

**-FOR RELEASE ON MARCH 15, 2012 AT 10:30 A.M. CDT-**

**SWANSON TO STEP DOWN AS NIRPC'S LEADER**

John A. Swanson, the Executive Director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), announced that he intends to retire from his post when his current contract expires on December 31, 2012.

During his report at NIRPC's monthly board meeting in Portage today, Swanson stated that he was extremely grateful for the opportunity to have served as the Commission's chief executive officer since September 2004, but that this represented a good time for a transition in leadership to occur.

During Swanson's administration, NIRPC's planning, public involvement and local assistance efforts have attained national stature. The National Association of Regional Councils has awarded NIRPC its top honors for a mid-sized regional council three times during the past five years. Among the major accomplishments of his tenure were the following:

- Northwest Indiana Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (2005 and 2010)
- Watershed Management Framework Plan (2005 and 2012)
- Transportation Summit: Moving Northwest Indiana Forward (2005)
- Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (2006)
- Transportation Improvement Program: 2007 - 2012
- Sensible Tools Handbook for Indiana (2007)
- Greenways and Blueways Plan (2007)
- The Marquette Plan, Phase II: A Vision for Lakeshore Reinvestment (2008)
- Forum on the Future of Northwest Indiana (2008)
- Transportation Improvement Program: 2009 - 2013
- 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (2011)
- Calumet Connections Plan (2011)
- Transportation Improvement Program: 2012 - 2015

Swanson was appointed shortly after the Indiana General Assembly passed legislation to make NIRPC a Council of Governments and added environmental and economic development planning to its existing transportation planning and programming duties. The Commission is now governed by a 53-member board comprised of elected officials from the region's 3 counties and 41 municipalities, as well as 2 townships and a gubernatorial appointment. "By creating a forum for bringing together the local government officials in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties, NIRPC has helped create the conditions for improved intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration in the region," Swanson stated.

NIRPC has also added planning capacity in a number of program areas, including Geographic Information Systems and land use, watershed management, economic development, environmental justice and food systems planning.

Dave Shafer, Munster Clerk-Treasurer and President-Elect of the National Association of Regional Councils, said, "[NIRPC is fortunate to have hired John Swanson as a seasoned professional who raised the level of NIRPC's planning efforts. It will be difficult to find a replacement for John.](#)"

Geof Benson, NIRPC's current Chair and the Beverly Shores Town Council President, stated: [We, the people of Northwest Indiana, are incredibly fortunate to be the beneficiaries of a man of John's caliber, integrity and ability. Mayors, clerks and council members of every stripe trust and respect John's judgment and know that he is working in the interest of their communities. John leaves the best kind of legacy - a legacy of not only roads and bridges and buses - but communities and staff working together to make this part of Indiana and the United States a great place to live, work, and carry a vision of a better place into the future.](#)"

At today's Executive Board meeting, Benson established an Executive Director Search Committee for purposes of seeking and recommending a successor to Swanson. The appointees are as follows:

Chair Ken Layton, La Porte County Commission Chair

Roosevelt Allen, Lake County Commission Chair

Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor

Karen Freeman – Wilson, Mayor, City of Gary

Bob Schaefer, Council President, Town of Long Beach

Dave Shafer, Clerk-Treasurer, Town of Munster

Jim Ton, Councilman, Town of Chesterton