

Frequently Asked Questions

How does this final plan differ from previous plans that have been released?

The system design is similar to the revised plan presented last fall after the Indy Connect public outreach campaign, but with these main changes: a new rapid transit corridor (north/south) from Greenwood through Indianapolis to Carmel using BRT vehicles; more frequent service in the four BRT rapid transit corridors; quicker build out of the Northeast Corridor rail line; and additional local bus service in parts of Marion and Hamilton Counties.

This proposed system design reflects changed economic assumptions, including lower projected growth rates and federal funding uncertainty, along with more refined cost estimates resulting from the ongoing engineering and feasibility studies. As a result, the build out over the initial ten years of the plan is less costly than originally estimated.

Is the proposed map the final system plan, or will there be changes to routes?

The new Metropolitan Transit Authority will decide exactly where specific routes will go. The rail line to the northeast corridor will not change, because that is being built on an existing rail line. The exact routes within the rapid transit corridors might change in some places, but the location of the corridors themselves is fairly well established. The local bus routes could be changed over time to ensure that the most effective passenger service is being provided to accommodate passenger demand, traffic patterns, and population shifts.

Why does the plan only start in Marion and Hamilton Counties? When will other counties be allowed to participate?

The first phase of the regional system will be built in Marion and Hamilton counties for two reasons: first, extensive feasibility and design studies have already been completed in those communities, including the current federal alternatives analysis of the Northeast Corridor rail line, and IndyGo's recent Comprehensive Operational Analysis on its system. Second, the backbone of the transit system will be built in those two counties.

But while that build out is happening, phase one of the plan also calls for system design and feasibility studies to start in neighboring counties, particularly Johnson and Hendricks counties -- to evaluate the level and kind of service that those communities desire.

When other counties are ready to connect to the system, their residents can vote to join the Metropolitan Transit Authority when it makes sense for them. That decision will be made by the local elected officials and residents of those counties on a timetable that works for their communities.

Why isn't there a rail line from downtown Indianapolis to the airport in the first phase?

The plan contains two rapid transit routes from downtown to the airport terminal: (1) nonstop express bus service from the terminal to downtown using the I-70 corridor; and (2) BRT service from the airport terminal to downtown via Washington Street.

The Federal Transit Administration just awarded Indianapolis a \$2 million grant to study, among other things, the feasibility of light rail service in the Washington Street corridor. Preliminary estimates suggest that such a rail line could cost nearly \$1 billion, given the configuration of the airport runways and the need either to go around them or under them to access the western-facing terminal. The study will also determine the full extent of the demand for such service and whether the current level of potential ridership would make that investment cost effective. This work will be done in concert with the ongoing planning that the Indianapolis International Airport is undertaking.

When a rail line to the airport becomes feasible from a financial and demand perspective, the Metropolitan Transit Authority will be able to incorporate that rail service into the system design.

What is bus circulator service, and how is that different from local bus service?

Bus circulators will run on fixed routes in downtown Indianapolis and in Lawrence, Carmel, Fishers and Noblesville. Circulator routes typically use smaller vehicles and run on frequent loops to provide "last mile" service to final destinations for riders who are connecting with rapid transit corridors such as the rail line or BRT routes.

How will the new tax affect the average resident of Marion or Hamilton County?

The proposed tax of 0.3 percent -- 3/10ths of a percent -- would only apply to "taxable income" such as wages and income, just like the current local income tax does. So after taking into account typical exemptions and deductions, a family of four making \$50,000 a year would pay about \$10 a month for this new transit system.

The tax would not affect most seniors or those out of work, since Social Security benefits and unemployment benefits are generally excluded from state and local taxes.

Will people who live in other counties have to pay the new tax before the transit system gets built in their communities?

No. A county's residents must first vote to become part of the Metropolitan Transit Authority before they would be subject to the new tax. And the decision to put the question on the ballot in the first place is also made at the local level -- not by anyone outside of the county.

What will happen to IndyGo under this plan?

IndyGo will become part of the new Metropolitan Transit Authority as bus service expands in Marion County and is offered in Hamilton County and other neighboring communities. Many regional transit systems have separate divisions for bus and rail services, and IndyGo's drivers, staff and equipment will become part of the Metropolitan Transit Authority's bus division.

Don't we already have a regional transportation entity? Why do we need a new one?

Under the plan, a new Metropolitan Transit Authority will be established to design, build and operate the regional transit system. The board members of that Transit Authority will be selected from the counties that vote to fund the transit system via referendum.

The existing regional entity, the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA), will be consolidated with the Metropolitan Transit Authority to provide a unified process where all of the counties in the region can have a voice on regional transit issues, including counties that have not yet voted to join the Metropolitan Transit Authority.

Is there a difference between the Central Indiana Transit Task Force and "Indy Connect?"

They are part of the same overall planning initiative. After the Central Indiana Transit Task Force released its initial plan in February 2010, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, working with IndyGo and the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority, led a public outreach campaign about that plan under the brand name "Indy Connect." Over the course of 2010, more than 150 public meetings were held to educate the participants on the benefits of mass transit and to elicit their feedback on the specific plan.

In late 2010, based on this feedback and additional analysis, a revised version of the regional transit plan was issued. Over the past year, the Task Force and its public sector partners have been refining the transit plan, working with state and local elected officials to reach a consensus on not just the design of the system, but also on the most feasible funding mechanism and the structure of the Metropolitan Transit Authority that will operate the regional system. The plan released today is the culmination of that entire effort.