

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

TALKING THE TALK

A GUIDE TO THE LANGUAGE OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

TALKING THE TALK defines the key terms that are commonly used by those who speak the language and do the work of transportation planning. It is meant to be a guide for people who are presently involved or who would like to participate in the planning process. The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission certainly encourages engagement in the process. For without involvement, planning is a mere technical, lifeless activity and is not nearly as fruitful or as much fun as when lots of people are involved. We hope that this publication increases your knowledge and appreciation of transportation planning.

This guide was adapted from a similar publication of the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council in St. Louis. Our thanks to them for letting us borrow their idea.

ALTERNATE FORMATS

Requests for alternate formats of this document may be directed to NIRPC staff Steve Strains, (sstrains@nirpc.org) or Belinda Petroskey (bpetroskey@nirpc.org).

TALKING THE TALK

Accelerated Retirement of Vehicles (also “Cash-for-Clinkers”)

A program of the Environmental Protection Agency which allows industries that exceed federal emission standards to purchase older model vehicles from the general public to remove them from the road (for air quality and energy reasons) for credit in lieu of point source controls on emissions.

Access, Accessibility

The opportunity to reach a given destination within a certain time frame or without being impeded by physical or economic barriers. Also, the ability of vehicles or facilities to accommodate people with disabilities.

Activity Center

A location that includes one or more land uses that generates a significant number of trips during the typical day or on special occasions. Regional shopping malls, concentrations of office buildings, large industrial complexes, and sports stadiums are examples.

Allocation

A method for dividing federal funds among states when no apportionment formula exists for those funds. Suballocations are sometimes made within states or regions.

Alternative Fuels

Any motor fuel other than ordinary gasoline which generally results in lower levels of air pollutants. Examples are reformulated gasoline, natural gas, liquid propane, liquefied natural gas, bio-diesel, electricity, and ethanol (also known as gasohol).

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Federal law which requires accessible public transportation services for persons with disabilities, including complementary or supplemental paratransit services in areas where fixed route transit service is operated. Expands definition of eligibility for accessible services to persons with mental disabilities, temporary disabilities, and the conditions related to substance abuse. The Act is an augmentation to, but does not supersede Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability against otherwise qualified individuals in programs receiving federal assistance.

Apportionment

A method for dividing federal funds by established formula. An apportionment operates like a line of credit to sub-federal governments. (See Obligation).

Appropriation

The annual Congressional process by which authorized funds are approved for release. Funds may be appropriated only for activities and purposes that have been authorized. (See Authorization). Transportation funds are appropriated in the annual US Department of Transportation Appropriations bill, one of 13 that Congress adopts each year. Amounts appropriated never exceed amounts authorized.

Area Source

Small stationary and non-highway mobile pollution sources that are too small and/or numerous to be included as point sources, but may collectively contribute significantly to air pollution.

Arterial

A class of street serving major traffic movement that is not designated as a highway. There are principle and minor arterials which are designed to primarily provide mobility and are a higher class than local or collector streets which are designed to primarily provide access.

Attainment Area

An area (consisting of a county or multiple counties) which has air quality at least as good as the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health standards used in the Clean Air Act. An area may be an attainment area for one pollutant and a non-attainment area for others. (See National Ambient Air Quality Standards and Non-Attainment Area).

Attraction

The pull or attracting power of a zone normally measured as a function of employment activity, population, or income. For non-home based trips, attractions in a zone can be considered synonymous with trip destinations in that zone.

Authorization The level of funding designated by Congress by Legislation. For example, ISTEA authorized \$151 billion for transportation projects over a six-year period beginning in Fiscal Year 1992.

Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVL)

A combination of radio and computer equipment that provides a central operations center with information regarding the current location of vehicles outfitted with transponders.

Average Daily Traffic (ADT)

The average number of vehicles passing a fixed point in a 24-hour time frame; a standard for measuring traffic volume. Annual average daily traffic (AADT) is determined by using a factor to adjust for the changing amounts of traffic at different times of the year.

Average Passenger Occupancy (APO)

The average number of people in a vehicle reporting to individual employer worksites, which can vary from one worksite to another.

Average Vehicle Occupancy (AVO)

The average number of people in a vehicle reporting regionally to worksites or other related activity centers. The average auto occupancy for work trips in Northwest Indiana is 1.17 persons per vehicle.

Base Fleet

The average number of transit revenue vehicles in scheduled operation during the non-peak hours of the average weekday operation.

Base Year

The lead-off year of data used in a study. It is often the year in which the U.S. Census was taken, such as 2000.

Bikeway

A facility intended to accommodate bicycle travel for recreational or commuting purposes. Bikeways are often, but not necessarily separate facilities; they may be designed and operated to be shared with other travel modes.

Body on Chassis (BOC)

A body on chassis vehicle seats from 12 to 18 passengers and is typically composed of a light truck chassis underneath a special body. It is sometimes referred to as a cutaway or light transit vehicle (LTV).

Capacity

The maximum number of vehicles that can pass over a given section of a lane or roadway in one direction during a given time period under prevailing roadway and traffic conditions.

Capital Assistance

Financial assistance granted to an agency by the Federal Transit Administration for the purchase or construction of facilities, rolling stock or equipment required to provide public transportation services. In addition, maintenance, capital cost of contracting, and complementary service for persons with disabilities are eligible capital costs.

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

A gas without color and odor which is toxic because too much of it can dangerously reduce oxygen in the bloodstream. It is formed, in large part by combustion of fuel.

Catenary

The overhead power line system for electrically propelled rail vehicles, including light-rail or commuter rail cars. The South Shore Railroad, operated by the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, uses such a system.

Central Business District (CBD)

The most intensely commercial sector of a city. Often referred to as the downtown.

Centroid

An assumed point in a zone that represents the origin or destination of all trips to and from the zone. (Refer to Traffic Analysis Zone).

Centroid Connector

A transportation model network link that provides the linkage between the transportation system and the theoretical point of origin or destination of the trips to or from a particular traffic analysis zone.

Charter Service

Transportation by bus of persons who, pursuant to a common purpose and under a single contract, at a fixed

charge for the vehicles or service, in accordance with the carrier's tariff, have acquired the exclusive use of a bus to travel together with an itinerary, either agreed on in advance, or modified after having left the place of origin. Certain types of transportation of students, school personnel and equipment can be regarded as charter service.

Closed-Door Route Segment

That portion of a transit route in which there are no bus stops to board or disembark.

Cold Start

The starting of an engine which is significantly below normal operating temperature. It is of significance in understanding vehicle emissions because the rate and composition of emissions vary with engine temperatures. Cold starts usually emit greater pollutants.

Collector

A class of street serving neighborhood circulation, and providing a balance between accessibility to land and through movement of traffic.

Comprehensive Planning

A planning process that requires inclusion of land use, transportation, water and sewer, education, recreation, health, housing, annexation, potential and economic development potential. Also known as master planning.

Conformity

Transportation conformity is a way to ensure that Federal funding and approval goes to those transportation activities that are consistent with air quality goals. It is a process to assess the compliance of a metropolitan transportation plan, program or project with air quality control plans. The conformity process is defined by the Clean Air Act and the Transportation Conformity Rule, as amended. A conformity determination demonstrates that the total emissions projected for a plan or program are within the emissions limits (budgets) established by the SIP. MPOs make initial conformity determinations, which are then made by FHWA/FTA.

Congestion

The level at which transportation system performance is no longer acceptable to the traveling public due to traffic interference.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

A categorical funding program established under ISTEA and continued under TEA-21. Funds are to be expended on projects within air quality non-attainment areas which contribute to meeting National Ambient Air Quality Standards. CMAQ funds may not be used for projects which expand Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) capacity or involve the preservation and maintenance of an existing transportation facility. With minor exceptions, all CMAQ projects must result in a reduction of emissions which cause ground-level ozone to materialize. These funds are allocated by INDOT to non-attainment and maintenance areas.

Congestion Management System (CMS)

A process to identify the performance of the transportation system with regard to traffic congestion, and to analyze alternative responses and implement strategies to alleviate congestion. The use of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies must be fully considered and implemented in conjunction with any project that would add capacity to the system available to single occupant vehicles in air quality non-attainment areas.

Congestion Mitigation

Implementation of demand-management strategies – such as carpooling, shuttle service or flexible work hours – to reduce congestion. Can also apply to other strategies to increase the operational efficiency of a transportation system.

Consultation

One party confers with another identified party and, prior to taking action, considers that party's view, and

keeps that party informed about actions taken.

Continuous Counter

A machine that provides an uninterrupted count of traffic volume on a particular point of the highway system. The detector is generally embedded into the pavement in a relatively permanent installation. The equipment provides hourly traffic information for every day of the year.

Coordination

The comparison of the transportation plans, programs, and schedules of one agency with related plans, programs and schedules of other agencies or entities and adjustment of plans, programs and schedules to achieve general consistency.

Cooperation

The parties involved in carrying out the planning and/or project development processes working together to achieve a common goal or objective.

Cordon Line

An abstract line encompassing a study area such as a central business district, a shopping center or a larger planning area like NIRPC's 3-county region. Origin-destination surveys and traffic counts are typically conducted along points on this line to determine the characteristics of travel entering and leaving the study area. It measures the transportation activity generated by the study area. The line is usually associated with physical barriers, such as rivers or major highways with limited crossings.

Corridor

Broad geographical band connecting major sources of trips. Usually associated with transportation facilities.

Coverage Count

A traffic count taken as part of the requirement for system-level estimates of traffic. The count is typically short-term, and may be volume, classification, speed, or weigh-in-motion counts. Coverage counts are usually used to estimate average daily traffic volumes throughout the system.

Cutline

An arbitrary line strategically drawn across the corridor of a transportation network to connect all the paths in the corridor. Its purpose is to check the larger scale comparability of the model with real-world knowledge of the area.

Deadhead

Refers to bus travel between a garage and a passenger route, or between passenger routes during which time it is carrying no passengers. Less deadhead time means more efficiency.

Demand-Response

Descriptive term for a service type, usually considered paratransit, in which a user can access transportation service which can be variably routed and timed to meet changing needs on a semi-daily basis. Sometimes referred to as dial-a-ride. (Compare with Fixed-Route.)

Demonstration Project

A transit or highway project that is authorized by an act of Congress.

Design Concept

Means the type of facility identified by the project, for example, freeway, expressway, arterial highway, grade adjusted highway, reserved right-of-way rail transit, mixed traffic rail transit, exclusive busway, etc.

Designated Recipient

An entity designated by the Governor to receive Federal transit funds from FTA. For the Indiana portion of the Chicago IL/IN urbanized area, there are three Designated Recipients: Gary Public Transportation Corporation,

City of East Chicago, and the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. For the Indiana portion of the Michigan City IN/MI urbanized area, there are two Designated Recipients: The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission and the City of Michigan City. [The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), although not a Designated Recipient itself, does receive and disburse FTA grant funds directly from FTA by way of an agreement with NIRPC.]

Desire Line

A representation of the number of trips between various origins and destinations as identified through travel surveys. These trips are represented by straight lines between the centroids of traffic analysis zones where trips begin and end, without regard to the specific transportation facilities and services used to make the trips. The thickness of the line sometimes represents the number of trips between the same centroids.

Destination

End point of a trip. It is the *there*, in “are we there yet?”

Dial-a-Ride

Term for demand-responsive systems usually delivering door-to-door service to clients who make requests by telephone on an as-needed reservation, or subscription basis.

Discretionary User

A transit rider who has an alternate means (auto) to make the trip, but chooses to use transit.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

A report presenting the impacts of alternative projects prepared for public comment.

Emissions Inventory

A complete list of sources and amounts of pollutant emissions within a specific area and time interval.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

A document prepared by a government agency that evaluates the impacts of a proposed federal action on the environment. Alternative projects are evaluated for the kind and magnitude of their respective impacts. An EIS details any adverse economic, social and environmental effects of a proposed transportation project for which federal funding is being sought. Adverse effects could include air, water, or noise pollution; destruction or disruption of natural resources; adverse employment effects; injurious displacement of people or businesses; or disruption of desirable community or regional growth. An EIS usually includes measures to mitigate the adverse environmental effects of a project.

Environmental Justice or Equity

A process to avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse effects of transportation projects on minority or low income persons.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA or USEPA)

The federal agency that is responsible for planning, funding and enforcing environmental laws. EPA is the source agency of air quality control regulations affecting transportation.

Expressway, Freeway

A divided arterial highway for through traffic with limited controlled access; the intersections of which are usually separated from other roadways by differing grades. It can be a toll road.

External Trip

A trip with one end inside a study area and the other end outside the study area.

Fare Recovery

The ratio equating public transportation fare revenue to total expenses. This measure is used to indicate the level at which the basic route fares support the transit system.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

A division of the U.S. Department of Transportation, which executes the highway-oriented provisions of the federal transportation program, through the state departments of transportation and metropolitan planning organizations. The FHWA administers federal funding for highway planning, and programming, leading to construction of highway oriented projects. In cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency, the FHWA prepares and issues regulations as required by law, monitors compliance, provides support for the technical developments necessary to implement the federal transportation authorizing act.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

A division of the U.S. Department of Transportation, which is responsible for administering federal public transportation funds and programs. This ranges from planning and operating assistance to the purchase of buses, trains and building of transit stations. Formerly known as the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA).

Field Check

Physical inspection of land used to confirm or learn more about impacts the transportation project would have on some portion of the natural or socio-economic environment.

Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)

A revised version of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, reflecting the consideration of public and resource agency input.

Financial Capacity, Capability

Refers to U.S. Department of Transportation requirements that an adequate financial plan for funding and sustaining transportation improvements be in place prior to programming federally-funded projects. Generally refers to the stability and reliability of revenue in meeting proposed costs.

Fixed Guideway

Any public transportation facility which utilizes and occupies a separate right-of-way, or rails, for the exclusive use of public transportation service including but not limited to fixed rail, automated guideway transit, and exclusive facilities for buses and other high occupancy vehicles.

Fixed Route

Term applied to public transit service that is regularly scheduled and operating over a predetermined route. Usually refers to bus service.

Forecasting

The process of estimating the future values of specific variables used in the transportation modeling process, including population, income and employment.

Fuel Volatility

The rate at which fuel evaporates.

Functional Classification

The categorization of streets and roadways based on their intended use. The classifications range from expressways, which are a controlled access facility that serves through traffic movement and provides no access to adjacent land, to the local street that primarily serves access to adjacent land, and provides little movement of through traffic.

Gasohol

A special motor fuel that is a blend of 90% ordinary gasoline and 10% ethanol which is fermented from biomass (i.e. corn).

Headway

A transit term meaning the time between buses or trains on the same route or line.

High Occupancy Vehicles (HOVs)

Generally applied to vehicles carrying two or more people (some define it as three or more). Freeways, expressways and other large volume roads may have lanes designated for HOV use, such as by carpools, vanpools and buses. The term HOV is sometimes used to refer to high occupancy vehicle lanes themselves. Such lanes are often called "diamond" lanes.

Highway

Term applies to roads, streets, and parkways. It also includes rights-of-way, bridges, railroad crossings, tunnels, drainage structures, signs, guard rails, and protective structures in connection with highways.

Highway Capacity Manual (HCM)

A guide for engineers and planners to estimate the capacity of the elements of the highway system, including freeways, ramps, arterial streets and intersections, based on factors that cause the reduction of capacity, such as parking, curves, topography and other similar factors.

Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS)

The system used by the FHWA to provide information to Congress, the states, and the public on the extent and physical condition of the nation's highway system, its use, performance and needs. For clean air act conformity analyses, the **HPMS** provides an official base estimate of vehicle-miles of travel, which is used to adjust model-derived estimates of vehicle-miles of travel for base and future years.

Home-Based Work Trip

A trip for the purpose of one's employment with either trip end being one's home.

Hot Soak Emissions

Emissions which occur after a hot engine is turned off. Unburned fuel evaporates from the emissions control system.

Hot Spot

A location with higher-than-ambient levels of a pollutant. Hot-spots may be attributed to such things as weather patterns, topography and traffic intensity.

Hydrocarbons (HC)

An organic compound containing only carbon and hydrogen. Hydrocarbons are a major pollutant resulting from incomplete combustion of fossil fuels. It contributes to the formation of Ozone. HC is one of the Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs).

Illustrative Project

A transportation improvement that would be included in a financially constrained transportation plan and program if reasonable additional financial resources were available to support its implementation.

Impact Fees

Monetary charges imposed upon new development to defray the capital costs of infrastructure needed to serve that development. Pursuant to Public Law 221 of 1991, impact fees can now be collected by communities in Indiana.

Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)

State of Indiana Department responsible for completing and carrying out environmental policies and requirements.

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)

The multi-modal transportation agency for the state which builds projects, maintains the state and interstate highway systems, and administers transportation funds.

Indiana State Transportation Improvement Program (INSTIP)

Indiana's multi-year program of transportation projects that is comprised of all the MPO's Transportation Improvement Programs, projects for non-urbanized areas and state jurisdiction projects.

Infrastructure

A term connoting the physical underpinnings of society at large, or system of public works, including, but not limited to, roads, bridges, transit, waste systems, public housing, sidewalks, utility installations, parks, public buildings and communications networks.

Inspection and Maintenance Program (I/M)

An emissions testing and inspection program implemented by states in non-attainment areas to ensure that the catalytic or other emissions control devices on in-use vehicles are properly maintained. Enhanced I/M includes use of a Dynamometer to test performance with wheels turning.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

The integration of transportation facilities and services with computers, communication and other electronic equipment to enhance the safety and efficiency of the transportation system. ITS uses equipment and procedures to monitor and manage the flow of people and goods. ITS gets the right emergency responders to the scene fast and gets information about delays to the users.

Interim Plan, Interim Transportation Program

A plan composed of projects eligible to proceed under a conformity lapse.

Intermodal

Refers to the connections between transportation modes.

Intermodal Facility

A transportation element that accommodates and interconnects different modes of transportation.

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA)

Legislative initiative by the U.S. Congress restructuring funding for highway and transit programs. ISTEA authorized increased levels of highway and transportation funding and an enlarged role for regional planning commissions/MPOs in funding decisions. The Act also requires comprehensive regional long-range transportation plans and 3-5 year Transportation Improvement Programs.

Journey

Entire, one-way trip from beginning to end, including intermediate stops and changes of mode. It is also known as a linked trip. For example, from the City of Portage to Sears Tower in Chicago, including auto mode to South Shore Station, train to Chicago and bus, taxi, or walk to the final destination.

Let

A project is said to be "let" when the contract bidding process is complete.

Level of Service (LOS)

A set of qualitative descriptions of a transportation system's performance. The Highway Capacity Manual defines levels of service for intersections and highway segments, with ratings that range from A (best) to F (worst). Transportation projects are usually planned and designed to result in a LOS of C or D, depending on the severity of the congestion problems, and the ability to make improvements.

Link

A representation of a road segment on a transportation model network. One part of a chain of trips.

Linked Trip

An entire trip that is part of a chain of trips made for various purposes between the origin of the first trip and the destination of the last trip in the chain. (See Journey)

Local Public Agency (LPA)

Municipalities and other political subdivisions of States; public agencies and instrumentalities of one or more States, municipalities and political subdivisions of States, Indian tribes; and public corporations, boards, and commissions established under the law of any State.

Local Street

A street intended solely for access to properties contiguous to it.

Maintenance Areas

A non-attainment area (consisting of a county or multiple counties) which has improved its air quality to the extent that it is in compliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Maintenance areas still qualify for CMAQ funds.

Major Investment Study (MIS)

A specialized study involving all modes, technologies and alternatives that will be required for all projects of substantial cost that significantly increase the capacity of an access controlled high-type facility including fixed guideway transit.

Mass Transportation

The provision of general or special transportation service, either public or private, to the public on a regular and continuing basis. Does not include school bus, charter or sightseeing service, or service provided to clients of special service organizations.

Metropolitan Area Boundary

At a minimum, the existing urban area, non-attainment area and contiguous area expected to become urban in the next twenty years. The metropolitan area boundary for Northwest Indiana and the area within which NIRPC conducts the transportation planning process includes the entire counties of Lake, Porter and LaPorte.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The organizational entity designated by law with lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. It is the forum for cooperative transportation decision making. MPOs are established by agreement of the Governor and units of general purpose local government. The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission was established in 1975 as the MPO for Northwest Indiana, initially Lake and Porter Counties. LaPorte County joined NIRPC in 1979 and was added to the Metropolitan Area Boundary in 1994.

Mobile Source

This includes motor vehicles, aircraft, seagoing vessels and other transportation modes that emit pollutants. In air quality planning, generally refers to highway motor vehicles.

Mobility

The ease with which desired destinations can be reached. Greater mobility usually means higher speeds and less accessibility.

Mode

The method used for personal travel or the movement of goods on a particular trip. Modes include automobile, bus, commuter rail, bicycle, walking, rail freight and trucking.

Model

A process to estimate the use of the transportation system under various scenarios, using specific computer software, combined with socioeconomic data, forecasts and the transportation system represented by a network of links and nodes.

Multimodal

The consideration of more than one mode to serve transportation needs in a given area. Refers to the diversity of options for the same trip; also, an approach to transportation planning or programming which acknowledges the existence of or need for transportation options.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)

Federal Standards that set allowable concentrations and exposure limits for various pollutants.

National Highway System (NHS)

A classification of roads authorized by ISTEA comprised of interstate highways and roads designated as important for interstate travel, national defense, intermodal connections and international commerce. Federal funds are designated for projects on the NHS.

National Transit Database (NTD)

The annual reporting requirement for public transit operators receiving FTA Section 5307 funds. For public transit operators within large UZA's, the data submitted by reporting operators is used in determining future apportionments of these funds.

Network

A system of links and nodes that represent highway segments and intersections, and transit services, used in a transportation model to estimate the use of the transportation system.

New Start

An entirely new transit service, or a significant extension or expansion of an existing service. For example, an extension of an existing fixed guideway service by more than one mile would be considered a new start.

Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x)

A pollutant that is involved in the production of ozone in the lower atmosphere.

Node

An element of a transportation model network that represents either an intersection or the centroid of a traffic analysis zone.

Non-attainment Area

Any geographic region of the United States which the USEPA has designated as a non-attainment area for pollutants for which a national ambient air quality standard exists. Non-attainment areas are areas considered not to have met these standards for designated pollutants. Lake and Porter Counties have exceeded the national ambient air quality standards to the extent that the counties are classified as severe non-attainment for ozone. LaPorte County will be designated non-attainment sometime within the next year.

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Northwest Indiana urbanized area. It is a cooperative of all local governments, with a board of 51 members. The areas of Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties are included within NIRPC's planning area. Formerly named the Lake-Porter County Regional Transportation and Planning Commission, the first meeting was held in March, 1966. The first meeting of the expanded and reorganized NIRPC was held on July 31, 2003.

Obligated

A highway project is said to be "obligated" when it has been accepted for funding, that is, when a project agreement has been signed with

- 1) INDOT. In the case of a highway project having federal participation, its estimated cost is subtracted from the appropriate funding category, and the cost is subtracted from the state's obligation.**
- 2) A transit project is said to be "obligated" by the federal funding agency (FTA) when a grant including the project has been approved**

3) Transit funds are said to be “obligated” by a transit recipient when the recipient either enters into a third party contract for those funds or has received funding agency approval of a force account plan for those funds.

Obligation

The means by which a state government contracts for a project or activity up to a certain limit, known as the obligation limitation. The state may then apply to the federal government for reimbursement of obligated funds.

Obligation Limitation or Obligation Ceiling

Obligation limitation is the amount of contractual authority allowed to a state against the Highway Trust Fund or other budget source within a fiscal year. A limitation on obligation does not affect the scheduled apportionment or allocation of funds; it just controls the rate at which these funds may be used. It is a limitation on spending which is lower than the authorization levels provided in an Act, such as TEA-21.

Off-Peak Period

Referring to the times and directions of travel not associated with the major commuting direction; that is, all times and directions other than toward the central business district or activity center(s) in the morning and away from it in the late afternoon and early evening.

Operating Assistance

Financial assistance granted to an agency by the Federal Transit Administration for the payment of costs related to the day to day operation of the transit system. Such expenses as labor, fuel, lubricants, small spare parts (less than \$300 value), marketing, utilities and insurance are considered to be operating expenses. It is only eligible in rural and small urban areas.

Operating Subsidy

Revenue received through federal, state, and local cash grants or reimbursements to fulfill operating expense obligations not covered by fares or other revenues generated by the transit system.

Origin

For transportation purposes, it is the location of the beginning of a trip or the zone in which the trip begins.

Origin-Destination Survey (O-D Survey)

A survey typically undertaken of travelers (motorists or transit passengers) to identify travel patterns, habits and needs.

Ozone (O³)

A substance that exists in the atmosphere with both positive and negative health effects. In the upper atmosphere, ozone screens out ultraviolet radiation, making life on Earth possible. In the lower atmosphere (at ground level), concentrations above .12 parts per million cause serious health effects, including lung cancer, asthma and emphysema. Ozone is formed in the atmosphere when hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, and in some cases small particulate matter combine at high temperature in the presence of sunlight. These precursor pollutants are emitted from point sources (including industrial smokestacks), mobile sources (including automobile tailpipes) and area sources (including a wide range of activities, such as the use of lawn-mowers, charcoal started fluid, and volatile chemicals).

Paratransit

Alternatively known as *special transportation* when applied to social services systems. Applies to a variety of smaller, often flexibly-scheduled and routed nonprofit oriented transportation services using low capacity vehicles, such as vans, to operate within normal urban transit corridors or rural areas. These services usually serve the needs of persons whom standard mass transit services would serve with difficulty, or not at all. Common patrons are the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Particulate Matter (PM)

Solid matter of a small diameter that is carried into the atmosphere by industrial processes, and by transportation activities. In high concentrations, the particles cause respiratory difficulty.

Passenger Boarding

The total number of all passengers carried by the system during the reporting period.

Passenger Miles

The sum of the distance ridden by each passenger.

Pavement Management System (PMS)

A systematic process of evaluating the condition of the pavement on all elements of the transportation system. The PMS provides information to decision-makers in selecting cost-effective strategies for providing and maintaining pavements in a serviceable condition, and in balancing the various investment needs.

Peak Hour or Peak Period

The period in the morning or evening in which the largest volume of travel is experienced. Travel peaks are typically the result of trips to and from work.

Person-Trip

A trip made by one person from one origin to one destination.

Planning

A predetermined course of action. Sections 134 and 135 of ISTEA define planning as the process by which a common vision or goal is set forth, with consideration given to a range of social, economic and environmental factors. Within the planning process, a set of long-range objectives and an identification of reasonably available fiscal resources are also outlined for at least a 20-year period. The plan specifies projects and activities to be carried out in the planning period, but not at the level of detail found in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

PublicHearing

A formal, required meeting at which a public agency receives public comments on a proposed action. There are specific findings or recommendations upon which people are asked to comment. A transcript of the comments is prepared.

Public Involvement or Public Participation

This means actively engaging members of the public in the various phases of planning, including the initial development of a plan, defining the issues, developing alternatives, commenting on a proposed list of projects or reviewing a draft report. Involvement can take the form of responding to a survey, telephoning, writing a letter, participating on committees or attending a public meeting or hearing. Elements of participation which can foster meaningful involvement include adequate notification, access to information, reasonable opportunity to comment and convenient and accessible meetings. The public's participation is needed in order to proceed with certain federally funded projects or programs. Federal law requires that state departments of transportation and MPOs "shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the development of the long range plan and the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program)."

Public Mass Transportation Fund (PMTF)

A state fund financed by 0.76 percent of the Indiana general sales and use tax to provide up to an amount equal to 100 percent of the system's Locally Derived Income or the system's population/performance based formula allocation, which ever is less. Eight transit systems in Northwest Indiana currently receive PMTF.

Public Meeting

A forum, for which there is no legal requirement, at which the public agency seeks citizen input.

Public Road

Any road or street under the jurisdiction of and maintained by a public authority and open to public traffic.

Purpose and Need

The intended outcome and sustaining rationale for a proposed transportation improvement, including, but not limited to, mobility deficiencies for identified populations and geographic areas.

Reasonable Further Progress (RFP)

Annual incremental reductions in emissions as may reasonably be required for ensuring attainment of a NAAQS by the applicable date.

Record of Decision (ROD)

A document prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that formally concludes a process. The ROD will approve a particular corridor or will select the No-Build alternative. The ROD will not select the exact alignment for the project.

Reformulated Gasoline

Gasoline specifically designed to reduce undesirable emissions or incomplete combustion.

Region

A geographic entity that cuts across existing jurisdictional boundaries. The places within a region are all alike in some way. In addition, the places in a region are in some way different from places outside the region.

Regional Planning

Public sector activities encompassing economic, social and physical elements to develop and implement appropriate public policy in an area covering more than one local jurisdiction.

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)

Two entities: 1) The Lake County RTA was created by the Lake County Council in 2000. It is intended to be a funding mechanism for furthering public transit service throughout Lake County. 2) NIRPC also interacts with the Northeast Illinois RTA. FTA apportions transit funds to urbanized areas, not individual transit operators. NIRPC maintains Letters of Understanding with the Northeast Illinois RTA. These Letters, authorized by the Commission, specify how the urbanized area's FTA Section 5307 and Section 5309 Rail Modernization funds are to be divided between the two states.

Regionally Significant Project

A transportation project other than an exempt project, that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs. It would normally be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area's transportation network, including, as a minimum, all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer a significant alternative to regional highway travel.

Request for Bids, Proposals, Qualifications (RFB, RFP, RFQ)

Preliminary stages of competitive procurement processes, most commonly associated with procurement of capital items or consulting services.

Reverse Commute

Travel from home to work or from work to home against the main direction of traffic.

Ride Share

Any vehicle or arrangement in which two or more occupants share the use or cost of traveling between fixed points on a regular basis, commonly a carpool or vanpool.

Route Miles

Total miles over which public transportation vehicles travel while in revenue service.

Rural Areas

Includes all areas of a State outside of the FHWA-approved adjusted Census boundaries of small urban and urbanized areas. In Northwest Indiana, rural or non-urbanized areas include the approximate southern half of Lake County, the southern two-thirds of Porter County and most of LaPorte County.

Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

Legislation passed by Congress on August 10, 2005, authorizing funding and programs for highway, public transit, airports, ports and railroads for federal fiscal years 2005-2009. Predecessor transportation acts were ISTEA and TEA-21.

Screen Line

An imaginary line bisecting an area. Traffic counts are taken at regular intervals at all streets intersecting the screen line. The line is associated, where possible, with physical barriers, such as rivers, or major highways with limited crossings. Counts taken along the screen line determine the traffic moving between two areas. These counts are intended to detect long-range changes in volume and direction of traffic due to significant changes in land use and travel patterns.

Section 5309 (formerly 3)

An FTA discretionary transit capital grant program for vehicles and facilities. The federal share is 80%.

Section 5307, 5309, 5310 and 5311 (formerly 9, 3, 16 and 18)

Refers to Section in Title 49 US Code, Chapter 53. These are the major funding titles of FTA's grant programs. Section 5307 authorizes annual grants to urbanized areas for public transit, Section 5309 is a three-tiered capital investment program (providing funds for rail modernization, new starts and bus projects), Section 5310 is a capital program for organizations which primarily serve the elderly or persons with disabilities, and Section 5311 authorizes annual grants to states for use in subsidizing public transit service in rural or small urban areas.

Section 5307

FTA's formula-based public transit grant subsidy program for urbanized areas (USA's). Funds are allocated to each UZA. Section 5307 funds in small UZA's (e.g., Michigan City) may be used for operating assistance (50% local match), or capital/planning projects (20% local match). Section 5307 funds in large UZA's (e.g., Lake/Porter Counties) may only be used for capital or planning projects (20% local match).

Section 5333 (formerly 13 (c))

Refers to the section of the Federal Transit Act which mandates the protection of the interests of employees affected by the obtaining of funding under the Federal Transit Act, and which requires the establishment and maintenance of arrangements to protect such interests.

Section 5310 (formerly 16)

Refers to funding made available under Section 5310 of the Federal Transit Act to assist public agencies, as well as non-profit corporations and associations, in meeting the specialized needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Section 5311 (formerly 18)

FTA's formula-based public transit grant subsidy program for rural or small urban areas. Funds are allocated by INDOT to eligible transit projects. Section 5311 funds may be used for operating assistance (50% local match), or capital/planning projects (20% local match). Section 5311-funded transit projects may provide service into a UZA, but generally not from point-to-point within the UZA.

Shuttle

A public transit service that connects major trip destinations and origins on a fixed- or route-deviation basis. Shuttles can provide feeder service to main transit routes, or operate in a point-to-point or circular fashion.

Single Occupant Vehicles (SOVs)

Vehicles carrying a driver with no passengers. The vehicle occupancy of SOVs is therefore 1.00.

Smart Growth

Mixing land uses with more sustainable compact, walkable, and transit-oriented development. It is also about directing development toward existing communities and redeveloping the older urban and close-in suburban areas. It is also about creating and preserving open space, protecting critical environmental areas, and promoting farmland preservation.

Sprawl

The commercial and residential development of land away from urban communities into areas that have lower or no population that results in the increased need for roads, cars, infrastructures, and which could promote further segregation economically and racially, thereby isolating low income and people of color from economic and social opportunities.

State Implementation Plan (SIP)

A process for a state to specify actions, programs and regulations to implement designated responsibilities under the Clean Air Act that lead to the attainment and maintenance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The SIP includes several components, including the attainment strategies for each pollutant in each non-attainment area, the emissions inventories and procedures for assuring that the implementation of the transportation plans, programs and projects would not hinder the attainment or maintenance of the NAAQS.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

A staged, multi-year, statewide, intermodal program of transportation projects which is consistent with the statewide transportation plan and planning processes and metropolitan plans, TIPs and processes.

Statewide Transportation Plan

The official statewide, intermodal transportation plan that is developed through the statewide transportation planning process.

Stationary Source

One of the source categories of the emissions that combines in the atmosphere to form ozone. Also called point sources, these are the industrial smokestacks or other relatively large mixed sources of emissions.

Surface Transportation Program (STP)

A category of federal transportation funds administered by the Federal Highway Administration and allocated to states and metropolitan areas based on a prescribed formula. This category of funds can provide 80% of the cost to complete transportation improvement projects. These funds are flexible, and can be used for planning design, land acquisition, and construction of highway improvement projects, the capital costs of transit system development, and up to two years of operating assistance for transit system development.

Sustainable Development

Defined as a human activity that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

3-C Planning

Comprehensive, Cooperative and Continuous transportation planning process required in metropolitan areas.

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act

Provides that no person on the basis of race, color, or national origin shall be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Traffic Analysis Zone

A subdivision of the metropolitan area used for transportation modeling. The characteristics of the traffic analysis zone are used to estimate the number of trips that start and end in the zone, for a base year, and for specific forecast years.

Transit

Generally refers to passenger service provided to the general public along established routes with fixed or variable schedules at published fares. Related terms include: public transit, mass transit, public transportation, urban transit and paratransit.

Transit Bus

A transit bus seats from about 19 to 53 passengers and has both a body and a chassis which are designed specifically for transit use.

Transit Dependent

Persons who must rely on public transit or paratransit services for most of their transportation. Typically refers to individuals without access to a personal vehicle, or a person with mobility limitations requiring mobility assistance.

Transit Dependent by Choice

A transit user who has the means and the ability to use an automobile, but decides to depend upon public transportation.

Transportation

The moving of people and goods from one place to another.

Transportation Control Measures (TCMs)

Local actions to adjust traffic patterns for traffic flow improvement, or to reduce vehicle use to reduce air pollution emissions. TCMs are specifically identified and committed to in the applicable implementation plan.

Transportation Enhancements Activities (TEA)

Refers to activities conducted in relationship to a particular transportation project which "enhance" or enrich the existing or proposed project. Examples of such activities include provision of facilities for pedestrians or bicyclists, landscaping or other scenic beautification projects, historic preservation, control and removal of outdoor advertising, archeological planning and research, and mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff. ISTEA requires each state to set aside 10% of all Surface Transportation Program funds for TEA projects.

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)

Legislation by the U.S. Congress, authorizing funding and programs for highway and public transportation for federal fiscal years 1998-2003.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

A staged, multi-year intermodal program of transportation projects in the metropolitan planning area which is consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan.

Transportation Improvement Program Update

The periodic reexamination and version of TIP contents, including but not limited to non-exempt projects. The TIP is normally updated at least every two years.

Transportation Management Area (TMA)

An urbanized area designated by the Secretary of Transportation, having an urbanized area population over 200,000. Within a TMA, all transportation plans and programs must be based on a continuing and comprehensive planning process carried out by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in cooperation with state and transit operators.

The TMA boundary affects that responsibility for selection of transportation projects that receive federal funds. For the TMAs that are in non-attainment of the NAAQS, projects can not be programmed for the addition of capacity to carry SOVs unless they come from a Congestion Management System. In Northwestern Indiana, the TMA is the same as the NIRPC planning or MPO area – Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties.

Transportation Management Organization (TMO)

A voluntary association of public and private agencies and firms joined to cooperatively develop transportation-enhancing programs in a given area. TMOs are appropriate organizations to better manage transportation demand in congested suburban communities.

Transportation Plan (Long and Short Term)

A plan identifies facilities that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system. It gives emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions, and includes a financial plan that demonstrates how the plan can be implemented.

Transportation System Management (TSM)

That element of the planning process, which proposes lower cost steps toward the improvement of a transportation system. This includes for example, traffic management, the use of bus priority or reserved lanes, and parking strategies. It includes actions to reduce vehicle use, facilitate traffic flow and improve internal transit management.

Travel Time

Customarily calculated as the time it takes to travel from door-to-door. In transportation planning, particularly in forecasting the demand for transit service, measures of travel time include time spent accessing, waiting, and transferring between vehicles, as well as that time spent on board. On network links, refers to the time required for vehicles to travel the link.

Trip

A one-direction movement from an origin to a destination.

Trip End

The origin or destination of a trip.

Trip Purpose

The reason for a trip, such as work, shopping, education, recreation, etc.

Twenty Year Planning Horizon

A long-range transportation plan typically forecasts 20 years ahead from the date of plan adoption, or update. In TMAs and air quality non-attainment areas, the forecast period cannot be any shorter than 20 years.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

A document, which describes transportation and related planning activities to be undertaken in a metropolitan area during a period of time. The UPWP is endorsed by the MPO board and some or most of the work is usually done by the MPO staff. It is also referred to as the Transportation Planning Work Program

Unlinked Trip

A transit trip measured from the boarding of a transit vehicle to the alighting from that same vehicle. It does not include transfers. For example, a transit ride involving a Gary Public Transportation Corporation bus and a Hammond Transit System bus would involve two, unlinked trips.

Urban Clusters

Places defined by the Census Bureau in which the population density is greater than 1,000 persons per square mile and the total population is between 2,500 and 49,999 persons. In northwestern Indiana, there are six (6) urban clusters including Lowell, Lake of the Four Seasons, Hebron, Union Township (Porter County), Westville, and New Carlisle (portion in LaPorte County). These Urban Clusters may also be referred to as Urban Class III places and

qualify for Surface Transportation Program (STP) Group III highway improvement funds from INDOT.

Urbanized Area

A geographic area with a population of at least 50,000. The urbanized area of Northwest Indiana as defined by the Census is the approximate northern half of Lake County, and the northern third of Porter County, plus a separate urbanized area in LaPorte County, which includes the Cities of Michigan City and LaPorte and nearby areas.

Vehicle Hours

One vehicle (or in the case of a train, the entire train) in operation for one hour. For example, 10 vehicles operating for 10 hours each, equals 100 vehicle hours.

Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT)

A standard area wide measure of travel activity. The most conventional VMT calculation is to multiply average length of trip by the total number of trips, or to sum the traffic volumes on links multiplied by link length.

Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM)

The total miles traveled by transit revenue vehicles while in revenue service. Excludes miles traveled to and from storage facilities and other deadhead travel.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)

The primary pollutant in the mixture that forms ozone in the atmosphere in the presence of sunlight and high temperatures. Also called Hydrocarbons (HC) and Reactive Organic Gasses (ROG).

Volume-to-Capacity Ratio (V/C)

A measure of the performance or use of a specific element of the transportation system, such as a road segment or an intersection. The capacity of the facility can be calculated using methods described in the Highway Capacity Manual. The traffic volume is determined through the traffic counting programs, and adjusted using factors to relate the data collection date to the annual average for the data collection year. The v/c is the percentage of the capacity that is being consumed by traffic. A v/c ratio above 1.0 means that the volume of traffic exceeds capacity and the road segment or intersection is becoming deficient and congested.

Zone

The smallest geographic area for analysis of transportation activity. A zone can be from one to 10 square miles in area. Average zone size depends on total size of study area. In its transportation planning, NIRPC has divided the 3-county region into 465 traffic analysis zones.

ACRONYMS

ASSHTO American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

ADA Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990

ADT Average Daily Traffic

AICP American Institute of Certified Planners

APTA American Public Transit Association

ATC Automated Toll Collection

ATM	Advanced Traffic Management System
BZA	Board of Zoning Appeals
CAAA	Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990
CBD	Central Business District
CDC	Community Development Corporation
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIP	Capital Improvements Plan (or Program)
CMS	Congestion Management System
CMAQ	Congestion Management and Air Quality Program
COG	Council of Governments
CZM	Coastal Zone Management
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOT	Department of Transportation (US)
DU	Dwelling Unit
ECO	Employee Commute Options
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FONSI	Finding of no significant impact
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GIS	Geographic Information System
HOV	High Occupancy Vehicle

HPMS	Highway Performance Monitoring System
INDOT	Indiana Department of Transportation
INSTIP	Indiana Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LMOP	Lake Michigan Ozone Plan
LOS	Level of Service
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NARC	National Association of Regional Councils
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHS	National Highway System
OTAQ	Office of Transportation and Air Quality
PDR	Purchase of Development Rights
PM-10	Particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter.
PMS	Pavement Management System
PMSA	Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area
PRT	Personal Rapid Transit
PUD	Planned Unit Development
RFP	Requests for Proposals
RFQ	Requests for Qualifications
ROW	Right-of-Way
RPC	Regional Plan Commission

RTA	Regional Transportation Authority
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SMSA	Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area
SOV	Single Occupant Vehicle
STP	Surface Transportation Program
TAZ	Traffic Analysis Zones
TEA-21	Transportation Efficiency Act of the 21 st Century
TDM	Travel Demand Management
TIF	Tax Increment Financing
TIGER	Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Reference File
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TOD	Transit Oriented Design
TMA	Transportation Management Area
TSM	Transportation System Management
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
UWP	Unified Work Program
VHT	Vehicle Hours of Travel
VMT	Vehicle Miles of Travel
VOC	Volatile Organic Compound

AND NOW FOR SOME FUN!

ACO	Acronym Control Officer, who is the person responsible for developing acronyms. A substantial reward is offered for the capture and disposal of this person.
AICP	Any Idiot Can Plan
BANANAS	Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything
BS	Bureaucratically Saleable
CAVE	Citizens Against Virtually Everything
DUDE	Developer Under Delusions of Entitlement
IGMFY	I've Got Mine, Forget You
LULU's	Locally Unwanted Land Uses
MIGA	Make It Go Away
MOOT	Move Out Of Town
NIABY	Not In Anyone's Back Yard
NIMBI	Now I Must Become Involved
NIMBY	Not In My Back Yard
NIMEY	Not In My Election Year
NIMFYE	Not In My Front Yard Either
NIMTOO	Not In My Term Of Office
NOPE	Not On Planet Earth
PIITBY	Put It In Their Back Yard
TOADS	Temporarily Obsolete Abandoned Derelict Sites
WIIFM	What's In It For Me?
WNK	We'll Never Know
WOMBAT	Waste Of Money, Brains And Time