

Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council



Participation Plan

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The Participation Plan contains the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council's official policy to ensure participation in the transportation planning process and related activities. The participation activities in this document are designed to support an inclusive process that provides information, and affords opportunities for individuals, agencies, businesses, and advocacy groups to shape and influence transportation policy and planning decisions. The participation process is guided by federal legislation and is intended to fulfill the obligations set forward in that legislation. Transportation is critical to regional growth; equitable mobility; economic vitality and sustainability; and livable places. Therefore, transportation decisions and policy should be formed through an open, transparent process that affords meaningful community participation.

The intent and goal of the Participation Plan is to present processes and procedures that encourage information sharing and involvement in NIRCC's transportation planning activities. The plan identifies opportunities for accessing information and providing comment on transportation issues and projects, and specifies outreach efforts that allows all full access to the planning process, including populations that have often lacked access, such as low income, elderly, minority, disabled, and limited English (language) proficiency individuals. The outcome is to incorporate community desires and values into transportation plans, projects, programs, and decisions.

Introduction-Participation Plan

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) is the agency designated by the Governor of the State of Indiana to perform general purpose planning on a regional basis for Adams, Allen, DeKalb, and Wells Counties. NIRCC functions as a Regional Planning Organization (RPO) in the four-county area, and as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Urbanized Area.

The primary goals of the Participation Plan are to define a process that assures opportunities are afforded to all interested parties to understand the planning process and how to comment and influence decisions; have access to transportation information, analyses, visual tools and documents; and receive feedback regarding questions and concerns. The process includes special outreach efforts to populations that have often lacked traditional access to the planning process such as elderly, low income, minority, disabled, and limited English proficiency individuals. The metropolitan planning process administered by NIRCC strives to achieve these goals through a variety of participation activities and information sharing techniques. The participation process includes collaboration with numerous local, state and federal agencies. In addition, NIRCC will make specific efforts to coordinate with the participation processes of the Indiana Department of Transportation, Citilink, Airport Authority, Allen County, Fort Wayne, New Haven, and other local public agencies. This document will discuss the participation opportunities.

Planning Area

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council as the Metropolitan Planning Organization is charged with performing comprehensive transportation planning in the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), that includes all the Fort Wayne Urbanized Area. The MPA is shown in Figure 1. The Participation Plan contains NIRCC's official policy to ensure meaningful participation in the transportation planning process and related activities. The policy incorporates guidance established by federal legislation and is intended to fulfill the obligations set forth in that legislation. Participation activities identified in this document provide opportunities for public input and influence on the transportation planning process and decision-making. NIRCC recognizes the value of public input to help shape transportation policy and decisions that support the community vision.

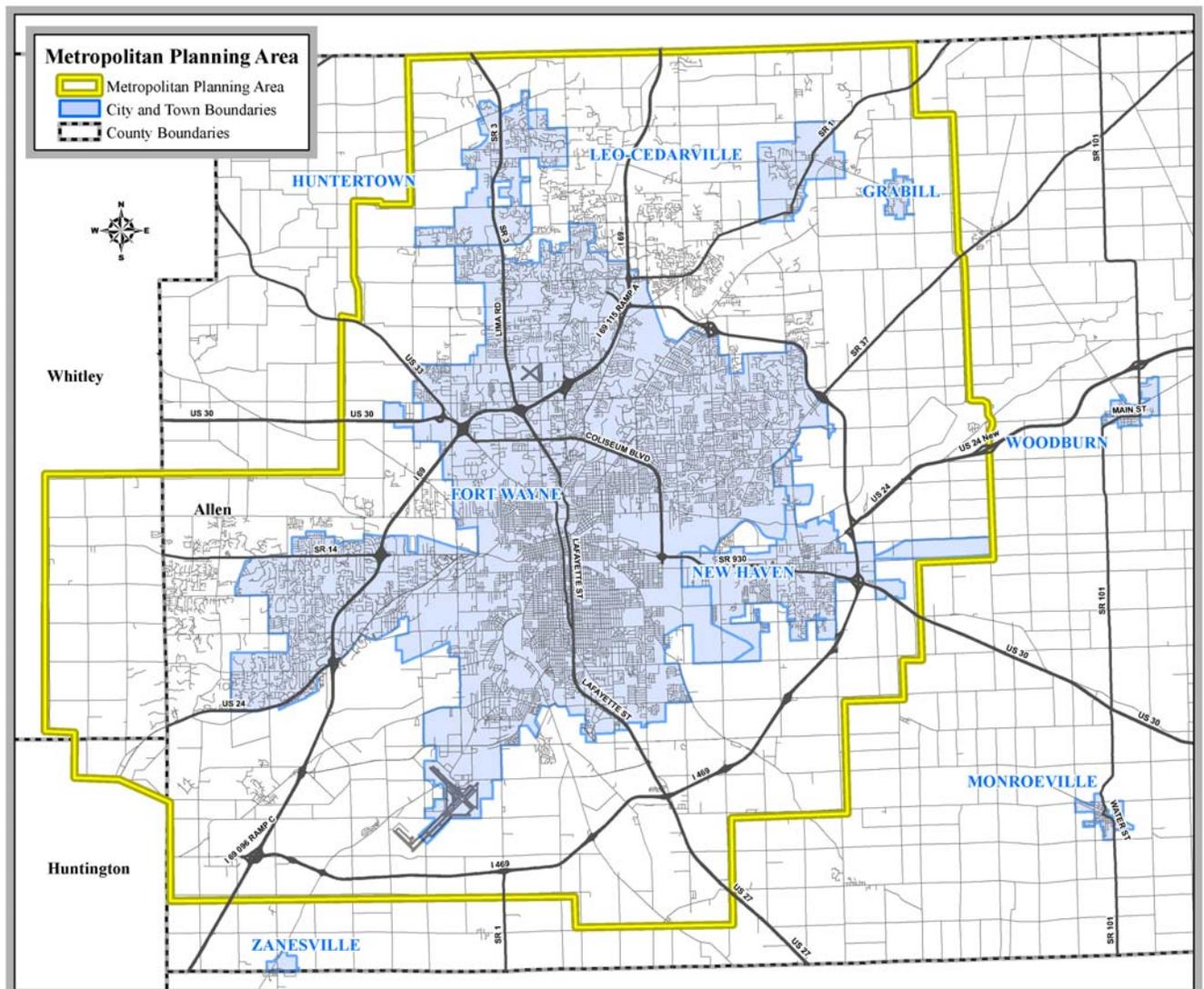


Figure 1. Metropolitan Planning Area

Policy Board and Planning Committees

The metropolitan transportation policy board is called the Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB). UTAB was established by NIRCC to conduct policy matters related to transportation planning within the Metropolitan Planning Area. Figure 2 provides a diagram of the NIRCC board and committee structure. A major function of UTAB is to manage the metropolitan transportation planning process and provide guidance to NIRCC on matters concerning the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Metropolitan Planning Area and the impacts on the regional transportation system.

UTAB includes elected and appointed officials who are in positions of responsibility for making transportation policy in the planning area. They represent local and state agencies such as Allen County, Fort Wayne, New Haven, Indiana Department of Transportation, Citilink and Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority. The responsibilities of UTAB include the following:

1. The Board supports NIRCC and the region with transportation planning policies and decision-making for highways, roads and public transportation within the Metropolitan Planning Area.
2. The Board acts as the policy board for decision required under Title 23, Section 134, of the U.S. Code.
3. The Board, with technical support from the NIRCC staff, performs functions listed under Title 23, Section 134 of the U.S. Code as specified in the Unified Planning Work Program.
4. The Board is responsible for administering a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process. The 3-C planning process utilizes the Transportation Technical Committee, Transit Planning Committee, and NIRCC staff for technical support and analyses. The responsibility includes the coordination of programs and projects of the separate units of local government and state government; and providing information necessary regarding land use, population, and economic development to successfully complete the required transportation planning activities.
5. Working with the NIRCC staff, the Board is responsible for developing the transportation work elements of the Unified Planning Work Program.
6. The Board reviews and appoints members to the Transportation Technical Committee and the Transit Planning Committee.
7. The Board has the authority and responsibility to approve the use of Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds and determine the implementation priority for the transportation improvement projects with the Metropolitan Planning Area.

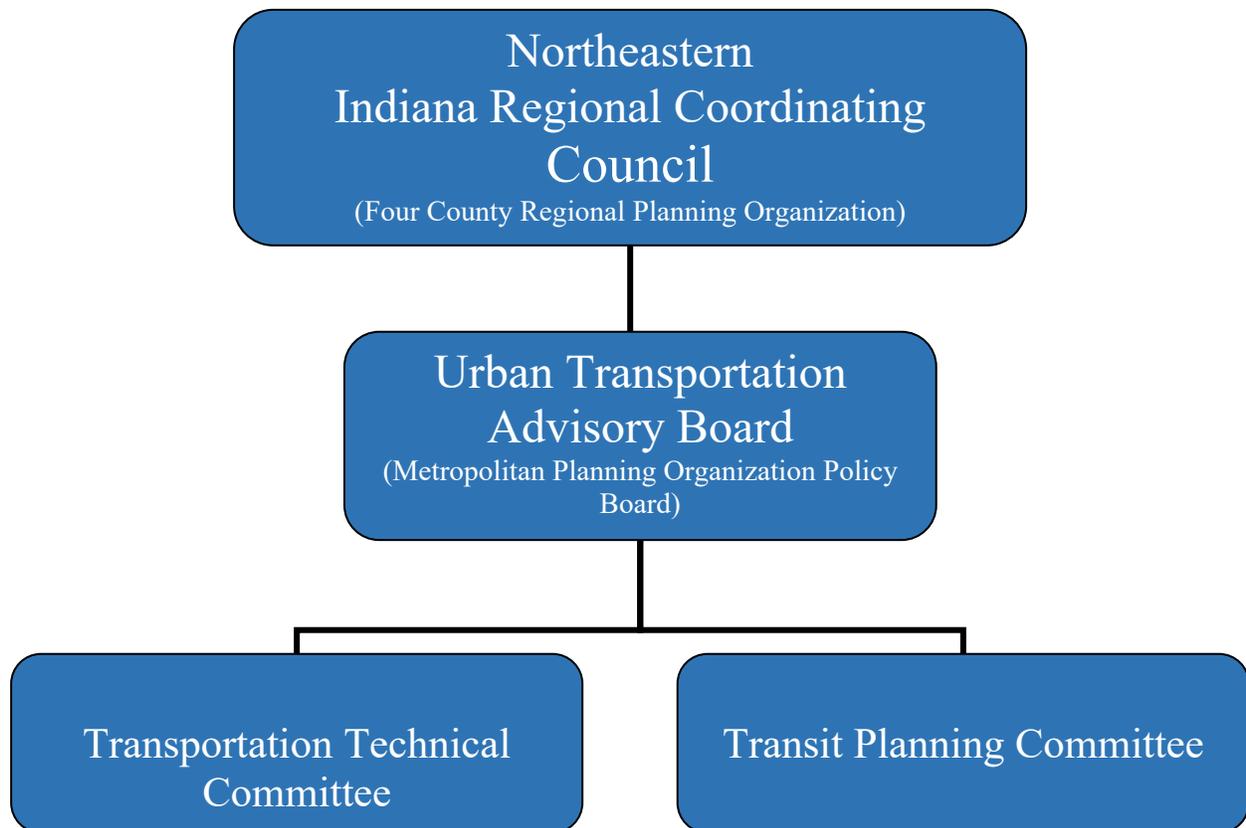


Figure 2. NIRCC Board and Committee Structure

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

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

The membership of these committees is composed of local government staff members authorized to provide planning information, offer comment, and report on transportation related activities within their agency’s jurisdiction. State and federal officials participate on these committees and may hold voting or non-voting memberships. Public and private transit groups also sit as

members on these committees. Duties and responsibilities of the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee include the following:

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

Planning Process, Activities and Products

The federal transportation planning regulations require MPOs to develop and maintain four specific documents to support the planning process. These include the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, and Participation Plan. All four documents must be developed through a transparent process that affords opportunities for public input and community involvement prior to key decisions and plan approvals. These documents are also required to ensure the region is eligible for federal assistance to support transportation projects and programs. The primary transportation modes covered by this process includes roads and highways; public transit and paratransit services; and bicycle and pedestrian travel.

The MTP is a 20-year long range plan that provides guidance on major transportation investment. The TIP is a short range 5-year program of projects that are scheduled for development, procurement and/or construction in the near term. The purpose of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan is to identify transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; develop strategies to address these needs; and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation. The Participation Plan documents the process for providing all interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

In support of the planning documents, NIRCC engages in a wide range of transportation monitoring, analyses, and system evaluations to identify problems and opportunities for improvements. These activities include traffic studies, crash analyses, corridor studies, transit ridership and transit route analysis, trail usage, and bicycle and pedestrian planning. NIRCC also has a Congestion Management Process and Safety Management Program. The culmination of traffic data and various studies are documented in reports. The reports are posted on NIRCC's website (www.nircc.com).

NIRCC monitors the highway, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian transportation networks within the region regardless of jurisdiction. One of NIRCC's most important roles is facilitating a consensus-based decision-making process to ensure transportation investments are made through intergovernmental collaboration and are based on factual data and rational analyses.

Statewide Plan and TIP/STIP Coordination

Within the region, NIRCC works closely with the INDOT Fort Wayne District assessing needs, analyzing problem areas developing solutions to improve the transportation system. This includes meetings with local governmental official, business representatives and public involvement opportunities. NIRCC also collaborates with INDOT Central Office staff on statewide plans and improvement programs. The MTP and TIP include planned transportation improvements on roads and highways maintained by INDOT and are included in NIRCC's participation opportunities. The NIRCC participation activities are consistent with the participation guidance for statewide transportation planning processes and procedures.

Participation Process and Methods

NIRCC utilizes several outreach and participation techniques to inform and engage interested parties regarding the transportation planning process. Opportunities for review, input and comment are afforded at strategic times during the development and modification of the MTP, TIP, Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, and Participation Plan. These techniques may focus on a specific project, program, or plan, or may cover multiple plans and the entire transportation planning process. Depending on the topic, NIRCC may target an affected neighborhood or portion of the region to gain public input. Notification procedures are used prior to key decisions or plan modifications. NIRCC staff are available to discuss transportation issues with individuals or groups. Emails, phone calls and personal visits are encouraged to exchange ideas and share information. Public input is documented and presented to decision makers and may include responses to questions and concerns when appropriate.

Outreach Techniques

Outreach techniques are designed to provide information, accommodate consultation, engage, and interact, and collaborate with individuals, agencies, advocates, neighborhood representatives and other interested parties. Planning documents, maps, reports, and opportunities for comment are all available at the NIRCC website. A variety of outreach techniques are employed to reach stakeholders and residents within the region and may vary depending on the project, program, or topic for discussion. Public notice is provided prior to any outreach opportunity detailing when, where, and how to participate. Consideration is given to select the most appropriate technique, or combination of techniques to effectively engage all interested parties. The opportunities for engagement include open policy and committee meetings, transportation newsletters, annual summary reports, information sharing, open houses, public meetings, workshops, and charrettes.

Policy Board and Committee Meetings

The Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB), Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), and Transit Planning Committee (TPC) have regularly scheduled meetings and a calendar of the meeting dates and locations are posted on the NIRCC website. Meeting notices are sent to all interested parties and news media. To receive meeting notifications, contact the NIRCC office or visit the NIRCC website and provide your name and email address. Meeting agendas and summary of minutes are posted on the NIRCC website. It is important to note that other governmental boards, commissions, councils, and committees in the region hold open meetings and adopt policies that impact and/or influence transportation decisions. Interested parties are encouraged to attend and participate in these meetings as well.

Transportation Planning Newsletter and Annual Summary Report

Transportation planning newsletters are prepared and distributed twice a year as an educational tool and share information with the public and local officials. The newsletter covers recent transportation studies, plan developments and project updates. The newsletters are distributed to all interested parties, and both current and archived newsletters are available on the NIRCC

website. To be added to the newsletter distribution list, please contact the NIRCC office and provide your name and email address.

An annual report is prepared each year highlighting the planning activities and summarizing studies and analyses that support the transportation planning process. These reports are prepared after the close of the fiscal year on June 30th. The current and archived annual summary reports are available on the NIRCC website.

Information Sharing and Website

The public may call, visit, or email staff at any time to ask questions, request data, voice concerns, or share ideas. Staff respond to numerous requests for information pertaining to transportation planning activities and projects from interested citizens and groups. The NIRCC staff respond to these requests with the most accurate and timely information available.

The NIRCC website is another useful technique for sharing information (www.nircc.com). The website provides information on the transportation planning process, activities and reports. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, and Participation Plan are all available for viewing and can be downloaded. Copies of these reports are available for viewing at the NIRCC office, and a reasonable effort will be made to provide paper copies of documents for individuals that cannot access the reports electronically.

Open Houses

An Open House is held each year generally in late winter or early spring. Information is available on the MTP, TIP, Air Quality documentation, Transit Plans, local projects, INDOT projects, and bicycle/pedestrian plans. Representatives from local jurisdictions, INDOT, Citilink and NIRCC are available to discuss concerns and answer questions. Maps, plans, renderings, and other visualization tools are provided to help convey information and explain transportation planning concepts. Comment forms are provided and can also be submitted electronically. Documented comments are channeled through the appropriate jurisdiction for review and a response. Comments and responses are presented to UTAB. The open house is held at a central and accessible location that is served by transit. Notice of the open house is published in local newspapers and through a press release distributed to local media. Neighborhood and homeowner association representatives, and interested parties are notified via electronic email or a direct mailing, and the notice is posted on the NIRCC website. The public notice, and time established for public review and comment for the TIP satisfies the program-of-projects notice requirements of the Federal Transit Administration Urbanized Area Formula Programs (Section 5307, 5310 and 5339) for the Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation/Citilink. To receive an open house notice, please contact the NIRCC office and provide your name and email address.

Public Meetings and Hearings

There are several types of public meetings and public hearings that are part of the transportation planning process. Public meetings or hearings for a specific project are typically held by the project sponsor (local government or INDOT) and NIRCC attends in an advisory capacity to help answer questions when applicable. The public meetings accommodate discussion on project

details, schedule, and provides a forum for sharing information and exchanging ideas. Citizens, businesses, and other transportation consumers can review project plans, provide input, and help shape the project's scope and amenities. Information provided by residents is valuable to the design process.

NIRCC periodically meets with various civic and service-related groups and other stakeholders to gain additional knowledge of specific transportation problems. Meeting with neighborhood groups and homeowner association representatives serves to gain input from different areas within the metropolitan area and disseminate information. Meetings are also held with utilities, economic development specialist, municipal land-use planners, developers, industry representatives, historic preservationist, and environmental groups to gain input on plans and projects.

Workshops and Planning Charrettes

Occasionally NIRCC sponsors workshops or planning charrettes to bring planners, advocates, transportation stakeholders, business leaders, citizens and state and local officials together to discuss transportation needs, projects, or plans. Typically, there is a specific topic such as public transit service improvements, traffic safety, or regional bicycle and pedestrian planning. NIRCC also facilitates workshops and other learning opportunities to bring stakeholders together to share information and strategize on innovative ideas to improve the transportation system.

Alternative Outreach Methods

Emergency situations similar to the COVID Pandemic may force NIRCC to suspend certain outreach efforts such as open policy and committee meetings, open houses, public meetings and other involvement activities. If in-person activities are not permitted, NIRCC will use virtual meetings, webinars, online surveys, telephone conferencing and other electronic means to communicate and provide opportunities for participation. The NIRCC website and email notices will advise interested parties how to participate.

Environmental Justice Population Areas

Additional provisions are undertaken to provide outreach to traditionally underserved and potentially disadvantaged populations residing in the metropolitan area. Potentially disadvantaged populations include minority, low-income, elderly, and disabled individuals, and those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). These populations may have been excluded from previous outreach efforts and underrepresented in the transportation planning process. In accordance with federal regulations, NIRCC utilizes Census and American Community Survey data to identify areas within the metropolitan area where potentially disadvantaged populations reside and has developed outreach procedures to increase participation of these individuals in the transportation planning process.

NIRCC evaluates census tracts for specific socio-economic characteristics. These characteristics include persons 65 years old and older, minorities, Hispanic, low-income households, disabled people, households with no vehicle; and LEP individuals. Census tracts that exceed the regional average for each characteristic are selected and mapped. Census tracts are prioritized based on a

cumulative presence of these socio-economic characteristics. Areas have been identified for targeting additional outreach strategies to seek input and participation from potentially disadvantaged populations. Figure 3 displays the census tracts with socio-economic characteristics that exceed regional averages.

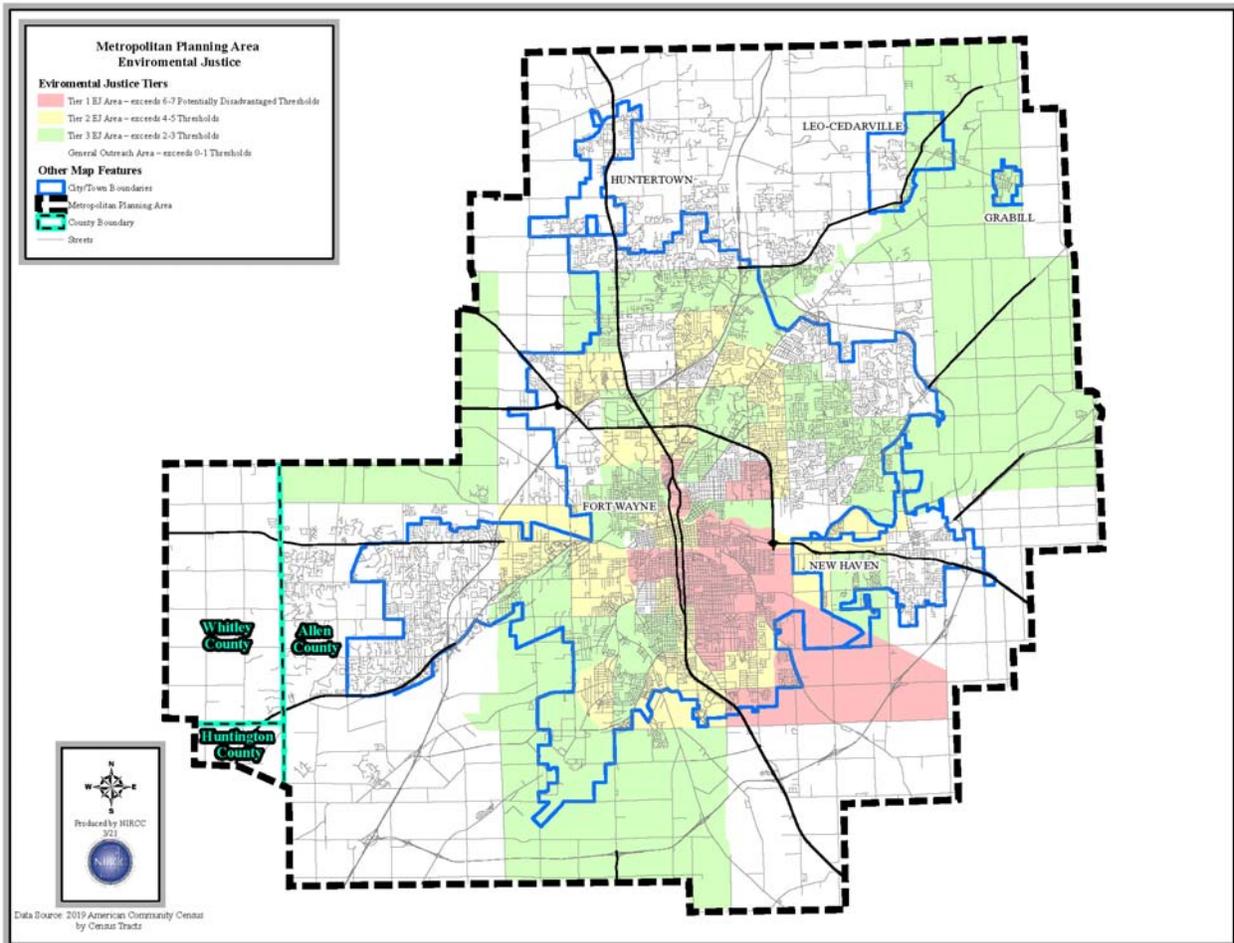


Figure 3. Environmental Justice Areas

Focused Outreach Strategies to Environmental Justice Populations

The outreach strategies to encourage participation from traditionally disadvantaged groups include the standard techniques of open policy board and committee meetings, meetings, transportation planning newsletter and annual summary report, information sharing and website, open houses, and public meetings and hearings. Additional focused outreach strategies will be utilized in areas meeting multiple disadvantaged thresholds. The goal of these strategies is to seek out the needs and concerns of Environmental Justice Populations, so they are taken into consideration throughout the planning and decision-making process. These strategies include timely notice of participation opportunities to civic and advocacy groups working with disadvantaged populations; direct communication and notices to representatives of neighborhood

groups and homeowner associations in Environmental Justice Areas; and holding planning and project input meetings at locations within EJ Areas exceeding multiple thresholds.

Title VI, Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council values everyone's civil rights and strives to provide equal opportunity and equitable service to all citizens in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and all related statutes, regulations, and directives, which provide that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity on the grounds of race, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, national origin, religion, income status or limited English proficiency.

Executive Order 12898 addresses Environmental Justice with a focus on the environmental and human health conditions in minority and low-income communities, enhances efforts to assure nondiscrimination in Federal programs affecting human health and the environment, and promotes meaningful opportunities for access to public information and for public participation in matters relating to minority and low-income communities and their environment. Executive Order 13166 ensures that, consistent with Title VI, persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to federally conducted and funded programs and activities. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NIRCC assures that no qualified disabled person shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination, including discrimination in employment, under any program or activity.

NIRCC assures that every effort will be made to prevent discrimination through the impacts of its programs, policies and activities for all individuals and groups. The participation process includes specific outreach efforts to engage minority and low-income populations in the transportation planning process. Reasonable steps are taken to provide meaningful access to services for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). NIRCC will, where necessary and appropriate, revise, update and incorporate nondiscrimination requirements into appropriate manuals and directives.

NIRCC's Title VI Documentation is located on the NIRCC website at www.nircc.com. The Title VI Complaint procedures are included with the documentation and require a written complaint submitted within 30 days of the alleged discriminatory occurrence.

Participation Plan Updates and Evaluation

The Participation Plan is reviewed and evaluated a minimum of once every four years. The review focuses on the primary goals to assure opportunities are afforded to all interested parties to understand the planning process and how to comment and influence decisions; have access to transportation information, analyses, visual tools and documents; and receive feedback regarding questions and concerns. The evaluation will include a geographic analysis of information distribution and meetings, with a specific focus on EJ areas. Participation at meetings will be tracked. Comments, questions, and suggestions will be documented and tracked, those regarding

participation activities and efforts will be considered for revising the process. Website “hit” tracking and surveys are additional tools that can be utilized to assess outreach efforts and provide valuable input. Voluntary survey results from participation events will also supplement the evaluation process. Modifications to the Participation Plan is based on Agency judgement and expectations. The compiled information from these tools will help identify areas to improve and guide the evaluation and revision process. Significant revisions to the public involvement process will not be adopted until a public comment period has been completed.

Consideration and Response to Comments

Comments received during participation events, or comment periods are documented and channeled through the appropriate jurisdiction for review and response. Comments and responses are presented in a timely manner to the policy board and committees for review and considerations. Comments and responses are included in the MTP, TIP, Participation Plan and Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan.

Figure 4. NIRCC Comment Form

COMMENTS...Please let us know your comments about a transportation issue(s). Please include as much information in your comment as possible. If your comment is a concern about a location or specific project, please include location (intersection or roadway), direction (of travel), lanes (all lanes or just one direction or turn lane), time of day (morning, 3-5pm), etc.

Project or location: _____

Direction of travel (if applicable): _____

Lanes of travel, thru, turn, etc. (if applicable): _____

Time of day that is of concern (if applicable): _____

Other: _____

Comment: _____

_____ If you need additional space, please continue on back.

Your input can assist in improving the transportation planning process.

- 1) Does the transportation planning process meet your expectations for identifying and addressing mobility and transportation needs? _____

- 2) What is the best method to convey transportation planning information to you?

Public Meetings Website Postings Newsletters

Other, please state: _____

Figure 5. NIRCC Voluntary Survey Form

As a recipient of federal funds, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) is requiring local agencies to develop a procedure for gathering statistical data regarding participants and beneficiaries of its federal-aid highway programs and activities (23 CRF §200.9(b)(4)). The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) is distributing this voluntary survey to fulfill that requirement to gather information about the populations affected by proposed projects.

You are not required to complete this survey. Submittal of this information is voluntary. This form is a public document that NIRCC will use to monitor its programs and activities for compliance with Title VI and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended and its related statutes and regulations.

If you have any questions regarding NIRCC's responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact NIRCC's Director Dan Avery at 200 East Berry Street Suite 230, Fort Wayne, IN 46802, (260) 449-7309, e-mail: dan.avery@co.allen.in.us.

You may return the survey by folding it and placing it on the registration table or by mailing or e-mailing it to the address above.

Date (month, day, year)					
Project name (if applicable)					
Proposed project location					
Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male		Ethnicity: <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino			
Race: (Check one or more)					
<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native		<input type="checkbox"/> Asian			
<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		<input type="checkbox"/> White			
<input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American		<input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial			
Age: <input type="checkbox"/> 1-21 <input type="checkbox"/> 22-40			Disability: <input type="checkbox"/> yes		
<input type="checkbox"/> 41-65 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+			<input type="checkbox"/> no		
Household Income:					
<input type="checkbox"/> 0-\$12,000		<input type="checkbox"/> \$12,001-\$24,000		<input type="checkbox"/> \$24,001-\$36,000	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$36,001-\$48,000		<input type="checkbox"/> \$48,001-\$60,000		<input type="checkbox"/> \$60,001+	

Participation Procedures-Key Decision Points

The transportation planning process includes the development and maintenance of several key documents that require public participation. These documents include the MTP, TIP, Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, and Participation Plan. All four documents must be developed through a transparent process that affords opportunities for public input and community involvement prior to key decisions and plan approvals. These documents are also required to ensure the region is eligible for federal assistance to support transportation projects and programs. NIRCC is involved in other planning activities including project development and implementation that include public review and participation meetings.

Engagement Opportunities

NIRCC utilizes a variety of engagement options. Depending on the planning activity, staff determines which option, or options are most appropriate. The typical participations options are listed below but are not limited to these if another option is preferred. Notice is provided prior to any outreach opportunity detailing when, where, and how to participate.

Inter-Agency Consultation and Collaboration

During the development of the MTP and TIP, NIRCC consults and collaborates with other planning agencies that are affected by transportation decisions. These agencies are involved in land use, local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, logistics and freight movement. Appendix C contains a list of agency contacts that receive notice to comment on the Participation Plan and Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Planning Meetings

NIRCC sponsors workshops and planning charrettes to bring planners, advocates, transportation stakeholders, business leaders, citizens and state and local officials together to discuss transportation needs, projects, or plans.

Public Notices

Public notices are published prior to key decisions on plan approvals and amendments to the MTP and Participation Plan. The notices are placed in local and regional newspapers announcing comment periods and participation opportunities. The public notices are also distributed via email to neighborhood representatives, elected officials, agencies and advocates working with EJ populations, and other interested parties that have requested notification. Notices are posted on NIRCC's website as are the draft documents and amendments. Press releases are sent to all local media outlets and include information on where documents can be reviewed, how to provide comment, and scheduled participation opportunities. Public notice of amendments to the TIP are posted on NIRCC's website.

Comment Periods

Comment periods are provided prior to adoption of the MTP, TIP, Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, Participation Plan and Air Quality Documentation. If significant changes are made to a plan or document after the comment period commences, a

second comment period is provided. Comment periods typically end one week prior to UTAB's consideration for approval.

Information Access

Information regarding transportation planning documents and reports are available for viewing and downloading from the NIRCC website at www.nircc.com. Maps, newsletters, annual reports and other information regarding highway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian transportation studies and plans are available at the website. Meeting notices and amendments are posted and available for review during comment periods. NIRCC staff are also available via personal visits to the office, phone calls or emails to discuss and provide information regarding transportation planning activities. A reasonable effort will be made to provide printed materials upon request.

Public Meetings

NIRCC sponsors an open house every spring and prior to the adoption of a new MTP or TIP. The open house is scheduled during the comment periods. Representatives from INDOT, Fort Wayne, New Haven, Allen County, and Citilink are present at the open house events to answer questions, discuss concerns, and review projects. Other meetings may be held throughout the year on specific projects or planning documents. Notices and invitations are distributed for these events.

Comment Summary

Comments received during participation events and comment periods are documented and channeled through the appropriate agency for review and response. Comments and responses are presented in a timely manner to the policy board for their review prior to an official action to adopt a plan or approve an amendment.

Policy Board and Committee Meetings

The Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB), Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), and Transit Planning Committee (TPC) meetings are open to the public. The final review and adoption of transportation plans and other transportation planning documents occurs at UTAB meetings.

Plans and Programs Requiring Participation

While transparency should prevail throughout the transportation planning process, specific plans and programs require that participation from individuals, affected agencies and other interested parties must be afforded reasonable and timely opportunities to review and make comment. These planning products include the MTP, TIP, Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, and Participation Plan. Table 2 provides a summary of participation procedures for each planning product and modification process.

Minor changes to an MTP or TIP are called administrative modifications. Administrative modifications do not require public review and comment. Amendments are used to make major

changes and must be available for public review and comment. Participation requirements and opportunities for transportation planning products are discussed below.

Participation Plan

The Participation Plan contains NIRCC's official policy to ensure participation in the transportation planning process and related activities. The plan provides general information on the planning process and specific participation activities designed to facilitate communication, share information, and afford opportunities for individuals, agencies, businesses, and advocacy groups to shape and influence transportation policy and planning decisions. Revisions to the Participation Plan are posted on the NIRCC website and are open for a forty-five-day comment period. Notification that the revised Draft Participation Plan is available for review and comment includes a published public notice and an email distribution to neighborhood representatives, advocacy groups and interested parties. The notification provides information on where the document can be found to review and how to submit comments.

Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan identifies transit and para-transit services available in the region; transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes; transportation service gaps and strategies to address the gaps; and projects that meet the identified strategies. The plan is intended to increase and promote coordination and collaboration amongst transportation providers to improve mobility and efficiency transportation services.

NIRCC consults with other planning agencies, transit providers, human service agencies, advocacy groups and individuals during the development of the Coordinated Plan. A Public Notice is published and distributed via email to interested parties with information on where the Plan can be reviewed, how to comment, and dates and times of public meetings. A minimum of thirty days is provided for comment on both a revised plan or plan amendment.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan guides infrastructure and program investment decisions for roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements within the Metropolitan Planning Area. The twenty-year vision is updated every five years to review planning assumptions and investment priorities. The multimodal plan determines how federal funds are used to improve the transportation system. Draft and adopted MTPs are available on the NIRCC website and printed versions are offered for review at the NIRCC office.

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

MTP Amendment

Periodically the MTP is modified or amended when unforeseen needs arise, and regionally significant projects or programs are identified. Administrative modifications to an MTP are minor revisions processed by NIRCC staff, typically correcting typographical errors, or adding language to clarify a project or process. Removing or adding a project, significantly modifying a project's design scope, or substantial change in project costs requires an amendment. A comment period is provided for a minimum of 15 days on amendments to the MTP. Notices are sent to neighborhood representatives and other interested parties. The amendment is posted on NIRCC's website. Comments are summarized and provided to UTAB for their review and consideration prior to a request to approve an amendment to the MTP.

Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program is a five-year capital investment plan that identifies how federal funds will be invested on the transportation system and locally funded project that are significant to the region. Projects are selected from the MTP, Safety Management Program, Congestion Management Process and Asset Management Programs for implementation. Projects typically have three primary phases of development listed in the TIP including Preliminary Engineering (PE), Right-of-Way (RW) acquisition, and Construction (CN). Improvement projects are identified and prioritized.

The Transportation Improvement Program is designed to provide the most accurate information available on transportation projects in Allen County. To meet this objective, the TIP is periodically revised through amendments and administrative modifications. The TIP may be revised at any time consistent with the defined procedures for its development and approval. The following procedures have been developed for processing project amendments and modifications including opportunity for review and comment.

TIP Amendment

An amendment is required when there is a major change to a project. An amendment requires formal action by the Urban Transportation Advisory Board. The amendment process includes an opportunity for review and comment. A major change is defined as: 1) a significant change in project scope of work; 2) adding a project to, or removing a project from, the TIP; or 3) a significant change in project or program cost as determined by the amendment cost thresholds (see Table 1).

Proposed TIP amendments are posted on the NIRCC Website, generally by the 10th of each month as needed. The comment period is open for 15 days. Whenever possible the full comment period will be observed, however certain circumstances may preclude a full comment period. Comments are documented and presented to UTAB for their consideration prior to approval. Comments are included in the appendix of the TIP. Simultaneous with the comment period, TIP amendments are submitted to the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) for air quality conformity purposes. The TIP is revised in accordance with approved amendments.

Administrative Modification

The TIP is also revised through an administrative modification process. Administrative modifications are minor changes to an approved TIP. Minor changes include splitting or combining projects without modifying project scope; updating project costs that fall below the Amendment threshold; changing project funding from federal to state or local funds; shifting a project schedule or project phase within the first four years of the TIP; and adding, deleting or modifying a “grouped project.” Certain revisions do not require an administrative modification such as correcting a data or typographical error; clarifying a project description that does not alter the project scope; and adding or modifying a designation or contract number.

Administrative modifications are not posted for comment and do not require ICG or UTAB approval. The administrative modifications are processed by NIRCC staff and submitted to INDOT for inclusion in the Indiana Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (INSTIP). The TIP is revised in accordance with the administrative modification.

Table 1. TIP Amendment Cost Thresholds

Total Project Cost	Amendment	Administrative Modification
< \$2,000,000	≥ 75%	< 75%
\$2,000,000 - \$9,999,999	≥ 50%	< 50%
\$10,000,000 - \$24,999,999	≥ 40%	< 40%
≥ \$25,000,000	≥ 30%	< 30%

Approved TIP Amendments and Administrative Modifications

A complete listing of approved TIP amendments and administrative modifications including Group Projects is posted on the NIRCC website. TIP amendments and administrative modifications are assigned an identification number that is included in the revised TIP and project lists.

Air Quality Analysis

In conjunction with the development of an MTP and/or TIP, an air quality conformity document is prepared. Allen County was originally designated as nonattainment for the 1997 National Ambient Air Quality Standard for the pollutant ozone in April 2004 and was redesignated to attainment in February 2007. At that time guidance indicated that conformity determinations were no longer required based on the revocation of the 1997 Ozone NAAQS. Under a recent court decision on February 16, 2018, a decision from the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in *South Coast Air Quality Management District v. EPA* (“South Coast II,” 882 F.3d 1138), EPA was directed to require conformity determinations for areas that were either non-attainment or maintenance for the 1997 Ozone NAAQS when the standard was revoked. These areas, such as Allen County, are referred to as “orphan areas.” Orphan areas are

required to prepare a simplified Air Quality Document that does not require a regional emissions analysis but does require an Air Quality Conformity Determination.

Based on this requirement, NIRCC prepares a Transportation Conformity Document to demonstrate conformity for the MTP and TIP. The Transportation Conformity Document is updated with the development of the MTP and/or TIP and is available for review and comment in conjunction with review and comment periods for the MTP and TIP.

Table 2. Participation Procedures

	Participation Plan		Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan		Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)		Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	
	Plan Update	Plan Amendment	Plan Update	Plan Amendment	Plan Update	Plan Amendment	Plan Update	Plan Amendment
	(every 4-5 years)	(revised as needed)	(every 4-5 years)	(revised as needed)	(every 4-5 years)	(amended as needed)	(every 2 years)	(amended as needed)
Inter-Agency Consultation and Coordination	●		●		●		●	
Engagement Opportunities			●		●			
Public Notices	●	●	●		●	●	●	Website Posting
Comment Period	45 days	15 days	30 days	-	30 days	15 days	30 days	15 days
Information Access	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Public Meetings			●		●		●	
Comment Summary	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
UTAB Approval	●	●	●		●	●	●	●

Other Transportation Planning Activities

NIRCC conducts numerous studies and reports that may benefit from individual and agency involvement. These activities include but are not limited to corridor studies, transit studies, safety management, bicycle and pedestrian planning, Certification Reviews, travel surveys and other studies. NIRCC may offer public meetings, workshops, focus group meetings, planning charrettes and other participation events for these activities. NIRCC is also involved with project development and assists state and local governments with project specific meetings and environmental assessments.

Appendix A
Participation – Federal Regulations

§ 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The MPO shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

- (i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
- (iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
- (iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
- (v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- (vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- (viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
- (ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and
- (x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93, subpart A), a summary, analysis, and

report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPO shall develop the metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

(1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;

(2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and

(3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 201-204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under § 450.314.

Appendix B
Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice

An important component of the participation process is the outreach strategies to ensure individuals, agencies, advocacy groups and other interested parties are aware of opportunities to be involved and provide input to the transportation planning process and more importantly, having influence on the decisions for investments in projects and programs resulting from the planning process. Outreach is deployed region-wide, however additional provisions are undertaken to provide outreach strategies to Environmental Justice (EJ) Populations Areas residing in the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). These populations have been traditionally underserved and potentially disadvantaged. To direct the additional outreach efforts to appropriate areas, the EJ populations are identified by evaluating census tracts for specific socio-economic characteristics. These characteristics include persons 65 years old and older; minority populations; Hispanic populations; individuals below poverty; disabled people; households with no vehicle; and Limited English Proficiency (LEP; speaks English less than very well) individuals.

American Community Survey Data 2015-2019 was utilized to evaluate each tract. A region-wide percentage was calculated for each of the seven socio-economic characteristics to establish a potentially disadvantaged threshold. The thresholds for the Census Tracts in the Metropolitan Planning Area are provided in Table B-1. Census tracts that display percentages higher than the threshold were identified. These census tracts become focus areas for that characteristic. Census tracts were then prioritized based on the number of characteristics that exceeded their respective thresholds. Based on the number of characteristics that exceeded their threshold, census tracts were prioritized as Tier 1, 2, 3 or General Outreach EJ Areas.

- Tier 1 EJ Area-exceeds 6-7 Thresholds
- Tier 2 EJ Area-exceeds 4-5 Thresholds
- Tier 3 EJ Area-exceeds 2-3 Thresholds
- General Outreach EJ Area-exceeds 0-1 Threshold

The map in Figure B-1 displays the Tiered and General Outreach EJ Population Areas for the NIRCC Metropolitan Planning Area. The maps in Figures B-2 through B-8 display the EJ Population for the seven separate socio-economic characteristics including: persons 65 years old and older; minority populations; Hispanic populations; individuals below poverty; disabled people; households with no vehicle; and Limited English Proficiency (LEP; speaks English less than very well) individuals. Charts displaying each of the seven EJ Population characteristics are provided in Figures B-9 through B-15.

Table B-1. Metropolitan Planning Area Census Tract Thresholds

Socio-economic Characteristic	Metropolitan Planning Area Census Tract Thresholds
Persons 65 years old and older	14.12%
Minority population	22.19%
Hispanic population	7.80%
Individuals below poverty	13.61%
Persons with a disability	12.50%
Households with no vehicle	5.81%
Individuals with Limited English Proficiency	4.31%

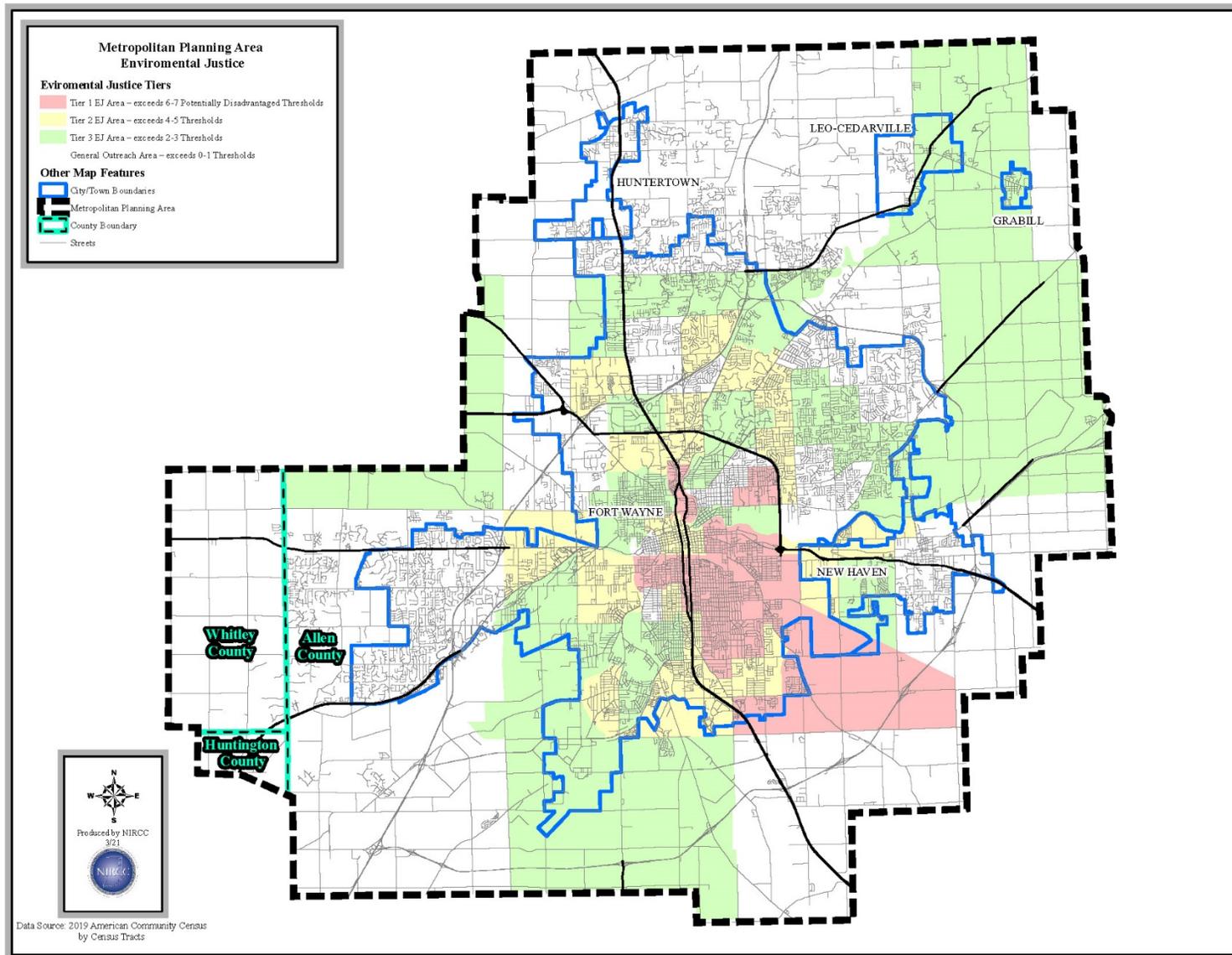


Figure B-1. Environmental Justice Population Areas

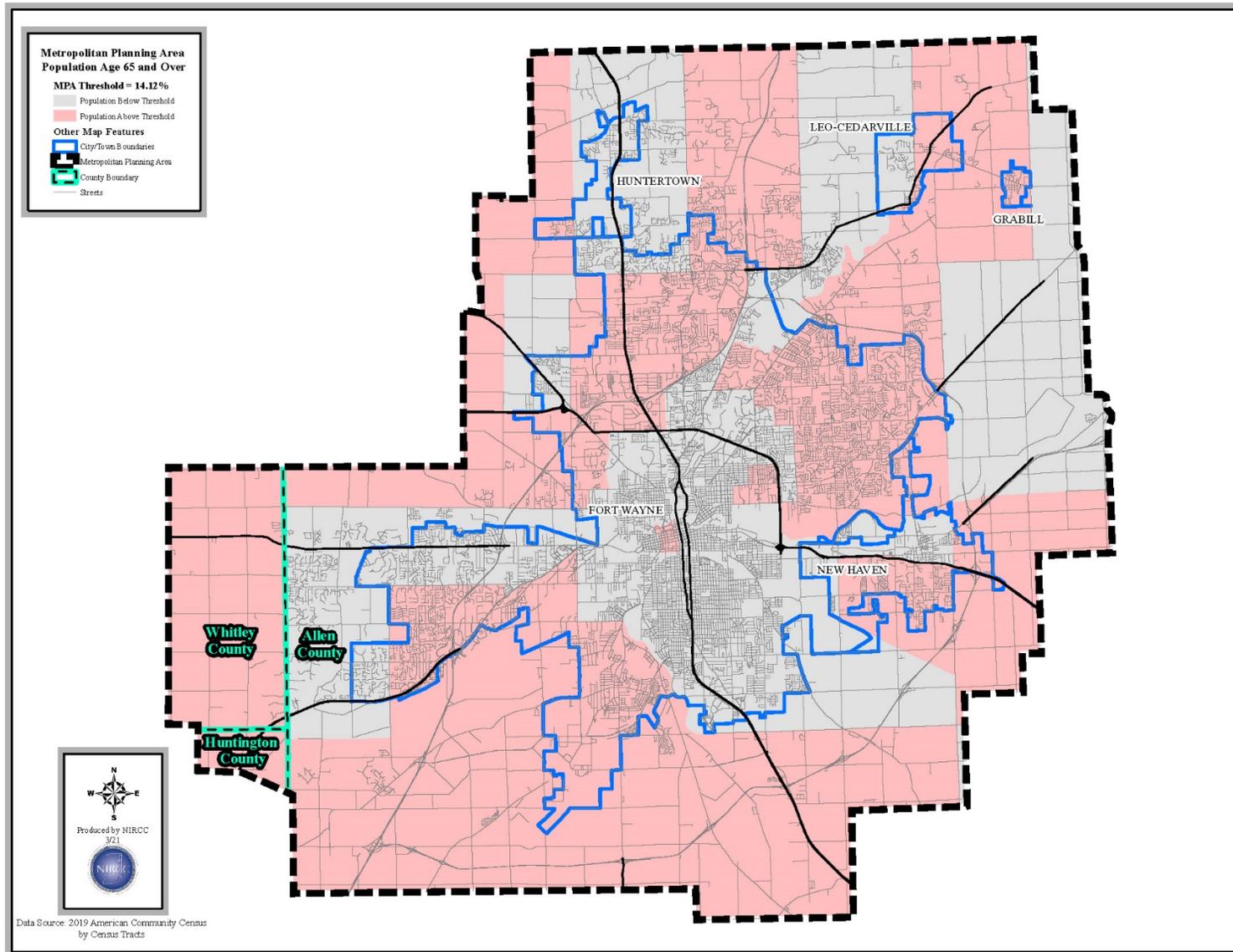


Figure B-2. Population Age 65 and Older

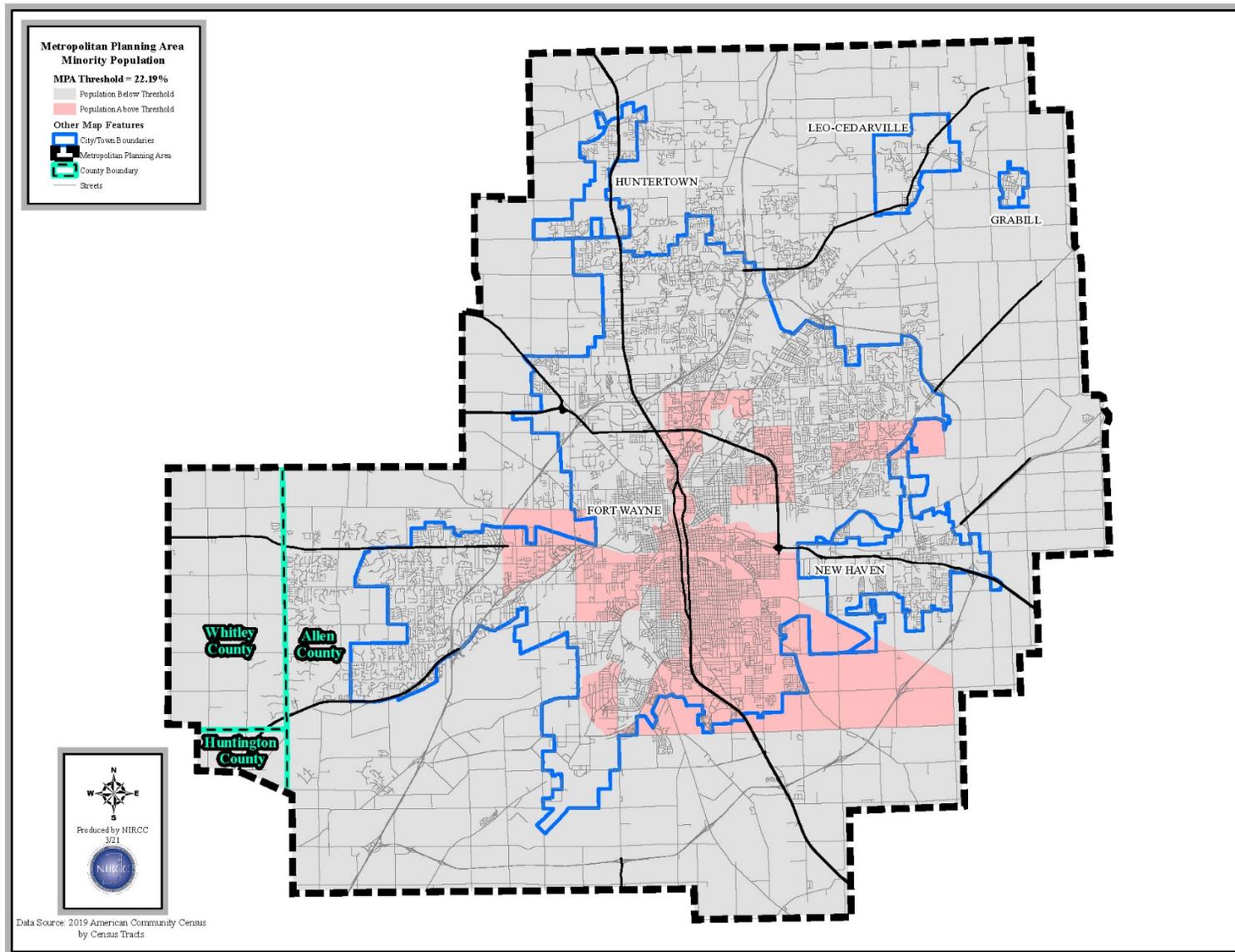


Figure B-3. Minority Population

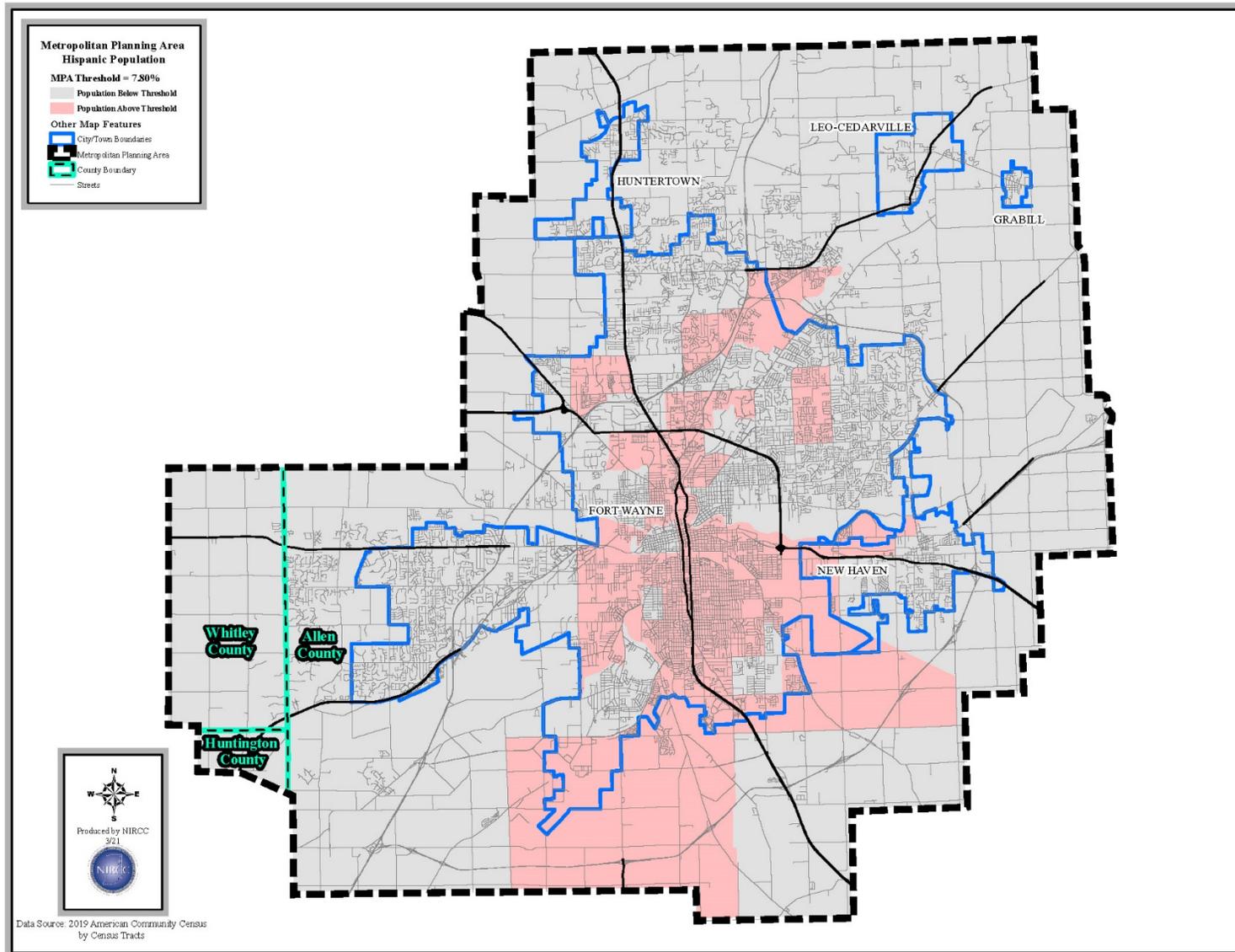


Figure B-4. Hispanic Population

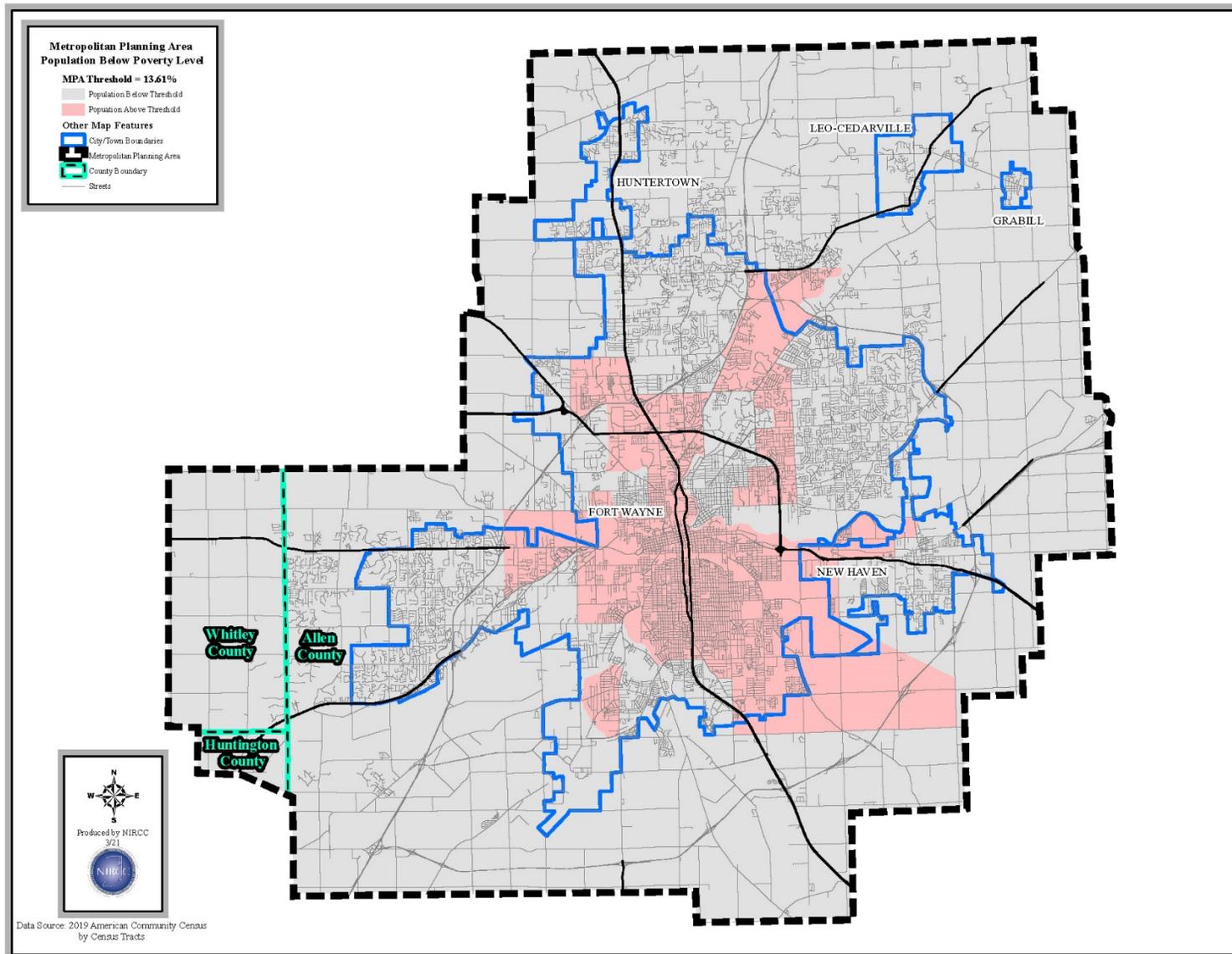


Figure B-5. Population Below Poverty Level

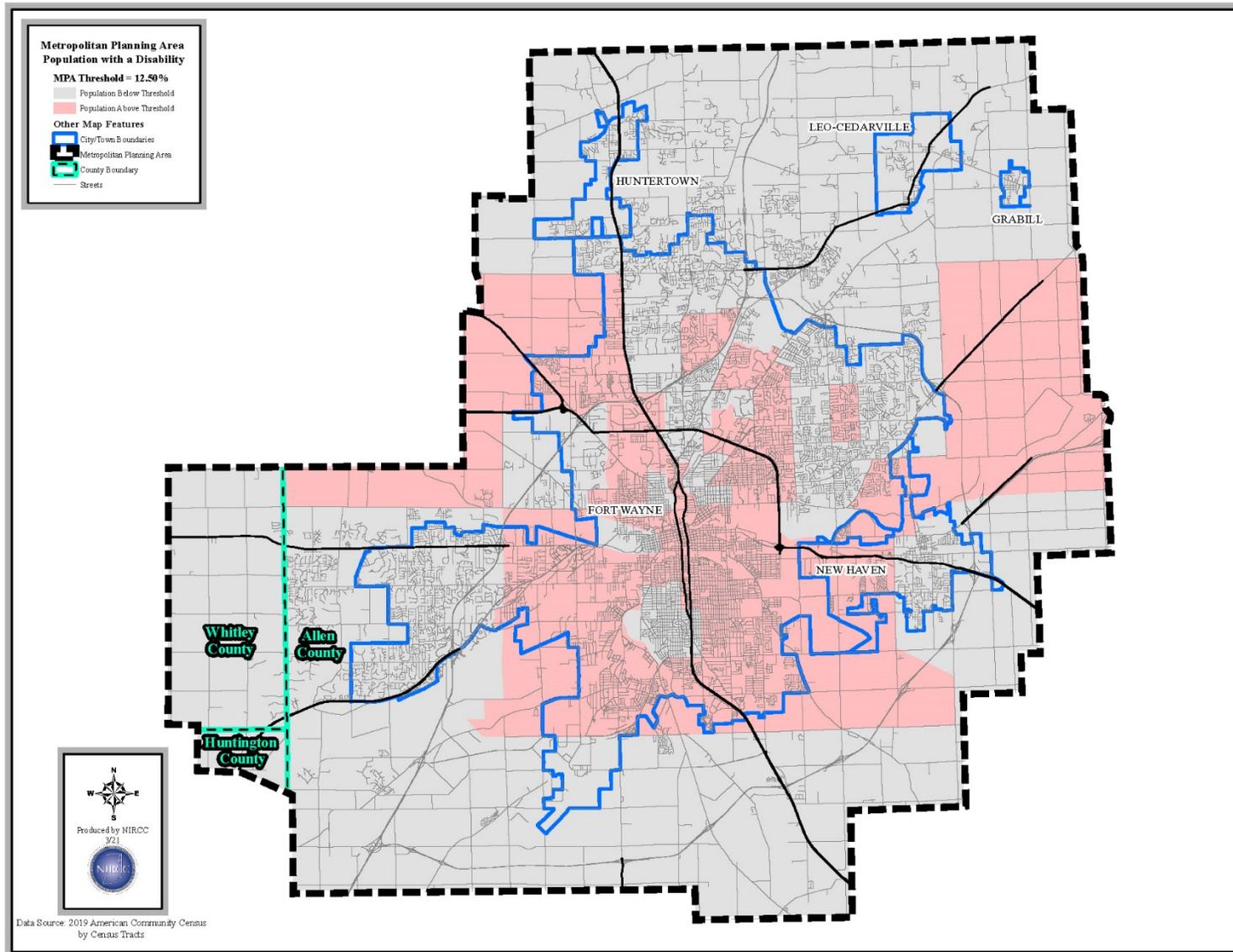


Figure B-6. Persons with a Disability

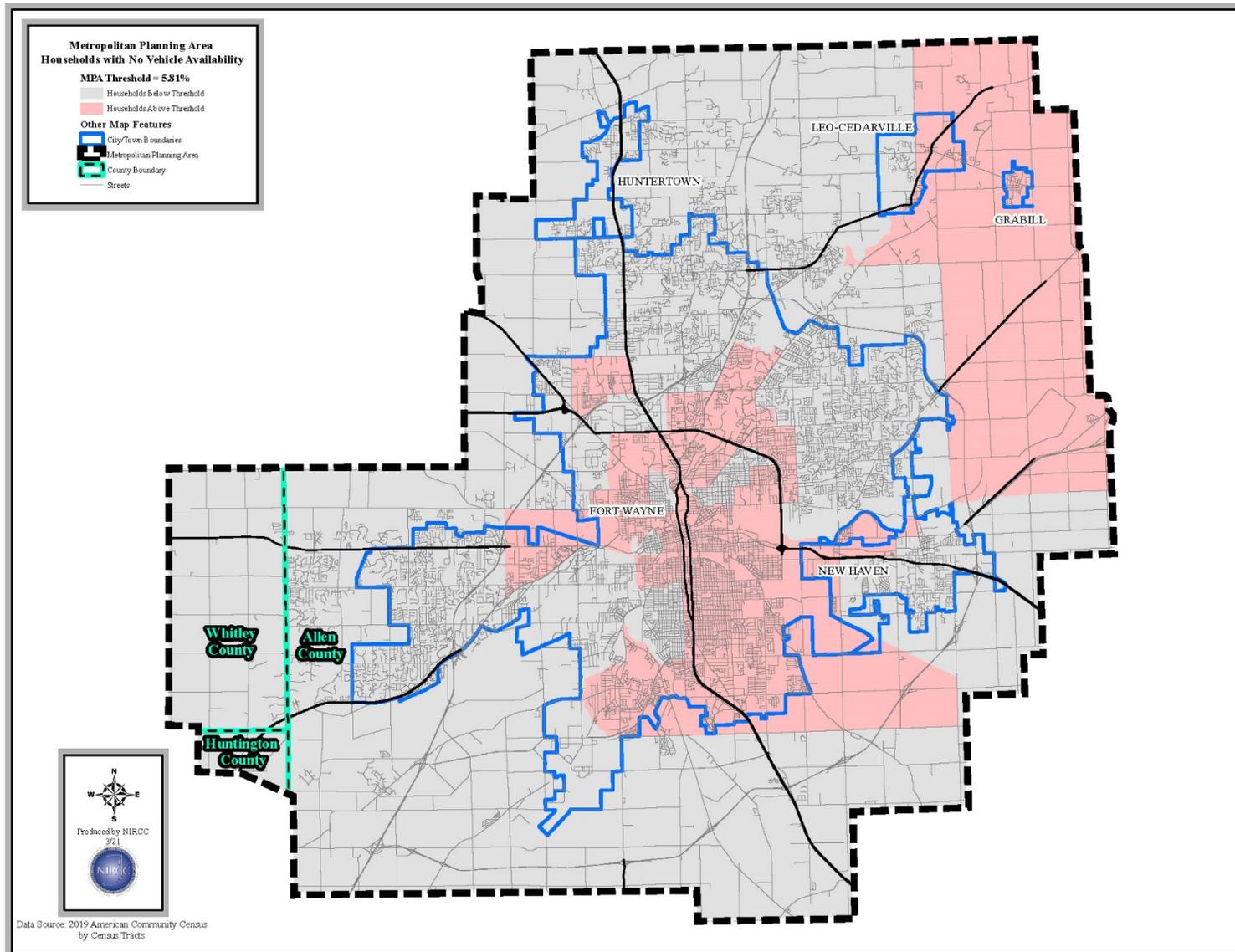


Figure B-7. Households with No Vehicle Available

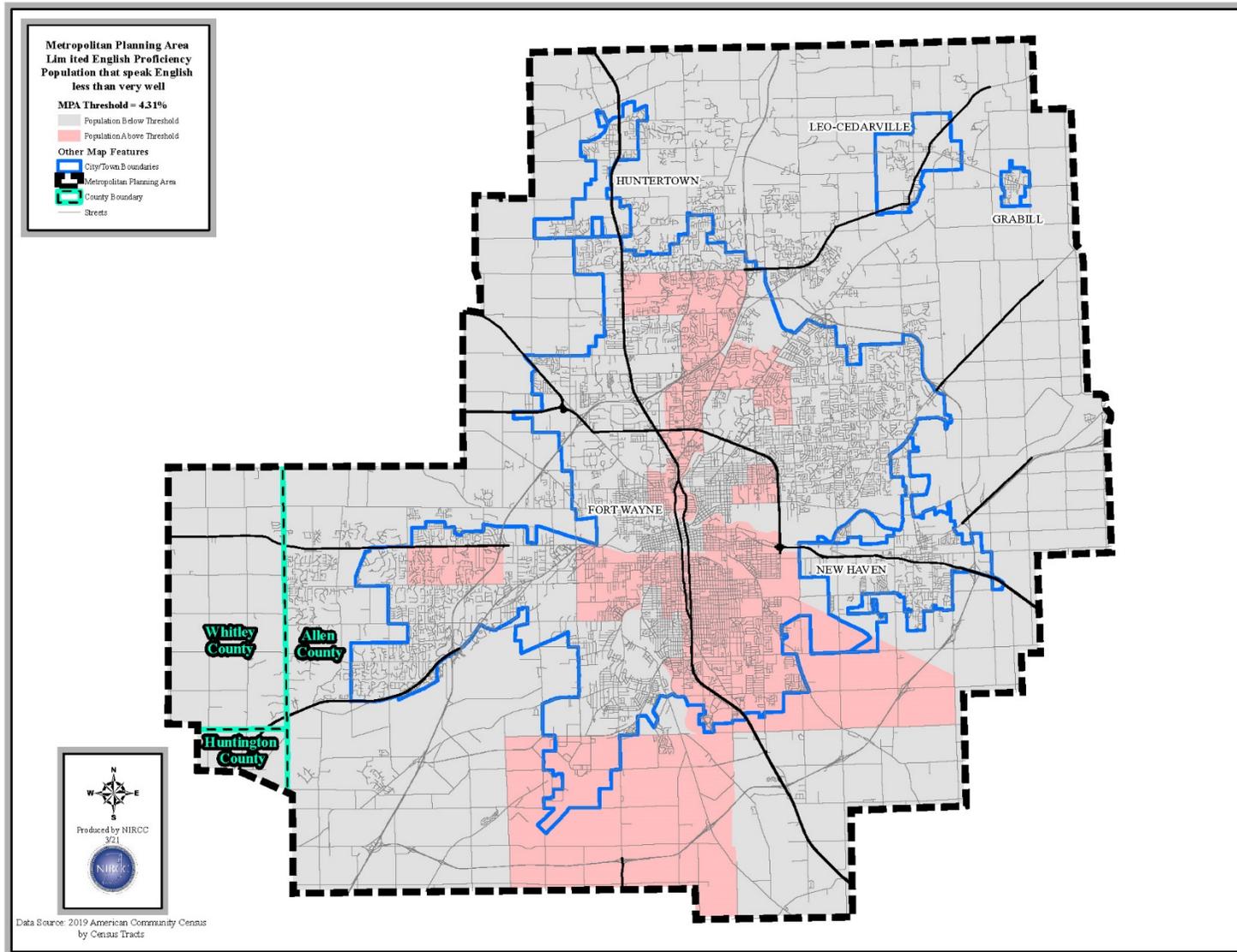


Figure B-8. Limited English Proficiency, Population That Speak English Less than Very Well

Figure B-9. Population 65 and Over

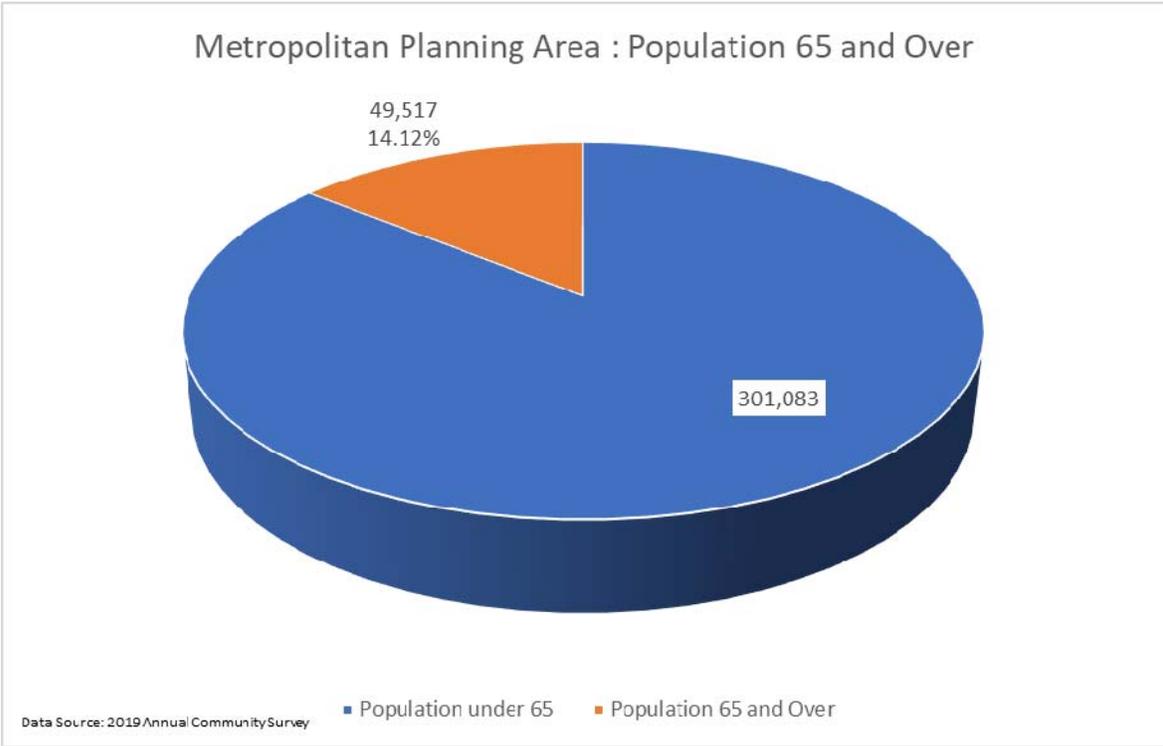


Figure B-10. Minority Population

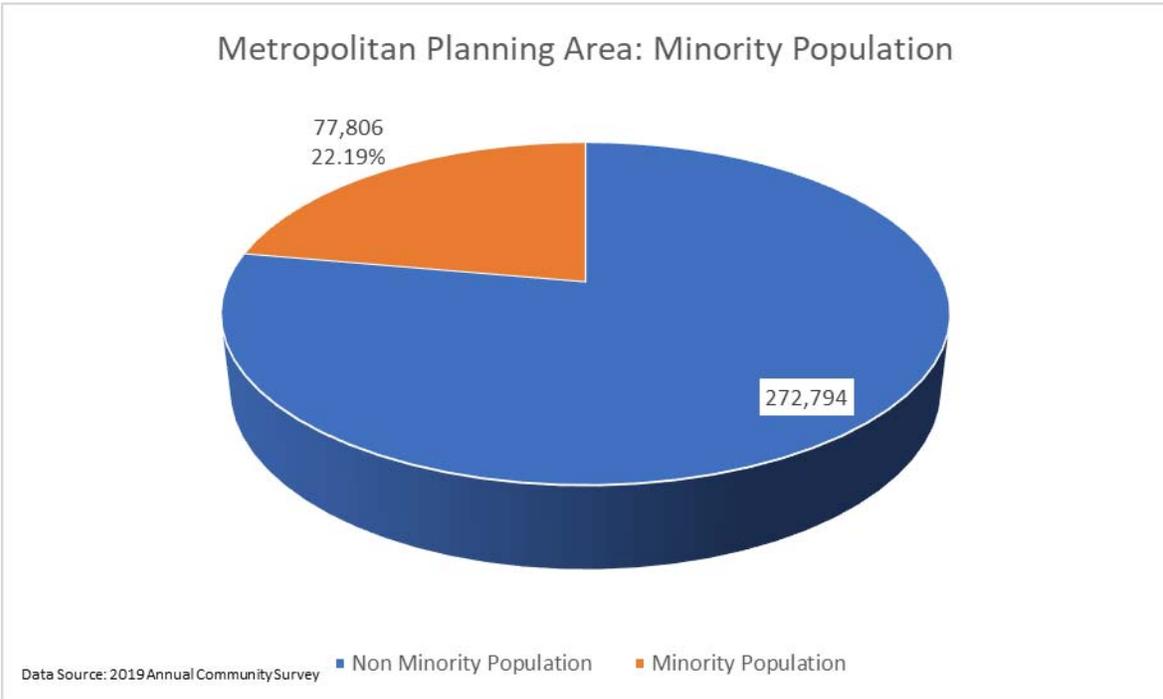


Figure B-11. Hispanic Population

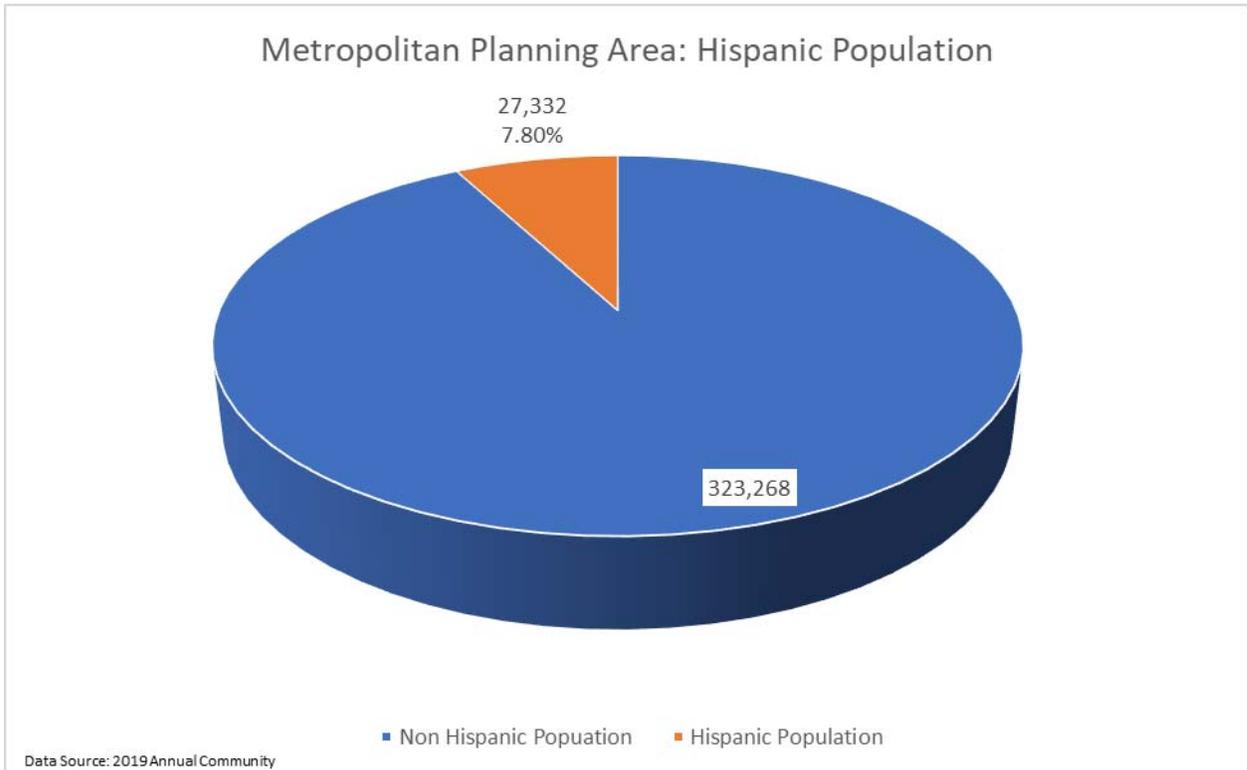


Figure B-12. Population Below Poverty Level

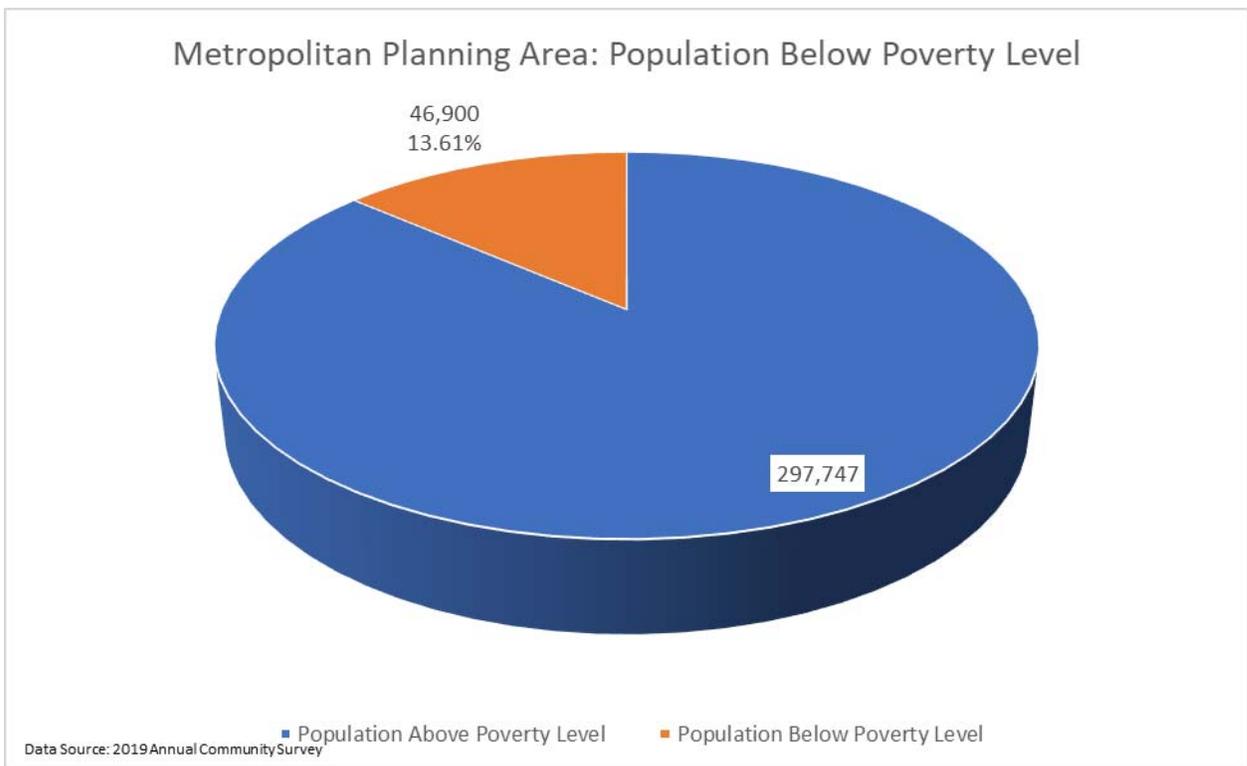


Figure B-13. Population with A Disability

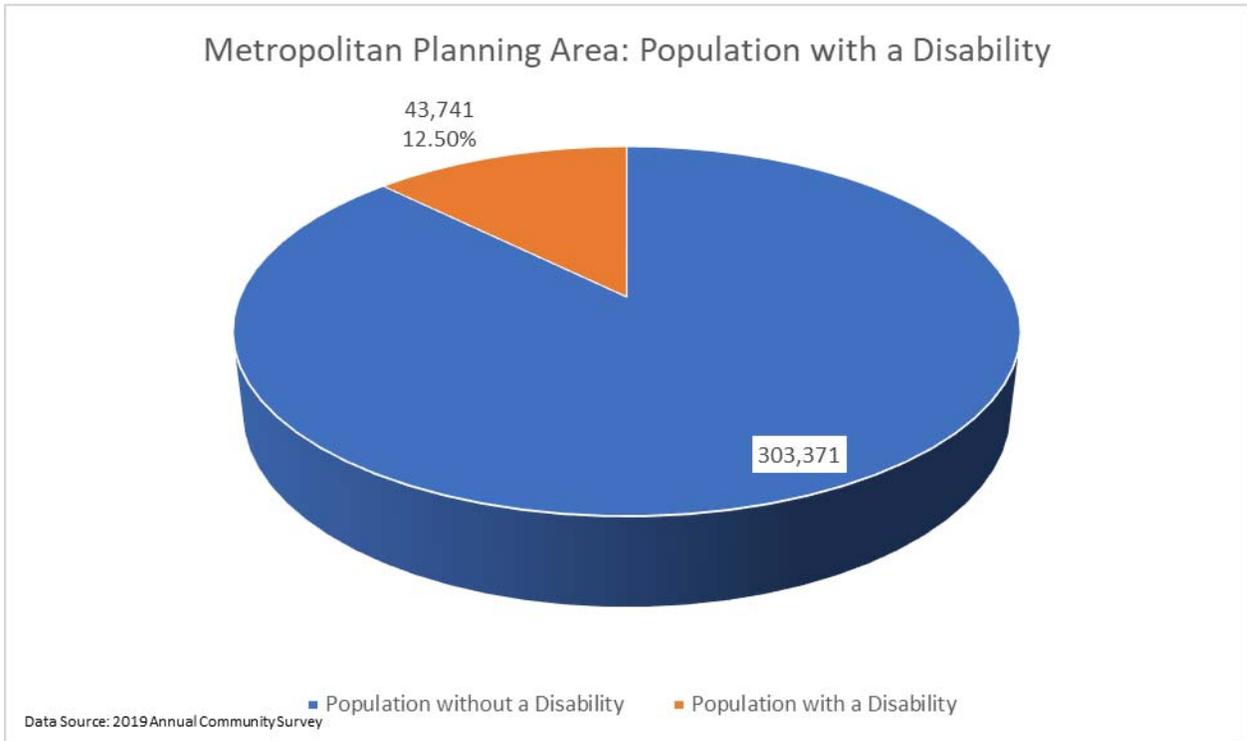


Figure B-14. Households with No Vehicle Available

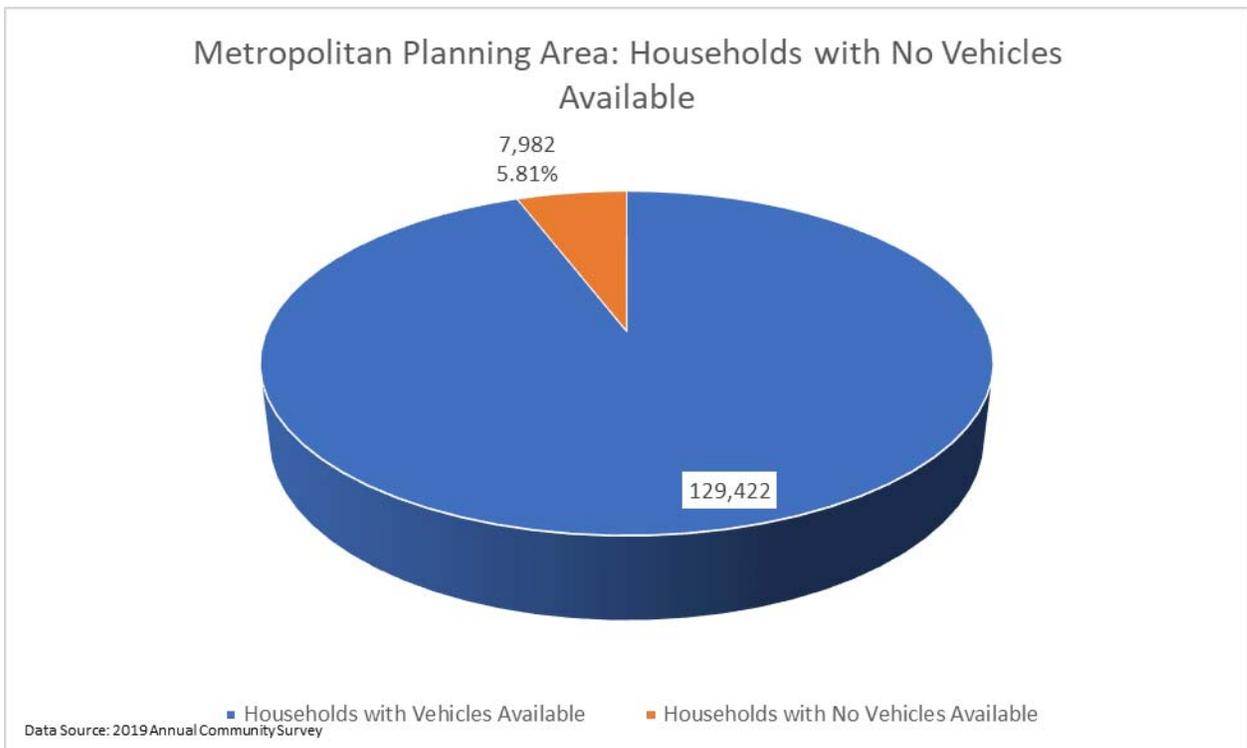
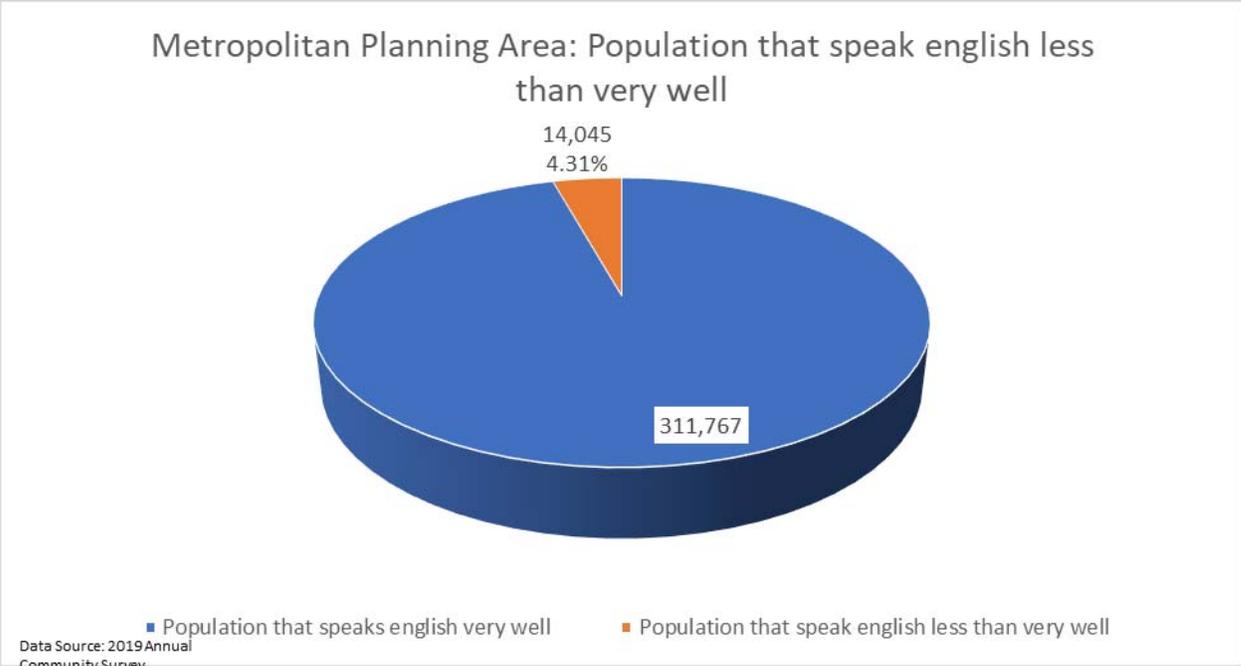


Figure B-15. Limited English Proficiency, Population that Speak English Less Than Very Well



Appendix C
Inter-Agency Contacts

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Mr. Shawn Seals, Senior Environmental Manager
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Appendix D
Participation Plan Comment Period

The Public Review and Comment Period for the Draft Participation Plan was initiated on November 17, 2021 and terminated on January 3, 2022 for a total of 48 days. The Draft Participation Plan was posted on the NIRCC website www.nircc.com and available for review at the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council, Citizen Square, 200 East Berry Street, Suite 230, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46802, (260) 449-7309, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Information requests and comments regarding the Participation Plan were asked to be directed in writing to Dan Avery, Executive Director of NIRCC, 200 East Berry Street, Suite 230, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46802 or dan.avery@co.allen.in.us, or by phone at (260) 449-7309.

A public notice was printed in the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette and a press release was sent to all known news media outlets. Notices were sent to neighborhood representatives, advocacy agencies, board and committee members, agency representatives listed in Appendix C, and other interested parties. Approximately 500 individuals and groups were directly contacted. No notable comments were submitted to NIRCC during the review and comment period. The public notice is provided below.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) that the Participation Plan for the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process has been revised and is available for public review and comment. The public comment period will commence upon publication of this notice on November 17, 2021 and remain open until January 3, 2022.

The primary goals of the Participation Plan are to define a process that assures opportunities are afforded to all interested parties to understand the planning process and how to comment and influence decisions; have access to transportation information, analyses, visual tools and documents; and receive feedback regarding questions and concerns. The process includes special outreach efforts to populations that have often lacked traditional access to the planning process such as elderly, low income, minority, disabled, and limited English proficiency individuals. The metropolitan planning process administered by NIRCC strives to achieve these goals through a variety of participation activities and information sharing techniques. The participation process includes collaboration with numerous local, state, and federal agencies. In addition, NIRCC will make specific efforts to coordinate with the participation processes of the Indiana Department of Transportation, Citilink, Airport Authority, Allen County, Fort Wayne, New Haven, and other local public agencies. This document will discuss the participation opportunities.

The Participation Plan as drafted is a proactive involvement process that provides citizens, affected public agencies, transportation stakeholders and interested parties complete information and public notice of participation activities. These activities provide for timely notice for review and comment at key decision points, including but

not limited to the opportunity to comment on the proposed Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, and Participation Plan. The Participation Plan for the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for the Metropolitan Planning Area covers a sizable portion of Allen County including the Cities of Fort Wayne and New Haven, the Towns of Grabill, Huntertown, and Leo-Cedarville, and small portions of Huntington and Whitley Counties.

The Participation Plan is available for review at the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council, Citizen Square, 200 East Berry Street, Suite 230, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46802, (260) 449-7309, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Participation Plan is also posted on the NIRCC web site, accessible through www.nircc.com. Information requests and comments regarding the Participation Plan should be directed in writing to Dan Avery, Executive Director of NIRCC, 200 East Berry Street, Suite 230, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46802 or dan.avery@co.allen.in.us, or by phone at (260) 449-7309.