

This week we take a look at the Northwest Indiana RDA, anchored by the cities of Gary and Michigan City. This is a \$270 million eight year project that is centered around the commuter rail lines that run through the area and is being supported through an active inter-regional collaboration of the Northwest Indiana RDA, and LaPorte County. There are four phases to the project, with the line traversing through Lake, Porter, LaPorte, & St. Joseph counties, and serving all of the cities and towns within those regions.

1. Double tracking between Michigan City and Gary to increase frequency of trains available and reduce the delays
 - Ridership models predict that with this investment and others to follow:
 - System ridership will nearly double from 3.6 million annual passengers to over 7 million passengers by 2033.
 - With an average fare of \$6 we could experience a revenue increase of \$20 million.
 - A quicker, more reliable transit system will encourage commuters to opt for transit, and make commuting into Chicago via the South Shore rail line a feasible option for many more people.
 - NICTD estimates that the planned improvements will lead to a 10 percent to 15 percent increase in ridership, which equates to 370K to 550K additional annual riders.
2. Infrastructure Renewal of the line between South Bend and Michigan City

Having transit-supportive land use policies in place at a local and regional level is also supportive for the rider market served by the transit system. High-density transit oriented development (TOD) creates a ready pool of residents, workers and visitors from which transit systems can draw riders and which, complemented by the design and diversity of uses, makes transit usage more attractive than driving a car. Encouraging more intense development around existing transit service can enhance ridership, strengthening utilization and support for the transit system and improving financial performance for the operator.

3. South Bend Station Realignment at SBN International Airport

South Shore trains currently navigate a circuitous reverse “C” in order to access the South Bend Airport terminal from the east. The route is long and trains are slowed by 23 grade crossings. This realignment project would provide a more direct route to the west side of the airport terminal by eliminating three track miles, reducing travel time by up to 10 minutes, and cutting the number of grade crossings from 23 to 7.

4. Michigan City Station Realignment

The project includes the construction of a new exposed ballasted double track railroad within the 10th/11th St. Corridor coupled with a modern, fully equipped consolidated station and 8-car high level boarding platforms. The City envisions this new station as the focal point for renewed retail and residential development in Michigan City.