



NORTHWEST INDIANA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

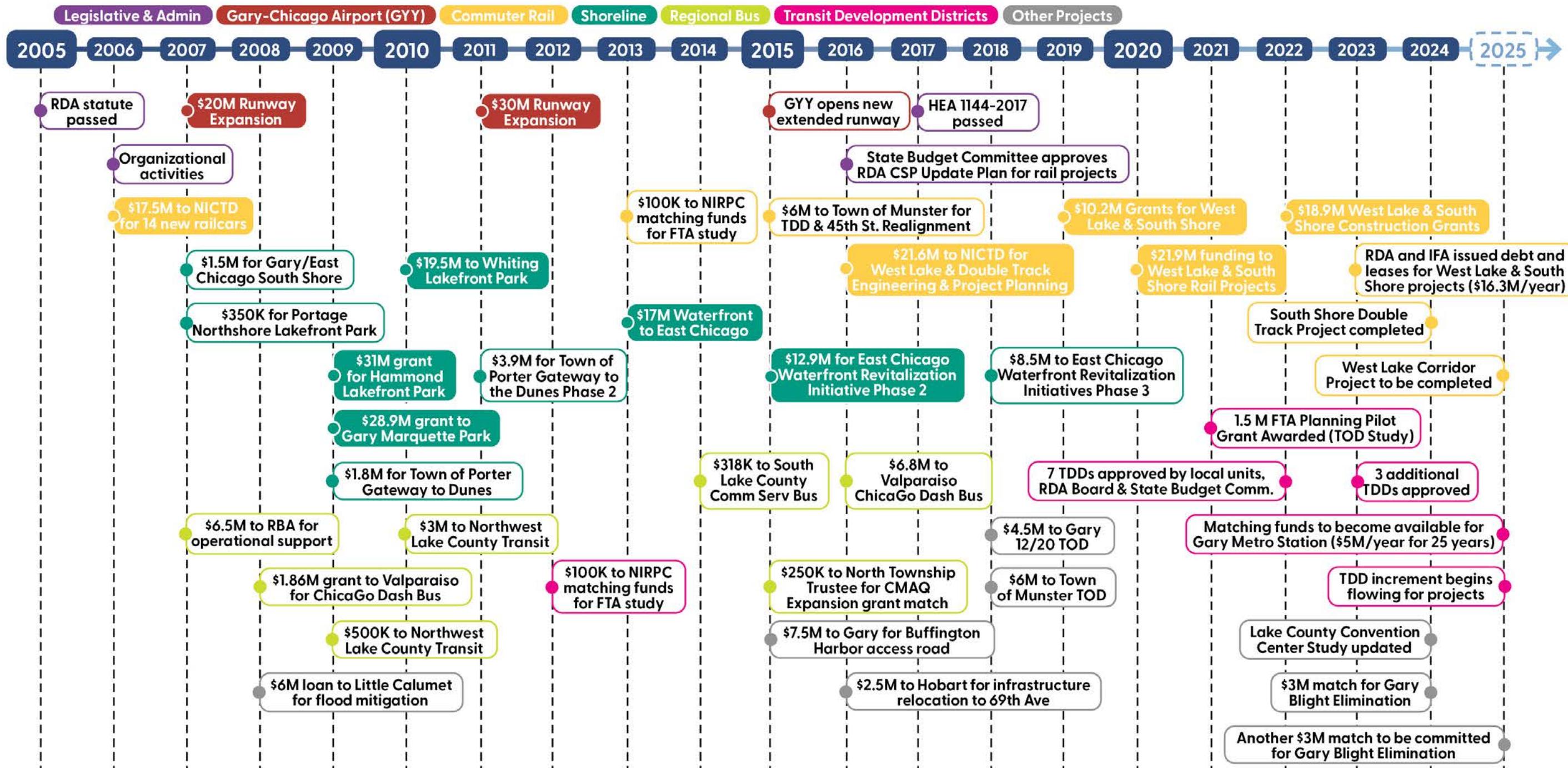
COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 UPDATE

Project Overview
June 12, 2025



RDA's 20 Years of Transformative Projects in Northwest Indiana



The Two Largest Transportation & Economic Development Projects in Indiana

\$1.5 B

Invested in Commuter Rail
in Northwest Indiana

EXPANSION OF COMMUTER RAIL

Since 2006, the RDA has led the vision, analysis, and advocacy for expanded commuter rail.

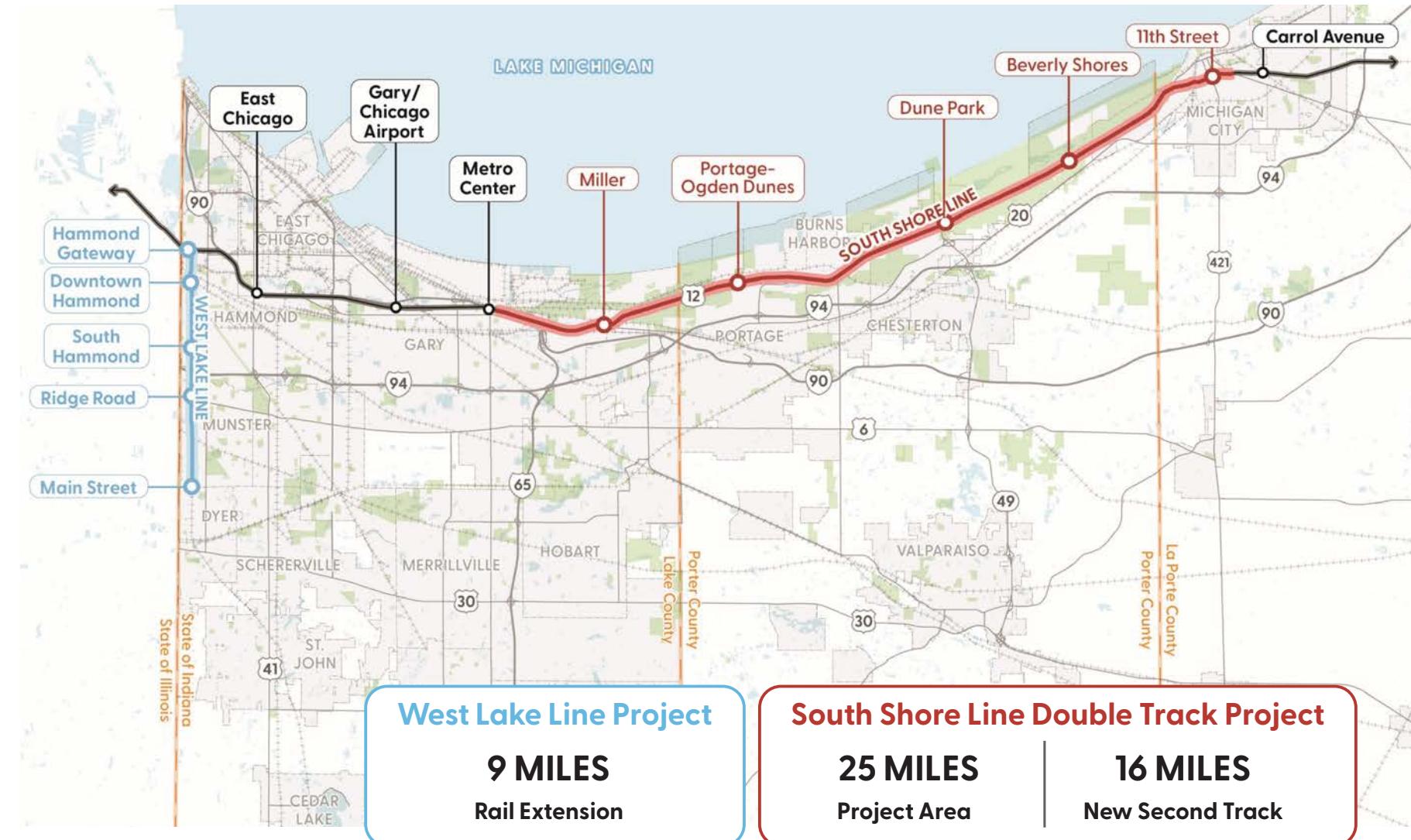
The RDA has helped fund the two rail projects totaling over \$1.5 Billion:

West Lake Corridor Project

- New line reaching south into Lake County
- Cost of \$900 M, to be completed late 2025

South Shore Double Track Project

- Increase speeds and reliability and put Michigan City within 60 minutes of Downtown Chicago.
- Cost of \$600 M, completed on May 13, 2024



Potential to Catalyze Significant Growth & Economic Development Across the Region

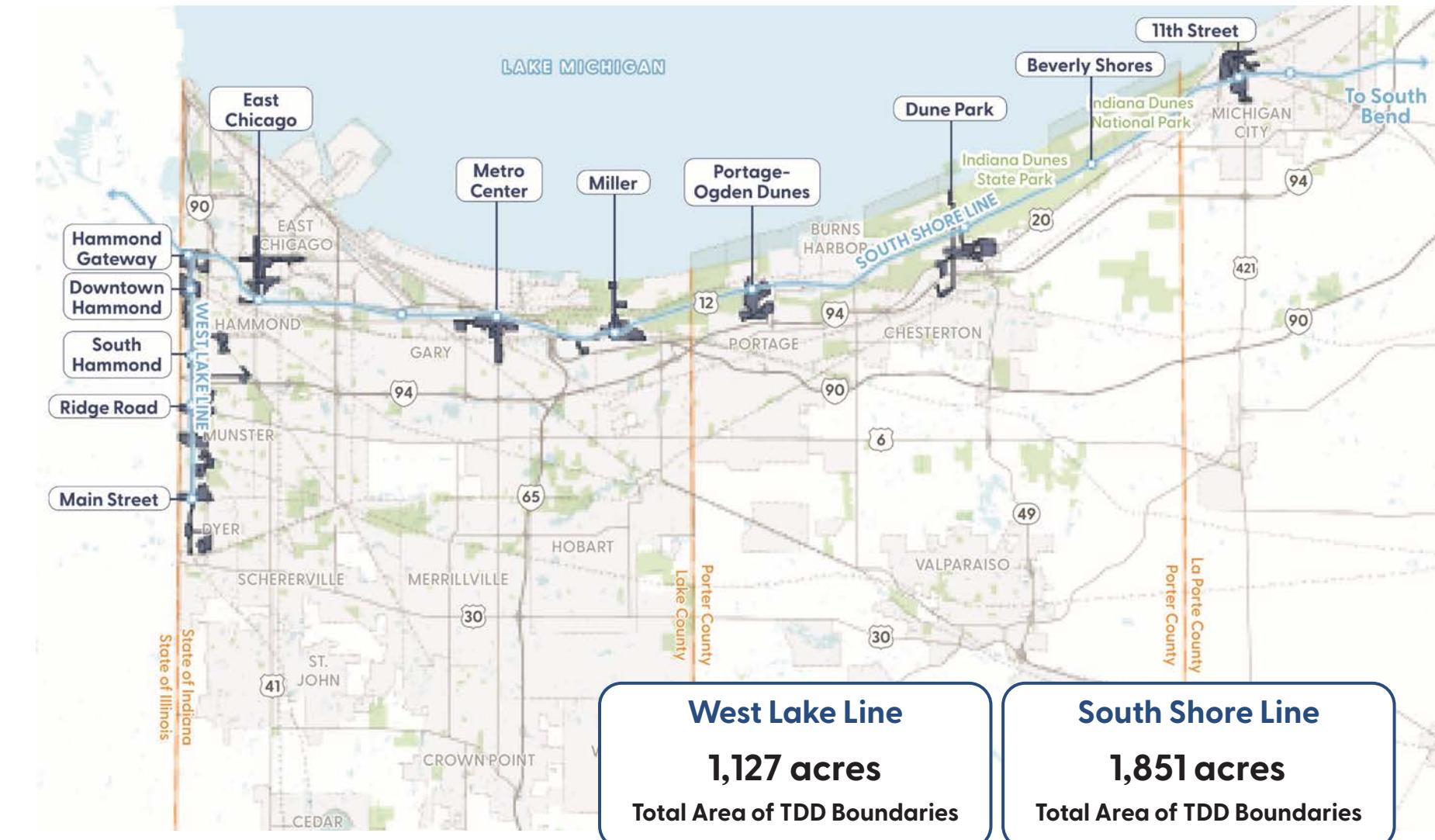
TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS (TDDs)

In 2017 the Indiana General Assembly passed HEA 1144 which provided the RDA with a tool to capture property tax and local income tax within districts that operate like TIFs.

The RDA has designed and obtained State approval for **10 TDDs across the Region** (with 1 pending).

The TDDs encompass commuter rail stations and extend up to 320 acres within the communities.

The taxes captured may be used for **development purposes and projects within the TDD boundary.**



Private Investment Following Commuter Rail Investments and Creation of TDDs

New Development Resulting from Rail Projects

\$2.7 B
Projected

\$500 M+
Investments Proposed

RAIL PROJECTS CATALYZING ACCESS, POPULATION GROWTH, AND DEVELOPMENT

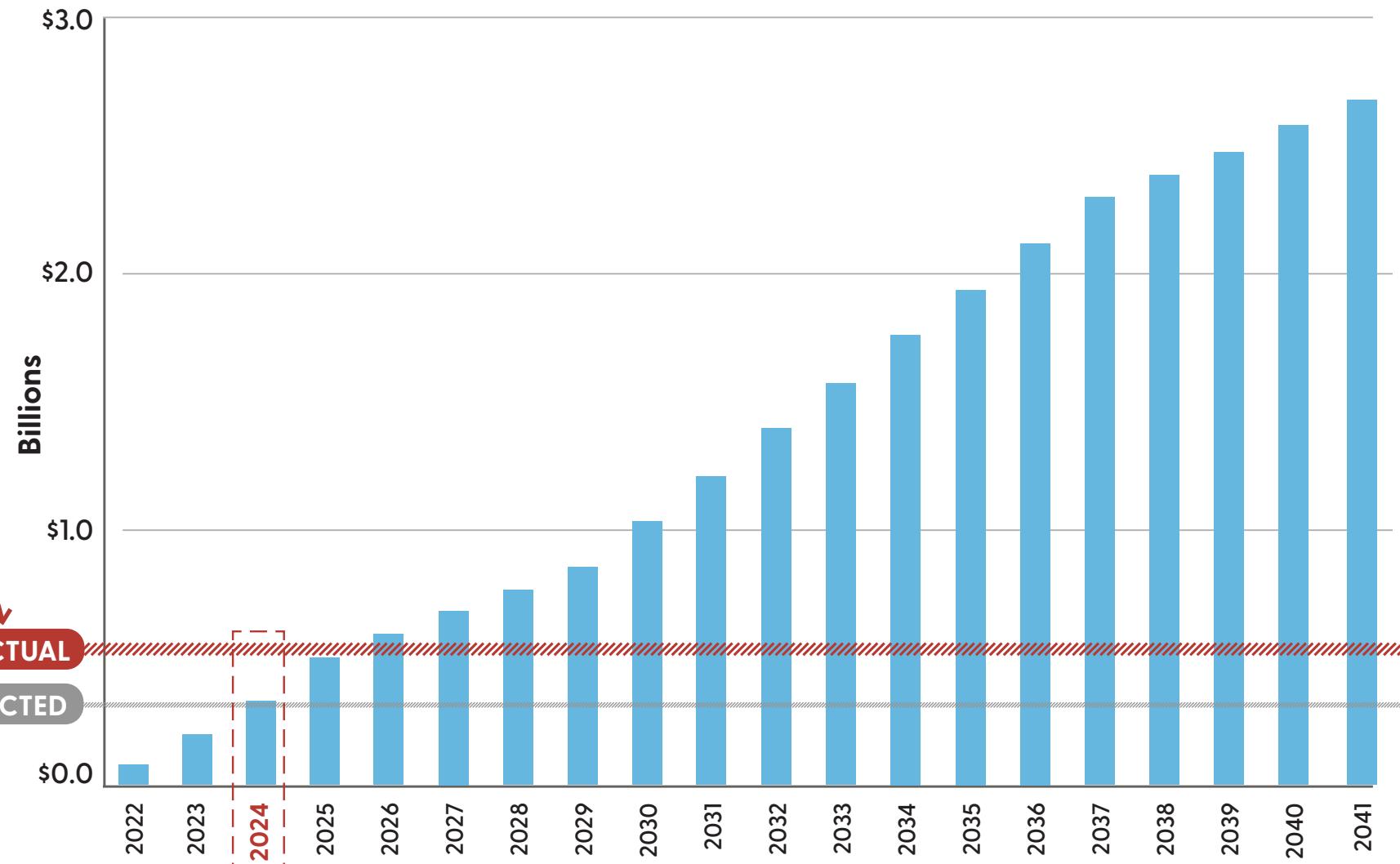
2016: the RDA **projected \$2.7 Billion in new development** catalyzed by expanded commuter rail access over the next 20 years.

2024: Investments in near-term development projects total **more than \$500 Million** (either started or announced)

Already exceeding those original estimates – **nearly twice the projected amount for 2024** – even before the completion of the rail.

These development estimates will continue to be updated.

Projected TOD Investments Due to Rail Projects



Investments in the Region over the Last 20 Years

THE RDA'S SUCCESS AND ONGOING COMMITMENT TO DELIVER

The State of Indiana is reaping the rewards of RDA's accomplishments:

- Economic and fiscal returns on new development and continued investment.
- Management and incentivizing of TDD and other projects across the Region.

The RDA is uniquely positioned to meet the challenge for advancing its mission into the future.

THE RESULT: A STRONGER REGION AND A MORE PROSPEROUS STATE OF INDIANA



RDA'S COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN:

THE PLAN + VISION



What is the RDA's Comprehensive Strategic Plan?

20 YEARS AHEAD: STRATEGIES FOR GREATER SUCCESS

This 18-month effort was led by Sherri Ziller, President and CEO of the RDA, supported by Don Fesko, Chairman of the RDA Board of Directors.

OVER 100 STAKEHOLDERS WERE ENGAGED DURING THIS PROCESS:

- State of Indiana Officials
- Cities and Towns Leadership
- County Officials
- Elected Officials
- Business Leaders
- Regional Organizations & Non-Profits
- Other Key Regional Stakeholders



With technical expertise from a multi-disciplinary team consisting of:

- Policy Analytics, lead fiscal and policy strategy
- MKSK, lead land use and growth strategy
- Brian H. Hurd, supporting land use and growth strategy
- WSP, lead transportation and engineering strategy
- AveNew, supporting transportation strategy
- JQOL, supporting utility/engineering strategy



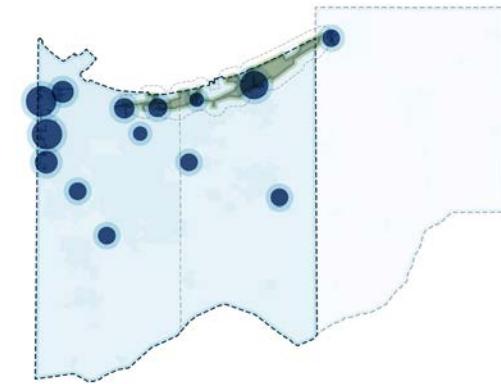
Vision of the RDA's Comprehensive Strategic Plan

20 YEARS AHEAD: STRATEGIES FOR GREATER SUCCESS

REDEVELOPMENT:

Create a Land Development Entity to assist with transformative investment and redevelopment.

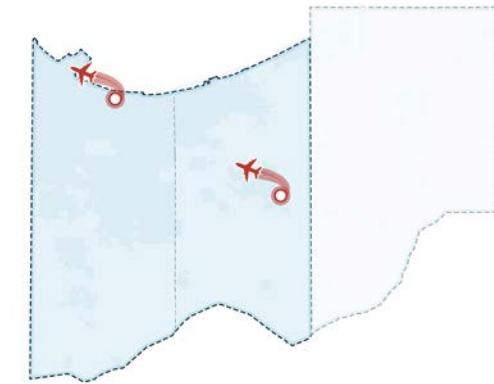
Redevelopment



REGIONAL AIRPORTS:

Reposition regional airports into key passenger and cargo aviation hubs.

Regional Airports



NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS:

Leverage the Indiana Dunes National and State Parks for regional and national tourism.

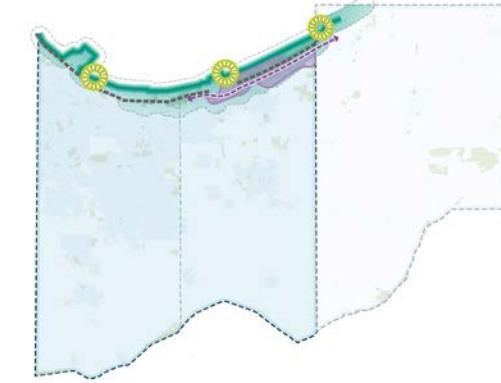
National & State Parks



LAKEFRONT:

Mitigate the barriers to growing and strengthening lakefront communities.

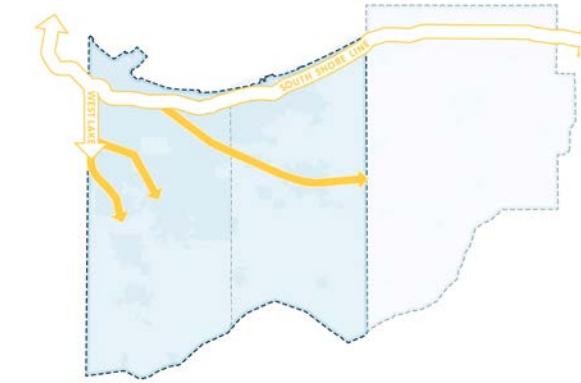
Lakefront



COMMUTER RAIL:

Expand commuter rail transit to serve more Northwest Indiana communities.

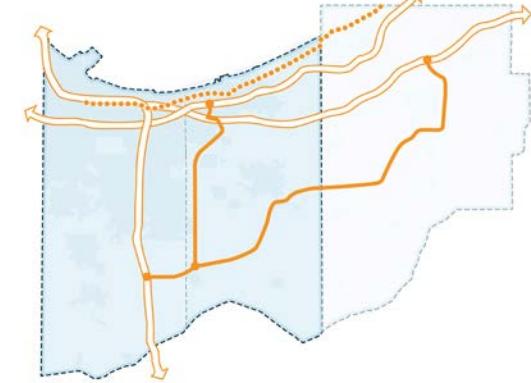
Commuter Rail



HIGHWAY CORRIDORS:

Reduce the negative impacts of congestion on highway corridors.

Highway Corridors



Create a Land Development Entity to Assist with Transformative Redevelopment

VISION:

Accelerate redevelopment by assisting with assembling, acquiring, and stabilizing challenging properties, providing added capacity and expertise, and operating collaboratively with local municipal entities.

THIS INCLUDES:

- Property Assembly + Acquisition
- Brownfields
- Identifying + Acquiring Grant Opportunities
- Managing Funding
- Optimizing Private Investment in TDDs

INITIATIVES:



Establish a Land Development Entity (LDE) connected to the RDA.

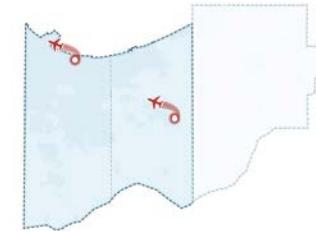


Work with agencies and municipalities to identify potential properties and procure grant funding to assist in environmental cleanup.



Explore potential TOD opportunities unlocked by new, enhanced rail service.

Reposition Regional Airports into Key Passenger and Cargo Aviation Hubs



VISION:

Residents and businesses of Northwest Indiana benefit from a third Chicago passenger airport and enhanced connections to goods and services.

THIS INCLUDES:

- Collaborate with Gary Airport Authority and State of Indiana to develop a new revenue strategy including private sector investment
- Gary-Chicago Airport: passenger services, development opportunities, and cargo facilities
- Porter County Regional Airport: development opportunities and cargo facilities

INITIATIVES:



As the compact ends, develop a new revenue strategy for future cargo operations at Gary/Chicago International Airport.

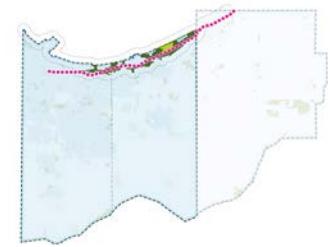


Modernize the Gary/Chicago International Airport to serve commercial passenger flights & continue to grow cargo operations.



Position Porter County Regional Airport as a future cargo hub for Northwest Indiana.

Leverage the Indiana Dunes National and State Parks for Regional and National Tourism



VISION:

A destination lakefront anchored by Indiana Dunes National and State Parks with: accessibility, a transformed user experience, and boosted economic development potential.

THIS INCLUDES:

- Partnering with Indiana Dunes Tourism and INDOT to determine feasibility of designating US 12 as a Scenic Byway
- Improving access to the parks via biking, walking, public transit and rail, and vehicles
- Integrated mobility at NICTD Stations supporting all modes of transportation

INITIATIVES:



Link the National Park Corridor.



Curate iconic access points from lakefront communities to the National & State Parks.



Activate the Parks corridor with services, amenities, and a regional identity for a best-in-class visitor experience.

Potential US 12 Scenic Byway and Marquette Greenway



WHAT IS A SCENIC BYWAY?

A program administered through the FHWA to recognize, protect, and promote America's most outstanding roads.

Recognizes roads that:

- Exhibit one or more of six qualities – **scenic, natural, historical, recreational, archaeological, or cultural**
- Contribute to a unique travel experience
- Considered regionally significant

Scenic Byway Example: Blue Ridge Parkway, VA & NC

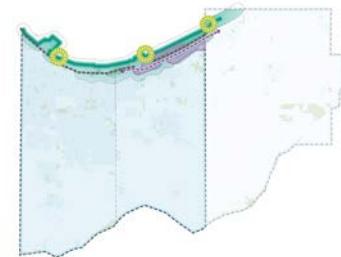
Scenic Byway (US 421) within the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area between Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Envisioned as a driver of tourism in local economies - accessing trailheads, campgrounds, natural attractions, and local communities, but is also marketed itself as a destination for mountain views and scenery.

In order to protect the experience for tourists and park visitors, commercial vehicles & semi-trucks are not permitted.



Mitigate the Barriers to Growing and Strengthening Lakefront Communities



VISION:

A transformed lakefront as a destination for rich ecological and recreation opportunities connected to lakeshore communities.

THIS INCLUDES:

- Increasing public access to the lakefront, such as at-grade rail crossings and trails
- Transitioning areas from septic to sewer
- Reclaim industrial and utility properties, as they become available, to expand public lakefront amenities

INITIATIVES:



Reclaim un-needed industrial and utility properties and reposition for use as lakefront amenities.



Construct and connect to municipal sewer system(s) to serve existing and future development.

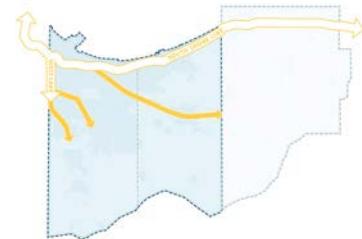


Improve at-grade crossings that make accessing the lakefront difficult.



Identify and mitigate sources of lakefront contamination.

Expand Commuter Rail Transit to Serve More Northwest Indiana Communities



VISION:

Advance economic opportunities for regional and community growth through continued infrastructure investment in efficient, convenient commuter rail service.

THIS INCLUDES:

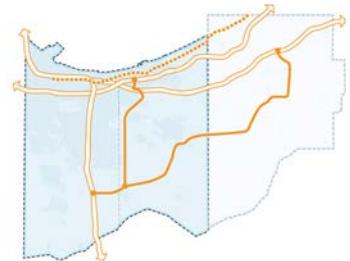
- Maximizing commuter rail and associated TDDs provides for transformative economic development
- Expanding West Lake Line rail service to St. John
- Expanded commuter rail service to Crown Point
- Expanded commuter rail service to Valparaiso
- Continue upgrading existing commuter rail stations with surrounding TDDs

INITIATIVES:

 Extend commuter rail service that is supported by existing commuter rail lines by evaluating potential segments.

 Continue enhancing and upgrading existing stations along commuter rail lines.

Reduce the negative impacts of congestion on highway corridors



VISION:

Improved transportation infrastructure that enhances the region's economic vitality, quality of life, and attractiveness for residents, businesses, and visitors.

THIS INCLUDES:

- Anticipated growth in Lake and Porter Counties will require more capacity on roadways
- Relieving congestion to the regional system

INITIATIVES:



Explore improvements to I-90 and I-94 to increase safety and efficiency.

RDA'S COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN:

FIRST STEPS



First Steps

CREATE A LAND DEVELOPMENT ENTITY TO ASSIST WITH TRANSFORMATIVE REDEVELOPMENT

RDA is committed to making a

\$5 M INVESTMENT
to start this initiative

The Northwest Indiana Region will be able to increase its economic and quality of life potential with an intentional program of environmental cleanup and reinvestment.

THE NEED:

- Northwest Indiana's **high concentration of documented brownfields** & potential of undocumented brownfields
- The Region lacks a **region-wide clean up and redevelopment effort** as seen in other regions and states
- Local units and regional organizations are hampered by **lack of funds and capacity**

THE PURPOSE:

- **Collaboration with local communities** in solving redevelopment issues/barriers
- Assemble and acquire, cleanup, and redevelop or sell for development properties that are **challenging or environmentally degraded**
- Optimizing the TDDs to **maximize TOD private investment opportunities**



First Steps

DESIGNATE US 12 AS A SCENIC BYWAY

US 12 as a Scenic Byway has the potential to further promote ecological and recreational tourism at the lakeshore and integrate it into the national park experience.

THE NEED:

- US 12 is the primary means of **experiencing the lakeshore and the state and national parks**, but also connects freight truck traffic to major routes and interstates
- Maintaining and improving connectivity throughout the national park is key to **increasing tourism and economic growth of the region**

THE PURPOSE:

- Promote the US 12 corridor for its **recreational, ecological, and scenic** qualities and its use for tourism
- Coordinated efforts and investments for **expanding access and use** of the lakeshore and state and national parks
- Evaluate strategies to reduce freight truck traffic on US 12 to **prioritize and improve the visitor experience to the parks and lakeshore** & enable Scenic Byway designation





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