

INTRODUCTION

The City of Fort Wayne (pop. 205,727)¹ is the largest city in Allen County, which is situated in northeastern Indiana. Fort Wayne is the second largest city in the state of Indiana, second only to the capitol city of Indianapolis. The city is a relatively isolated metropolitan area that is within 2-3 hours of several large metropolitan areas including Indianapolis, Detroit, Chicago, Columbus, and Cincinnati. The proximity to these metropolitan areas creates a unique environment for business and social life in the city, and creates opportunities for the city to have economic ties to multiple states within the region.

The City of Fort Wayne and Allen County have experienced population growth in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue. Allen County grew by 10% between 1990 and 2000, while the City of Fort Wayne grew at a much higher rate of 27.4%². The City of New Haven, a community adjacent to Fort Wayne, grew by 33% during that same period. This growth adds to the complex nature of providing transportation services in northeast Indiana. The City of Fort Wayne grew mostly through annexation of surrounding communities. This has simultaneously allowed for the expansion of the Fort Wayne tax base and created larger requirements for city services. Annexation will be a continuing phenomenon for the city and county, with the town of Aboite expected to be annexed in 2006 as well as other adjacent communities. This will push the city to a population of nearly 260,000 within the next five years.

While the population growth in Fort Wayne is mainly attributed to annexation, the city continues to be a focal point for Allen County residents. The city retains the majority of employment, services, and cultural opportunities that citizens rely on for their quality of life. Employment in the city is following a national trend towards decentralized job centers where the traditional downtown Central Business District (CBD) is no longer the hub for all business endeavors. Increasingly, employers are moving to the fringes of the city or to other portions of the region. The largest CBD-based employer in Fort Wayne is the Lincoln Financial Group (2,108 employees), while the largest overall employer in the region, Parkview Health Systems (3,648 employees) is outside of the downtown CBD. Other major employers include the Lutheran Health Network (2,889 employees) and Verizon (2,214 employees), both of which are located on the southwest fringe of the city. The city and county government (3,256 employees combined) are also major employers in the region, as is the Fort Wayne Community Schools (3,445 employees), all of which have employees spread throughout the region.

The City of Fort Wayne also provides critical medical and health services for the region that attract persons to the city on a daily basis. The hospital and health network provides opportunity for primary and specialized care facilities. The Parkview Hospital, Lutheran Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and Dupont Medical Center all provide health services and are located in a medical setting that includes specialists, and rehabilitation centers.

Fort Wayne is home to universities and colleges that are vital to the city's life and attract students, faculty, and visitors from Fort Wayne, the surrounding area and beyond. Indiana University/ Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) is the largest university with an enrollment of

¹ United States Census Bureau – 2000 Census

² *ibid*

over 12,000. The university, which is part of a larger statewide university system, has been a commuter school for all of its history, but is currently constructing its first dormitories as it continues to grow. IPFW is located on Coliseum Boulevard in the northeastern portion of the city and across the road from Ivy Tech, another local higher education facility. Together these institutions form a large academic “campus” that thrives year-round. Fort Wayne is also home to two smaller institutions, the University of St. Francis and Taylor University, both of which offer smaller academic settings within the city. Other institutions in Fort Wayne include Concordia Theological Seminary, Tri-State University, the Indiana Institute of Technology, and Indiana Wesleyan University. These institutions offer employment to local residents as well as educational opportunities.

The city is also a cultural and entertainment center for Allen County. The Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Lincoln Museum, and Botanical Gardens offer cultural attractions for the city, as do arts events at local universities and locations such as Performing Arts Center, Fort Wayne Ballet, and other theaters and galleries in the city. The Memorial Coliseum and Memorial Stadium, both located on Memorial Boulevard in close proximity to IPFW and Ivy Tech, offer sporting and other events that draw crowds from throughout the region. A well-maintained parks system throughout the city plays host to numerous events and offers daily recreation opportunities.

These factors combine to make Fort Wayne a focal point of a growing metropolitan area that remains isolated geographically. Transportation in the area is dominated by the personal automobile, which is evidenced by continued roadway construction throughout the region. The city and surrounding areas have also recognized the need for public transportation as a part of the overall network and Citilink, previously known as PTC, provides that link for persons that require public transit. After several years of declining ridership, declining budgets, and numerous management changes, the City of Fort Wayne determined that expert management should be introduced and the agency should move ahead as an important component of the transportation network. Bus service was re-branded as Citilink, bus logos and colors were changed, route structure and services were modified, and service was re-born in Fort Wayne and the surrounding area.

The changes to bus service in Fort Wayne took place five years ago and have resulted in ridership increases, enhanced perceptions of service, and better faith in the bus service from the community. Citilink management has commissioned this study to assist in the strategic direction of the agency in the next five to ten years will allow the agency to wisely allocate an ever-challenging budget. This study process is intended to provide Citilink with the proper information and analysis that will result in recommendations to match service changes with local growth and needs. The scope of work for this project involves local settings investigation, market research, intense service analysis, and collaborative recommendation development. A highlight of the plan is the effort to involve as much of the community as possible in the process through an aggressive public participation plan.

This document provides a detailed summary of the work performed in the study and provides recommendations intended to assist Citilink to thrive in coming years. The study has been performed to incorporate local needs into a consensus-driven plan.