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[UPDATED] Miles: 'Substantial' Support For Transit Funding

Andy Ober, InsideIndianaBusiness.com

The president of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership says, for the first time, the region has a roadmap of how to implement a mass transit plan. Mark Miles helped unveil the details of the \$1.3 billion initiative designed to greatly increase public transportation. In a Studio(i) interview with Gerry Dick, Miles says there is a significant amount of support for the project and how to fund it. The plan includes a call for an income tax increase which would have to be put to referendum in Marion and Hamilton counties.


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December 13, 2011



News Release

Indianapolis, Ind. Local elected officials will join civic and business leaders today at the Indiana State Fairgrounds to endorse a dramatic expansion of mass transit in the region, and together will call on the Indiana General Assembly to give local communities the flexibility they need to fund the plan and to authorize a referendum in November 2012 to give voters the final say on the plan.

Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard, Noblesville Mayor John Ditslear, Indianapolis City-County Council President-elect Maggie Lewis, and Hamilton County Commissioner Christine Altman are expected to join other local elected officials from Marion and Hamilton counties, along with members of the Central Indiana Transit Task Force and representatives from civic organizations, neighborhood associations and business groups at the event. The Task Force will present the first phase of a broader regional proposal to create more robust transit options that will connect workers to jobs, revitalize urban neighborhoods and help the region compete for talent and economic investment.

“Like so many of the initiatives that have moved Indianapolis forward, this plan has been a true partnership between local government and the private sector that’s also been exceptionally open to the public,” said Mayor Ballard, noting that the planning process included more than 150 public forums on the plan over the past 18 months. “After reviewing this work, I am confident that the proposed system will serve the transportation needs of our citizens and transform many of our urban neighborhoods, while representing a strong return on investment for the taxpayers.”

“This process has been unique in bringing the best thinking of corporate and civic leaders together with the technical planning expertise of government,” said Mark Miles, President & CEO of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, which was one of the founding members of the Task Force. “We used a rigorous economic analysis to lead us to a system that’s realistic and affordable while making a significant impact on workforce mobility, economic development, and our overall competitiveness as a region.”

“Our goal is to make transit a realistic option for people trying to get to work, whether you’re looking for a more efficient way to commute

to your job during the day, or working the second or third shift and need a way across town," said Bob Palmer, Vice-President of FedEx and co-chair of the Task Force. "In the past, service was confined to Marion County, and trips that took 20 minutes by car could take two hours or more by bus. This plan changes all that."

A critical component of the plan is the creation of a truly regional, multi-modal system that will connect economic centers throughout the area, with the expanded system bringing tremendous benefits to neighboring counties such as Hamilton County as they opt-in to the system.

"People don't live, work or play in just one place, and don't limit their activities based on county lines," said Christine Altman, Hamilton County Commissioner and chair of the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority. "A meaningful transit system must be responsive to that movement of people and commerce and must go where people need to go. Building the first phase of the system in the region's two most populous counties is a great initial step toward realizing the vision of a broader regional transit system."

"For Hamilton County, this proposal gives our residents more options to move among our residential and commercial centers in Carmel, Fishers and Noblesville, as well as getting to and from Indianapolis," noted Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard. "At the same time, it will allow our businesses better access to potential workers and customers from Marion County."

Task Force members also emphasized the plan's potential to revitalize urban neighborhoods.

"In other regions that have implemented mass transit systems, dense residential and commercial development has sprung up around the stations," said Task Force member John Thompson, President & CEO of Thompson Distribution Company. "This boost in economic activity can help turn around neighborhoods, broaden our tax base and create new jobs."

This final plan is the result of nearly three years of study, and refines prior proposals based on feedback from the Indy Connect public outreach campaign, along with additional cost-benefit analysis, updated economic projections and discussions with local officials. The first phase of the transit plan, to be completed by 2021, focuses initially on providing the following expanded service in Marion and Hamilton counties:

• Doubles the amount of local bus service in Marion County and adds local bus service in Hamilton County, with significant reductions in average wait times, more direct routes, more transfer points outside downtown, and longer service hours.

• Creates four ~~new~~ bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors, featuring the latest technology hybrid or electric vehicles, dedicated lanes and/or traffic signal prioritization, permanent stations, real-time schedule updates, and other advances on these routes:

- o east to west along Washington Street, including downtown to the airport;
- o 38th Street from Lawrence to Lafayette Square
- o Greenwood to downtown Indianapolis through Broad Ripple to Carmel
- o University of Indianapolis on the south side of Indianapolis along Keystone Avenue to Hamilton County.

• Provides five express bus routes featuring limited stops and quick access between major economic and commercial centers, including from downtown Indianapolis to the Indianapolis International Airport terminal.

• Establishes frequent bus circulator service in downtown Indianapolis linking the life sciences sectors from IU Health, IUPUI and Eli Lilly, along with service to the 10th Street commercial district; with similar circulator service provided in downtown Lawrence, Fishers, and Noblesville.

• Creates multiple transfer hubs throughout the region for more efficient passenger service, including the location of a new transit center in downtown Indianapolis.

• Launches rail service in the existing northeast rail corridor from Indianapolis to Noblesville, with frequent stops serving destinations such as the near Eastside, Martindale-Brightwood, the State Fairgrounds, the Binford area, Castleton, and Fishers.

• In addition, the initial plan calls for completing feasibility and design studies for providing transit service in neighboring counties, including Hendricks and Johnson Counties, and completing engineering and feasibility studies with the Indianapolis International Airport on additional transit lines to the airport, including future light rail service.

(See included map for additional detail on the system plan, or visit www.cincorp.com/transit for more information.)

The plan calls for a capital expense of \$1.3 billion to build out the first phase of the system in Marion and Hamilton counties, with annual operating expense estimated at \$128 million when the system came fully online in 2021. To fund this expansion, the plan seeks flexibility from the General Assembly to increase the local income tax by up to 0.3% (three-tenths of a percent) in Marion and Hamilton Counties, subject to voter approval. For a family of four earning \$50,000 a year, the plan would cost about \$10 per month.

These revenues are supplemented by fare receipts, estimated to cover roughly 25% of operating expenses, and projected federal funding.

Counties would each decide individually when to put this matter on the ballot, and would not be subject to a new tax until after the residents of that county voted to become part of the system. The plan contemplates that Marion and Hamilton County voters would

consider the issue via referendum in November 2012, with other counties choosing to vote on the issue in later elections following the completion of their feasibility studies.

A broad coalition representing civic organizations and neighborhood associations, organized labor, the business community, local colleges and universities, disability advocates and other groups is expected to make the case with the General Assembly in support of the transit plan.

It's time to give voters a chance to evaluate this work and decide for themselves the kind of transit system they want," finished Task Force co-chair Al Hubbard of E&A Industries. "We're optimistic that the legislature will agree that the Task Force has created a thoughtful proposal for financing and operating this system, and will act to let the people's voice be heard."

The Central Indiana Transit Task Force was founded by the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP), the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and the Central Indiana Community Foundation in 2008 to evaluate the region's need for an expanded multi-modal transit system, with subsequent support from the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of REALTORS (MIBOR). The group worked with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), IndyGo and the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA) to develop a specific system plan, which was shared with the public and revised through the Indy Connect input campaign.

