



CONNECTING OPPORTUNITY



# Welcome First Edition – West Lake Corridor Project Briefing Report

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### WELCOME: NICTD President, Mike Noland

Welcome to the first edition of TIP (The Intergovernmental Project News Brief) for the West Lake Corridor. It is prepared as a quarterly update for elected officials, providing you and your office a reference guide citing project developments and federal evaluation status.

Currently, the West Lake Corridor Project is being proposed as a southern extension to the South Shore Line. The objective is to provide the residents of Northwest Indiana increased connectivity from Lake County to high growth, economic opportunities in Chicago and Cook County, Illinois. The project will grow our regional economy and to improve transportation access/ connectivity for the region.

In addition to this newsletter, we invite you to visit the updated project website at: [www.nictdwestlake.com](http://www.nictdwestlake.com) and to contact our project office or hotline, if we may be of added assistance.

Throughout this development process, NICTD appreciates the legislative leadership and tireless support you have shown the West Lake Corridor project.

Sincerely,  
Michael Noland  
President  
NICTD/South Shore Line

### COMMENTS: RDA President & CEO, Bill Hanna

In 2015, the RDA worked with local and state leaders to craft a vision for the future of Northwest Indiana that would create new jobs, attract private investment and improve quality of life for region residents. This vision centered on connectivity to Chicago via commuter rail expansion. The General Assembly has dedicated \$180 million for the first phase of this expansion, the West Lake Corridor

project, which will apply for federal matching dollars later this year.

The RDA is committed to working with federal officials to secure a matching grant from the Federal Transit Administration for West Lake construction.

In 2017, the General Assembly authorized creation of Transit Development Districts (TDDs) around stations on both the new and existing lines to ensure that the vision of new jobs, investment and quality of life improvements becomes a reality. The RDA looks forward to working with local communities to deliver the maximum possible benefit from this transformational investment in commuter rail.

Sincerely,  
Bill Hanna  
President/CEO  
Northwest Indiana RDA

*... to ensure that the vision of new jobs, investment and quality of life improvements becomes a reality.*

## COMMENTS: Congressman Pete Visclosky

Recently, Congress approved legislation that will allocate federal funding for Fiscal Year 2017. It will include \$2.4 billion for the Capital Investment Grant program, which is the program that will support the recapitalization and expansion of the South Shore Rail Line.

You should know that the Fiscal Year 2017 funding level is \$235.6 million more than the Fiscal Year 2016 funding level and \$699.6 million more than President Trump’s proposal for Fiscal Year 2017.

I am pleased that Congress continues to appreciate that the Capital Investment Grant program represents an economic investment in communities across the nation. The increase in funding for this program is testament to the fact that it has the ability to fundamentally transform the economy of Northwest Indiana. The recapitalization and expansion of the South Shore Rail Line are generational investments that will create good-paying jobs and attract new businesses and people to Northwest Indiana throughout the next century.

I will continue to do all that I can to garner regional support for these projects and work to support appropriate federal funding for the Capital Investment Grant program.

Sincerely,  
Pete Visclosky  
Member of Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District of Indiana

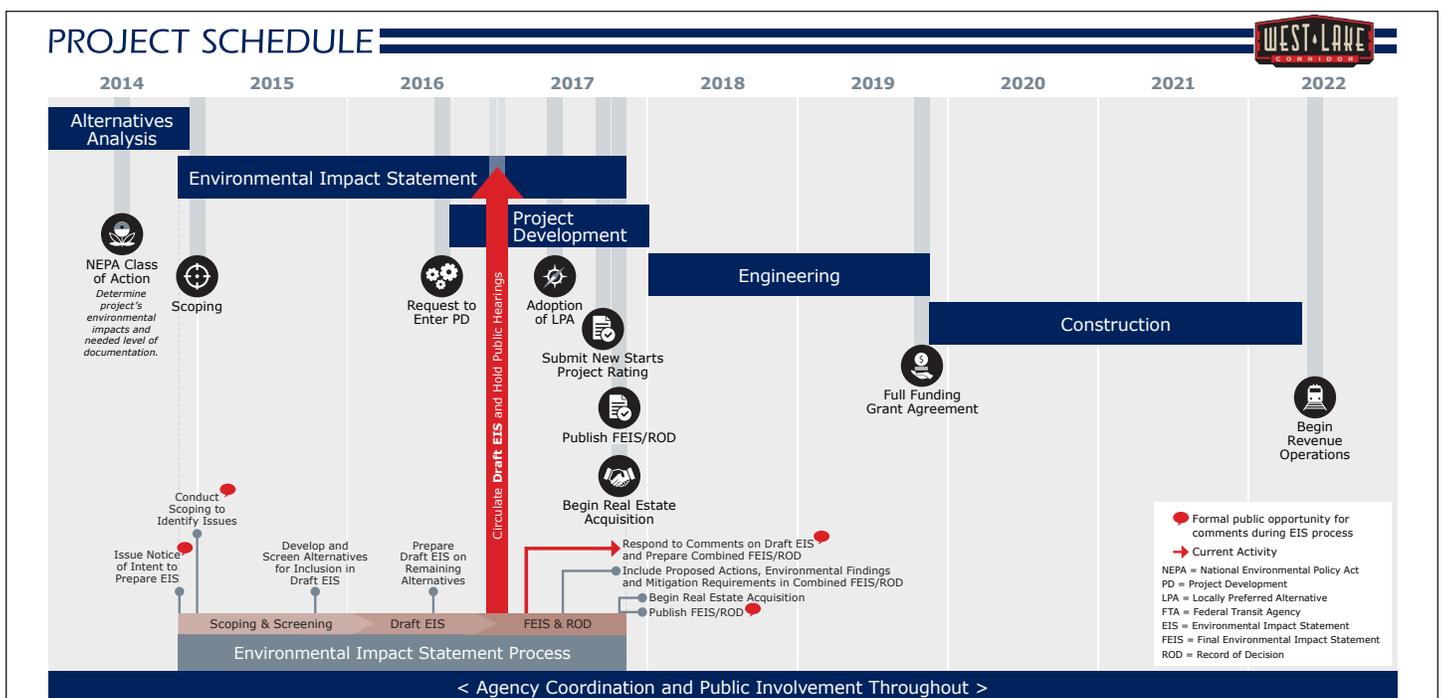
## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The West Lake Corridor project represents a nine-mile southern extension of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District’s (NICTD) existing South Shore Line. This project represents the first expansion of the South Shore in the railroad’s history, and provides an opportunity to expand access to Northwest Indiana and the neighboring Chicago region and the jobs that it represents. The project equally represents an opportunity to retain the region’s existing population, while attracting new residents.

To position this project for matching federal funding, it has followed an established study process of federally mandated evaluations seeking Capital Investment Grant funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Throughout this process, consistent with Title 40 CFR 1506.6, public open houses and three formal public/hearings were held, with public testimonies received. Additionally, the project website offers a continual on-line comment option and a telephone information line to receive public input. All of which, including public presentations upon request, respond to the requirement that each project “make diligent efforts to involve the public in preparing and implementing NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) procedures.”

*...first expansion of the South Shore in the railroad’s history...*

The environmental impact statement (EIS) process and project schedule are provided below for your reference.



## FUNDING

The project's current estimated cost is \$615 million. This includes approximately \$84 million in costs related to completion of the environmental study, preliminary engineering, and the initial right-of-way acquisitions prior to the start of construction in 2019. Construction of the project (including the remaining right-of-way acquisitions) is estimated to cost \$531 million and is planned to occur between 2019 and 2022.

The New Starts funding application will be submitted in September 2017. It will request reimbursement of 50 percent of the project's capital cost through a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA). The current schedule anticipates executing the FFGA with FTA in the fall of 2019. Given the nation-wide competition for Capital Investment Grant (CIG)-New Starts funds and based on the Project Team's experience on similar projects, we anticipate that the federal share of the project cost will be received over a six-year period – approximately \$50 million per year. The length of time invested to move the project to this pivotal stage of development has been required to meet the federal requirements to receive matching funding. NICTD and the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority's (RDA) shared vision for regional transportation are aligned to meet these federal requirements. The remaining local share of the project funding will be provided through a partnership with the RDA, State of Indiana, and local communities in Lake County.

## REAL ESTATE ACQUISITION

We understand your constituent's concerns regarding potential property acquisition, whether residential or commercial. Federal regulations implementing the Uniform Act (49 CFR Part 24) establish the process that must be followed. The project's design is currently at a preliminary phase and property needs may change as the design develops, particularly as project team members seek to minimize impacts to properties and the community.

In the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), a preliminary and conservative estimate was prepared to identify properties that could potentially be purchased to construct the project. The number and location of those properties is currently under review to look for ways to reduce the number of property acquisitions. Some property owners in the corridor may have received letters notifying them of survey and soil testing work being performed on their property. Please note that your receipt of a survey letter does not necessarily indicate that your property will be acquired. This important survey work is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and supports our preliminary engineering and design. Property requirements to support the project are still under review.

**State, and federal regulations and laws govern the purchase of private property for public use** and define when purchase would be required. These laws also confirm that owners of property acquired for public projects are treated fairly and consistently. They are designed to encourage and expedite purchase by agreements with property owners, to minimize litigation and relieve congestion in the courts, and to promote public confidence in land acquisition programs designed to benefit the public as a whole.

**An investment  
in transportation  
choices yields  
benefits for all.**

**The Uniform Act** (Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act) of 1970 provides for uniform and equitable treatment of persons displaced from their homes, businesses, or farms by federal and federally-assisted programs, and establishes uniform and equitable land acquisition policies.

NICTD would begin negotiations with property owners during the engineering phase of the Project, scheduled to begin in 2018. If you have questions about whether a specific property is being considered for purchase or have any project-related real estate questions, please contact NICTD at (219) 250-2637 or [realestate@nictdwestlake.com](mailto:realestate@nictdwestlake.com).

## Investment Returns

Densely populated growing regions from rural, to suburban to central business districts have growing needs for consistent, timely and reliable transportation choices, as both highway congestion and the cost of air travel increase. An investment in transportation choices yields benefits for all.

## Benefits

- Commuter Rail offers faster trip times, lower cost, greater convenience and a more environmentally friendly alternative to other transportation modes.
- Expansion of public transit systems meet growing ridership and consumer demand.
- Expansion of public transit rail systems supports the manufacturing sector in rail cars, tracks, signals, power systems and communications.
- Avoiding expansion of freeways which increase noise impacts, air quality impacts, quality of life for residents.
- Public transit drives the local economy and directly generates business sales, revenues and new private investment.
- Anticipated to attract approximately 8,000 residents to Northwest Indiana by 2046.
- Commuter rail related economic activity anticipated to produce a total of \$171M in state sales tax and \$101M in state income tax (2019 through 2038).



## HISTORY IN THE MAKING

This project has long been recognized as an important factor in regional economic development.

- **1989:** Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission releases study identifying extending the South Shore as the best means of expanding mass transit in the region.
- **1991:** General Assembly passes bill allowing South Shore to operate new rail lines that only span one county.
- **1991:** Amtrak commuter service from Valparaiso to Chicago ends.
- **1996:** U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky secures \$500,000 appropriation for study of the Lowell to Chicago South Shore service, now called the West Lake Corridor.
- **2004:** Lake and Porter county communities agree to help fund a study to extend the South Shore line to Lowell and Valparaiso.
- **2011:** NICTD officials propose building a first stage extension from Hammond to Munster/Dyer.
- **2013:** U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky calls on Indiana General Assembly to find a solution to funding the South Shore extension.
- **2014:** State and local support begin to materialize.
- **2014:** West Lake Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) begins.
- **2017:** DEIS completed, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) begins.

**Talent retention and attraction are critically important to the growth of the Northwest Indiana economy. Now is the time for us to start expanding access to amenities that commuter rail offers.**

– Heather Ennis, President/CEO,  
Northwest Indiana Forum

## TRANSITION TO FEIS

The completion of the DEIS in February 2017 transitioned the project to the Final EIS (FEIS) stage of the NEPA process as a final evaluation of the project’s environmental and social impacts. The DEIS documented the benefits and impacts of no build and build project alternatives. This evaluation included environmental, transportation, social and economic impacts associated with the West Lake project. Examples include: noise and vibration, historic architectural/archaeological, wetland and floodplain delineation, Section 4(f) resources (publicly-owned parks and recreation areas) and neighborhood/community impacts were considered.

The complete DEIS report is available on the project website.

The FEIS currently underway will position the project to apply for CIG-New Starts funding.

## Planned Next Steps

### 2017

- Submit application for CIG-New Starts project rating
- Obtain federal approval the FEIS and a Record Of Decision (ROD)
- Submit a Request to the FTA to enter Engineering

### 2018

- Begin property acquisitions
- Receive project listing in the President’s FY 2019 federal budget
- Develop final engineering plans

### 2019

- Execute FFGA

### 2020

- Construction begins

### 2022

- First South Shore trains begin running from Dyer to Millennium Station in downtown Chicago

## PROGRESS MOVES FORWARD

- Visit the South Shore Line website for more information on NICTD projects [www.mysouthshoreline.com](http://www.mysouthshoreline.com).
- Bikes on Trains starts back and expands in April 2017.
- Double Track will shorten the trip from South Bend to Chicago. For more information: [www.doubletrack-nwi.com](http://www.doubletrack-nwi.com).

