

## **NICTI (FORMALLY NICRI): A TOPICAL HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS**

### **BACKGROUND-**

In June of 2001, Growth Dimensions formed the Tollway Station Point Project Management Team, in response to Boone County's newly completed Comprehensive Plan and its economic development recommendations. This newly formed Management Team was comprised of leaders from Boone and Winnebago Counties as well as throughout the north central Illinois region. From this original Tollway Station Point group, a subcommittee, the Northern Illinois Commuter Rail Initiative (NICRI) was formed. Their objective was to gain community support and obtain funding for a feasibility study to investigate the feasibility of commuter rail within the region.

In September of 2002, 35 north central Illinois Cities, Villages, Counties and Economic Development agencies signed resolutions supporting the initiative of NICRI. Area legislators such as Senator Durbin, Senator Fitzgerald and Congressman Manzullo supported the efforts of NICRI. As a result of the resounding support for NICRI and its directive, approximately \$200,000 in funding was received for the completion of the first step in the process, a feasibility study.

- In November of 2004 the feasibility study evaluating the viability of commuter rail in the region was completed. The consultant who completed the study concluded that commuter rail was feasible.
- Throughout 2005 NICRI continued to meet and was able to secure even more federal funding for an Alternatives Analysis. This Alternatives Analysis is second next step towards approval for the construction of a commuter transportation alternative in the Federal Transit Administrations SAFETEA-LU New Starts Planning and Project Development Process.

### **CURRENTLY AND OVER THE NEXT NINETY DAYS –**

In Fiscal Year 2006 over \$1,000,000 of federal funds were earmarked for this Alternatives Analysis. A total of approximately \$3,000,000 worth of federal, state, and local funds will be utilized for the completion of this Alternatives Analysis. Currently, consultants are evaluating the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and are preparing responses.

- The group formally known as the Northern Illinois Commuter Rail Initiative (NICRI) changed its name on March 15, 2006 to **the Northern Illinois Commuter Transportation Initiative (NICTI)**, to better reflect the goals of an Alternatives Analysis.
- On April 18, 2006 at 10 am, a meeting for public officials from throughout north central Illinois will be held at the Rockford Art Museum.
- Bid opening for the currently available RFQ will be April 28<sup>th</sup>.
- On May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup> of 2006, the Rockford Area Transportation Study will host four area public open houses as a forum for area residents to gather information about the process of NICTI.
- On or around June 1<sup>st</sup> the NICTI Executive Committee will select a consultant.

## **PROGRESSION AND OUTCOME OF THE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS -**

- The process of completing an Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement should take approximately **two years** after a consultant is selected and work has begun.
- During this time the consultant and local agencies will investigate **all** potentially feasible alternatives for easing commuter congestion and strain within the Interstate 90 corridor. The consultant will be required to complete:
  - A review of the subject current transportation methods, volumes, and routes for north central Illinois residents that are traveling to and/or from destinations in Chicago's northwestern suburbs and the City of Chicago.
  - Evaluate these transportation goals and evaluation measures based on these criteria:
    - **EFFECTIVENESS**
    - **IMPACTS**
    - **COST EFFECTIVENESS**
    - **FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY**
    - **EQUITY**
  - After continued evaluation of all of these factors, identify a Locally Preferred Alternative as approved by the local Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS).
  - The consultant must also develop a Federal Transit Administration approved Project Management Plan (PMP) for explicitly defining all tasks necessary to implement the Locally Preferred Alternative.
  - As an integral part of this process and starting at the very beginning of the process, the consultant must be certain that all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Federal Transit Administration requirements are being met.

## **IMPORTANT DATES –**

- March 13, 2006 – Release date for the Request for Qualifications (RFQ).
- March 30, 2006 – Pre-Submittal conference at 10 am in the Belvidere Community Building Banquet Room.
- April 18, 2006 – NICTI meeting for public officials at 10 am at the Rockford Art Museum.
- April 28, 2006 – Statements of Qualifications due.
- May 3 and 4, 2006 – Public open houses hosted by the Rockford Area Transportation Study to discuss the project and answer inquiries from the general public and press.
- June 2006 – Approximate date for selection of a consultant.

**FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS IS AVAILABLE AT**

**[WWW.CITYOFROCKFORD.NET](http://WWW.CITYOFROCKFORD.NET)**

**OR BY**

**CONTACTING THE ROCKFORD AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY AT  
815.987.5628**

**HAYES.MORRISON@CI.ROCKFORD.IL.US**