

May/June 2018

THE CONNECTION POINT

Upcoming Events

May 17, 2018

MPO Technical Committee
at City of Loves Park: City Hall
- 10:00 AM

**Economic Development
Committee**
at Regional Design Center
- 3:00 PM

May 24, 2018

Environmental Committee
at Regional Design Center
- 4:00 - 6:00 PM

June 21, 2018

MPO Technical Committee
at City of Loves Park: City Hall
- 10:00 AM

**Economic Development
Committee**
at Regional Design Center
- 3:00 PM

June 28, 2018

MPO Policy Committee
at Regional Design Center
- 1:00 PM

R1PC Board Meeting
at Regional Design Center
- 1:30 PM

R1PC Awarded Emerging Opportunity Fund

In April, R1PC was awarded funds from Rockford Area Economic Development Council's (RAEDC) Emerging Opportunity Funds program to move forward with a regional workforce study. The study, coordinated by R1PC, is a partnership between R1PC, Rock Valley College, and The Workforce Connection. Additionally, the study is sponsored by the City of Rockford and Winnebago County.

The purpose of the study is to build upon past workforce planning efforts by providing unified research, implementation, and monitoring to address the region's most pressing workforce needs. Among those needs are:

- Maintaining and growing the workforce;
- Adapting to employer needs and training as processes become more advanced and the workforce ages;
- Meeting the ever-growing demand for "middle-skills"; and
- Giving educators and vocational trainers more insight into employer reported skill-gaps among employees and how their programming can address those gaps.



The study will consist of three deliverables, including a report of actionable data on occupational skill needs and recommendations, promotion of the workforce system, and the convening of an implementation group to oversee plan recommendations. The report is expected to be completed by November 2018, with the promotion and implementation phases continuing into the future. R1PC and their partners are excited to move forward with this study and believe that the regional economy will greatly benefit from this work.

For more information, please contact Thomas Bona, at tbona@r1planning.org.



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

First Focused-Deterrence Call-In Meeting

Partnerships and Strategies to Reduce Violent Crime held its first Focused-Deterrence Call-In meeting in March. Of those called-in, five were on parole and five were on probation. The first part of the meeting consisted of a message from enforcement and the community (Moral Voice) that the violence must stop. After the message, the individuals were led to participate in a mini “Summit of Hope” in a separate room that included a meal generously provided by the Rockford Rescue Mission. It was in this room that participants were able to learn about services available in the community and make connections with individuals who want to help them, including those who have lived the life and are now on the other side of it. Both the Message and the Community Room received high reviews from those who completed a follow up survey. Interestingly and encouraging, was that five of those called-in also completed the survey and rated it as favorable.

A sampling of participant survey responses:

Question: How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the enforcement message? (*Options: Very Effective, Effective, Somewhat Effective, and Not Effective*) **Answers:** Very Effective: 4, Effective: 1

Question: How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the Moral Voice message? (*Options: Very Effective, Effective, Somewhat Effective, and Not Effective*) **Answers:** Very Effective: 3, Effective: 2

Question: What word best describes the attitude of the call-in attendees in the Community Room? (*Options: Hopeful, Somewhat Interested, Not Interested, Couldn't wait to leave*) **Answers:** Hopeful: 2, Somewhat Interested: 3

The best place to end is with the two responses received from participants under Additional Comments/Input:

“If I can get up at the next meeting and speak, I will” and “Keep up the work and keep hope alive for offenders like me.”



Room generously provided by Rockford Rescue Mission.



Educating Local Families on Energy Efficiency

On Saturday, April 14th, R1PC and Northern Illinois University STEM Outreach hosted a Smart Energy Day event in Downtown Rockford. The event was free, open to the public, and included over ten different interactive displays. Each display offered hands on experience in teaching both children and adults about energy efficiency practices. In particular, attendees spent a considerable amount of time interacting with the model home designed by NIU Professor Kevin Martin. The model allowed participants to see how much energy common household items use and how by staggering the use of those items, rather than using them all at once, you can easily reduce your energy bills. In addition to the various hands on activities, Professor Martin spoke with numerous individuals about the benefits and function of the new Smart Meters that ComEd has been installing throughout the region.

The idea for the Smart Energy event originated from a grant received by NIU STEM Outreach to host a variety of energy-related events throughout Rockford in 2018. Similar to Smart Energy Day, multiple community-based events have taken place so far this winter and early spring. NIU is now switching its focus to local high school science classes throughout the city. They have already gone to three different schools and have many more scheduled this spring. In late summer or early fall, the group hopes to host another public education event. Stay tuned for more information and details regarding this effort. For more general information on NIU STEAM Outreach: <https://www.niu.edu/stem/>.



What's a COLI?

Many of us are familiar with COLA, or Cost of Living Adjustment, but do you know about COLI, the Cost of Living Index? While COLI isn't the official government tool often used for salary adjustments, it is a resource used by our economic and business leaders to understand and promote the region. Area realtors and our partners at the Rockford Area Economic Development Council use COLI to show potential businesses and home-buyers that the cost of living and doing business is cheaper here.

COLI is a measure of living cost differences among urban areas. Three times a year, R1PC staff members collect prices for a standard 'basket' of goods and services that have been chosen to reflect the different categories of typical consumer expenses. Then C2ER (Council for Community and Economic Research) assigns weights based on government survey data. For the index, the average for all participating places equals 100. The difference from 100 for a region's score is the percentage above or below average prices.

But if you're considering a move, don't take minor differences in indices too seriously – it is not an exact measure. Participants elect into this collection, and the survey uses judgement sampling, meaning that if two regions have similar index scores, you can expect typical bills and quality of life to be about the same.

So how does the Rockford MSA rank? In 2017, the Rockford Metropolitan Region had an annual average composite index score of 90.0. That's 10% below average! That's good news for residents and business who benefit from lower prices, and it's also a good motivator for businesses and home-buyers who are considering moving or expanding to the Rockford MSA.

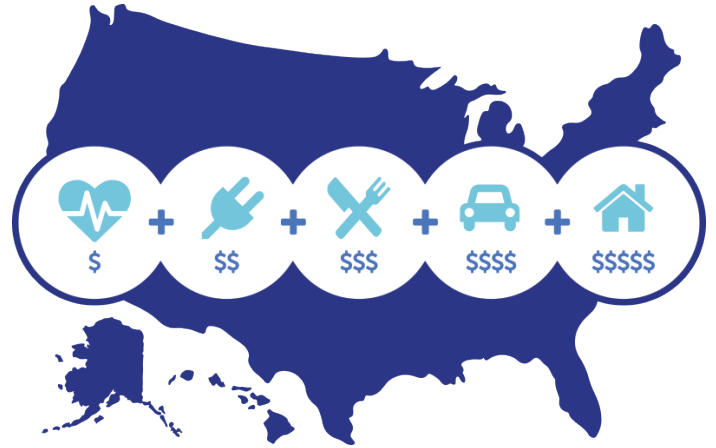


Photo Source: The Council for Community & Economic Research

Dynamic Economic & Travel Demand Modeling for Transportation Project Assessment

On March 28th, 2018, Colin Belle, Metropolitan Planner, delivered a webinar to over 350 participants on "Performance Based Transportation Project Assessment Utilizing Travel Demand Model Data & Dynamic Economic Modeling". This informational webinar went into the details that make our integration of the region's Travel Demand Model (TDM) and the Regional Economic Modeling software unique. As recommended in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) last Certification Review by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the MPO will be implementing a benefit-cost analysis, or comparable analysis, for aiding in project selection in the Long Range Transportation Plan update. To accomplish this the MPO has begun integrating Department of Employment Security (IDES) employment data into the TDM. The accurately allocated employment data is now available in the model using traffic analysis zones, as well as demographic information, dwelling units, population, traffic generators, and building ratings.

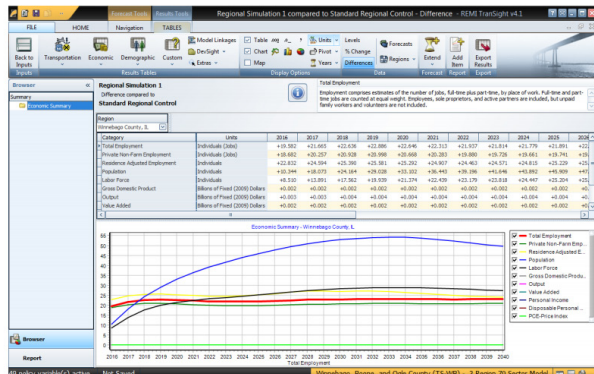
This model update allows the MPO to run a variety of transportation planning scenarios in the TDM. Based on the differences between the scenarios, the travel demand model will calculate the increase or decrease in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), the vehicle hours traveled (VHT), and overall vehicle trips to and from each of the over 700 traffic analysis zones in the TDM. This encompasses the entirety of Boone, Winnebago and Ogle County, and the urbanized portion of the State Line Area Transportation Study (SLATS), the MPO north of us. By importing

this data into the dynamic economic forecast model (REMI) it is possible to develop estimated project benefit-cost ratios. This type of analysis allows for sophisticated projections of employment, demographic, and economic variables based on these changes in the region's transportation system, jobs, land use characteristics, and other scenarios. The utilization of this software will help planners and elected officials make strategic investment decisions with limited local funding resources to leverage state and federal matching dollars.

A recording of the webinar can be accessed at <http://www.remi.com/event/performance-based-transportation-investment-estimating-a-projects-efficiency-impacts-colin-belle-eric-mcclellan/>.

For more information, please contact Colin Belle, at cbelle@r1planning.org.

REMI TranSight Economic Summary



Slide from the webinar highlighting an example result summary table from REMI.

FY 2019 Unified Work Program Now Available

The MPO FY 2019 Unified Work Program (UWP) is now available. The MPO UWP identifies the transportation planning funds (federal, state, local) and planning activities to be conducted by the MPO during the period from July 1st, 2018 through June 30th, 2019. Funds identified in the UWP provide the financial operational assistance so that the MPO can perform the required transportation planning work, prepare technical documents, and provide specialized assistance as required by Federal transportation law and regulations within an adopted Cooperative Agreement and an annual IDOT/MPO Intergovernmental Agreement.

This document provides further detail regarding the development of the regional long range transportation plan and transportation planning activities in which the MPO is engaged, such as public transit planning; public participation; technical assistance; Transportation Improvement Program; land use and environmental linkages related to transportation planning; and safety, congestion management and transportation systems planning.

The FY 2019 MPO UWP can be accessed on the MPO website www.rmapil.org.

LimeBike's 1st Launch in Illinois

If you recently traveled in the Rockford Region, you may have noticed the bright green bicycles stationed in front of retail, restaurants, and popular destinations. Region 1 Planning Council, along with our municipal and county partners, are excited to welcome LimeBike to our region. Back in October 2017, R1PC staff began coordinating with the California-based bike sharing company as a way to bring this emerging transportation option to the area. LimeBike launched its bike share program in the region on April 7th with approximately 500 bikes. What makes LimeBike's program unique is that it is dock-less,



meaning riders can pick up the bike closest to them and drop it off right at their destination. The Rockford region is LimeBike's first launch in Illinois and their second location in the Midwest (South Bend, Indiana was their first Midwest launch).

As identified in the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan for the Rockford Metropolitan Area, the launch of the bike sharing program is an important component of the making the region a more bicycle-friendly place. Bike share programs have transformed cities into a more desirable place for both residents and visitors due to the associated health, environmental, mobility, transportation, social, and safety benefits. Other bike share programs have positively contributed to the improved outlook, increased physical activity, and improvement in sociability of their communities.

Northwest Illinois Water Study Kicks-Off

In partnership with Blackhawk Hills Regional Council and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Region 1 Planning Council (R1PC) is excited to announce the launch of the Northwest Illinois Water Study. The study will analyze both the supply and demand of water in Winnebago, Boone, and the 10 other counties that make up Northwest Illinois. On April 12th, the planning process was launched through a kickoff meeting with over forty people in attendance, several of whom were representatives from the Rockford Region. The meeting focused on providing background information, outlining the planning process, and highlighting successful regional water planning initiatives around the state. Additionally, a strengths and weaknesses exercise was conducted, along with the distribution of a water usage survey. The survey can be accessed at <http://www.blackhawkhills.com/watersurvey/>. Any person who lives or works in the region is encouraged to participate.

Moving forward, a key stakeholder committee will be formed to participate in additional meetings focused on the development of the plan. R1PC and several other stakeholders from around the Rockford Region will be participating in the committee. The entire planning process is expected to take several months. Over that time period, R1PC will provide status updates and make draft documents available on our various platforms.

For interest in participating in the planning process and being a part of the stakeholder committee, please contact Ben Rohr (brohr@r1planning.org) or Dan Payette, Executive Director of Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (Daniel.payette@blackhawkhills.com).



R1PC STAFF ATTENDS GROWTH DIMENSIONS 2018 ANNUAL SPRING RECEPTION

Several R1PC team members attended Growth Dimension's 2018 Spring Reception. Growth Dimensions is the lead liaison for primary employers in Boone County, regarding public sector issues and the delivery of economic development services. In attendance at the 2018 Spring Reception, held on April 26th, were many of Growth Dimensions' investors including City of Belvidere, Boone County, Fehr Graham, SwedishAmerican a Division of UW Health, Blackhawk Bank, OSF Healthcare, and many more.

The keynote speaker for the event was Manley Feinberg. He is recognized as an award winning international keynote speaker, business leader, and author. His leadership direction at Build-A-Bear Workshop, helped the company grow from 40 stores to over 400 worldwide and realize revenue growth from 55 million to over 474 million. He now compares the lessons he learned in business and travel to life's daily challenges. He shared insight into eight lessons for "leading on the edge" from his book Reaching Your Next Summit!.



Attendees intently listening to Manley Feinberg sharing the lessons learned during his mountain climbing experiences.

New Committee Aims to Improve Alternative Transportation Options

On April 17th, Region 1 Planning Council invited stakeholders from local governments, public transit agencies, non-profits, human services, workforce development, and transportation advocacy groups to an introductory meeting of the Alternative Transportation Committee. The committee will be a standing committee of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide information and guidance to the MPO on issues related to improvements to accessibility, connectivity, and the efficiency of the alternative transportation network within the MPO's planning area. Alternative transportation refers to any mode of personal transportation other than a single-occupant vehicle, including biking, walking, carpooling, and taking public transportation.

The focus of this first meeting was to introduce potential members of the committee to the structure of R1PC and the MPO, as well as discuss the purpose and focus of the committee moving forward. Some of the planning initiatives that would be taken on by the committee includes the development, maintenance, and supporting implementation efforts of Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan and the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan (HSTP), as well as the review and recommendation on priorities of funding for the Transportation Alternative Program and capital projects.

The committee will be comprised of 10 – 20 members from organizations representing cycling, mobility, pedestrian mobility, senior mobility, workforce mobility, physical accessibility, public health, and public transportation agencies. Members can also choose to serve on one or more of the working groups, which will cover active transportation, public transportation, and ADA accessibility. Committee meetings are slated to take place quarterly with working group meeting more or less frequently.

Postive Collaboration for Continued Economic Development Success in Northern Illinois

Last month, R1PC hosted the first Economic Development Committee meeting. Those familiar with the mission of R1PC know that though many agencies with set jurisdictions exist within the region, planning issues are not necessarily constrained to such boundaries. Economic development is one of those issues. Recognition that economic development organizations in the region have more to gain from cooperation, rather than competition, was a key motivation for setting up the Economic Development Committee, which consists of economic development officials in Boone, Ogle, Stephenson, and Winnebago Counties.

The Economic Development Committee will serve as a central place for economic development officials in the region to convene on regional economic development initiatives. The regional industrial site-selector website, or the Qualified Site Program, is one such initiative; committee members have been discussing site criteria updates as more sites in more areas get added to the program. The sharing of data tools related to demography, workforce analysis, and economic impact assessment has also been discussed.

R1PC feels that Economic Development Committee will be a good opportunity for positive collaboration and continued economic development success in Northern Illinois. Other economic development voices in the region are encouraged to join the committee.

The committee will meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month, with the next meeting occurring on May 17th. For more information on the committee, please contact Jay Fieser at jfieser@r1planning.org.

Brandon Geber Joins the R1PC Team!

Brandon Geber has joined R1PC as a Metropolitan Planner. In this role, Brandon will be working with R1PC's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to administer the federally required transportation planning process, provide transportation planning products to the MPO member organizations, coordinate with Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as the public, and MPO. Brandon is a 2017 graduate of Iowa State University with a Master of Community and Regional Planning degree and a GIS Certification. He is an Illinois native who has returned to his home state after working as a Transportation Planner for the Iowa Department of Transportation. At the Iowa DOT, Brandon provided travel demand model development and guidance to the nine MPOs throughout the State of Iowa.

As part of the planning staff, Brandon will assist in the development and updates of the Unified Work Program, Transportation Improvement Program, Long Range Transportation Plan, and other planning documents. Additionally, he will assist in the collection and analysis of data for transportation performance based planning, as well as analyzing the linkages between land use, demographic and economic development, environmental and transportation initiatives within the region.



Employee SPOTLIGHT

Colin Belle
METROPOLITAN PLANNER



We want to highlight the diverse collection of individuals who work at Region 1 Planning Council with our employee spotlight series. During this series, we will interview a new employee for each publication to hear a little about the people who make up our team. This issue we are highlighting Colin Belle.

When did you join the R1PC team? April 23rd, 2012

What is your education and background? Bachelor of Environmental Science and Geography, State University of New York – Plattsburgh, & Master of Regional Planning, State University of New York at Albany.

What is your job in 25 words or less? I coordinate regional land-use and transportation planning using our Travel Demand Model and dynamic Economic Model to analyze future congestion, economic, and demographic information.

What skills do you need as Metropolitan Planner? The ability to understand how land-use decisions, economic development, and transportation infrastructure all relate to one another and the capability to communicate this technical information in a clear and concise way so that other planners, leaders, and elected officials have the ability to make informed decisions.

What aspect of your role do you enjoy the most? The opportunity to work on a large variety of projects in our region that have the ability to make the place we live a better place for both residents and visitors alike.

What has been your favorite project at R1PC? The opportunity to take over the coordination of the region's Travel Demand Model (TDM) and dynamic Regional Economic Forecasting Model, REMI.

What is your favorite part about working for R1PC? The office culture is open-minded with the ability to suggest new planning topics and projects that fit into your planning areas of expertise.

When you are not working, what do you enjoy doing in your free time? I am a professional kayak angler and very often you will find me on Lake Michigan searching for large King Salmon or Trout.

What are some fun facts about you? I'm an avid backyard gardener and love growing my own vegetables and fruits.

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