



Feb. 6, 2017

New Economic Improvement District (EID) to pay for workforce transportation

Plainfield has an estimated 2,400 unfilled job openings

The Plainfield Town Council recently passed an ordinance to create the first Economic Improvement District (EID) in the state to help fund a commuter transportation service.

Property owners within a 3,442-square-acre district south of US 40 in Plainfield petitioned the council to create the district. They will pay into a fund that will cover the cost of the South Plainfield Connector shuttle. The connector provides service between IndyGo's western-most stop to the dense employment centers in Plainfield. Meeting up at the Bridgeport Road stop on IndyGo's #8 route, the service takes Indianapolis workers to warehouse and distribution worksites.

Plainfield has been so successful in attracting businesses that it faces a workforce crisis. In the designated district, there are more than 15,000 jobs, including an estimated 2,400 of which are unfilled, according to a survey conducted by the Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership in 2015. More than 50% of existing employees come from outside Hendricks County, so commuting plays a key role in attracting, creating, retaining, and training the workforce.

The Town of Plainfield contracted with Kelley and Associates to investigate the feasibility of establishing an EID. More than half of the district's property owners – including Duke Realty, Clarion Partners, Prologis and Meritex – signed the petition to establish the district.

The EID will be governed by a board of owners and representatives and address common workforce concerns, including transportation and attracting a new skilled workforce.

The Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA) began operating the Plainfield Connector in 2012 via a three-year, nonrenewable federal grant and a local match. The grant expired in 2015, at which time CIRTA and the Town of Plainfield pooled resources to continue the service through mid-2017 and continued to identify more sustainable funding.

"This is a great example of how transit means jobs," said CIRTA Executive Director Lori F. Kaplan. "Businesses can't attract workers, and people can't get to jobs without reliable transportation."

"And while an EID won't work for every situation, it's perfect for Plainfield for three reasons: the intense workforce need, the density of jobs and large employers in the district, and the purely commuter aspect of the service," said Kaplan.

Town Council President Robin Brandgard said, "It's a testament to the great working relationship we have with the property owners. Plus, we couldn't do this without the support of CIRTA, which has been involved every step of the way and will continue to provide staff support to operate the service."

Beginning in July 2017, the South Plainfield Connector will be funded through the EID, with management from CIRTA. The North Plainfield Connector began running in 2015, and funding continues through 2018.

The cost to ride the Workforce Connector is \$1 each way. CIRTA operates the service with vehicles from Miller Transportation. For routes and timetables, visit www.PlainfieldConnector.com. Job openings in Plainfield can be found at www.HendricksJobs.com.

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Route maps as of December, 2016 and subject to change.

