



FAQs from Public Workshop #1
General Questions for Entire West Lake Corridor
Updated 1/4/17

Q) Why are you doing this?

Planning for incoming transit development is part of the preparation that is required by the Federal Transit Administration in order to receive matching funds to construct a commuter rail project. The RDA is using a grant from the State of Indiana's Regional Cities program (which is designed to help communities across Indiana improve quality of life and spur economic development) to help Hammond, Munster and Dyer plan for development near the new commuter rail stations on the West Lake Corridor. Nearly all of this development will be privately funded through private investors. The plans developed through this collaborative process will give the community and its elected leaders a voice in how that development is done.

Q) What are you demolishing for the TOD?

(A consolidation of the 3 questions below.)

- *Is the plan to tear down a neighborhood to build apartments? (Munster)*
- *If you have to have a TOD in order to get funding and all the area around the station is already built up, how can you get the land to build the TOD if people won't sell? (Dyer)*
- *If you aren't planning on taking homes for the project, where are you going to put them? (Hammond)*
- *How many homes destroyed makes this project worth it? I have a study that counters every "argument" you have made. You are routing and destroying homes! There was no public opinion asked for in this. (Munster)*

There are no plans to demolish homes or buildings for the TOD master plan. The ½ mile radii around the train stations are impact areas that we are looking at for future development possibilities as opportunities arise. This planning process is long-range and is intended to guide future development as parcels become available and the market supports new development.

Q) What role does affordable housing play in the TODs?

(A consolidation of the 4 questions below.)

- *Please define what you mean by affordable housing? What factor/criteria does affordable housing have in the new starts program? (Munster)*
- *The TOD examples you gave, were they tied to a grant that required an affordable housing component? Munster average income is \$75,000 that will require family income of \$45,000 being able to pay rents. What will the rent be for those housing units? (Munster)*
- *Did your TOD examples have an affordable housing component? Normal, IL for example. (Munster)*

- *Is low-income housing required to get federal funding for trains? (Dyer)*

As part of the New Starts application evaluation, the FTA looks at the ratio of affordable housing within ½ mile of the station compared to the amount of affordable housing available within the county. While affordable housing is not a requirement to pursue New Starts funding, it contributes to a competitive application.

Q) What is mixed-use?

- *Explain mixed-use. (Dyer)*

Mixed-use developments place different land uses such as housing and retail next to each other (horizontal) or above one another (vertical). They are intended to bring people closer to the things they need on a daily basis. Mixed use can range from a corner store with residential units above it, to a larger development with a range of compatible uses in one place.

Q) Why are many of the consultants on this project from outside of Northwest Indiana and Chicago?

- *Farr Associates hired consultants from Portland, Berkeley and New York. Were there no local consultants with any expertise? (Munster)*

The FTA New Starts Program is incredibly competitive with communities from all over the nation competing for the same funds we are. Farr Associates has carefully assembled a team comprised of nationally renowned professionals to put together the most competitive application possible for the New Starts funds.

Q) Where can I find the presentations and other materials from the public workshops?

- *Since the slides were mostly unreadable, are handouts available? (Munster)*

All presentations have been uploaded to the website under the “Downloads” tab.

Q) Where is TOD along our 100-year-old existing line?

Sustainable development has to be planned for. The existing line was designed and put in place more than a century ago as an “inter-regional railroad”. The train authority at that time may have had the intention of only providing a station with eventually a parking lot for transit riders. In the intervening years, little consideration was given to surrounding land uses and development opportunities. TOD is most successful when it can be directly adjacent to stations. In most cases this is not possible if a station sits in a large parking lot or if adjacent zoning does not allow for higher-density development. By proactively planning, we can set the stage for transit-supportive development in the four station areas.

Q) Has a decision been made that TOD will happen or do residents have an opportunity to vote on whether we want this or not? If decision is already made, then who made that decision?

Transit oriented development is just development that is near transit and compliments a multi-modal lifestyle

(trains, bikes, walking, cars). TOD will be constructed by private developers, using private money, on land they acquire from people who voluntarily sell it to them. TOD is not a government program.

Q) One of your stated goals is getting people to walk. Can you explain the additional transit infrastructure that will be required to make TOD successful?

Like any kind of residential or commercial development, transit oriented development will require some investment in public infrastructure, such as extending water, sewer and utilities to new homes and business, putting in sidewalks and street crossings, etc. As explained in the answer to Question 7 above, cities and towns typically charge developers impact fees which the municipality then uses to fund this kind of infrastructure work.

Q) What is the funding source of the TOD process we are involved in today?

The "TOD planning process" is being funded through a combination of funds: a grant from the State of Indiana's Regional Cities program, and a grant from the Federal Transit Administration. Both grants are designed to help communities plan for the changes that will take place as transit impacts a municipality and assist stakeholders in maintaining a strong quality of life while spurring economic development.

Q) What happens if federal funding is not granted? Who foots the bill?

If this question refers to the funding for the actual construction of the train, and the FTA does not approve the West Lake Corridor Project for funding, then there will be no TOD. The TOD is dependent on the train project being built.

Q) Would the West Lake Extension and the West Lake TOD projects still be considered if we didn't have the county income tax to fund it?

The West Lake Corridor Rail Project is being funded by a number of federal, state, and local revenue sources. As a project with a strong return on investment, it would go forward without the income tax, but with a different mix of State and local sources. With regard to TOD, the county income tax is not funding TOD. Private development and investment will fund TOD.

Q) You state "no new taxes" but how much will existing taxes be raised?

Existing taxes will not increase due to TOD. No part of existing tax revenues will be spent on TOD.

Q) You keep saying no taxes will be required to build the line. Haven't most TOD projects required extensive government money from a variety of sources?

The history of funding for TOD is mixed with regard to whether public incentives are used to incentivize the private development projects or not. In some cases, TIF [tax increment financing] is used, or perhaps abatements are granted. However, many new development projects in cities across Indiana and around the country require those kinds of incentives – without regard to whether located near transit or not.

Q) Why are residents just now in 2016 being informed that TOD is a requirement for the federal funds necessary for the West Lake Corridor Project when the rail project is not new?

Of the funding required for construction of the West Lake Corridor project, 50% will come from the federal New Starts grant program. As part of the grant application, cities must show that they have a long-term plan for mixed-use development near transit. The West Lake TOD planning process will generate those long-term plans. These plans will be submitted as part of the grant application. Our goal is a robust and thoughtful planning process resulting in implementable TOD plans and a strong grant application. This is the point in the planning schedule for the transit project that public meetings are normally held. The train authority, NICTD, and the development authority, the RDA, are simply following a normal procedure for providing input to local communities.

Q) How are the precedents you are showing relevant to TOD in Northwest Indiana?

(A consolidation of the 7 questions below.)

- *You have cited a lot of figures. Are any of the other TOD projects associated with inter-urban, one-way, commuter rail? (Munster)*
- *It seems a lot of the plans shown would have been good for Munster 30-35 years ago - but not now that so much land is used. How can this project have the same impact you are describing? (Munster)*
- *You are comparing San Diego to NWI. I've lived in both places - it doesn't snow in San Diego. The climate is different, the terrain is different, the workforce is different, the two areas could not be more different!! How does it make sense to compare the two areas?! (Munster)*
- *What other local city can we visit to see an example of this type of development? (Hammond)*
- *Comment: Respectfully to those that reject this plan, being native to Normal and the success there, Munster shares a lot of the same attributes so I would suspect the same success here. (Munster)*
- *What is residential and business occupancy of the Normal, IL project? (Hammond)*
- *In Houston, population grew by 23% but light rail ridership went down 12%. Even in Los Angeles where traffic is horrible, 10% fewer people on trains. What makes you think this will increase ridership here? (Hammond)*

Each TOD is unique to its location so there is rarely a perfect precedent for a given location. The presentation featured five local examples of TOD: Normal, Orland Park, Park Ridge, Prairie Crossing and Lake Forest (and cited research from San Diego) to describe a range of scales and forms. Each of these projects has a development history unique to that place and is worth a visit or tour. Each of the modern TOD's we featured share two key attributes with Northwest Indiana: 1) at the beginning of the planning process, people were skeptical that transit would add value given their unique conditions and 2) despite people now using transit for their commutes, many people still rely on cars for other trips.

Q) Are all TOD plans successfully implemented and how long does it take retail in a TOD to achieve critical mass?

(A consolidation of the 2 questions below.)

- *Will you admit the Orland Park project is a ghost town? The retailers go out of business regularly and most rental spaces are vacant. I travel there regularly to see my broker. I travel by car because I wouldn't go to Chicago and go back down to Orland. (Munster)*

- *Your project in Riverdale, IL has not seen major success. How will you avert the same errors in that project when you construct TODs in NWI? (Hammond)*

Some communities lack the leadership, capacity or resources to implement TOD plans, or take many years to do so. The recession stalled implementation for most real estate projects by five or more years. There is an adage in real estate, "retail follows rooftops," that applies to TODs. While every TOD plan would benefit greatly from having restaurants and shops on day one to attract dwellers, the market sees it exactly the opposite; they are only willing to invest after their customers already live there.

Q) How will multiple modes of transportation be incorporated into the TOD?

(A consolidation of the 3 questions below.)

- *Will streets connecting the stations to various parts of the town be renovated to include bike lanes and sidewalks to get to the stations safely? For instance, Broadmoor to the Ridge Road Station. (Munster)*
- *How does bike access from the west via Main St or from the North from Centennial Village fit into the planning? Examples: wider shoulders or bike lanes? (Munster)*
- *Will the bike path on Ridge Rd and Monon Trail still exist? (Munster)*

One of the many benefits of a TOD is that the development can be accessed by multiple modes of transportation including walking, biking, transit, and cars. It is important for the train station and surrounding development to be accessible for a range of people, including children, the elderly and the disabled. The Monon Trail multi-modal bike path will be maintained in the proposed development schemes.

Q) What about cars, congestion, and parking?

(A consolidation of the 6 questions below.)

- *I like my cars I don't want to give them up I am concerned about a lack of parking. What if I have a company? Where will they park? (Hammond)*
- *Munster & Dyer residents travel on average 25 min to work, so they are not going to Chicago. How do you satisfy the reducing traffic/congestion requirement? (Hammond)*
- *I understand the TOD is meant to bring urbanites into NWI. However, to move around these towns you still need a car. How will this impact congestion in the area, which is already bad? (Dyer)*
- *Can you build garage towers for parking? (Munster)*
- *Are there plans to connect Margo Lane in the west lake subdivision to Dyer? How will this impact traffic through the subdivision? (Dyer)*
- *No parking on street in front of my house? (Hammond)*

Traffic and parking are two of the most frequently raised issues of concern in the planning of TODs. Traffic in Northwest Indiana is bad because of segregated land uses and poor street connectivity. The TOD master plans will help, rather than hurt, these underlying issues by created mixed-use places, connected to their surroundings where many families will be able to shed a car. Nationally there are between four and ten parking spaces for every car we own. Despite this we all feel there is never enough parking and are reluctant to walk any distance to get to it. TOD parking is an issue of economics: free parking is an expensive (often public) subsidy and a land use that pays no taxes. Minimum parking requirements often make things worse - requiring the construction of expensive parking in excess of what a development needs to succeed.

Q) What type of development will go in the TOD and how much might it cost?

(A consolidation of the 7 questions below.)

- *What facilities do you envision being built? (Dyer)*
- *What level of investment in TOD is appropriate for Munster/Dyer? (Dyer)*
- *What price of housing or type of housing will be in the TOD? (Dyer)*
- *What is the ideal business for this TOD, especially in relation to Hammond and its unique demographics? (Hammond)*
- *What or who will determine what businesses will be placed in these developments? Can we please have more desirable establishments like Starbucks, dry cleaning, and not JJ Fish or a Mobil station? (Hammond)*
- *If I am a business owner and my company needs can not be met by your one size fits all model - why would I not just take my business elsewhere? What about individuality? (Munster)*
- *Do you have an exact cost of each TOD for Munster, Dyer, Hammond? (Munster)*

Each TOD plan will have a unique and different mix of uses. Two market studies are underway and will be completed by the end of the year that will go a long way to answer this question. Development takes place because private real estate developers believe they can make money at it. The illustrative and marketing plan goes a long way to shape the opportunity that a developer sees. If a developer proposes a business that is permitted by current zoning and meets all the necessary code requirements, they must be granted a permit. If a town still wants something other than what the market wants to provide, they can negotiate with the developer to provide something the community likes better.

Q) What role does public health play in a TOD?

(A consolidation of the 2 questions below.)

- *Can you explain the comment "The National Association of Home Builders is the new tobacco industry?" (Hammond)*
- *You say no plan has been made but you only work with sustainable communities, walkable communities. In fact, you said it's your legal obligation to ensure that our kids are not fat, correct? (Munster)*

The U.S. Surgeon General issued a report saying that the U.S. is in a decades-long obesity epidemic, due to inactive lifestyles and poor diet. Obesity among U.S. adults is currently 36% and is projected to be about 50% by 2030. By contrast smoking among adults is currently about 19% and is declining. The total annual national impact on our economy (health care costs, lost work, etc.) from obesity exceeds that of smoking by tens of billions of dollars each year. A TOD can help address this issue by encouraging active lifestyles including walking and biking.

Q) What happens if things don't go as planned?

(A consolidation of the 2 questions below.)

- *Should the Dyer/Munster train station not attract the predicted number of riders, what happens to the TOD area? (Dyer)*
- *What is to prevent the Munster stations from becoming ride-through stations (even in the presence of TOD efforts)? (Munster)*

Ridership depends on economic factors—the cost of gasoline, parking and transit—and on people’s ability to access the transit—living within walking or biking distance, adequate parking for park and ride, etc.

Q) Will the businesses in mixed-use buildings be minimum wage jobs?

In other TOD projects around the country, the businesses that begin to fill the mixed-use development spaces represent the cross-section of businesses throughout the community. Assuming that trend is exhibited here, then the employment around the stations should look like the average for wages also across the community.

Q) Will people in employed around the stations be able to afford to live around those same stations?

TOD is not a government program. It is simply development. The ideal from a planning perspective is for the residential housing around and within the TOD areas to be comprised of a mix of housing types and costs. Part of that housing would likely be quite expensive, because of the higher demand and higher property values that TOD tends to produce. However, in any community, it is desirable to also have residential projects that are more affordable for middle-class and young families, young singles, and senior citizens. It is the planning that is taking place across the region and within Hammond, Munster, and Dyer today that can ensure this kind of desirable development.

Q) What are the trends in income and crime in other TODs?

- *Concerning other TODs or TOD-like developments, what did immediate and post data suggest about income and crime? (Hammond)*

The literature on the crime-transit relationship indicates there is no clear connection between crime and transit. Nationwide, violent crimes on transit property declines from 2000-2009, despite an increase in transit ridership (Litman, 2014 using Bureau of Transportation Statistics). Studies focuses specifically on impacts of new transit in suburban neighborhoods also found no clear evidence of a crime surge (Los Angeles, CA in 2003; Atlanta, GA in 2003).

Q) How do you improve a walk score if an area is landlocked?

- *How can "walk scores" go up for the current single family homes/enclosed subdivisions that would be near the south station in Munster since the area is still locked in subdivisions? (Munster)*

Walkscore.com is a website that generates a walkability rating of 1 to 100 for any location in the U.S. It is an imperfect measure of walkability as it only counts destinations and overlooks the desirability of the pedestrian experience. The TOD master plans will improve the Walkscore of these locations by promoting pedestrian destinations.

Q) Will this just turn into a low-income housing project?

Land around the West Lake stations will be too valuable to build low-income housing on. The experience around the country has been that there is an increase in demand for housing around transit stations.

Q) Our city has a lot of empty storefront and homes now. How do you propose filling businesses when we have too many empty spaces now?

Proximity to transit, new stations and faster commutes, will attract new residents and new businesses to the areas of Hammond near the new train stations. This will also increase the number of potential patrons for businesses, both immediately adjacent to the stations and elsewhere in the City. These changes are likely to make the city more attractive to prospective residents and businesses overall.

SITE-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS THAT WILL BE ANSWERED BY THE MASTER PLANS

- *Type of development to South Hammond between 165th and 173rd along*
- *Lyman as our sewer system is old and cannot handle more housing.*
- *Where parking lots would be. (Hammond)*

Q) Isn't Policy Analytics the same company that promised thousands of jobs around the Gary airport development? That never happened.

Policy Analytics projection of jobs resulting from the RDA's investment at the Gary Airport was for the 30-year period beginning after the runway extension was completed. The runway construction was done in CY 2015. Let's see what happens between now and 2045.

Q) How did your study arrive at a projected \$1.9 Billion in development investment over the next 20 years?

An engineering firm under contract with the RDA had discussions with the planning staff at the municipalities along the West Lake Project corridor and along the current South Shore line. The plans that came from those discussions call for about \$1.9 billion in construction funded by private development over the 20 years following the inception of the train. Of that amount, approximately \$946.1 million is estimated to occur at or near the stations on the West Lake Corridor project, and another \$1,016.7 million along the stations of the South Shore.

Q) What is an impact fee and what are the locations affected by this fee? Its in RDA documents.

Impact fees are enacted by the governments of the municipalities surrounding the train stations, so that the additional costs that are imposed by developers and investors in the real estate projects surrounding the stations are borne by the investment projects and not the long term residents of those municipalities. The impact fees only apply to the new developments.

Q) Reducing auto dependency in an area that employs MANY auto workers?! Doesn't less autos mean less high paying union jobs!?

Reductions in auto dependency are minimal and localized compared to the world-wide markets into which the auto manufacturers are selling. The choice of transit by the millennial generation is a life-style choice that is taking place across the U.S. If that life-style is not accommodated in NW Indiana, other locales across the country will provide that type of development and those young people will simply go elsewhere.

Q) Please identify the sources of and types of social stats and demographics relied upon to calculate and project the progressive development of the master plan and its horizons?

The demographic statistics used for the RDA's Comprehensive Strategic Development Plan were produced by the Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, [NIRPC]. Those plans can be found at the website below. <http://www.nirpc.org/2040-plan.aspx>

Q) How can I continue to participate in this planning process?

For more information on the West Lake TOD planning process, please visit: westlaketod.civicpage.com