



On October 3-5, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) hosted the 2005 Annual Indiana MPO* Conference at the Radisson Hotel at Star Plaza in Merrillville. A record 204 people registered and of those, nearly 60 were on the Conference agenda. It was NIRPC's turn to host the annual, statewide Conference, which was generously supported, in part by 15 engineering and planning consultants, transportation suppliers, a bank, and the three county convention and visitor bureaus.

There were a variety of informative and enlightening topics during the two and a half days. Early in the Conference, a session described the recent federal surface transportation reauthorization act and its impact on Indiana's metropolitan areas. Some of the other workshop sessions included a question and answer panel discussion about the new Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority; Freight Planning; Traffic Management through technology; Transportation Project Selection Criteria That Works; and a plan consensus-building process from Northeast Illinois called "Transopoly." The Conference also featured a demonstration of the Segway, the unique, personal transportation vehicle. In a departure from the subject of transportation, Purdue University Calumet Communication Professor, Bill Robinson presented a valuable lesson, "Motivating and Leading Others." Not all activities took place indoors. A ride along the scenic Oak-Savannah trail, from Griffith, through Gary to Hobart was enjoyed by nearly two dozen Conference attendees.

The Conference welcomed Indiana First District Congressman Pete Visclosky; INDOT Commissioner Tom Sharp; Fred Abousleman from the National Association of Regional Councils; and top officials from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, including Sherry Ways from the Federal Highway Headquarters office in Washington, D.C. Commissioner Sharp applauded the State's new 10-year highway plan, called "Major Moves", which had just been announced by Governor Mitch Daniels the week before.

Dave Shafer, NIRPC Chair and a NARC Board member said, "Those who attended the 2005 Indiana MPO Conference (whether as a delegate, presenter, or sponsor) enjoyed the opportunity to network with their colleagues, to learn about some of the best practices in the state of Indiana, and to improve their skills in planning that will result in enhancements to our quality of life. Congratulations and thanks to all who made the effort to participate in this very successful conference."

*Metropolitan Planning Organizations are the designated transportation planning agencies in the nation's metropolitan areas, and there are 13 MPOs in Indiana.