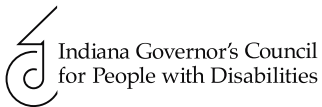


ignite thoughts into action

spark



Indiana Governor's Council
for People with Disabilities

jan/feb 2012
volume 2 number 2

in this issue on **TRANSPORTATION**



Muckway steers
Muncie to action



On the path to
improving transit



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spark is a bi-monthly publication of the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, an independent state agency that facilitates change. Our mission is to promote the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. This mission is accomplished through planning, evaluation, collaboration, education, research and advocacy.

Suellen Jackson-Boner
Executive Director

Christine Dahlberg
Deputy Director

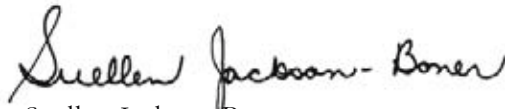
Public transportation is more than just a service that helps us get from point A to point B. In the bigger picture, the development and maintenance of sustainable public transit is an investment in the economic prosperity of our communities, supporting jobs, sales revenue and more.

For every billion dollars invested annually in developing and maintaining public transportation, more than 36,000 jobs are supported, according to a 2009 report from the American Public Transportation Association. Investment in public transit generates \$3.6 million annually in sales revenue which, in turn, generates \$500 million in tax revenue at the local, state and federal levels.


For people with disabilities, we know that reliable, accessible transportation is a dire need. More than one-third of people with disabilities in the United States – 34 percent to be exact – reported problems with inadequate transportation in a 2010 survey conducted by the Kessler Foundation. And correlating to the lack of suitable transportation is the staggering unemployment rate – 13.6 percent among people with disabilities and 8.3 percent among those without disabilities (U.S. Department of Labor).

As we look toward a future of building more inclusive, livable communities for all, a well-structured public transportation system must be at the core to ensure economic vitality. In this issue of Spark, we'll look closely at current transportation laws and anticipated changes, as well as tell inspiring personal stories of advocacy and share helpful public transportation resources and information.

Sincerely,



Suellen Jackson-Boner
Executive Director



All systems go: Linda Muckway steers Muncie to action

Linda Muckway knows how to advocate for change from point A all the way to Z. A recipient of the 2010 Distinguished Leadership Award from the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, Muckway was honored for her determination to initiate action and resolve transportation issues in her community of Muncie, Ind. After living in Muncie for 30 years, she knew something needed to be done to meet her needs and those of others dependent on paratransit, and Muckway became an instrumental part in identifying the problems and implementing solutions to improve this essential service.

Starting the engine

It became increasingly difficult for Muckway to rely on a transportation system unable to provide wheelchair-accessible service after 9 p.m. on weekdays

or on Sundays, so she decided to become proactive about bringing positive change. She learned about a federal grant entitled the New Freedom Initiative, which provides dollars to help transportation systems go beyond the minimum ADA paratransit standards. With the New Freedom Initiative,

"Affordable, accessible transportation is not just for me, it's for all people who rely on accessible transportation in Indiana."

– Linda Muckway, recipient of the 2010 Distinguished Leadership Award

Muckway knew she had the key to start the ignition. Her first step was finding the right person to leverage her goals, and John Brooke, a Delaware County commissioner, was more than willing to drive the initiative for paratransit improvements.

"After John said 'I want to pursue this,' I sent all sorts of information his way," Muckway said.

Checking the mirrors

To add service to Muncie's current transit provider (called MITS, or Muncie Indiana Transit System), approval procedures needed

to be carried out. After the Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission came on board, several Federal Transit Administration (FTA) standards required the task force to take a look at the transportation options that currently existed within the

How livable is your community?

There's still time to participate in this year's Disability Poll on Livable Communities and give your input on how well Indiana is serving its citizens with disabilities.

The survey is intended to help identify the current state of services, programs and supports for people with disabilities across Indiana. People with disabilities, family members and professionals in the disability field are asked to share their thoughts about the livability of Indiana communities.

The results of the survey will be used to help guide programs in local communities around the state, ultimately with the goal of fostering independence, choice and control for people with disabilities.

The Disability Poll is organized by the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services and the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community.

Take the survey at thepollingplace.org. *

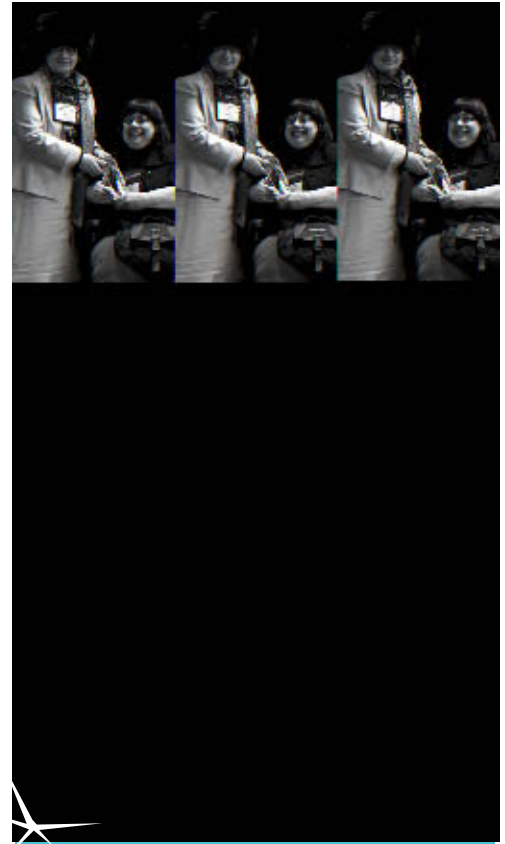
county. After taking a full inventory in 2007, the committee then looked at ways to develop a coordination plan that would meet all transportation needs, but not duplicate state services.

"Several people with disabilities and service providers were asked to participate in the summit to discuss the coordination plan and suggest ways to streamline services for people with disabilities. After the summit, I was added to the steering committee to create the plan," Muckway stated.

Shifting into gear

In April 2009, Muckway was excited to hear that federal grant money would be made available to purchase two wheelchair-accessible cabs to alleviate accessibility issues. The recipient of those cabs was Eaton EMTs, a nonprofit transportation provider in Delaware County used for medical trips. This service had agreed to take on an additional contract to provide trips for individuals in wheelchairs past the hours of MITS paratransit operations.

Now that accessible vehicles were available, the next step in planning was coordinating the operation and funding to ensure affordability. FTA grant money regulations approved paying 50 percent of the cost of operations, but required a plan to ensure the other half of payment was met. Muckway, along with MITS General Manager Larry King, formulated a proposal to the FTA that would institute a voucher program where riders with disabilities could pay half of the fare and the FTA would cover the rest. Second, the plan was careful to define that vouchers were to be used only after MITS hours, so that the unionized bus service would not accuse the Eaton EMTs of subcontracting. This plan was approved in October 2009.



Linda Muckway was honored for her advocacy and community efforts with a Distinguished Leadership Award, part of the Governor's Council Community Spirit Awards program, during the 2010 Conference for People with Disabilities.

Going places

Muckway's consistent voice for equality in accessibility was greatly appreciated by her colleagues and friends, many of whom continue to count on her for referrals and support. After the coordination plan was put into motion, she followed through to make sure the new voucher program would also allow all MITS riders who were eligible by Americans with Disabilities Act standards, not just wheelchair riders, to take advantage of the new service.

Muckway continues to stay active, ensuring transportation needs are being met throughout the county and across the state. "Affordable, accessible transportation is not just for me, it's for all people who rely on accessible transportation in Indiana," she said. *

Survey reveals potential road blocks without mass transit

Whether living in rural areas of the state or urban epicenters, most people in Indiana who are employed travel back and forth to work by car. According to the 2010 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 2.3 million Indiana residents, ages 16 and older, rely on personal vehicles to get to places of employment and earn an income. In comparison, only about 23,100 Hoosiers use mass transit.

Overall, Indiana residents rely heavily on personal vehicles, with 43.7 percent of residents having access to two vehicles. Of the individuals using mass transit, however, 33.8 percent have no other means of transportation. The vast majority of riders have low incomes and many are

young adults commuting to and from work, relying on public transportation to sustain a living and support their families.

The survey indicates that people ranging in age from 25 to 40 are the most common users of either personal vehicles or mass transit when commuting to work, accounting for roughly 40 percent in both categories. Among young adults, almost 29 percent of transit-users are under the age of 25, whereas only 12 percent of vehicle drivers were part of this young adult population.

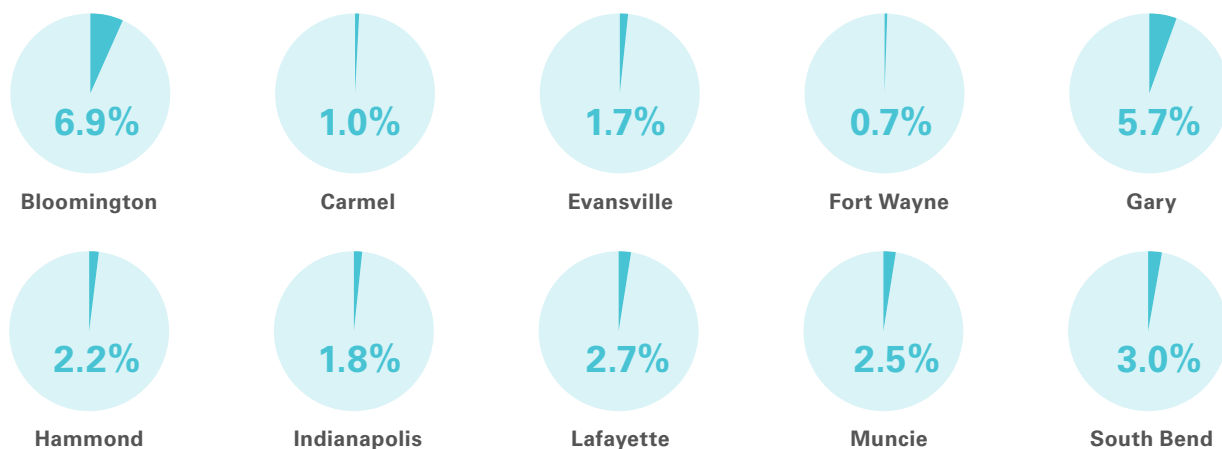
The survey also reinforced the importance of public transit for individuals with lower incomes. Approximately 78 percent of people using mass transit around the state earn less than \$25,000

per year – 40 percent of those earn less than \$10,000. Most mass-transit users work in service occupations, while more than 24 percent of people who drive themselves to work are employed in sales and office jobs.

Without a robust mass-transit system, Indiana will continue to be a largely vehicle-dependent state, and employment opportunities for workers without access to personal vehicles will continue to be limited.

Much more data is available from the American Community Survey. Go to factfinder2.census.gov to get an even more detailed synopsis of what single, commuter and mass transit looks like across race, occupation, age and income levels. *

Percent of workers 16 years and older who traveled to work by public transportation (excluding taxicab)





On the right path to improving transportation

Many Indiana communities are on the right path to meeting the transportation needs of residents and visitors of all abilities. These improvements, being made across the state, help make public transportation more accessible, reliable and affordable for everyone.

The following communities are paving the way to enable people with disabilities to come and go without barriers:

Indianapolis (Marion County) A **indyconnect.org**

Indy Connect, a partnership of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization, Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority and IndyGo (the Indianapolis city bus system), laid out an ambitious 25-year plan in 2010 that would completely reinvent mass transit for Marion and surrounding counties. The plan was a result of extensive

public outreach and planning by regional transportation planning experts, making it the most comprehensive plan ever developed for central Indiana. The plan tripled the current bus service and added 84 miles of bus rapid transit; built 43 miles of rail transit; expanded 397 miles of roadway and included hundreds of miles of planned bike and pedestrian pathways. After its unveiling, much debate went into deciding where funding sources would come from to cover the \$2.5 billion it would take to complete the project.

In December 2011, a revised plan, consisting of a 10-year, \$1.3 billion overhaul, provided a new push toward the legislature. Supported by several key business leaders, including Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, the plan would double the IndyGo system and add train service from Noblesville to downtown Indianapolis.

The Indianapolis Star newspaper reported that leaders are “selling the plan first as an economic development tool and second as a way to ease commutes and create more urban mobility.” More plan details have been added to tackle funding issues, including a proposal to reconfigure income tax options already available to local governments into a transit tax.

Johnson County B **accessjohnsoncounty.org**

Established in 1999, ACCESS Johnson County was the first county-wide service to start public transit in central Indiana. Focusing on citizens who are elderly, have disabilities, have low incomes or who need mobility assistance, ACCESS provides reservations, scheduling and operation of this service to meet the needs of its riders.

“We have always served anyone who wanted or needed a ride and have always been 100 percent wheelchair accessible,” said Rebecca Allen, director of transportation for ACCESS. “People can get to work, medical appointments, school or wherever they want to go. We are constantly changing our services to accommodate the needs of our customers.”

ACCESS services are determined by a committee of local volunteers who also assist with financial planning and policies regarding the operation of ACCESS. The committee has also been working with surrounding counties and the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA) to find better ways to make central Indiana more user-friendly and accessible to everyone.

“ACCESS Johnson County keeps improving features, like our demand response and flexible fixed-route service. We are also looking to add fixed-route service along U.S. 31 and work with CIRTA to start a regional bus pass system,” Allen said.

South Bend C
sbtranspo.com

South Bend TRANSPO knows many of its riders may not be able to afford the day-to-day travel expense of using its service. Therefore, TRANSPO offers half-price fares on fixed-route bus service to many of its passengers ages 65 and older and people with disabilities. A TRANSPO Handi-Card, which can be obtained through an application

process, is all that is required to use the service.

Like many other Indiana transit providers, TRANSPO also allows for one personal care attendant to ride for free if determined eligible through the application. South Bend’s paratransit service, TRANSPO Access, saw ridership increase in 2010 by 9.65 percent according to the latest INDOT Public Transit Annual Report.

Fort Wayne D
fwcitolink.com

Since starting Citilink ACCESS in 1995, Fort Wayne’s paratransit service has seen an increase in ridership by 163 percent – more than 50,000 trips annually. Betsy Kachmar, assistant general manager for Citilink, notes that with increased ridership, improvements have been made to their fleet of vehicles.

“[Citilink] has seven more hybrid fixed-route buses on order and eight more ACCESS buses, so this will improve the quality of vehicles and they will have the latest and greatest equipment.” New buses are also equipped with low-floor/kneeling features for easier entry, longer ramps and a more user-friendly wheelchair securement system.

Fort Wayne Citilink also broke ground in August 2011 on a new transfer facility in their downtown area. The new building will include vast improvements in passenger amenities, including compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) construction standards.



Delaware County E
mitsbus.org

After a full transit inventory (see Linda Muckway, pg. 3) in 2007, Delaware County was able to create a system coordination plan and secure additional funding through the New Freedom Initiative to provide two new wheelchair-accessible taxicabs. These cabs will be operated through Eaton EMTs after normal public transportation hours. A voucher system was also created and approved by the Federal Transit Administration to reduce costs by 50 percent for those eligible for paratransit services.

Learn More

Improvements and changes made to public transportation happen continuously. See p. 13 for resources that will keep you up-to-date on progress and initiatives happening in your city, across Indiana and throughout the nation. *



Indiana coalition takes on transportation in the 2012 General Assembly

A healthy transit system is the backbone of sustainable communities. Without an accessible public transportation system, many individuals are limited in choosing where to live, be employed and socialize with others. More than 34 percent of Americans with disabilities believe access to transportation is inadequate (according to the Kessler Foundation's July 2010 survey, "The ADA, 20 Years Later"), a gap that advocates hoped to narrow during the Indiana General Assembly's 2012 legislative session.

A coalition of organizations led by the Indiana Citizens' Alliance for Transit (ICAT) came together to ask the Indiana General Assembly to authorize voter referendum that would allow communities to create local, dedicated and adequate funding for transit. Their reasoning? Funding sources are

failing to meet today's demand or support a more transit-ready future, and communities should have the opportunity to increase transit funding to meet their residents' needs.

More than 3,500 people across the state, ranging from individual advocates, local chambers of commerce, local transit providers and 44 Arc of Indiana chapters, pledged their support by signing

an online petition. However, the bill died in the House Ways and Means committee.

Advocates haven't been derailed by the setback, however. The Indianapolis Star reported that transit advocates will return to the statehouse next year, using this year to build consensus.

Regardless of how transit is approached in the legislature

"Accessible, reliable public transit is of highest priority for many people with disabilities as they seek employment, travel to medical appointments, visit retail establishments and stay active in their communities."

– Kim Irwin, executive director of the Alliance for Health Promotion

next year, advocates stand united on key beliefs and principles supporting mass transit:

- Improving mass-transit infrastructure is a wise investment of tax dollars because it creates jobs and spurs economic growth and opportunity.
- Creating more mass transit options decreases energy consumption and positively impacts the environment and public health, resulting in fewer traffic accidents, less vehicle pollution and increased physical activity.
- Mass transit serves as an affordable, convenient and safe transportation choice when adequately funded.

Mass transit gives many individuals, who would otherwise be unable to travel, the access they need to be self-sufficient.

Kim Irwin, executive director of the Alliance for Health Promotion, provides leadership and coordination for the initiative. She states, “Accessible, reliable public transit is of highest priority for many people with disabilities as they seek employment, travel to medical appointments, visit retail establishments and stay active in their communities. ICAT is grateful for the involvement of numerous partner organizations and individual advocates working to support and expand transit services throughout the state.” *



Attendees of the 2011 Conference for People with Disabilities signed a petition to adopt a legislative resolution aimed at increasing funding options for public transit.

How to join the cause

It is easy to join ICAT’s coalition and pledge ongoing support of transit options in your community. By going online to www.indianacat.org/take-action, you can sign the petition to support expanded funding for transit. You will also find talking points to help you advocate for a better transportation system and a sample letter to send to your state legislators.

In addition, submitting letters to the editors and opinion-editorials to your local newspapers can help spread the message across your community and show elected officials that, as a constituent, you support the expansion of accessible public transportation to meet your community’s needs.

Above all, get to know your local transportation provider and identify the gaps in assistance so you can become a voice to help spread the message that improvements are needed. *



All aboard! A coalition comes together for Bloomington transit

With the help of disability advocate and resident Barbara Salisbury, Bloomington, Ind., is taking action to enhance transportation in southern Indiana. Bloomington has been selected as one of 10 communities nationwide to participate in the Easter Seals' Project ACTION: Accessible Transportation Coalitions Initiative (Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation). The program put 25 Bloomington organizations through a two-day intensive program aimed at helping the city develop an effective action plan for improved transportation.

As a 10-year advocate for accessible transportation on the local, state and national levels, Salisbury jumped at the chance to nominate Bloomington for one of the spots in the program last year. Through her many connections, she brought together the Bloomington

Transit, Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Southern Indiana Center for Independent Living to enter the city in the competitive process. In May 2011, Bloomington was chosen to join nine other communities in the initiative, which promotes cooperation between the transportation industry and the disability community to strengthen and increase mobility for people with disabilities.

Once Bloomington was selected, Salisbury helped form a committee that was charged with identifying civic and business entities interested in forming a proactive coalition and committed to two full days of training. The committee invited 60 organizations, including schools, colleges, veterans groups, the Red Cross and many other nonprofits, and 25 of those groups were

represented during the training on Sept. 13 and 14, 2011.

"The majority of the training was to build discussion and create obtainable objectives," said Salisbury, recalling that interaction was central to the program. "We had a very active group that was able to jump right in and be vocal."

The Easter Seals agenda for the two-day session was aimed at creating a consensus among the newly formed coalition to develop an accessible transportation plan for the community that could be implemented within a year. Trainees were asked to prioritize urgent issues in transportation and formulate objectives for discussion. By the end of the training, all participants had to sign a proclamation supporting the plan.

Governor's Council policy statement on transportation

The Governor's Council for People with Disabilities has developed the following policy statement on transportation, expressing its support of appropriate laws and policies to increase affordable, accessible and reliable transportation options for people with disabilities.

Policy Statement

Freedom of movement is essential for independent living, for engaging in productive self-sustaining activities, and, most importantly, for full participation in the communities of one's choice.

Beliefs and Conditions

People with disabilities, like other Indiana citizens, deserve viable options for getting from place to place to live, work and play in their communities of choice. All components of a transportation system must meet the needs of all citizens in an accessible and affordable manner.

Although some improvements have occurred, significant barriers remain. Most Indiana counties are rural and lack accessible, affordable and timely transportation resources. While some urban communities have more transportation options, challenges with accessible, affordable and timely resources

remain. Existing systems have restricted hours and days of service options, and lack adequate basic infrastructure including accessible sidewalks and bus stops. Transportation options for traveling from city to city are extremely limited, costly and difficult to navigate and require unusually long commute times.

Position

The Council supports legislation, policy and practices that:

- Educate transit personnel to sensitize them to the needs of people with disabilities, as well as "user-side training" for people with disabilities to ensure safe and successful utilization of all transportation options.
- Expand affordable, accessible transportation options statewide to include weekend (year-round) service, longer hours and increased routes with more frequent service.
- Coordinate statewide, intermodal transportation systems that are accessible, affordable and available to all people with transportation needs.
- Utilize all available funding options to expand accessible and affordable public transportation options, including

paratransit, for people with disabilities.

- Promote significant expansion of mass-transit options statewide that incorporate "green" alternatives such as light rail, hybrid vehicles and other technologies that reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- Ensure all publicly funded or publicly regulated transportation services are in full compliance with the ADA and must be architecturally, physically (mechanically) and programmatically accessible to people with disabilities.

Terms and Definitions

Intermodal: The combination of more than one mode of transportation.

Green technology: The application of environmental science to conserve the natural environment and resources, and to curb the negative impacts of human involvement.

References

Indiana Institute on Disability (2010), Disability Transportation Survey (unpublished raw data). *

Transportation resources

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)

ctaa.org
(800) 891-0590 (Voice)

The CTAA website offers an abundance of resources, including information specifically for people with disabilities, to help transit systems, public officials and advocates enhance mobility in their communities. The site also provides federal and legislative updates and information on current programs.

Indiana Transportation Association

indianatransportationassociation.com
(812) 855-8143 (Voice)

The Indiana Transportation Association serves as a liaison between public and private transportation agencies, such as the Indiana Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration. The website provides an interactive state map with links, by city, to transportation organizations across Indiana.

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)

indot.in.gov
(317) 232-5533 (Voice)
indot@indot.in.gov

Explore the state's current transportation projects and future plans on INDOT's website. Click on the "Public Involvement" link to find meetings and hearings where you may be able to influence transportation decisions.

Easter Seals Project ACTION

projectaction.easterseals.com
(800) 659-6428 (Voice)
(202) 347-7385 (TDD)

Project ACTION (Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation) partners with transportation providers, the disability community and others to provide training and technical assistance, and conduct research and outreach to enhance transportation options for people with disabilities. Visit the website to review the Project's blog and participate in webinars.

Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA)

cirta.us
(317) 327-7433 (Voice)
info@cirta.us

As one of the best resources for staying up-to-date on transit news in central Indiana, CIRTA's website provides updates, trip-planning tools, a commuter fare calculator, and offers information for bikers, walkers, light rail and car poolers. You can also add your name to the monthly e-newsletter list or sign your name to the petition to support dedicated funding for transit.

Transportation topics on Disability.Gov

disability.gov/transportation

Disability.gov connects Americans with disabilities, their families, veterans, educators and employers with resources from federal, state and local government agencies, educational institutions and nonprofit organizations. This section of Disability.gov posts information about accessible transportation and paratransit services. There's also information for transportation providers on making their services accessible to people with disabilities and information about laws like the Air Carrier Access Act that protect the rights of travelers with disabilities.

The Indiana Citizens' Alliance for Transit (ICAT)

indianacat.org
chair@indianacat.org

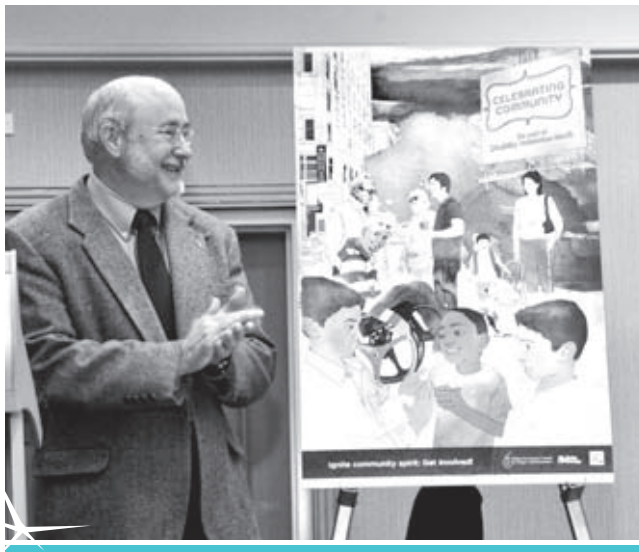
As an advocacy force throughout Indiana, ICAT focuses on educating the Indiana General Assembly on the benefits of transit and supports the development of a comprehensive plan to secure dedicated transit funding. ICAT members regularly meet with legislators to request support, offer technical assistance and testify in committee hearings. To get involved or support ICAT, visit their website and find useful ways to advocate alongside their efforts.

2011 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

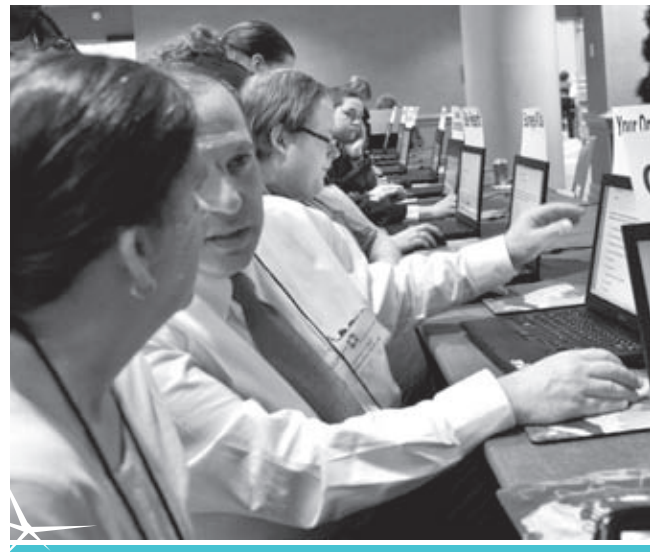
More than 400 people with disabilities, their family members, service providers and others came to downtown Indianapolis for the 2011 Conference for People with Disabilities, held Nov. 29 and 30. Themed “Celebrating Community,” the Conference featured keynote presentations, interactive workshops and informational sessions that inspired attendees to participate in their communities and advocate for change to make their communities more livable and enjoyable for everyone.



The Governor's Council honored Dr. Vicki Pappas (far right), who recently retired from the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, with a special award, presented by 2011 Ms. Wheelchair Indiana Jodi Logman. Dr. Pappas joined the Indiana Institute in 1974.



This year's Disability Awareness Month theme, Celebrating Community, was unveiled during the Conference opening.



Participants expressed their viewpoints and opinions about the livability of Indiana's communities via the sixth-annual disability poll.

Conference begins with a look into the future

“If you want to change the choices you make, change your image of the future.”

Conference opening speaker Glen Hiemstra, an internationally respected expert on future trends and long-range planning, used this phrase to encourage attendees to consider their own vision for the future. According to Hiemstra, “the future creates the present,” and he challenged Conference attendees to think about what future they preferred. Through intriguing statistics about our present realities, we can see what changes our world faces in the coming years and how our present mindset can help deter future challenges.

Several developments we are already aware of can be identified as future challenges. First, as the Baby Boomer generation ages and advances in health sciences improve life expectancy, an unprecedented quarter of all Americans will be older than 65 by 2030. This signals a likely shift on the federal level for government programs to recognize the needs of the aging population, including people with disabilities.



Glen Hiemstra inspired attendees with insights about future challenges and opportunities as society evolves.

Second, as American minorities are projected to become majorities by 2030, diversity will increase. Just as Generation X (those born after 1970) created the Internet, the millennial generation (those born after 1980) will make our digital world more natural and open to all cultures. Currently, 4 out of 5 people have online access, but only 50 percent of people with disabilities are part of that number. As online communication continues to flourish, people with disabilities ages 18 to 29 will find themselves interacting more with their peers who don't have disabilities.

Third, society is shifting once again toward an urban core as

70 percent of the population is expected to return to central cities by 2030. With this movement, more access to education and social services (like transportation) may follow, and it may also help us identify the needs of citizens faster and more efficiently.

Recognizing these developments, together with understanding the realities of society's mounting debt and growing gaps in inequalities, Hiemstra believes we can focus our present decisions on creating better policies and actions to face the challenges of tomorrow.

“Be willing to invent the future. It is something that we want to do,” Hiemstra concluded. *

Bold thoughts on civic engagement

To close out the 2011 Conference, attendees probably weren't expecting to hear the unsettling opening lyrics of Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child:" "Them that's got shall get. Them that's not shall lose."

But keynote speaker Ceasar McDowell, MIT professor on community development and the director of Dropping Knowledge International, used this phrase to remind attendees about the importance of civic engagement and advocacy for our communities to prosper and create opportunities for individual growth.

"The need for civic engagement is stronger than ever as an increasing number of people with disabilities become socially isolated and excluded each year due to geographic, societal and physical boundaries," McDowell stressed.

McDowell shared with the audience four ideas to encourage advocates and people with disabilities to become more engaged:

- 1. "But for the grace of..."**
We all strive for similar goals, but we each have different beliefs and make different choices to meet these goals.
- 2. "Let nature guide"**
Elements of nature work together to produce what they



Keynote speaker Ceasar McDowell encouraged attendees to contribute to the success of their communities by being engaged, active citizens.

need to survive. It does not produce what it does not need. It is also patient. We must learn from nature how to cultivate thriving, efficient communities.

- 3. "Designed for the margins"**
Like a tent staked at the edges, humans are responsible for maintaining the stability of what we have. However, we also look beyond our boundaries and push toward things we want or desire for our lives.

- 4. "Unleashing the power of questions"**
No one brings about democracy; rather, we

willingly use the democratic process. Through democracy, we can empower people to ask questions and create opportunities for answers.

Using video clips, images and real-life examples of people pushing the limits on active engagement, McDowell acknowledged that building community can be challenging. But when actively and rightfully engaged, we gain the power to change perceptions and accomplish our goals. *



From left to right: Maureen Greer, Cyndi Johnson and Alan Spaulding received Community Spirit Awards. Vicki Pappas was celebrated for retiring from the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community. Pictured with Governor’s Council executive director Suellen Jackson-Boner and board chairperson Steve Tilden.



Conference attendees had the opportunity to ask questions during keynote presentations and workshops.



A number of interactive and informative workshops were offered on topics related to community involvement, livability and more.



Keynote speaker Aaron Bishop, from the National Disability Council, addressed national policy changes and expected implications for people with disabilities.



Conference attendees found the latest information on assistive technology, services and other resources offered by more than 20 exhibitors.



Conference goers celebrated the “Great State of Indiana” during a themed reception Tuesday night.



Attendees had the opportunity to share their stories and inspire others at the Conference Story Tent.



Legislative update: 2011 Conference recap

Perseverance was the overarching theme of both legislative sessions during the 2011 Conference as the U.S. Congress and the Indiana General Assembly continue to face political partisanship and impending budget cuts. Keynote presenter Aaron Bishop, executive director of the National Council on Disability (NCD), led the discussion on action taken at the federal level, while a State of the State panel brought together four disability advocates – Kim Dodson, Beth Karnes, Paul Chase and John Cardwell – to discuss Indiana-specific issues. Both sessions offered compelling strategies to advance the disability agenda with legislators.

The Federal Report – Aaron Bishop

“Congress isn’t working the same as it used to,” Bishop remarked to

the large lunchtime crowd. “But there is still a way to communicate with your elected officials.”

To make change in Washington, Bishop stressed the need for communities to work together. Bishop, who uses his independent federal office to advise Congress and the President on disability policy, has been busy collaborating with disability forums across the country and supporting plans that create stronger communities.

He adds, “7.8 percent of money spent on programs supporting people with disabilities will be cut if Congress can’t work together.” Bishop believes that helping people with disabilities get back to work will reduce the deficit. “With more people working, there will be more job training, more taxes and a more competitive business environment.”

Bishop also supports livable versus institutional communities. States receive no reimbursement rates for people living in state-owned care centers, and states pay more for institutions using Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) rates. He believes states should start investing in livable communities because they create more economic potential.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of congressional leadership focusing on the issues – Bishop said only one congressman, Senator Harkin (D-IA), has an office solely dedicated to disability legislation. To spread knowledge and awareness about disability programs, building relationships with elected officials is key.

“Form letters don’t work anymore. Personalization works. And it can’t happen on a single day. When members of Congress hear key

messages from trusted sources, it is more likely to gain their attention and cause them to take action.”

State of the State – legislative panel

Moderated by Nancy Griffin, the panel emphasized the focus on mass transit and finding ways to secure its funding in the current legislative session. According to Kim Dodson, associate executive director of The Arc of Indiana, independence and economic benefits will be the result of improved transit across the state. Paul Chase, associate state director of public policy at Indiana AARP,



Attendees had the opportunity to talk one-on-one with keynote speaker Aaron Bishop.

Beth Karnes, president and CFO of Indiana Mental Health Memorial Foundation, Inc., discussed her focus on drug- and alcohol-related

waivers. Chase believes it is important for people to know nursing homes are not the only option for long-term care. John Cardwell, executive director of United Senior Action and the Generations Project, is also active in the collective bargaining debate. He states that Right to Work legislation may hinder higher-quality health benefits since unions work hard to negotiate these and other benefits for low-wage workers. He also mentioned that those using the CHOICE program (Community and Home Options to Institutional Care for the Elderly and Disabled) should not be alarmed at reports of higher costs of services for the program since no increases in the rates for providers have been issued.

In closing, Cardwell noted to attendees that the timing is perfect to start advocating. “As candidates are running for office, now is the time to get involved.” *

“Form letters don’t work anymore. Personalization works. [...] When members of Congress hear key messages from trusted sources, it is more likely to gain their attention and cause them to take action.”

– Aaron Bishop, executive director of the National Council on Disability (NCD)

echoed these statements, saying mass transit legislation is past due, as 30 percent of people ages 65 and older do not drive. In addition, Chase said the Indiana AARP is a proponent of livable communities and energetic about a “complete streets” initiative.

The Arc of Indiana is also hoping to secure the passage of a bill requiring improved first-responder training and will continue to work on education reform, particularly in the handling of seclusion and restraints in schools.

legislation, advocating more laws strengthening treatment of addiction versus jail time, social host liability and smoke-free public places. She is also concerned with mental health issues for military personnel returning home. Indiana is fourth in the nation for the number of people deployed, and Karnes wants to ensure access to care for soldiers readjusting to life back home.

In health care, Indiana AARP is advocating options counseling for the 20,000 people on Medicare

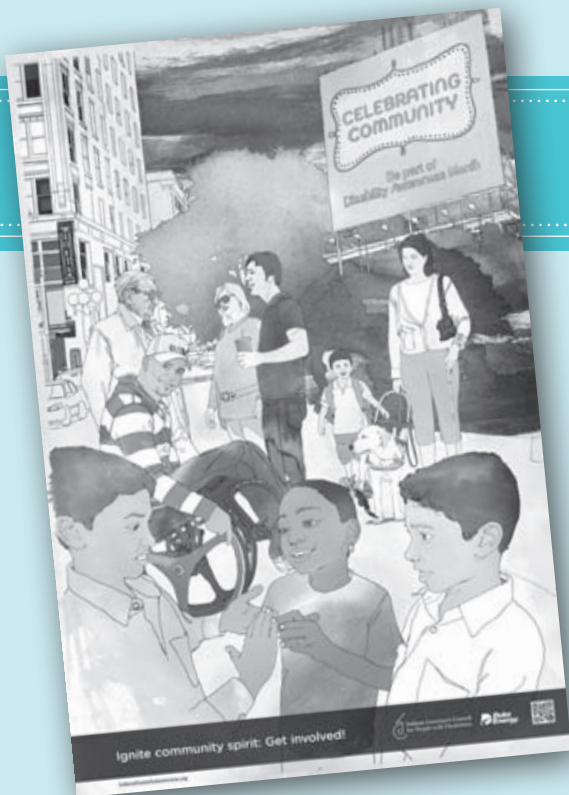
ignite thoughts into action

spark

We welcome your suggestions
for newsletter content and
ideas concerning the actions
of the Council.

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Order Disability Awareness Month materials now!

March is Disability Awareness Month, and the Governor's Council is offering free materials to help you celebrate and spread awareness in your communities.

You can order your free materials by visiting IndianaDisabilityAwareness.org. You'll also find many resources, tools and information on the website.

This year's Disability Awareness Month theme is "Celebrating Community," calling on all of us to ignite community spirit by rolling up our sleeves and getting involved.

Help us celebrate Disability Awareness Month in March by hosting events and activities in your community!