

Chapter 5

SELECTION OF THE RECOMMENDED PLAN

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council has delegated the responsibility for selecting the transportation plan that best meets the future travel needs of the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Metropolitan Planning Area to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB). The development of the plan involved a magnitude of local, state and federal governmental agencies plus considerable public participation. The factors and events that led to the selection of the plan are the subject of discussion within this chapter. The final adoption of the transportation plan is made by the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council.

Documentation of Public Participation

Public officials and local citizens of the metropolitan area have historically provided valuable and comprehensive input throughout the development of transportation plan updates. The development of the 2040 transportation plan also proactively encouraged public input and participation. Local elected and appointed officials were included in meetings and discussions concerning the transportation plan. Presentations were made to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board, and input from the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee was incorporated into the transportation plan. Discussion at these meetings is intended to inform, stimulate participation, and obtain policy guidance at all stages of plan development. A list of the Urban Transportation Advisory Board meetings where topics concerning the plan update were discussed is provided in Table 10. These meetings are open to the public. Notices are sent to all interested persons including the media, the local Chapter of the NAACP, the Fort Wayne Urban League, and the Benito Juarez Cultural Center.

The Urban Transportation Advisory Board began discussing the merits of the current Year 2040 Transportation Plan in mid-2017 in preparation of the 2040 update. This discussion familiarized the members to the planning process for developing a transportation plan. Subsequent meetings involved productive dialogue between members and staff, and exceptional policy formulation throughout the evolution of the 2040 plan update. The Transportation Technical Committee, Feasibility Subcommittee, and Transit Planning Committee were also involved in the development of the plan. Through their assistance, a comprehensive plan was developed to meet the future transportation needs of the community.

In addition, numerous other efforts were made to inform and involve the public in developing the 2040 plan update. Citizens are encouraged to attend NIRCC's Transportation Open House, visit the office, mail in comments, or contact us by telephone to discuss development of the plan and provide suggestions. Planning materials are also routinely posted on the NIRCC Website at www.NIRCC.com for review

Table 10. Urban Transportation Advisory Board Meetings*

April 4, 2017
July 11, 2017
September 5, 2017
November 7, 2017
December 5, 2017
February 6, 2018
March 13, 2018
April 3, 2018
May 1, 2018

*These meetings were all open to the public

and informational purposes. The planning process received coverage by local news media including television, radio, and newspaper. Presentations were also made to groups and committees associated with the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce as part of an on-going working relationship with the business community.

The comments received from the participation meetings were documented. The comments are combined with those received by telephone, mail, or e-mail. The comments are reviewed by the Urban Transportation Advisory Board and related subcommittees. The staff, working with the Board, prepared responses to the citizen comments. The comments received as part of the development of the 2040 Transportation Plan along with the responses are provided in Appendix J.

Environmental Justice

The concept of environmental justice refers to the goal of identifying and avoiding disproportionate adverse impacts on minority and low-income individuals and communities. The provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, and other statutes, orders, policies, and guidelines affect planning and project decisions undertaken by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), public transportation agencies, State Departments of Transportation (DOT), and other transportation providers. Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice amplifies the provisions of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that states “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

There are three fundamental principals at the core of environmental justice:

To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental

effects including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.

To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

The implementation of Environmental Justice Order in the transportation planning process should assure public involvement of low-income and minority groups in planning activities and decision-making, prevent disproportionately high and adverse impacts of decisions on minority and low-income populations, and assure low-income and minority populations receive a proportionate share of transportation benefits.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council, the Metropolitan Planning Organization of the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Urban Area, has developed a process for addressing environmental justice issues in transportation planning activities and plan development. The process includes defining and identifying minority and low-income populations, public involvement strategies to engage minority and low-income groups and individuals in the transportation planning process, and measures for evaluating the benefits and burdens of transportation plans and projects.

Defining and Identifying Minority and Low-Income Populations

In order to identify the location of low-income and minority populations, a demographic profile of the Metropolitan Planning Area was developed based upon 2010 Census information. Three separate profiles were developed that identify minority, Hispanic, and low-income populations by census tract. Separate maps have been prepared for each profile.

The minority population is obtained by combining the Census categories of Black, American Indian, Asian, Hawaiian, other, and two or more races. The Hispanic population is obtained directly from a Census category identifying Hispanic population. The information was determined by Census Tract. Identifying these two environmental justice populations was fairly straightforward.

Identifying the low-income population group is a little more difficult and subjective based on various acceptable methods. Information was obtained from 2016 ACS data and is based upon household income. Several methods for identifying low-income populations using household income data were evaluated. One method used 2010 Census poverty income criteria for various household sizes, which is very similar to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2000 poverty guidelines. This provided data on the number of persons considered low-income by Census poverty definitions. A second similar approach identified households, rather than population, that met the Census poverty guidelines. A third and simpler approach established a threshold for household income based household size. (See Table 11).

Any household under the listed annual income level was identified as low-income. The three methods of identifying low-income populations yielded similar demographic profiles. The third approach was utilized for its simplicity and reasonable results.

The process used to identify concentrations of environmental justice populations was based upon

Table 11: Poverty Thresholds by Family Size

Family Size	Threshold
One Person	\$12,228
Two People	\$15,569
Three People	\$19,105
Four People	\$24,563
Five People	\$29,111
Six People	\$32,928
Seven People	\$37,458
Eight People	\$41,781
Nine people or more	\$49,721

*Source US Census

establishing threshold levels for minority, low-income, and Hispanic populations. The thresholds are based on the Metropolitan Planning Area regional average established through 2016 Census data. The regional averages for the environmental justice populations are 21.01 percent for minority populations, 7.41 percent for Hispanic populations, and 18.19 percent for low-income populations. A map was developed for each population group identifying census tracts where data indicates the population characteristic exceeds the threshold level. Figures 15, 16, and 17 display this information. Figure 18 combines the minority population, Hispanic population, and low-income population census tracts that exceed the respective threshold levels. As a performance measure we looked at the transit system coverage area. Staff determined that approximately 93% percentage of poverty level population fell within a 1/2 mile of a transit route. See Figure 19.

Public Involvement Strategies for Engaging Minority and Low- Income Populations

The transportation planning process for the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County has a long established public participation program that has evolved since the development of the first transportation plan in the late 1970's. The current public participation program involves a variety of strategies to inform citizens of transportation planning issues and encourage their participation. These strategies include public meetings, open board meetings, transportation planning briefs, press releases to local media, and information exchanged through telephone calls, mail, e-mail and visits to our offices.

Meetings of the Urban Transportation Advisory Board are open to the public. This is the policy body for the transportation planning process. Meeting notices and agendas are provided to groups representing

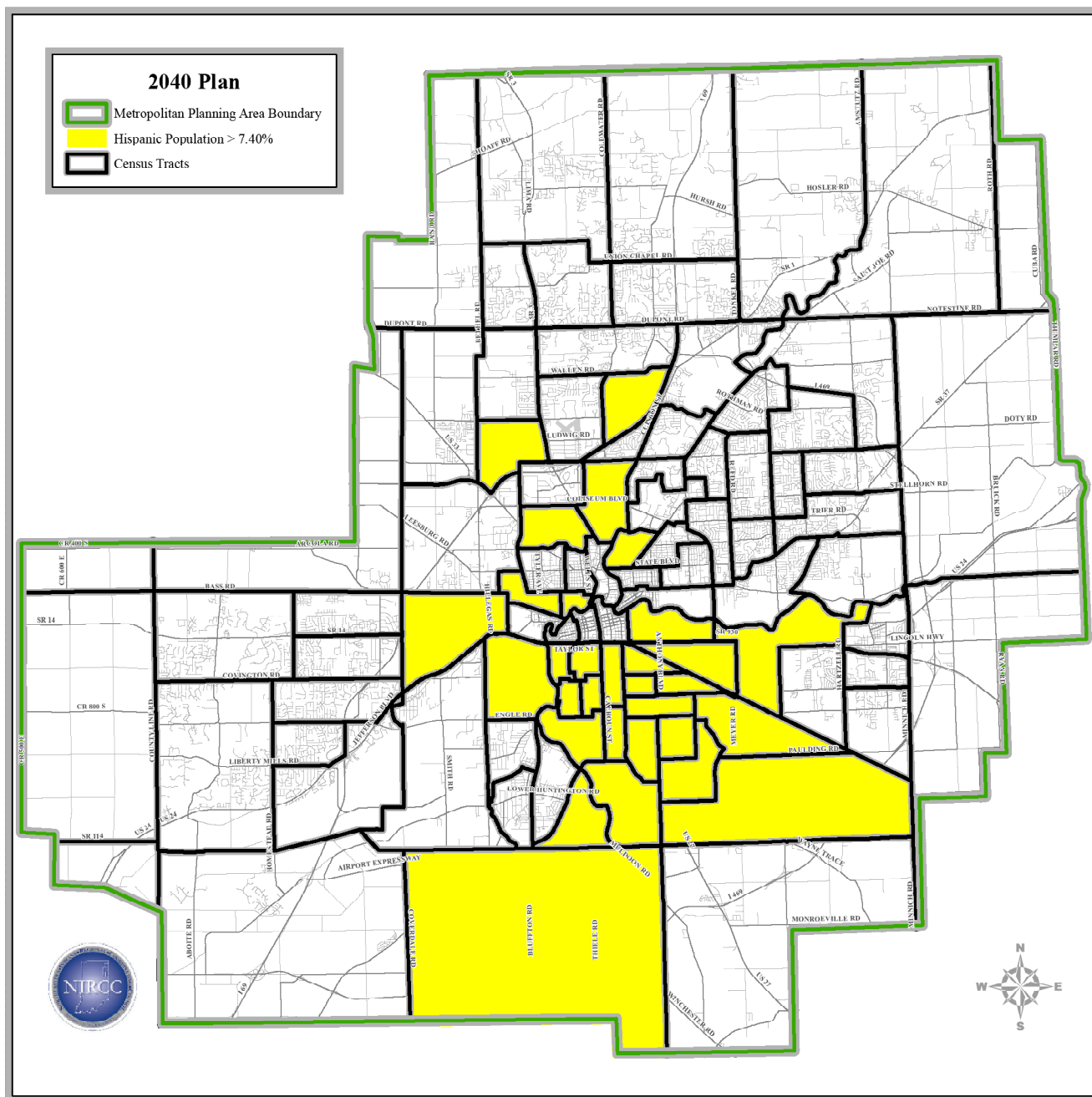


Figure 16
Hispanic Population Profile

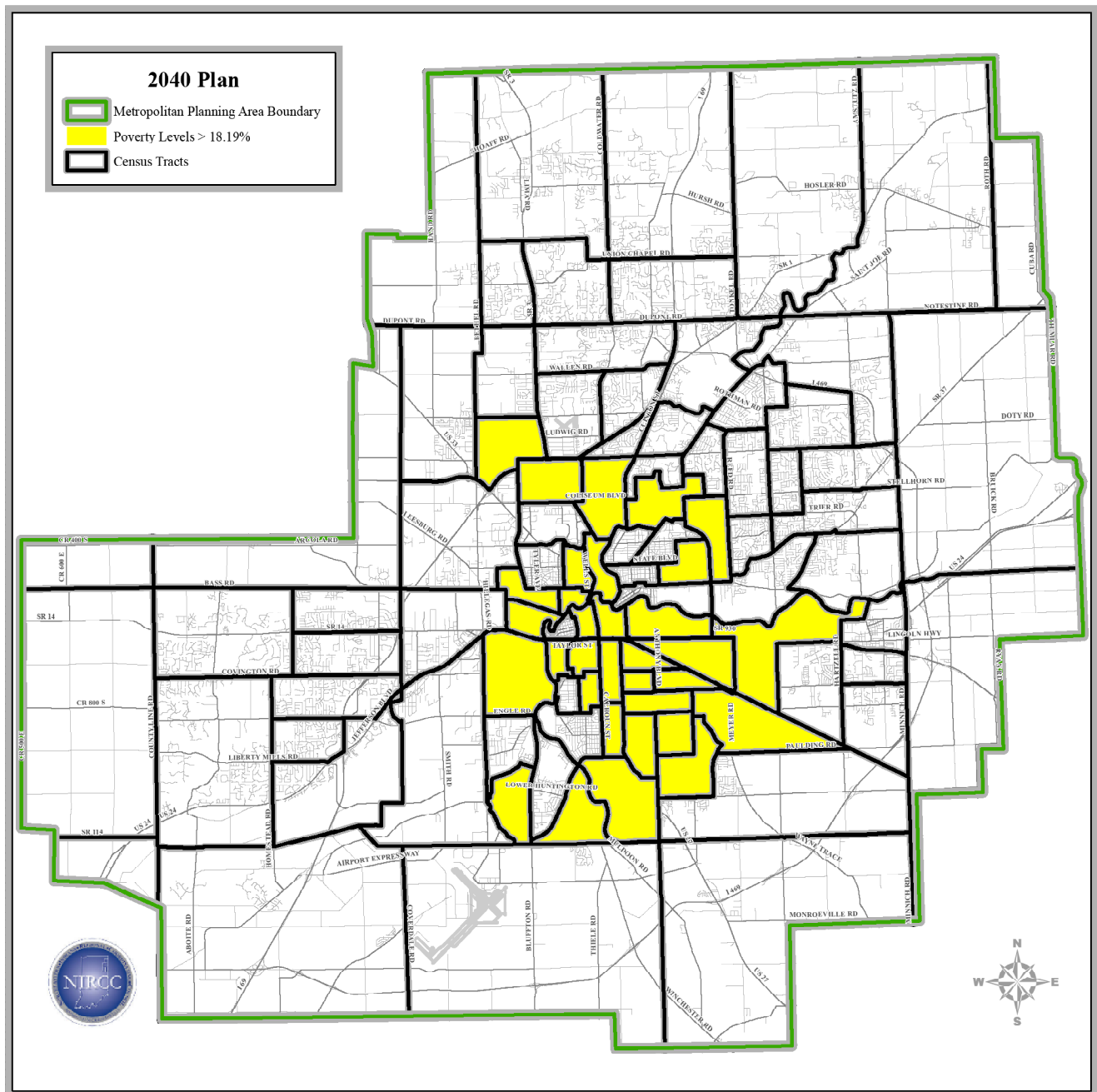


Figure 17

Low-Income Population Profile

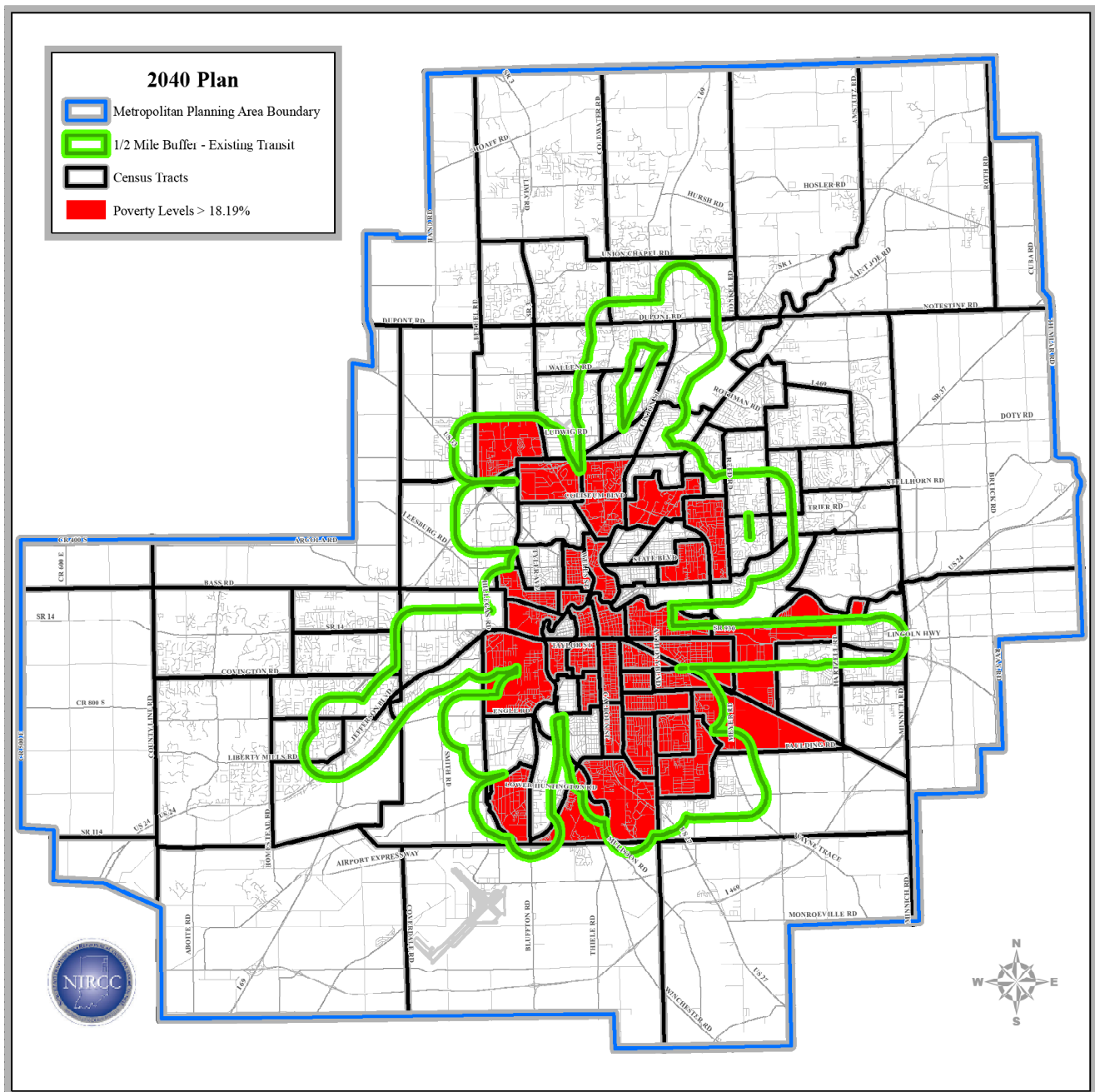


Figure 19

Transit Routes 1/2 Mile Buffer

minority and low-income populations such as the Fort Wayne Urban League, local Chapter of the NAACP, and Benito Juarez Cultural Center.

Public meetings are conducted at various times throughout the year to solicit citizen input to the transportation planning process and on specific improvement projects. One public meeting always coincides with the development of the Transportation Improvement Program. This meeting is used to present the proposed improvement program and gain citizen feedback. All comments are welcome at this meeting. In addition public information meetings are held for major improvement projects and opportunities for public hearings are afforded to the public as required.

Notices for the public meetings are mailed to all known neighborhood association presidents or representatives. The neighborhood association representatives are well dispersed throughout the metropolitan area including areas where high concentrations of low-income, minority, and Hispanic populations have been identified. Figure 20 displays the location of neighborhood associations. In addition, a separate mailing is made for any other interested citizens or group that has expressed an interest in participating. This includes organizations representing low-income and minority groups, environmental groups, business groups, and other interested citizens. The news media is also notified to help publicize the meetings. The meetings are held at accessible sites and at times convenient for the public.

The meeting notices include a comment form that is designed to be easily returned to the NIRCC office. Comments are encouraged through use of the form, telephone calls, e-mails, office visits, or through attending the public meetings. The citizen comments presented at the public meetings and through the other various channels are documented by planning staff. The comments are presented to the policy board. The staff works with the policy board and related subcommittees to prepare responses to the comments. Once prepared, the comments and responses are sent to those who attended the citizen meeting. In addition, staff attends meetings of special groups when requested.

A Open House style meeting occurred during the development of the Transportation Plan. The meeting was held at One Citizens Square. Comments are documented, and responses are prepared to ensure all comments are considered as input to the transportation planning process. The meetings allowed for the exchange of information and generated many good ideas. The concerns include mobility issues, intersection improvement, transit improvements, and bicycle/pedestrian safety. Improvement projects addressing these types of transportation problems were developed and are included in the Transportation Plan. These projects represent the responsive nature of the transportation planning process for all areas of the community, including low-income and minority areas.

Measures for Evaluating Benefits and Burdens of Transportation Plans and Projects

The evaluation of benefits and burdens is conducted at both a Transportation Plan level and a project level basis. The planning process, including development of the Transportation Plan, utilizes a total assessment of the transportation system for the entire Metropolitan Planning Area. Data collection and analysis is performed on the entire system utilizing uniform performance standards and analytical tools. The transportation plan is developed through an analytical process of identifying existing and future deficiencies of the transportation system. The quantitative analysis that is a part of this process is applied consistently and unilaterally to the transportation system. This ensures that the entire Metropolitan Planning Area is treated equitably in the deficiency assessment process. The deficiency assessment process drives the development of transportation policies and projects.

The quantitative measures include volume to capacity ratios, level of service, travel time and delay, transit headways, and transit service routes. See Appendix A: “Congestion Management Process”. These criteria provide performance measures for evaluating the efficiency of the highway and transit systems. Factors affecting evaluation of highway performance utilizing volume to capacity ratios, level of service, and travel time and delay are based on area type and facility type regardless of the socioeconomic variables of the surrounding population. Performance measures of the transit system using headways and location of service routes also provide a unilateral evaluation tool unbiased to the environmental justice populations (See earlier in Chapter 5).

A qualitative evaluation of the Transportation Plan and associated transportation planning process is also utilized to measure benefits. A qualitative assessment identifies the distribution of the proposed projects and corresponding benefits. As part of this evaluation, the location of deficient areas as defined by quantitative analysis procedures must be considered. Improvements planned for the highway system are identified and overlaid on maps that identify the locations of the environmental justice populations. The transit route system and other system improvements identified in the Transportation Plan are also overlaid on maps identifying locations of environmental populations. Headways, route saturation, and improvement projects can be measured for equitable distribution (See earlier in Chapter 5).

A historical look at the implementation of projects through the transportation planning process has shown a fair distribution of projects and benefits throughout the entire metropolitan planning area. See Figure 21. The transit system is extremely sensitive to the needs of low-income and minority groups. The transit system has concentrated a number of routes in low-income neighborhoods based upon identified transit needs and transit propensity. Recent transit modifications by Citilink concentrated on improvements in the south central section of Fort Wayne. Service was improved and headways were reduced to thirty minutes on several of heaviest traveled routes through this area. The standard headway for Citilink routes is sixty

minutes. Decisions to improve transit service are based upon anticipated increases in ridership and where increased service will maximize public benefit. This is typically in the low-income neighborhoods.

The proposed improvements in the Transportation Plan are designed to improve safety, mitigate congestion, increase accessibility and mobility, and support economic growth through feasible strategies which minimize impacts on residential neighborhoods and are environmentally sensitive. Individual projects are designed to meet one or more of these objectives and their corresponding benefits measured. The regional benefits of the transportation plan are measured in vehicle miles of travel and vehicle hours of delay. These assessments are evaluated on the total package of projects proposed in the transportation plan.

Individual projects are also evaluated for burdens and benefits on environmental justice populations as part of the community and environmental analysis studies conducted as part of project development. The primary concern at the project level is identifying adverse impacts such as noise, traffic, and relocations. Mitigation strategies are included in the project development and design to minimize adverse impacts to all population groups, including low-income and minority populations. Context-sensitive design practices are beginning to be incorporated in the project development activities.

The transportation planning process includes assessment techniques through the development of the Transportation Plan and related improvement projects. The primary goal of a transportation plan is to achieve an efficient and safe transportation system for the movement of people and goods, while simultaneously improving the economic and environmental conditions of the community. The desire for an efficient transportation system includes accountability for environmental and social costs. The result is a plan that preserves neighborhood tranquility, minimizes environmental disruption, and is sensitive to its effect on minority and low-income populations.

Factors Influencing Plan Selection

The development of the Year 2000 Transportation Plan included the establishing of evaluation methodology for comparing alternative transportation plans. The ideals and concepts of this methodology have remained throughout the development of the 2005, 2010, 2015, 2025, 2030, 2030-II, 2035 and the 2040 plans. These concepts continuously guide transportation planning decisions within the metropolitan area. Three of the major factors influencing such decisions include reduced congestion, economic advantages, and land use concerns.

Reducing traffic congestion within the Metropolitan Planning Area will result in a number of distinct advantages. Less congestion equates to reductions in noise, air pollution, travel times, energy consumption and vehicle crash rates. Reducing vehicle crash rates and improving safety has always been the highest priority influencing transportation decisions. Reduced congestion also improves accessibility, provides safer

streets, and improves the response time of essential emergency services such as medical, fire, and police.

Economic advantages of a well-designed transportation plan include enhanced regional accessibility, especially to areas zoned for future industrial and commercial developments. An efficient transportation system minimizes the travel times required to transport goods and services providing a direct economic benefit to area businesses. Improved accessibility significantly assists economic development activities for the Fort Wayne area, stimulating the economy and generating new employment opportunities.

Land use concerns were also considered throughout the development of the transportation plan. Protecting prime agricultural land and rural areas while providing sufficient access to commercial and industrial developments is a delicate procedure necessary to balance all interests involved. The outcome of this process is a transportation plan that promotes orderly growth and protects prime agricultural land.

The collaborative effort among local residents; public officials; federal, state, and local governmental agencies; and local boards, commissions, and committees, was the solidifying and driving force behind the 2040 transportation plan. The update incorporates positive impacts such as safety and efficiency on the transportation system with less congestion and improved accessibility. The plan serves as a guide for directing and establishing transportation policy and policy decisions to ensure that the transportation system meets the travel demands of future generations.

Livable Communities

The Livable Communities is a federal initiative designed to provide communities with tools, information, and resources they can use to enhance their quality of life, ensure their economic competitiveness, and build a stronger sense of community. The transportation planning process and resulting transportation plan incorporates many transportation-related activities associated with the Livable Communities initiative. The transportation plan has as its goal to develop a safe, cost-effective transportation system that ensures mobility to all persons, enhances the quality of life in the region, supports planned growth, promotes economic development, and preserves the integrity and enhances the vitality of the human and natural environment. The implementation of such a system will minimize energy consumption and reduce air pollution. Reductions in vehicle hours of delay, vehicle miles of travel, accident rates, and accident severity are measures by which the system can be measured. Achieving this goal will enhance quality of life in the Metropolitan Planning Area and ensure that it remains as a “Livable Community.”

In pursuit of this goal, the transportation plan and planning process have identified improvement strategies and projects designed to improve the quality of life for area residents and people visiting the community. Including a variety of travel modes as components of the transportation system improves accessibility and mobility while reducing the dependency on the private automobile. Promoting and expanding transit

service in the metropolitan area is an important policy objective of the plan. Improving and extending the pedestrian and bicycle pathway system to reach more neighborhoods and activity centers will be achieved through the implementation of the transportation plan. These types of projects encourage the use of alternative travel modes.

The transportation plan includes many transit related projects and policy guidance to improve transit service within the community. Reducing headways, expanding service hours, and providing service on Sundays are transit service level improvements designed to increase the attractiveness of the transit system. To ensure transit issues are considered as new development occurs in the community, the transportation plan recommends that land use policies address transit needs for accessibility to private developments through street and subdivision design. It further states that the land use planning approval process should include pedestrian and public transit issues. Incorporating these policies into the land use planning process will be an objective of the transportation planning process.

The pedestrian\bikeway plan is another component of the transportation planning process that will encourage walking and bicycling and support the livable community agenda. This plan includes interconnecting the New Haven bicycle and pedestrian trail system with the Fort Wayne River Greenway system. The combining of these two systems will improve accessibility and mobility on both systems. Additional projects to expand the system and develop new trails will further improve pedestrian/bicycle opportunities in the Metropolitan Planning Area. The pedestrian\bicycle plan also supports the requirements for sidewalks in all new developments and ensuring they interconnect with adjacent developments. This process will ensure a growing network of sidewalks throughout the community.

The transportation planning process includes a traffic-calming program initiated by the City of Fort Wayne. Through this process, neighborhood associations can request that a study be conducted to develop traffic calming strategies. Through a collaborative process, the Metropolitan Planning Organization collects data and provides information to the Fort Wayne Traffic Engineering Department to assist in the study. The Fort Wayne Traffic Engineering Department makes the final decision and implements the selected strategy. The MPO staff provides similar assistance to other local governments upon request.

The access management program, a component of the congestion management program, is an extremely successful program enhancing the community's quality of life. The access management program controls driveway and public street connections to the roadway system. The access management process utilizes access standard design and access control to minimize traffic impacts to the transportation system from new developments. The access management program supports corridor preservation, leads to air quality improvements, prolongs the functional life of existing highways, maintains travel efficiency for economic prosperity, saves lives by reducing the frequency of accidents, applies uniform standards and promotes

fair and equal application to the development community, and requires cooperation among all agencies that make land use and transportation decisions thereby achieving improved planning and transportation integration. These benefits, of a well-developed and administered access management program, directly support the many facets of the “Livable Communities” initiative.

Financial Analysis

An important factor affecting the selection of the 2040 Transportation Plan is the financial revenues available to support the implementation of the improvement projects. The plan is required to include a financial analysis that demonstrates the consistency of proposed transportation investments with available and projected sources of revenue. The plan selection was developed within this framework. The selection of proposed transportation investments for inclusion in the plan occurred after financial analysis was complete and projected revenue was earmarked for project implementation. Only those projects, for which funding is reasonably expected to be available, were included in the plan.