This is the story of Indy Connect, Central Indiana’s largest-ever public engagement effort.
First, some context. That little gray square is Marion County, the center of this story (so far).
Indy Connect has three main partners: IndyGo, the main transit provider (red box, serving Marion County), the MPO (blue area), and the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (all counties shown).
Welcome to Indianapolis.
Indianapolis has a long history of transit. It has the most mileage of Interurban after Ohio. In 1916 the Traction Terminal served over 7 million passengers on over 460 trains per day.
Today, IndyGo serves all 400 square miles of Marion County, plus a few extensions via interlocal agreements.
This story begins in 2009, when a group of Indianapolis business leaders, recognizing that we’re good at moving goods but not people, asked “How do we keep Indianapolis Competitive?” Considering many transportation options, they determined that transit had the best ROI, so the below report and map were created.
We also had upward mobility issues. A child born to the bottom 1/5 of the economic scale in Indianapolis has about a 5% chance of making it to the top. Some of our major limitations were access to school and better paying jobs, via transportation burdens.
These three partners came together to figure out what to do next: CIRTA has a good reputation in the suburbs, IndyGo being the major transit operator, and the MPO as the major regional transportation planning agency.
And Indy Connect was born! (Here’s the 2010 press conference)
We set out to engage the public and transform the private-let report into a publicly supported plan. We used nametags with the Indy Connect logo to separate us from our individual organizations and solidify the partnership and regional image.
We were everywhere for two years.
We had a big to-do at the 2011 Indiana State Fair. We had BRT vehicles, maps, signs, information, the works.
We upgraded from logoed nametags to these ugly green t-shirts to denote us a part of the partnership.
From 2010-2011 the private-led report morphed into the Indy Connect Vision Plan, which was incorporated into the MPO’s Long Range Plan.
But we weren’t done yet. We were still EVERYWHERE. We had planning to do and input to gather. We upgraded to ugly green polo shirts with the logo embroidered on them.
We went back to the Indiana State Fair!
We also gave away so many of these attractive lime green bags. Aren’t they nice?
The MPO began working on the Red/Blue/Green rapid transit line studies (stepping in for lack of capacity at IndyGo).
We were also meeting Every-other-week at project management team (PMT meetings). These included the partners but also all of their consults to ensure that everyone was on the same page.
We also had this TOD thing that we were riling people up about. Some national experts came and spoke, and the community seemed very interested.
Then the private side kicked off “Indy Connect NOW” as the chief advocacy campaign for getting things DONE. They worked with the state legislature and were often in the public eye. That partnership included: Indy Chamber, Central Indiana Community Foundation, Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, and MIBOR Realtor Association.
We’re still holding PMT meetings, but with additional partners in the room.
We created videos! (2013-ish) They emphasized the partnership messages. Notice how the Indy Connect logo is prominent.

Check out the video on YouTube
I can’t forget about our community partners. Hoosiers do everything by consensus, and we consider it a strength.

Check out the video on YouTube
Side story: In 2013-ish, IndyGo realized that they were about to have a transit center earmark taken away. The MPO paid for a site selection study. City sold the land for $1.
Here it is open in 2016. This was a major upgrade to a fantastic downtown transit center. From what used to be a one-way, one-mile loop.
In December 2013, the MPO’s board approved by resolution the Red and Blue Line Alternative Analyses. Yay!
In 2014 IndyGo snagged themselves a TIGER VI grant to engineer the Red Line. The IC agencies all pitched in on the application.
Queue another round of input!
This conversation started in 2010. We’re now in 2014. Had gone to soooo many summer study committees. The addition of Indy Connect NOW and ramping up of public engagement definitely helped. What we got was an up to .25% income tax (weird for transit), and it had to be county-led. It’s changed a bit since, but there are still some very patient soles working at the statehouse to refine the enabling legislation, which is still ongoing today.
This takes us up to 2015 and “IndyGo Forward” (COA update). More public input! The COA takes on a whole new energy when there’s the possibility of money on the table. It included design/funding levels for:

- No new funding
- Conservative new funding
- Maximum new funding
Oh, also about this time, then Secretary Foxx came to town to talk Ladders of Opportunity. We pulled out all the stops! (We wanted to talk up the rapid transit corridors and try to get some small starts grants....)
We took him on a guided bus tour of the 13-mile Red Line!
Here he is in front of that gorgeous new transit center! (under construction) Ok, enough of that... back to IndyGo Forward...
IndyGo hired JWA to do the plan. All of our agencies learned sooooo much during the visits and workshops.
We even had JWA do a couple of workshops in our suburban communities.
And we had him talk on a few panels.
So, by this point there has been:
-- Over 100 advertised public meetings, reaching over 3,000 individuals
-- Presentations to more than 250 stakeholder groups
-- 100+ media stories, articles, op-eds
-- More than 110,000 visits and 300,000 page views on IndyConnect.org
-- More than 10,000 comments have been incorporated into the plan
Here’s the plan’s evolution from the CITTF report to IndyGo Forward’s Marion County Transit Plan. The latter promises: Shorter waits, Longer hours, Easier transfers, Every route, every day, and 3 Bus Rapid Transit Lines.
In 2015, Marion County certified a referendum for 2016! We had a lot of work ahead. We had so many partners that we needed to create org charts for the partnership.

### 2016 PUBLIC EDUCATION TEAM STRUCTURE

#### LEADERSHIP

**TEAM LEAD:** Bryan Luellen, IndyGo
- Coordinates strategy, leads meetings, prepares agendas, keeps minutes

**Sean Northup, MPO:** Supports Team Lead, tracks strategy, contributes to discussions and decision-making when the Team Lead is unavailable.

**Lori Kaplan, CIRTA:** Presents at events and possibly funds public education efforts. Promotes partnership with organizations.

**Mike Terry, IndyGo; Anna Gremling, MPO:** May attend meetings on occasion.

#### MANAGEMENT TEAM

**CONTENT + CREATIVE**
- Videos, website, brochures, pamphlets, handouts, visual presentation, copy production.

**LEADERSHIP**
- Lauren Day, IndyGo

**NEW MPO Consultant:** Will define market segments, identify efficient methods of researching each segment, and maximize reach. This effort will never include a call to action, and will educate the entire population on the MCTR.

**Chris Watts, CVR:** Manages content production for CVR team.

#### RESEARCH + PLACEMENT

**MARKET RESEARCH & MARKET SEGMENTATION:**
- Market research, market segmentation, outreach strategy by segment, public awareness placement strategy.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS

**MEDIA CALENDAR:**
- Media calendar, messaging + media strategy, public priority survey.

**LEADERSHIP**
- Jen Thomas, JTPR

**MEMBERS:**
- Denise Herd, Herd Strategies

**CONtributes knowledge, perspective, and professional expertise.**

#### EDUCATION + ENGAGEMENT

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN:**
- Public engagement plan, public presence, staff training, outreach calendar.

**LEADERSHIP**
- Cindy Benedict, Indy Connect

**MEMBERS:**
- Debbie Wilso, Engaging Solutions

**Responsible for public engagement.**

**Jerome Horn, IndyGo Primary logistics coordinator for all outreach events, reports back on social media trends.**

**Lauren Day, IndyGo Represents IndyGo Ambassadors.**

**Denise Herd, Herd Strategies**

**Andrew McGee, CIRTA:**
- Responsible for CIRTA's event calendar.

**Jen Higginbotham, MPO:**
- Represents street teams.}

**Jen Thomas**
This was the other half of the org chart!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Campaign</th>
<th>Advocacy Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IndyGo, MPO, CIRTA</td>
<td>Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness, Message Testing</td>
<td>Polling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Awareness  
2. Education | 1. Awareness  
2. Advocacy  
3. Turnout |
| www.IndyConnect.org | www.transitdrivesindy.com |

On to Transit Drives Indy, same partners as Indy Connect NOW, but different lead. This table was the “what can you legally do” chart. There were advocacy restrictions once the referendum was certified. The line was drawn at a call to action: Do everything on your side of the line and don’t get scared.
We did some training with grassroots organizations so that they would have the facts.
We hired some street teams to go out all summer in 2016 and talk up the referendum. (Now the shirts are blue!) How do we catch people without wasting money?
With an adorable remote controlled bus! The kids loved it, and we loved chatting with their parents. (some of the adults wanted to play with it too)
IndyGo created Transit Ambassadors. They were regular people who volunteered to ride the bus and talk to riders about the referendum. They wore the same shirts as the street teams (and everyone else in Indy Connect at this point).
We all used the same materials for education (even the advocates). These folders showed how Indianapolis ranked and what the income tax would mean for your particular income.
On the inside of the folders it shows the before and after system and stats, plus the exact language that would be on the ballot.
On November 8th, Marion County residents will have the option to vote on an income tax increase of 25¢ for every $100 of income to pay for improving public transit.

IF APPROVED, THE MARION COUNTY TRANSIT PLAN WILL...

1. Create a connected, frequent network of buses and rapid transit lines
2. Shorten wait times and increase morning, evening, and weekend hours
3. Expand the Red Line and implement the Blue and Purple rapid transit lines
Just to drive the point home, this is all of the public engagement that we did from 2010-2015...
And this is ONLY 2016.
By the fall, people were saying, “we get it, just DO IT already!”
And it passed 60/40!
This map is a little backwards, but the darkest red shows the most support and the darkest blue the least. It makes sense because most of the population/jobs/planned transit improvements are in the northern half.
Now IndyGo is planning the rest of the rapid transit lines and building the electric BRT Red Line. In 2017 IndyGo got (part of) a Small Starts grant. Didn’t start construction until they got the rest of it in 2018.
Red Line Stations are underway! Opens in September 2019! (Red line opens, plus network rerouting feeding in)
Oh yeah, and in 2017 AMPO gave us an award for collaboration!
Still work to be done! We are off to the suburbs! Suburban transit study in procurement. Now townships can go instead of whole counties.