

October 20, 2021

Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization
Attn: Annie Dixon
200 E Washington Street, Ste. 2322
Indianapolis, IN 46204



RE: Public Comments on Northern Johnson County Transit Plan

Dear Ms. Dixon:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization's (IMPO) draft of the Northern Johnson County Transit Plan.

As you know, Health by Design works at the intersection of the built environment and public health, collaborating across sectors and disciplines to ensure Indiana communities have neighborhoods, public spaces and transportation infrastructure that promote active living for all. For the past 15 years, we have advocated for equitable, safe, accessible, convenient, and connected options for walking, biking, and public transit; and we have encouraged responsible land use. We believe that this transit plan represents a step forward, not only for Johnson County residents, but for the region as we continue to evaluate existing conditions and plan for investments that have a tangible impact on the quality of life for everyone in Central Indiana.

Below is a summary of the comments, questions and concerns assembled by our staff team:

1. P. 2, We would have liked to see participation on the planning team include riders with lived experience (disability, seniors, low income).
2. P. 10, Figure 4. Study Area Employment Density – we were surprised to see such low employment density in the census tracts immediately east of I-65 in Pleasant Township, given the Amazon fulfillment center, FedEx Ground facility, and several other warehouses. Perhaps the data is lagging?
3. P. 16, Table 5: Ridership by Route – the total ridership for all routes in 2020 should be 24,478, not 39,892, which looks to be a replication of 2016 ridership for all routes.
4. P. 26, We appreciate knowing the survey was done in consideration with diverse languages.
5. P. 26, We understand and appreciate COVID-19 restrictions but are concerned the survey was only distributed via online and limits participation to those only with internet access.
6. P. 27, We appreciate Access Johnson County bus drivers distributing paper surveys to riders on buses.
7. P. 45, 4th bullet point, there is concern in pursuing a higher ridership model will reduce service for people with disabilities and older adults. While we see the benefits of pursuing a higher ridership model would appeal to more workers and businesses, this must be done in balance with the need for already limited transit options for people with disabilities.
8. P. 81, Since Pleasant, White River, and Franklin Townships are home to 90 percent of the county's jobs with more than 90,000 people commuting into or out of these townships for work each day, have discussions been explored with employers and or businesses to provide transportation services for employees?

General Comments:

- Public and Rider Input: We commend the planning team for including Hakha Chin as an option in the MetroQuest survey as well as presenting to the Immigrant Welcome Center roundtable group. The Burmese American Community Institute, located on the southside of Indianapolis, is another organization that can help the local Burmese population participate in future public engagement, related to the Northern Johnson

County Transit Plan or other IMPO projects.

- Did the City of Franklin, Town of Bargersville, or township governments participate in sharing this engagement opportunity through their media (provided they had the internal infrastructure to do so)?
- Though not a focus of this plan, it's always useful to reinforce the crucial impact land use has on public transit as well as Complete Streets (e.g., sidewalk or trail connections). Suburban areas typically have very segregated land uses and low densities which undermine public transit ridership and effectiveness by forcing most trips to be done by personal vehicle.
 - Future conversations should center on existing land use and zoning policies with recommendations for decisionmakers to consider higher residential density, mixed-uses, and other development patterns that produce walkable neighborhoods, reinforcing the usefulness of public transit and providing Johnson County residents with more lifestyle options.
- P. 37, second paragraph, line 8 – typo: "...proportion that that supports..."
- P. 46, first paragraph, line 5 – typo: "The annual costs and service statistics are shown in ."

We appreciate the opportunity to review the plan and provide feedback and public comment. We're hopeful that the findings of this plan will guide decisionmakers toward a long-term investment in a more robust and connected public transit infrastructure for Johnson County. We also remain committed to supporting your efforts in whatever ways are most helpful. Please don't hesitate to let us know of any questions for us; we look forward to your response. If you have any immediate questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Kim Irwin, MPH
Executive Director