

## **Frequently Asked Questions About the West Lakes Corridor Project in Munster**

### **What are NICTD and the RDA?**

NICTD is the **Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District**, an agency that owns and operates the South Shore railroad. NICTD is independent of the Munster Town Council.

The RDA (Regional Development Authority) provides leadership, direction and secure funding for five specific regional issues affecting Lake and Porter counties, surface transportation being one of them. The RDA is independent of the Munster Town Council.

### **What is the West Lake Corridor project?**

The West Lake Corridor Project is an all-new, 8-mile southern extension of the South Shore Line, from the existing mainline in Hammond to Main Street on the Munster/Dyer border. The project will include four new high-level platforms at stations located near Gostlin Street and Sheffield Avenue in Hammond, 173rd Street and Harrison Avenue in South Hammond, Manor Avenue near Ridge Road in Munster, and lastly Main Street and Allison Road in Munster/Dyer.

### **When is the project going to be completed?**

The project is estimated to be completed in May of 2025, when Revenue Service will begin. Beginning in October 2024, test trains will operate on the line to allow the South Shore Line crews to become familiar with the new railroad.

### **Does the train development require the town to do anything with residential or commercial development?**

NICTD construction of the Westlake Extension is independent of the Town and does not compel the Town to produce or approve any particular kind of residential or commercial development.

While NICTD and the RDA cannot make the Town do anything, that does not necessarily mean that the Town should do nothing. The construction of the transit line presents an opportunity for our community. This may include an openness to the quality of life and financial benefits of improved residential and commercial development in the immediate vicinity of the station area.

## **Construction**

### **What is going on with the bike path between Ridge Road and Fisher (closer to Fisher)?**

The bike path is currently closed in this location for safety reasons. Once construction is complete, the path will reopen and remain on the east side of the new tracks.

### **Will there be an at-grade crossing at Ridge Road or at 45<sup>th</sup> Street?**

There will be at-grade crossings at Ridge Road and Fisher Street. At 45th Street, due to the proximity of other railroads and related infrastructure, there will be an overhead bridge spanning the road. The current CSX at-grade crossing at 45<sup>th</sup> Street will remain.

### **Will the area receive landscaping since construction disrupted and removed so many trees?**

Grading and landscaping will occur on disrupted ground.

## Operations

### What are the stations / depots going to look like at Main Street and Manor (north of Ridge Road)?

The Town has successfully negotiated with NICTD to include a number of aesthetic betterments in the construction of our stations. As a result, both the Munster Ridge and Munster Main stations will have a



unique and contextually appropriate appearance.

The Manor/Ridge Road station [left] will only have a platform with a warming shelter, not a depot (station building). The platform will be similar to other NICTD high-level platforms currently in use.

The Main Street station [below] will have a depot (station building) in addition to the platform.



### How many people will be using the stations?

#### NICTD's Estimates of Daily Ridership

| Ridge Road / Manor Station |      |      | Main Street Station |       |       |
|----------------------------|------|------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Mode of Access             | 2025 | 2040 | Mode of Access      | 2025  | 2040  |
| Walk                       | 114  | 143  | Walk                | 137   | 158   |
| Kiss-and-Ride              | 49   | 60   | Kiss-and-Ride       | 198   | 278   |
| Park-and-Ride              | 68   | 35   | Park-and-Ride       | 981   | 1534  |
| Transfer                   | 0    | 0    | Transfer            | 0     | 12    |
| Total                      | 231  | 238  | Total               | 1,316 | 1,982 |

NICTD conducted a study in March of 2018 forecasting the ridership. These projections can be found on the NICTD West Lake Website under Resources. FEIS G2 Section 2:

[http://www.nictdwestlake.com/assets/documents/FEIS\\_ROD\\_AppG2.pdf](http://www.nictdwestlake.com/assets/documents/FEIS_ROD_AppG2.pdf)

### What about the parking at the Ridge Road station and will it spill over to neighborhood streets?

As there will be 100 convenient parking spots on Manor and NICTD predicts a daily average of only 68 parked cars there, it is not expected that there will be overflow in residential areas. If the need for more parking emerges, NICTD can simply enlarge the lot. In any case, the Town of Munster will be closely monitoring the situation.

**Will the new Ridge Road station bring additional traffic through my neighborhood and will it also affect the traffic on Ridge Road?**

NICTD's trip data has been incorporated into the baseline assumptions of the ReNew, ReImagine, and ReConnect Ridge Road Project. –Trip generation data provided by NICTD predicts only 95 cars will be coming to the train station via car from all directions combined. With 28 stops daily, that gives an average of 4 or 5 cars at any one time. Of course, the number will be higher during rush hour, but it will not greatly impact traffic on Ridge Road nor on nearby residential streets. The Town is now in the process of collecting data on these streets so that we can have a before and after comparison.

### **How is the parking going to work on Main Street?**

The parking lot at Main Street will be on the west side of the tracks off of the new Main Street extension. Parking will be free. The Main Street extension will consist of a new underpass to go underneath the CSX railroad.

### **How many trains will there be on a daily basis?**

NICTD estimates that 28 trains will operate daily on weekdays and 29 trains will operate daily on the weekends. Please see the below high-level overview of the anticipated train schedule:

#### **Train Schedule**

- **Weekday to Chicago:** 5 trains direct to Chicago, 9 shuttle trains from Main Street to Hammond.
  - **Weekday from Chicago:** 6 trains direct from Chicago, 8 shuttle trains from Hammond.
  - **Weekend to Chicago:** 5 trains direct to Chicago, 10 shuttle trains from Main Street to Hammond.
  - **Weekend from Chicago:** 4 trains from Chicago, 10 shuttle trains from Dyer to Hammond Gateway
- Total Count: 28 trains on weekdays, 29 trains on weekends.

The shuttles will be 2-car trains, which will run from the Main Street station to the Hammond Gateway station. Passengers may then transfer to go towards either South Bend or Chicago.

The projected schedule has trains operating between 5am and Midnight on weekdays and between 7:30am and 2:00am on weekends.

### **Does the Hammond Gateway Station have any special significance?**

The Hammond Gateway Station is where the West Lake trains meet the South Shore mainline. On the schedule indicated above, some of the West Lake trains will continue onto the South Shore mainline to travel into downtown Chicago. Otherwise, the Gateway Station will serve as the transfer point between West Lake and South Shore mainline trains.

### **How long will it take to get to downtown Chicago and where will it stop in downtown Chicago?**

Trains will stop at all the stations in downtown Chicago that the normal South Shore Line trains do. It will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour to go from Dyer to Millennium Station in Chicago, depending on the number of intermediate stops.

### **Why are there fences and walls installed along the rail line in some places but not others?**

FTA guidelines require noise mitigation (sound barriers) where severe noise is projected to occur. NICTD has prepared a Noise and Vibration Technical Report that showed the areas of projected severe noise.

There will be a black vinyl-coated chain link fence between the bike path and NICTD tracks for places where that the Monon Trail is adjacent to and at the same level as the new railroad tracks. This will prevent pedestrians and cyclists from accidentally falling onto the track.

**What will happen to the walking path between Manor and Garfield on Briar?**

This path will be closed by NICTD. An at-grade street crossing can be installed at the Town's cost if the RDA determines that there is a transit-oriented development need for it.

**Will the Belden Tunnel be redone?**

The tunnel has been inspected and found to be safe. It will be reopened once construction is complete.