

Vision 2020

A Vision for Northeast Indiana

Topical Group Activities



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*Infrastructure
Topical Group*

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Strategizing the Pillar: Infrastructure

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

At each regional outreach meeting, one table of participants received a form with a list of “must have” policies or initiatives related to Infrastructure. The list was developed using two main sources: 1) an extensive review of the region’s existing economic development studies; and 2) a series of stakeholder interviews with representatives of various interest groups and geographies.

Participants worked individually to read through the list of must haves, select the top three initiatives, and then rank those three initiatives in order of priority. Following the meetings, these forms were analyzed and the initiatives were given a weighted score (receiving 3 points for being ranked first, 2 points for being ranked second, 1 point for being ranked third).

Using an aggregate compilation of the input from all ten meetings, the initiatives for Infrastructure are listed in order of priority in the table below. The initiative ID number refers back to the original forms used at the outreach meetings. The table also indicates if an initiative was ranked as #1 for a particular county or counties.

Regional Initiatives for Infrastructure

ID	Initiative	Weighted Score	Top Priority for:
8	Increase the number of “shovel-ready” development sites.	87	Allen, DeKalb (tie with #1), LaGrange, Wells, Whitley
2	Enhance regional planning efforts to ensure connections between land use, transportation, and infrastructure investments.	76	Adams, Noble
10	Work regionally to identify and finance regional infrastructure priorities.	68	Huntington, Wabash
11	Expand broadband width and availability.	64	Steuben
1	Increase access to affordable energy.	28	DeKalb (tie with #8)
5	Focus on developing an integrated, multi-modal transportation network that effectively links the region’s population centers.	24	
4	Enhance freight opportunities through improvements to air and rail facilities.	21	
9	Invest in renewable energy and green infrastructure.	15	
3	Provide for a new east-west highway artery.	12	
7	Develop better, faster, safer transportation options (such as high speed rail) to major hubs like Chicago, Indianapolis, and Detroit.	12	
6	Improve public transportation. Provide affordable, frequent, dependable bus service throughout the region.	0	

ADDITIONAL “MUST HAVES”

Participants were also encouraged to write-in additional initiatives that they would like to see added to the “must have” list. The following strategic priorities were suggested by participants at meetings throughout the region. Strategies are organized under several broad themes: Facilities for Freight, Multimodal or Alternative Transportation, Regional Cooperation/Funding, Green Infrastructure, Roadway Improvements, Shovel-ready Sites, and Utilities. Certain broad themes are further divided into sub themes.

Many of these themes relate to one of the original “must-have” initiatives on the ranking form. Where appropriate, the relevant initiatives are indicated in parenthesis.

Facilities for Freight (Initiative 4)

- Expanding our airport - creating a facility to land and house and maintain corporate jets.
- Inter-modal (Freight) transportation hub
- Increase corporate use of the airport by enhancing the facilities
- 1-mile runway at Kendallville Airport.

Multimodal or Alternative Transportation (Initiative 5)

- Light rail between downtown Ft. Wayne and the IPFW/Ivy Tech/Coliseum node and between Jefferson Pointe and downtown.
- Create "world-class" regional trails system serving entire region and connecting key venues/assets.
- Create an underpass or overpass in City of Wabash so traffic is not disrupted by train traffic.
- Have a taxi service.
- Recreational infrastructure - trails, athletic facilities, etc.
- Inter/multi-modal and cross-dock facility at or near airport.

Regional Cooperation/Funding (Initiatives 2, 10)

- Local government reform/restructuring
- Single government structure - city/county make it easier to do business here.
- Financial assistance - state and federal.
- Aggressive support from federal elected officials.
- Cooperative planning, buildings, small town + large
- Planning needs to start thinking regional: smoother faster traffic flow; congestion; spot-zoning (redefine).
- Develop regional strategies (3 to 10 years) for trails, rail, public transit, roads, parks and recreation.
- Local government partnership, Regional financing
- Funds are short on availability, must help each other.
- Regional financing is necessary. Cannot be supported by Allen County only.

Green Infrastructure

- Develop or concentrate on regional policies that protect the water resources, but allow the area for capitalize on their asset.

- Noble County has great aquifers. We need to capitalize on them as well as protect them.
- Develop wind power to supplement electricity.
- Invest in renewable energy and green infrastructure. This is very important to attract talent and business from outside of the region. Ride the wave - this is a national policy.

Roadway Improvements

- 4-lane north-south highway.
- Better access to I-69 (North-South) another interstate between Angola and Ashley?
- Provide north/south highway artery to provide improved connectivity to US-30 West (northwest).
- North-south connector to 30-West via parallel to 15 or expand 9 or 5.
- Four lane access to 69/469
- A larger network of "extra heavy duty" highway designations.
- Road northwest to Warsaw and US-30 West.
- Build an exit and entrance from I-69 to downtown Fort Wayne
- Better all around roads in county
- All roads in County need improving
- Pave road through out County
- Good roads.
- Improved county roads - to access small business.

Shovel-ready Sites (Initiative 8)

- While we have empty buildings these may not prove the need of particular business interest. So we need "Shovel Ready" sites of various sizes or options.
- Have land ready - for new industry.
- "Certified" shovel-ready sites.
- Build and cluster some "ready sites" for various business segments that we want to have and focus on bringing these sectors to our community.

Utilities

- Internet access to all parts of the County.
- Northeast Indiana could easily become the "most wired" area in the nation which would make us the platform that all others would strive towards. Someday soon, we'll be the "Chattanooga" of broadband! Wouldn't it be outrageous if we were to be the topic of the next major economic development conference?
- Tax incentive for legislature to promote tax incentive for development of broadband for everyone.
- Establish north/south and east/west fiber-optic backbone with goal of high-speed broadband throughout county, wired and wireless. Owned by local non-profit corporation.
- Develop cheap and plentiful water as a strategy to attract businesses and for population growth.
- A strategy to improve the efficiency of local utility infrastructures (water, sewer, energy) to make them more competitive.

- Underground- can you run power and fiber in same easement? Grid power distribution enhanced.
- Need to look at strategically placing nuclear power plants that will provide power in regional areas vs that of the monster plants. Small might be easier to manage.
- Local, but tied together regionally a fuel cell type proprietary electric power system and grid.
- We have to get cheap energy.
- Increase access to affordable energy - maybe not just access to the energy but efficiency in acquiring and delivering this energy.
- Develop local nuclear power.
- No Septic Field - sanitary sewers + treatment plant wherever possible

Other

- Love one another, work together
- Get to know your strengths
- Bike trails, parks, arts and entertainment venues
- River development - recreation, cleaning, living space, business, walking access.
- Clean up blight in the area/improve appearance
- Enhance north/south and east/west corridor from I-69 to I-469 to downtown Ft. Wayne. Not to interstate standards but visually improved, better signage - make them true gateways.
- Educated workforce/top-notch educational system.
- Education and training for non-college bound students and re-training of displaced, unemployed to match skills for new jobs.
- Speed up permits
- Allen County must revise the building code or encourage development NOT discourage it.
- Strategic development plan for Steuben County
- We have to help each county get industry to come.
- US Customs/Federal Inspection and Immigration Services Facility at airport to process international passengers/cargo.
- Right to work. This is the single biggest obstacle to attracting new industry.
- Subsidy for flights - locally-funded.
- Integrate the 3 rivers in economic and social enhancements to our communities where appropriate.
- Competitive business practices. Do not favor one company over another or harm part of an industry while promoting other parts.
- Increase knowledge and the expansion of agriculture processing facilities in Adams County.
- Establish regional high tech development center

County Perspectives on Infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

During the regional outreach meetings, participants engaged in a discussion on two questions: Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?; and Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?

This document captures the discussion on Infrastructure for each of the ten counties. Results are listed below in alphabetical order by county.

1. ADAMS COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better broadband: to attract and maintain business. • Transportation: better highways and rail (regional not a problem), airport is good. • Gain jobs and population with better infrastructure. • Higher wages, improving quality of life. • Even if jobs go to another county, we will get a spill-over effect. • Work ethic and labor availability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ethic, good labor pool. • Infrastructure-friendly government. • Make incentives to business already here, not just "new" business. • Shovel-ready sites - availability of land. • Agricultural products: even with bad economy, people have to eat. • Research in agricultural products (Bunge, Red Gold).

2. ALLEN COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to other communities close by - close to Chicago, the rest of the world through airport. • Fort to Port - we're a stopping point on that corridor, shipping access to ports • Warehouses locating here • Support region, while region will be able to support Allen • Better interaction between regional communities. • Improved use of infrastructure we already use: are the weight limits on highways impeding trucks from using Indian highways/routes; why is there a stop for the track in Waterloo, but not Fort Wayne? • Improved ease of travel (stoplights after interchange exits) • Rethink zoning • Improved air quality • An airport at the next level: fun, easy to use. Utilize air service - it is currently underserved, but it needs to be used in order to get access to some of those services. It is a catch-22. • Globally connected airport with "butts in the seats" • A community that stands up and asks for air service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband connectivity - Comcast updated bandwidth in Ft. Wayne • Technology that is not available anywhere else - we are the most wired city in the US • The people • Healthcare - Parkview and Lutheran. Health sciences, 2 hospital systems; access/service here is unbelievable. • Affordable housing. • Proximity to Warsaw and their industry • Infrastructure: I-69, Norfolk-Southern rail, airport, 24 • Access to water resources: underground aquifer - not constrained to water use like many. • Lots of land - though they need to be "shovel-ready" sites. • Electrical grid - capable and reasonably cheap.

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- Marketing of a diverse transportation center
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3. DEKALB COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?

- Transportation
- Facility - water/sewer - need to expand, where does it come from: cooperative effort, put 4 or 5 pieces together to make it work.
- Roadblocks are a problem for county.
- Competition within state? I-69 is key factor in attraction. Companies look from land that fits their needs. Identify sites easy to get to. Improve roads close to land available.
- Water/sewer maintenance. Financing: residents may not be able to pay utility cost within region, more expensive. Do you look for state for assistance?
- Power availability to company very key. NIPACO - high in Waterloo - effects. How to distribute - ours is outdated - how to make more efficient. We depend on coal. Regionally - we can advance more.
- Utilities - regionalized? Thinking outside the box! More open connection.
- Wind power - approximately 30 years away.

Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?

- I-69
- Railroads.
- Highway - INDOT
- Airport

4. HUNTINGTON COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?

- Broader industry focus (i.e. autos)
- Infrastructure/energy is the ticket price into the game. But even though you enter the game, you don't necessarily win the game. Everyone has to do things well to be looked at.
- 21st Century Talent/Quality of Life will follow when you have infrastructure in place.
- Protect/improve our assets.
- Improve on weaknesses: sewer (combined sewer overflow), inability to radically improve.
- How do we take an existing strength and make it viable for the next 30-40 years?
- We're disadvantaged in money/funding because of merger with Region II/A / NIIC
- What is regional coalition of legislatures/coordinating strategy?
- 9 could be another north/south road, other than I-69 (Marion to Toll Road) and we could then get to 30-W
- Cooperation of regional legislators to lobby for regional transportation.

Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?

- Broad band in the works
- 1 shovel-ready site.
- I-69 and 3 exits.
- 24
- State Roads 9, 5.
- Lafayette Center Rd, Allen to FWA International Airport
- Norfolk Southern Rail
- KHHG, our own airport
- University has fiber
- I-light regional system for broadband
- Electric energy suppliers

5. LAGRANGE COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attractive to outsiders to move into area. • Add and invest in what we already have here - improve from residents • Infrastructure in place, improves business climate. • Infrastructure can improve tourism traffic (wireless especially). • Cheap gas and electricity supports and is vital to a competitive business climate. • Fiber/telecom/redundant service is good to making a competitive business climate. • Roads connect us to the world - vital to our growth. • Fiber optic project on Indiana Toll Road is important - need it to extend down to us. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toll Road - both for transportation and infrastructure (fiber) • Wind power availability. • Lakes. • REMC - affordable. • Industrial park at Toll Road • Capacity of our sewage systems. • Shovel-ready sites. • Crossroads community. • Tourism hub. • Recreation - Shippshewana, Mongo area. • LCEDC (LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation) • New tech high school, Westview Bronze Medal award - US News & World Report. • Good road system • Available buildings. • New facilities (library, hospital, medical facilities) • Good ground water supplies. • Home of a wonderful tourism community.

6. NOBLE COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More competitive globally with entrepreneurs who can choose to live in a rural area because they have access to broadband. • Share a rural airport with another county. • A possibility for companies who previously could not get to rural areas. • Rail lines, globally competitive. • With mass transit: people travel into and out of county. If we had mass transit it would really help with increased energy costs; high speed rail. • More broadband, transportation could make us more of a bedroom community than we want to be, yet the potential gain is bigger than the loss. • Allow people to live/work here if they don't want to live in the city. • Allow employee to work from home • Pretty good energy infrastructure. • We could "woo" companies with the great water supply. • More competitive business climate. • 2-mile runway at Kendallville, or even a mile runway for corporate jets. • Looking farther down the road, knocking down boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the best aquifers in the country. We don't have a problem with water. • Rail systems. • Roadways. • Utilities - located here. • Partnerships with other counties. • REMC crosses county lines. • Rural cooperatives are large and spread out. • Capitalize on the assets of the other counties (airport, etc.) • Healthcare system, a regional healthcare system. • Broadband. • Combination of healthcare and broadband and what can be done with that.

7. STEUBEN COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure investments will prepare us for future growth. But need to know what direction we want to go in. (i.e. may not want heavy industry with the lakes). Know our vision. • Broadband and fiber optics are critical. • IMAN - Community foundation developing fiber optics. • Master Plan for the county: stress lakes, farming, and industry - strike a balance. • First do no harm - make sure you're not harming the environment. • County roads need improvement. • Bike paths - contribute to quality of life. • Grow high tech jobs and keep the college graduates. • Get different local governments together - move forward with the same vision. • Make sure county plan (and zoning) follows the regional plan. • Avoid in-fighting! Need buy-in from all groups. What do we do with the Build Indiana Fund? • Need county-wide planning and zoning. • Good leadership can guide the way to collaboration (i.e. county government). • Broadband service a must. • Need engineers to stay and make start-up companies locally. • Steuben County needs a capital improvement plan. • An industrial park we could market • Would like to see the region driven by whole region, not one county • We would be more efficient in the full package of infrastructure • We would be more competitive, could use our advantages better • More attractive • Railroad is a viable asset • More jobs here will benefit entire region • We'll have a better life: better wages, more tax base, better jobs, better govt. services • Diverse industries from better internet/broadband • Helps Steuben leverage other benefits like quality of life. Once you meet infrastructure requirement you can be more competitive • We have to invest in infrastructure- we have to pay for • Become the beta, pilot, get recognition for the region. Wouldn't it be nice if we were the next Chattanooga? • Government/ legislature tells businesses that they have to sign first and then they get to know the incentives we should be up front about incentives, honest about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lakes • 2 Interstates • Rail, air • 2 colleges • Wonderful school system • Build Indiana Funds • Regional Marketing Partnership • \$30 Million cash in the county - money is not our problem. • What if we created an inter-modal transportation hub? Facilitate air distribution. • Location- N, S, E, W- all are great • Transportation: toll road, I-69 • Lakes- paint a great picture • Beginnings of broadband • Electric companies have been upgrading systems • Sewers- for all the grief it has been beneficial • Entities need to work together • Angola downtown renovation with repaving, state/county/city all had to work together. There were many hurdles to cross but it is going to be efficient. Sidewalk upgrades are coming • Everyone wants to do good for their 'home' • True opportunities for folks to work together • Within the county there is Angola that acts as the driver and it needs to spread to Orland, Ashley, and the other towns • Major moves money- but no one wants to spend it • Local officials- Mayor Hickman has made stuff happen downtown • County-wide partnership to build/ maintain infrastructure

<p>infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have to be mutually beneficial/ investing • Infrastructure laid could make NE IN the next benchmark

8. WABASH COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

<p>Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial development • High speed county-wide internet connection. • Improved corporate/industrial development • Better connection to education. • Better/faster distribution of goods and services. • Railroad hub - capitalize on east-west, north-south rail hub. • Improved government system, better coordinated, more efficient - between city/county/state. • Low utility rates - competitive. • Increased capacity for water/sewer service. • Low tax rates. 	<p>Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong/excess capacity, low electricity rates. • Strong water aquifer. • Strong highway system - limited access state highways. • Sense of urgency to act. • Willingness to collaborate - communities working together better than ever. • Certified industrial park development. • Proactive land acquisition • North-south, east-west rail intersection. • Central location.
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9. WELLS COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

<p>Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could lose potential business if infrastructure is not in place • Quality of infrastructure is foundation for ED • Quality of roads- first impression impact- ease of coming in and out of community • Need for wind and renewable energy • Can install wind turbines- companies can choose to buy energy locally, cost will be more stable • "Bluffton uses 10% renewable energy" • Must have EVERY infrastructure component in place • Fiber optics- fundamental to communication driven economy • Sizing infrastructure for tomorrow- not today. Importance of planning to shovel ready sites • 4 lane connector to 69/469, businesses want to know how many minutes to interstate 	<p>Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiber optics in Bluffton • Wind farms, currently in testing phase • Having the Chamber and Mike Row- asset to our economic development • Ethanol plant- could attract biodiesel, like-minded businesses • Ted Ellis- mayor is a great leadership resource • Ossian- had a history of installing lower quality of utilities, now building to last and increasing capacity • State senator and state rep gives us voice at a state level • WOW- Wells on Wheels- transit for elderly
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10. WHITLEY COUNTY: INFRASTRUCTURE

<p>Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shovel-ready sites, need to expand throughout county and make sure ready for businesses to move in • Transportation: US30 and access to I-69, several state roads • Need affordable energy 	<p>Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?</p> <p>n/a</p>
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- Broadband DSL available, need to improve high speed service-necessary to stay competitive
 - Map out existing infrastructure throughout region
 - Create jobs and get revenue back
-