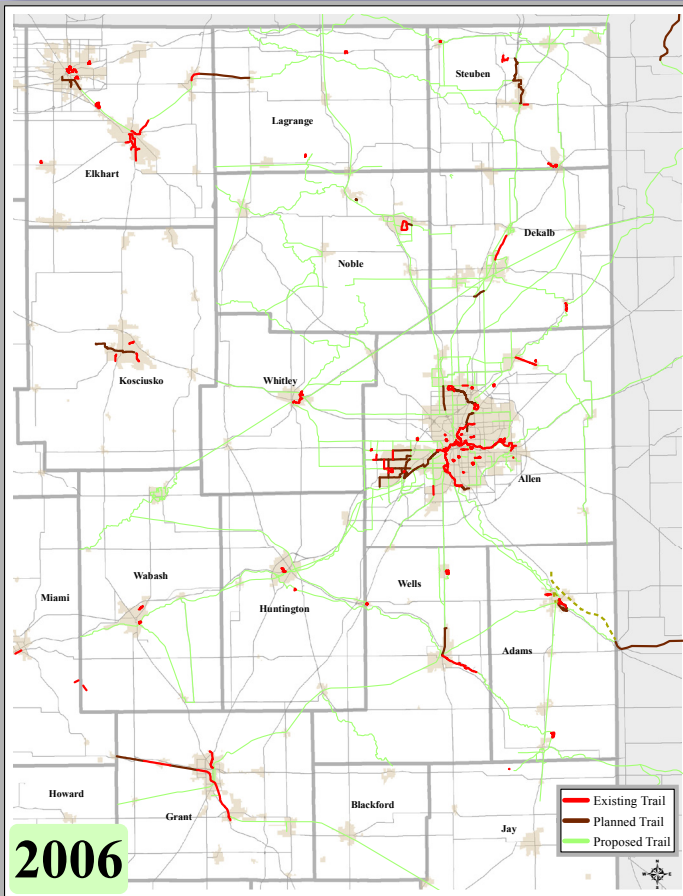
  
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our last trail planning charrette in 2006. The number of trail miles more than doubled between 2006 and 2015. With Northeast Indiana being selected as one of the winners of the RCI and receiving up to \$42 million in state matching funds trail development should continue to expand across the region. If you would like to see more information on the RCI for Northeast Indiana visit <http://www.neindiana.com/vision/the-vision/regionalcities>.

The results from “Connecting Communities – The Northeast Indiana Trail Plan” held in November of 2015 will be available soon. NIRCC and Region 3A Development and Regional Planning Commission is currently in the process of finalizing the results and gaining board approval of the updated plan. Once this process is complete the updated regional plan will be available on our website at [www.nircc.com](http://www.nircc.com) under bicycle and pedestrian planning.



## Community Development Updates

**D**id you know that NIRCC is available to assist communities within Adams, Allen, DeKalb, and Wells Counties with community and economic development activities? We can assist communities with projects receiving funding through a myriad of sources such as grants and loans from the Indiana Office of Community and



Rural Affairs (OCRA), the State Revolving Fund (SRF), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), and other State, Federal, and private programs. The NIRCC community development team has the capabilities to assist with project development and to provide grant writing, grant administration, and labor standards administration services. Information regarding available funding opportunities and the community development services provided by the NIRCC community development team is available by

contacting Matt Vondran at [Matt.Vondran@co.allen.in.us](mailto:Matt.Vondran@co.allen.in.us) or Kyle Quandt at [Kyle.Quandt@co.allen.in.us](mailto:Kyle.Quandt@co.allen.in.us) or calling (260) 449-7309

### **Current Projects**

In recent years, NIRCC has assisted several local communities in acquiring and managing OCRA grant funds for the completion of planning and construction projects. OCRA administers Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money that is allocated to Indiana by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. OCRA offers multiple funding programs to Indiana communities from CDBG funds which have afforded communities in our area the ability to complete projects such as: infrastructure improvements, demolition of dilapidated structures, comprehensive plans, and utility studies and planning. NIRCC staff works closely with the grantees, project engineers, and contractors to make sure that all of the federal requirements associated with the grant are followed and met. More information on the programs OCRA offers can be found at <http://www.in.gov/ocra/2331.htm> and NIRCC's community development team is available to answer your questions and discuss potential projects within your community.

The community development team is currently assisting the Town of St. Joe with the completion of a water and storm water utilities plan that is being funded with a recently acquired \$40,000 OCRA Planning Grant. The Town is currently experiencing water and storm water infrastructure issues that need to be addressed. The plan will allow the Town to evaluate and identify problematic issues within their water and storm water infrastructure and provide options to eliminate these issues, including costs and funding opportunities. The study was initiated in March 2016 by Jones and Henry Engineers and the final Plan is anticipated to be delivered in August 2016. Once complete, the Town anticipates exploring funding opportunities to address issues identified within the Plan. Most likely an OCRA Construction Grant will be pursued in 2017 to complete needed storm water improvements in 2018.

NIRCC has also assisted several communities with the Labor Standards Administration (LSA) requirements associated with their SRF funded projects. The LSA services provided by NIRCC include documentation

and payroll review, jobsite interviews, and the compilation and submission of required reports. NIRCC staff is currently providing LSA services for the City of Bluffton's SRF funded wastewater related projects and multiple Allen County Regional Water and Sewer District SRF funded projects throughout Allen County. It is anticipated that over 40 contractors will be submitting documentation and weekly payrolls for these projects. All of these SRF funded projects are anticipated to be completed before the end of 2016. If you are in need of an experienced Labor Standards Administrator, please feel free to discuss your project with us.

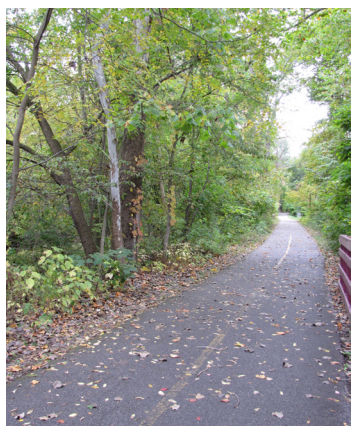
NIRCC can also assist communities and area parks departments with outdoor recreation funding programs



available through the Indiana DNR. Information on these programs can be found at <https://secure.in.gov/dnr/2331.htm#>. Staff recently assisted the City of Decatur with acquiring an Indiana Department of Natural Resources: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant to develop the St. Marys Nature Preserve adjacent to downtown Decatur. The LWCF grant funds are earmarked for development of outdoor recreation facilities that are open to the public and it provides a 1:1 match for project development and construction. The proposed St. Marys Nature Preserve will consist of 46.3 acres of wetland and sedge prairie being accessible to the public via approximately 3,650 linear feet of trail with two designated wildlife observation areas and a pier overlook on a fishing pond. The newly constructed trail will connect to the existing river greenway making the total mileage of hard surface trail in Decatur approximately 4.5 miles. NIRCC assisted with project design, federal and state compliance for land acquisition and environmental reviews, and writing the grant application. The project has been approved by the State and is being forwarded to the National Park



Service for final approval. Decatur expects to begin construction of the Nature Preserve this year, with the finished project being open to the public by spring 2017. The NIRCC community development team is available to assist you if your community is interested in developing a park or trails. If you would like more information regarding DNR funding opportunities and to discuss potential projects within your community, please give us a call.



## Brownfield Environmental Assessment Grant Summary

NIRCC and the Region III-A Development and Planning Commission partnered in 2013 to form the Northeast Indiana Brownfield Coalition (Coalition) which represents the counties of Adams, Allen (excluding Fort Wayne), LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wells and Whitley (excluding Columbia City). The Coalition was awarded a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield Assessment grant to be used for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Assessments of potential Brownfield sites within the Coalition's project area that are potentially contaminated with petroleum or hazardous substances. The grant funding was available from 2013 until the end of September 2015. The grant provided funding for 100% of the costs associated with environmental assessment activities at eligible properties only; not the remediation of contaminated sites. Arcadis Inc. was hired as the Coalition's environmental consultant to complete all assessment activities funded by the grant. Arcadis completed assessments at 35 properties within the Coalition's seven county project area between February 2013 and September 2015. These properties included former industrial and manufacturing sites, commercial buildings, former hospital / medical buildings, automotive repair shops, gas stations, residential houses, and vacant lots. The total amount of the EPA grant funding utilized for the entire seven

county project area was approximately \$790,000. This funding provided a total of 35 Phase 1 environmental assessments and 31 Phase 2 environmental assessment related activities. The Phase I assessments were on-site survey and record checks to identify potential contamination. The Phase II assessment activities included: the collection and analysis of construction materials (lead paint, asbestos, etc.) and soil samples; well monitoring; and closures of underground storage tanks (UST's). These assessment activities have been integral in development and redevelopment activities at several of the assessed properties within the region.

In the NIRCC Coalition counties (Adams, Allen, and Wells) alone, approximately \$280,000 of the EPA grant funding was utilized to complete assessment activities at 17 properties. A total of 16 Phase 1 environmental assessments and 8 Phase 2 environmental assessment related activities were completed. The assessment information has assisted with redevelopment projects in Decatur, Berne, and Bluffton. The City of Decatur utilized the assessment information while renovating the former Adams County Memorial Hospital Building into the new Decatur City Hall. The City of Berne utilized the assessment information to remediate the Former Dunbar Furniture site that was not only an eyesore in the community, but also a major health and safety liability due to deteriorating structures and a significant amount of asbestos containing materials. The buildings were demolished and the site was remediated in 2015 and the City of Berne plans to build a new storage facility for City equipment on the site in the future. The Wells County Economic Development Corporation is utilizing the assessment information to plan for the redevelopment of the Bluffton Regional Medical Center South Campus located in the City of Bluffton.

The Coalition currently does not have any brownfield assessment or remediation funding in hand, however there are various funding resources that could be utilized to assist your communities with environmental issues. If your community has any potential brownfield sites in need of assessments or remediation, please let us know by contacting Matt Vondran at [Matt.Vondran@co.allen.in.us](mailto:Matt.Vondran@co.allen.in.us) or Kyle Quandt at [Kyle.Quandt@co.allen.in.us](mailto:Kyle.Quandt@co.allen.in.us) or calling (260) 449-7309.

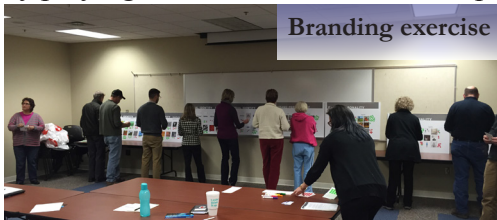
## Northeast Indiana Trail Branding and Wayfinding Initiative continued...

be created. The regional trail system covers Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells and Whitley Counties, and the communities within.

Merje presenting to the public at Parkview's Mirro Center



The Regional Trail System needs a name, it needs a brand. We need something to call our system that speaks to residents of and visitors to Northeast Indiana, and logos to capture visually the message of our trails. It should be unique, and allude to Northeast Indiana's history and fit with other community attractions and branding efforts. The dynamics are many as different existing trails with different "owners" need to maintain their identities, new trails taking various routes will require consistent signage and information regarding directions and destinations, and naming must take into account history, culture and community identities. A named and branded system will simplify the marketing of our trail system to users and potential funding partners, thereby playing a crucial role in the development of our trail system and soliciting private investment.



Branding exercise

Merje made their initial visit to our region in January. NIRCC and Region 3A Development and Regional Planning Commission helped facilitate several meetings throughout our region to engage all participating



stakeholders and the public from January 13-15, 2016. Merje toured many of the trails throughout Northeast Indiana while they were here as well. They used the information they gathered and tours to gain an understanding of our trail system and amenities associated with it while they were here. Merje will be coming back to our region soon with their first design concepts for our regional branding initiative. They will be meeting with stakeholders and the public once again to present their findings and find out what people like the



most before going to the next step in their process.

The Northeast Indiana Trail Branding and Wayfinding initiative is expected to be complete in the fall of 2016. Once complete we will be provided with a Branding Master Plan, Graphics Sign Standards Manual, Regional Trail System Brand, Visionary Trail Brand (trail connecting Pokagon State Park to Ouabache State Park), and various trail logos from sections throughout the region.

### NIRCC

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