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## **MACOG & Transpo Launch “CONNECT” to Study the Future of Transit**

**CONNECT will focus on understanding community and regional transit needs, conceptualizing the transit network redesign, and connecting transit mobility priorities to a full range of opportunities for resident, business and visitor successes along the Interurban Trolley and Transpo Bus corridors.**

South Bend, IN - The Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) in partnership with the South Bend Public Transportation Corporation (Transpo) are kicking-off an 18-month study of the existing Interurban Trolley and Transpo Bus systems and developing a 10-year plan for the future of transit in the region.

“The **CONNECT** holds potential for pivoting the current trolley and bus networks toward a more fully-developed bus transit system integral to strong economic growth and improved quality of life for the region’s residents,” said MACOG Executive Director James Turnwald. “It’s been 10 years since our region has completed a thorough study of our bus system. **CONNECT** is a chance for stakeholders and residents to reevaluate our bus network and consider whether it is meeting the goals and needs of our region.”

Transit riders, the public, and all interested parties can keep up with the latest project developments at the study website: [www.connecttransitplan.com](http://www.connecttransitplan.com). The **CONNECT** consists of three phases of transit planning with robust stakeholder and public engagement. The first phase analyzes the existing transit services, regional markets and overall needs for transit. Key findings will be summarized in the “Choices Report” to be published in January 2022. In January and February, stakeholders and the public will be presented with the Choices Report and will be asked to respond to a survey to help shape transit priorities.

In the second phase, the study team will design alternatives to the existing bus networks and will present them in a “Concepts Report.” In April 2022, stakeholders and the public will be asked which concepts they prefer and the guidance from the community will be provided to the Transpo and MACOG Boards for key decisions about how to design a new transit system for the region.

In the third phase, the study team will develop a draft plan for a new transit network and a 10-year plan for transit improvements. In September 2022, stakeholders and the public will provide feedback on whether the draft network is right or should be adjusted.

**CONNECT** will utilize innovative outreach and engagement strategies to all residents including the lived experiences of minority, under-resourced, transportation-disadvantaged, and environmental justice populations within St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties.

“We know that many people who rely on bus service today can’t reach many of the employment and educational opportunities in our region or have trouble reaching other critical needs, like health care or childcare.” said Transpo General Manager & CEO, Amy Hill. “**CONNECT** is a chance for us to reconsider our entire regional transit network, our priorities for investment in transit, and how our transit system can better meet the needs of residents, employers, and institutions to support a growing region.”

The [introduction](#) of the **CONNECT** project was presented by transit consultant, Scudder Wagg of Jarrett Walker & Associates, to the MACOG Board of Directors on November 10, 2021 and the Transpo Board of Directors on Monday, November 15, 2021.

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**About the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG):** The Michiana Area Council of Governments is a metropolitan planning commission serving Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall and St. Joseph counties in northern Indiana. The voluntary organization of local governments studies and attempts to resolve, for the benefit of each member and the region, areas of interlocal issues, which includes but is not limited to transportation, transit, economic development, environment and other issues that impact the region. To learn more, go to [www.macog.com](http://www.macog.com).

**About the South Bend Public Transportation Corporation (Transpo):** Transpo, the South Bend Public Transportation Corporation, provides public bus transit services to residents and visitors throughout St. Joseph County. Transpo is led by a general manager, and a nine-member, bipartisan board appointed by the Mayors of Mishawaka and South Bend and the Common Councils of Mishawaka and South Bend. With 20 local fixed routes and an ADA-compliant paratransit service, Transpo provides over 1.5 million fixed route and 84,000 paratransit trips per year. Visit [www.sbtranspo.com](http://www.sbtranspo.com) or call 574.233.2131 for more information. Follow SBTranspo on Twitter and Facebook.