



September/October 2018

THE CONNECTION POINT

Upcoming Events

September 10, 2018

Northern IL Land Bank
Information Session
at Regional Design Center
- 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

September 20, 2018

WinGIS Technical Committee
at City of Loves Park: City Hall
- 9:00 AM

MPO Technical Committee

at City of Loves Park: City Hall
- 10:00 AM

September 27, 2018

Environmental Committee
at Regional Design Center
- 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

October 9, 2018

Alternative Transportation
Committee
at Regional Design Center
- X:00 PM

October 18, 2018

WinGIS Technical Committee
at City of Loves Park: City Hall
- 9:00 AM

MPO Technical Committee

at City of Loves Park: City Hall
- 10:00 AM

October 25, 2018

WinGIS Policy Committee
at Regional Design Center
- 12:30 PM

MPO Policy Committee

at Regional Design Center
- 1:00 PM

R1PC Board Meeting

at Regional Design Center
- 1:30 PM

RMTD & R1PC Prepare to Start Comprehensive Mobility Analysis

The Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) and Region 1 Planning Council were recently awarded Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) funds from IDOT to complete a Comprehensive Mobility Analysis for RMTD's service area and to purchase automated passenger counters (APCs) for RMTD's fixed-route buses. The four-step process proposed for this analysis emphasizes community input, builds an extensive tool-box of strategies to prepare for cultural shifts in transportation and technology, and creates an implementation plan that can move the community's goals for public transit into a reality. The steps and descriptions are detailed below:

- 1. Market Analysis:** Central to the evaluation of transit coverage is an understanding of the service area. This first step includes documenting the population characteristics and transportation infrastructure pertinent to an efficient and equitable transit system in the Rockford urbanized area (UA).
- 2. Service Evaluation:** An internal and external evaluation of service will provide valuable perspective into current operations. A service evaluation will include quantitative views of user boarding and alighting, statistical trend analysis, and peer-agency comparisons, along with qualitative data collected through multiple series of public input sessions, internal staff surveys and interviews.
- 3. Alternatives Analysis:** Combined with complementary needs identified in related regional guidance, gaps and opportunities will be converted into short and long-term recommendations to prepare for service demand alternatives.
- 4. Implementation Plan:** Charting an implementable action plan is key to obtaining results from service recommendations. Based on input and guidance received from key officials, the last step within this analysis includes using internal or consultant services to bring selected recommendations to fruition.

The effectiveness of the Comprehensive Mobility Analysis will hinge on the input and feedback received from both the community and partner organizations. Monthly progress updates will be provided to both R1PC and RMTD organizations' respective boards and committees until project completion at the end of fiscal year 2019. Comments and input is welcome at any time.



Cancellations will be posted on the [website](#).

Your Connections in Focused Deterrence

Focused deterrence is a crime reduction strategy in which carefully selected high-risk offenders receive concentrated law enforcement attention and, simultaneously, offers of concentrated social services through direct, persuasive communication and rigorous follow-up of these commitments. The model dictates both enforcement and services must be swift, certain, and fair. R1PC wanted to share a success story that demonstrates how swift and certain services is played out, this time in the form of advocacy:

One of our clients, Zachary, a 23-year-old who had served two years in the Department of Corrections, was working but struggling to keep his head above water partly due to a mix-up at the State regarding outstanding fines. He works 40-50 hours a week at \$11.25 an hour and was getting the following deducted from his paycheck:



Current Child Support: \$ 187.00/bi-weekly
Child Support Arrears: \$ 40.00/bi-weekly
Additional \$ to keep license: \$ 245.00/monthly

This young man, a father of three, had a total of \$699.00 a month taken from his paycheck. The additional \$245.00 was not only inaccurate, it was discouraging as he was not able to get results through the various avenues he attempted. We reached out to Representative Joe Sosnowski who advocated on his behalf and the \$245.00 was lifted within a matter of days. The client was literally tearful when he found out; this small amount to some of us, was a HUGE relief to him.

We don't all work as social workers, pastors, or in the criminal justice field, however, we all have connections that other people do not. It's through these connections that we can help those who are trying to turn their lives around. By continuing to take the help that's offered, Zachary has a chance at a new life. If you would like information on how you can help, please contact Marlana Dokken at

mdokken@r1planning.org

Zachary, one of the Focused Deterrence Program clients.

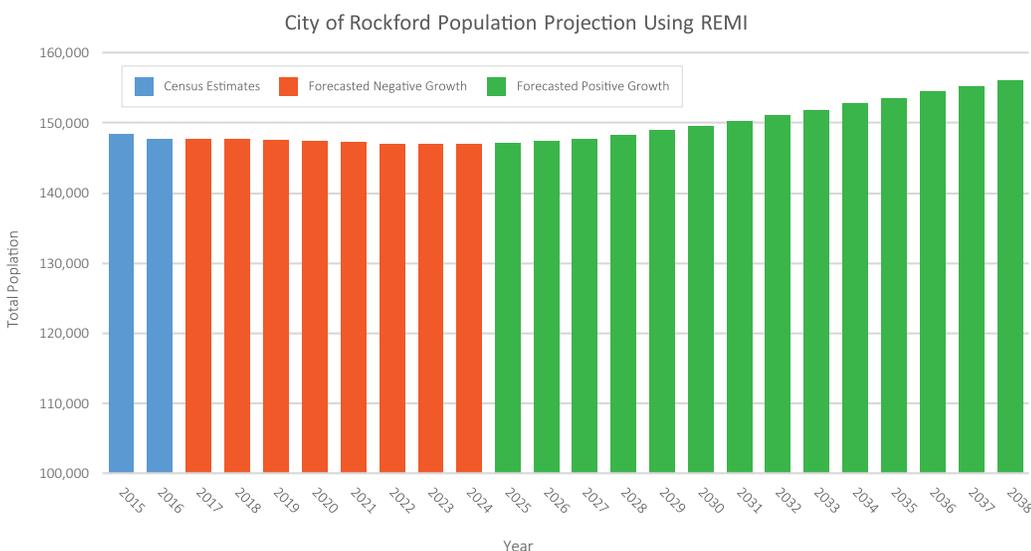
Growth Projections: A Rebound in Rockford's Population

The Regional Economic Models Inc. (REMI) dynamic input-output model is used to conduct small area forecasts using detailed local data on employment, dwelling units, socio-economic/demographic information, and transportation statistics. Using REMI, a population forecast can be created at the Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) level, which are commonly used in transportation planning models and based on U.S. Census blocks.

Using REMI, the annual population growth rate was calculated for the TAZ geography that represents the City of Rockford Municipal boundary. Then, the compound growth rate over the next 20 years (2018- 2038) was calculated for the same geography. Using the most recent data provided from the U.S. Census Bureau, these annualized and compounded growth rates were applied to known population values. The data was then cross referenced with information that R1PC obtains from Woods & Poole Economics and other sources to ensure data certainty and check for accuracy with the forecast results.

The REMI model assumed an overall growth rate of 5.7% from the baseline in 2015 to 2038. If the 5.7% growth rate is applied to the REMI 2018 population out to the year 2038, the forecasted population is approximately 156,080. We assume this to be the maximum population growth

value for this time period. Using a more conservative growth rate of 4%, the forecasted population would be 153,550 in 2038, and using a 2% growth rate would result in a population forecast value of 150,600. These numbers are all based on a population decline up until 2024. The REMI model then forecasts population in 2025 to return to a positive growth rate and by 2027 the population returns to just over its original recorded 2016 value.



Learning about Public Transportation Innovations

Brandon Geber, Metropolitan Transit Planner, attended the 2018 State Public Transportation Partnerships Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota from August 15-17. Hosted by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the conference covered topics ranging from local transit initiatives, such as rural mobility and new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) infrastructure, to national priorities, including new guidance for Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans.

Aside from first-hand guidance provided at both the policy and association levels, a major benefit of this conference lies in the wealth of best practice information provided from other transit agencies. Applicable topics include innovations in both human service coordination and legislative practices, focused messaging to attract riders, leveraging data to make planning decisions and improve rider experiences, and lessons learned from both battery-electric bus and autonomous vehicle implementation. R1PC will continue to provide updates on their continual effort to evolve with the transportation industry.



Sharing the Tools of the Trade

Sydney Turner, Metro Program Manager, recently attended the 16th National Tools of the Trade Conference in Kansas City, MO. The National Tools of the Trade conference is organized by the Transportation Research Board. The national conference provides the practical techniques for transportation planners in small to mid-sized communities (those with populations under 250,000). Session topics covered everything from public participation in disruptive situations to freight and logistics to scenario planning and asset management. One of the most interesting sessions at the conference was Planner's Feud, similar to Family Feud, in which Sydney was recruited to play on a team and tested on her knowledge of Long Range Transportation Plans. *(She is proud to say her team won!)*

Several common themes ran through the various sessions held over the course of the two-and-a-half day conference, including performance-based planning, scenario planning, and transportation modeling. The techniques and lessons learned presented at the conference will provide R1PC the base knowledge needed as they begin to dive into the update of their own Long Range Transportation Plan for the Rockford region. Additionally, the connections made with other transportation planners, practitioners, academics, and researchers throughout the nation will be invaluable as the project moves forward.



The 16th National Tools of the Trade conference took place in downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

Effective Methods of Visualizing Information

BY: IVY HOOD, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

On Friday, August 24, I attended a one-day course on "Presenting Data and Information" by Edward Tufte. The author is known for his texts on visual material and for coining the fundamental principles for analytical design in his textbook "Beautiful Evidence." The course tested my perceptions of the accepted structure for educational meetings, as it began with a lengthy 'Study Hall,' in which attendees were expected to read specific sections of his work; Tufte argued the superiority of this format when presenting information to an audience, as it decreases the presenter burden and allows the audience to gain information more rapidly than the presenter would be able to convey verbally. It also designates specific time within the meeting for attendees to read relevant material (How many of us are guilty of attending a meeting without reading the agenda beforehand?). As the class progressed through well- and poorly-designed visualizations, Tufte advocated that presentations be driven almost exclusively by content, discussion, and explanation, and implored that we avoid time and space wasters often encouraged by a spreadsheet graph or lengthy slide-deck. He reminded us of the importance of citing our data, and to always ask *how do [I, you, they] know that?* before trusting data or drawing conclusions. While I was critical of some of his arguments, I hope to use some of Tufte's principles to improve how R1PC presents data and information in the future.



Launch of the Northern Illinois Land Bank



R1PC staff continues to implement the Land Bank Capacity Program grant from the Illinois Housing Development Authority. The \$225,000 grant provides start-up and operational funds to create the Northern Illinois Land Bank through an intergovernmental agreement between Boone and Winnebago Counties and the cities of Rockford, Belvidere, and Freeport.

The Northern Illinois Land Bank will be a tool for neighborhood and commercial revitalization. One of the most useful powers of a land bank is the ability to clear title issues. Often, properties are structurally stable and can be renovated at a reasonable cost, but have title or ownership issues that prevent the property from being sold on the open market. The land bank may be able to step in using a number of acquisition methods to obtain clear title to the property. The alternative to the land bank expediting a change in ownership would be the tax sale process. This process would prevent a new owner from obtaining ownership for at least two years, possibly many more. During the tax sale process, the property may fall into such a state of disrepair that demolition is the only option.

The next step for the creation of the Northern Illinois Land Bank is to draft and execute the intergovernmental agreement. Once executed, the member counties and municipalities will appoint a board of directors. The board of directors will determine the goals and strategies of the land bank. Region 1 Planning Council will be the fiscal agent of the land bank.

For more information on the Northern Illinois Land Bank, contact Eric Setter, esetter@r1planning.org.

Staff Retreat: Searching for the Details in Downtown Rockford

On August 29, 2018, Region 1 Planning Council hosted its fourth annual Staff Retreat. The day offered staff the opportunity to take a step back from their typical daily work and spend time focusing on the bigger picture of the organization. A discussion in the morning, led by Executive Director Michael P. Dunn, offered employees a chance to hear about the goals and strategies for the organization over the next 12 months, as well as provide their input several external and internal initiatives.

Following the meeting, R1PC staff was broken into four teams for a scavenger hunt in downtown Rockford. The teams were challenged to find a variety of objects and items scattered throughout the downtown area, including the IceHog's mascot, a movie projector, Abraham Lincoln bust, and a carrot. Teams were also provided descriptions of several historical landmarks they needed to figure out and take of photo of. The scavenger hunt concluded at Capri Restaurant with lunch.

While the scavenger hunt was a creative and fun way for the R1PC staff to get to know each other outside of the typical work day, it highlighted the importance of teamwork and the value of each team member's contribution, as well as demonstrated the cross-divisional collaboration and problem-solving that can be applied to day-to-day operations.



Welcome...

As you can see, we have several in faces in the office. Please join us in giving R1PC's new staff a warm welcome!



Janna Bailey
TECHNICAL WRITER

Janna Bailey recently joined R1PC as a Technical Writer. In this role, she will help write grants for non-profit organizations in the Northern Illinois region. Janna's background includes a B.A in anthropology from Michigan State University and an M.S. in Historic Preservation from Eastern Michigan University. During a career spent in non-profits, Janna has learned to drive oxen, given museum tours to hundreds of people in Illinois and Wisconsin, and written a number of successful grants benefiting historic house museums and older adults.

A Rockford resident since 2002, Janna looks forward to helping organizations improve our region and create stronger communities.



Margaret Campbell
METROPOLITAN PLANNER

Margaret is a recent 2018 graduate of the University of Kansas with a Master of Urban Planning. While there she specialized in Transportation and Sustainable Land Use. She is originally from Kansas and worked at the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization as a Transportation Planning Intern while finishing her Urban Planning studies. During her time at the MPO she worked on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update, the Countywide Bikeway Plan update, and other countywide planning efforts. Margaret enjoyed assisting with public engagement and outreach efforts for the MPO.

As a member of the planning team, Margaret will assist with updating the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Title VI & Environmental Justice Considerations, and other planning work. She will assist with public participation and the engagement process and research and implement new ways of involving the public in transportation planning.



Dhawal Kataria
METROPOLITAN PLANNER

Coming from a small industrial town Bharuch, in the state of Gujarat, India and working with private consultants and local government, Dhawal brings a diverse experience to R1PC. He recently graduated from University of Texas at Arlington with a Masters of City and Regional Planning and a GIS Certification. Previously, he completed his Bachelor of Planning from School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada (India) and has worked as an assistant planner with the City of Cedar Hill, TX.

Dhawal Kataria joined R1PC as a Metropolitan Planner in August 2018 and is currently assisting on the federally required Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and updating of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) database.



Eric Setter
RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Eric Setter joined R1PC as a Research Assistant in July 2018. Eric will be administering the grant award from the Illinois Housing Development Authority to create the Northern Illinois Regional Land Bank. He will also be assisting with economic development research and planning.

Eric is a graduate of Bradley University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Management and Administration. Eric also is a graduate of the Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute, an executive development certificate program for those in the business of economic development. Prior to his work with R1PC, Eric worked for the City of Peoria and the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council in various community and economic development capacities. Eric is a Rockford area native, excited to return to his hometown.

Aaron Frey
GIS TECHNICIAN

Aaron Frey, a Madison, Wisconsin native, joined the Winnebago County Geographical Information System (WinGIS) team in mid-June 2018 as a GIS Technician. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with a Bachelor of Science in Geography.

As the GIS Technician for the department, the main duties of the position are to handle external data requests from local firms, update 9-1-1 NINGA safety data for all emergency service departments in Winnebago County, and to create web map applications for various county departments. Aaron noted that the department has been extremely welcoming and their ability to have a positive impact on the community through the use of spatial data has been great.

A Farewell MESSAGE

Thomas Bona

RESEARCH & INFORMATION DIRECTOR



I moved to Rockford in 2006, the last time it was on the upswing coming out of a recession. At least 15 new businesses opened downtown – the most in five years, the Rockford Register Star reported – and another 11 expanded.

Unemployment dropped to 4.3 percent as Chrysler, UPS, and other major employers expanded. Regional leaders were planning for ways to keep the growth coming – engineering programs at Rock Valley College, expansions at Chicago Rockford Airport, a downtown hotel.

Then the Great Recession hit one big pause button (and, in a lot of ways, a delete button). The years since have been tough work for those of us trying to make Rockford and the surrounding region a better place. Global economic trends out of our hands sent unemployment skyrocketing, which caused poverty, crime, and blight to spike. Debates shifted from how to make Rockford better to whether to conduct triage instead.

But here's the thing – many of those plans to improve the area actually happened. RVC and Northern Illinois University announced a joint engineering program, and RVC and other educational institutions have started additional programs to train our residents for the jobs we have and can hope to attract with the right workforce. The airport's dogged efforts to recruit cargo and aircraft maintenance jobs resulted in hundreds of new jobs at AAR, UPS, and the logistics firms serving Amazon's Prime delivery service. And despite a lot of doubt, that downtown hotel is currently under construction.

Of course, we're not out of the woods yet. There is so much more to do to make the region prosperous for all. But good people are working hard, way behind the scenes, to research, plan, recommend best practices, gather funding, and ensure implementation happens and results are tracked. For the past seven years, I was honored to be one of those people at Region 1 Planning Council and one of its predecessor organizations. I can't point to one thing I did that, by itself, changed Rockford. I was always part of a team to make this a better region – convincing Woodward to open a second campus in Loves Park, renewing Boone County's Enterprise Zone (which helped another expansion by Chrysler), showing Winnebago County the potential benefits of consolidating two elected offices.

I'm leaving because of a new career opportunity for my wife, and going back to another community I've grown to love. But I still see how great Rockford and Northern Illinois are, and how much greater they can be. I'll keep watching, to see what plans you cook up next and more importantly, which plans you and your regional team push forward to a better reality.



Region 1 Planning Council
313 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61101
815.319.4180
r1planning.org