

Porter County Residents' Attitudes Toward the Regional Development Authority

October 2010

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Introduction

The Community Research and Service Center (CRSC) at Valparaiso University was asked by the Times Media Company to conduct a survey of Porter County residents on their opinions about regionalism, the Regional Development Authority (RDA), and some of the projects currently being worked on by the RDA.

Methods

Representatives from the Times and the CRSC worked together to develop a questionnaire that would assess the opinions of Porter County residents on these issues. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix to this report. The CRSC took a random sample of 3500 households in Porter County and mailed out the questionnaire along with a cover letter and return envelope to all of these households in early October 2010. Persons were guaranteed confidentiality and no information was available that could connect them to their responses. Persons were also given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire online. Respondents were encouraged to return the questionnaire no later than October 15. People were offered the opportunity to include their names in a drawing for one of thirty \$10.00 Subway gift cards. There was no follow up or reminder sent to recipients. We received 499 useable responses by the deadline; almost all were completed by mail. Another fifty were received after the deadline and were not used in the current analysis. Approximately 250 questionnaires were returned because of bad or out-of-date addresses. The response rate was 17% which is less than hoped for, but not unusual for mail surveys of this type. The analysis, to be presented later, demonstrates that many people are not aware of many of the issues raised in the survey which in part explains the lower than expected returns.

Table 1 compares the sample to the general population of Porter County on age, race/ethnicity, gender, home ownership, education, and income to the US Census Bureau's 2009 estimates. Despite taking a random sample, the sample is skewed to some degree. Persons who responded are more likely to be female, homeowners, and better educated. They are similar to Porter County residents in terms of ethnicity and income. Not reflected in Table 1, but considered later, the sample is also skewed towards persons who say that they are likely voters. These differences should be kept in mind when examining the results that follow.

To compensate for some of the differences between the sample and the population, as well as to demonstrate how different groups viewed these issues, age, gender, income level, how long the respondents have lived in Porter County, the area of the County they are from, and whether they are likely to vote were controlled for on each question. In the following discussion, only statistically significant differences between these variables at the .05 level will be reported. What this means is that if there is a difference in how one group, e.g., women vs. men, view a particular issue, and the magnitude of this difference is so great that it could occur less than five times out of one hundred by pure chance, we will conclude it is not chance and that there is a real difference in how these various groups perceive that issue. The statistic used is Chi square which reports the probability of getting deviations in a table that large by pure chance. Because the analysis using the control variables creates a large number of tables, many are included in the Appendix.

Table 1
A Comparison Between Porter County Sample and Census Data

Characteristics	Porter Co. Sample	Census Bureau 2009 Estimates
Female	59.0%	49.6%
Male	41.0%	50.4%
Mean Age*	56.7%	48.4%
Income Under \$35K	23.5%	29.0%
Over \$75K	38.6%	35.5%
Caucasian	93.1%	92.5%
Homeowner	91.1%	76.8%
High School or less	34.9%	45.0%
BA or more	46.9%	21.4%

*Of persons over 18.

Results

Support for Projects

The purpose of this study is to discover how residents of Porter County view certain projects and programs that affect the county. In particular, the focus is on projects on the docket of the Regional Development Authority (RDA). According to the RDA's web page, they are charged with working on four major project areas. These include:

1. The development and expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport.
2. Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line.
3. A regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties.
4. The increased development of the Lake Michigan shore line.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they strongly supported, supported, didn't know or were not sure about, opposed to, or strongly opposed to each one of these projects. The responses to these questions are presented in Table 2 and represented graphically in Figures 1 – 4. Figures for Tables 1 through 11 are included in the Appendix. In addition, the responses to each question were broken down by gender, age, income, education, length of residence in Porter County, area of the county, and whether they are likely to vote. In the following, reference is made to these break downs only if there is a statistically significant difference on these variables.

Commuter Rail Transportation. Almost three fourths of respondents (73.3%) support commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line. This includes 34.5% with strong support and 38.8% who support it. A total of 7.8% are not sure,

while 19.0% oppose this, with 9.2% opposing it and 9.8% strongly opposing it. There is a tendency for support to be greater among females and those with higher levels of education.

Gary/Chicago International Airport. The next area with the most support was the development and expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport. Almost two-thirds (63.5%) support this with 29.1% strongly supporting it and 34.4% supporting it. A total of 13.2% are not sure while 13.4% oppose this and 9.8% strongly oppose this. The longer persons live in Porter County the less likely they are to support the airport.

Lake Michigan Shore. The increased development of the Lake Michigan shore line is next with 53.6% support, including 23.5% who strongly support this and 30.1% who just support it. One fifth (20.0%) of respondents are not sure about this, and a total of 26.3% oppose this with 15.5% opposing it and 10.8% strongly opposing it.

A Regional Bus System. The regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties garners the least support with less than one-half (49.6%) supporting it and 31.9% opposing it. Of the total, 17.6% strongly support this and almost one third (32%) support it. Almost one fifth (18.6%) are not sure about this, while another fifth (19.2%) oppose it and 12.7% strongly oppose this. Support for a bus system is greater among females, persons who rent, those with less income, and those who are older.

Table 2

Support for Projects. We are interested in the extent of your support for the following projects. Indicate your support by checking the response that most closely represents your opinion.

Projects	Strongly Support	Support	Not Sure Don't know	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Total Support	Total Oppose	N
Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the	34.5%	38.8%	7.8%	9.2%	9.8%	73.3%	19.0%	490
The development and expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport.	29.1%	34.4%	13.2%	13.4%	9.8%	63.5%	23.2%	491
The increased development of the Lake Michigan shore line.	23.5%	30.1%	20.0%	15.5%	10.8%	53.6%	26.3%	489
A regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties.	17.6%	32.0%	18.6%	19.2%	12.7%	49.6%	31.9%	490

Taxes and Support

When you specifically ask people if they are willing to support these projects with their tax dollars, support diminishes somewhat. These results are presented in Table 3 and figures 5 – 8. Once again responses to these questions were broken down by gender, age, income, education, length of residence in Porter County, area of the county, and whether they are likely to vote. Differences between groups are reported when there is a statistically significant difference.

Commuter rail transportation. Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line is the only project that a majority of respondents (55.9%) report that they are willing to support with their tax dollars. Over one third of respondents oppose spending tax dollars on commuter rail transportation with almost 20% strongly opposing spending tax dollars on this. Females, persons with greater incomes, and persons with higher levels of education are more likely to support taxes for commuter rail transportation.

Lake Michigan shore. While the increased development of the Lake Michigan shore line was supported by a majority of respondents, only 41.8% were willing to pay taxes to support this. Almost a fifth of the respondents were not sure about this, and a total of 38.1% opposed spending tax dollars on this. Persons who are older are more likely to support this, but the longer one has lived in Porter County the less likely they are to support more taxes on this issue.

Gary/Chicago International Airport. When respondents were asked about spending tax dollars on the development and expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport, a plurality (44.2%) oppose this and 41.5% support it. Almost one-fourth (22.3%) of respondents strongly oppose this. Females are less likely to oppose these taxes. Persons who are more likely to vote are more supportive, but support declines with length of residency in Porter County.

A regional Bus System. Similarly, almost a majority of respondents (45.6%) oppose spending tax dollars on a regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties. Almost one-fourth (23.9%) of respondents strongly oppose this. Females, persons who rent and older persons are more supportive, while support declines the longer you have been a resident of Porter County.

Table 3

Support for Taxes. We are interested in your willingness to use your tax dollars to support the following projects. Indicate your support by checking the response that most closely represents your opinion.

Projects	Strongly Support	Support	Not Sure Don't know	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Total Support	Total Oppose	N
The development and expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport.	16.6%	24.9%	14.3%	21.9%	22.3%	41.5%	44.2%	489
Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line.	17.2%	38.7%	10.5%	13.7%	19.9%	55.9%	33.6%	488
A regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties.	9.8%	26.4%	18.2%	21.7%	23.9%	36.2%	45.6%	489
The increased development of the Lake Michigan shore line.	12.1%	29.7%	20.2%	16.6%	21.5%	41.8%	38.1%	489

Support for Regionalism

To examine support for regional efforts, eight statements about cooperating with other counties and areas in Northwest Indiana were included in the questionnaire, and respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statements and how strongly they agree or disagree. The responses to these statements are presented in Table 4. Once again responses to these questions were broken down by gender, age, income, education, length of residence in Porter County, area of the county, and whether they are likely to vote. The results of this analysis are reported in tables in the appendix.

Support for Cooperation. When it comes to the more abstract issue of cooperation with others, there is substantial support for regional efforts. For example, 75.1% agree that “it is a good idea to cooperate more with other cities and counties in Northwest Indiana to address issues and possibly save tax dollars.” Similarly, 67.2% agree that “the best way we can solve some problems like transportation, as well as others, is to cooperate with other cities and counties.” And 66.0% agree that “we can no longer isolate ourselves and ignore the fact that problems today go beyond existing political boundaries.”

Less Support on Specific Issues. However, when you get to more specific issues involved with cooperation, support for regional efforts begins to decline. For example, while 48.2% disagree with the statement that “I think we should just worry about our own problems and not those of LaPorte and Lake Counties,” 40.8% agree that we should worry about our own problems. And when you talk about the impact of regional efforts on economic development and jobs, 48.1% agree that it will have an impact, but 21.5% don’t know or aren’t sure, and 29.9% don’t think it will have that impact.

Taxes and Regionalism. As we saw with previous questions, when you throw taxation issues into the mix, support begins to change. While most agree with cooperating with other areas of the region, almost two-thirds (61.5%) agree that “I don’t want my tax dollars spent on issues in other counties.”

Leadership and Accountability. Additionally, Porter County residents have other concerns about regional efforts that relate to control and accountability. For example, 58% agree that “regional efforts sound good, but we lose our ability to control our own local issues.” Similarly, 69.6% agree that “leaders of regional organizations are not always elected and not accountable to the people they serve.”

Table 4

Regionalism and Cooperation. There has been a lot of talk recently about the need to cooperate with other cities and counties in Northwest Indiana. The idea is simply referred to as “regionalism.” Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statements by checking the response that most closely represents your opinion.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agree	Total Disagree	N
It is a good idea to cooperate more with other cities and counties in Northwest Indiana to address issues and possibly save tax dollars.	33.1%	42.0%	9.6%	8.0%	7.3%	75.1%	15.3%	490
The best way we can solve some problems like transportation, as well as others, is to cooperate with other cities and counties.	28.0%	39.2%	13.1%	11.2%	8.6%	67.2%	19.8%	490
We can no longer isolate ourselves and ignore the fact that problems today go beyond existing political boundaries.	22.4%	43.6%	14.6%	14.2%	5.1%	66.0%	19.3%	486

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agree	Total Disagree	N
I think we should just worry about our own problems and not those of LaPorte and Lake Counties.	17.8%	23.0%	11.0%	35.8%	12.4%	40.8%	48.2%	483
Without regional cooperation there will be less economic development and fewer jobs.	13.5%	34.6%	21.9%	21.7%	8.2%	48.1%	29.9%	488
I don't want my tax dollars spent on issues in other counties.	29.8%	31.7%	17.3%	16.7%	4.5%	61.5%	21.2%	486
Regional efforts sound good, but we lose our ability to control our own local issues.	23.8%	34.2%	17.2%	20.9%	3.9%	58.0%	24.8%	488
Leaders of regional organizations are not always elected and not accountable to the people they serve.	31.3%	38.3%	19.5%	8.4%	2.7%	69.6%	11.1%	486

Factors affecting Attitudes Towards Regionalism

To look more closely at attitudes towards regionalism, the responses to the eight statements about regionalism were combined into an index measuring a person's overall attitude toward regionalism. Respondents were then divided into four categories ranging from those who were opposed to regionalism (anti), those who had low support, those who had some support, and those who were high or strong supporters of regionalism. The question then was what factors affect attitudes towards regionalism. Analysis indicates that gender, whether people owned or rented, age, and the area of the county they live in had no effect on their attitudes towards regionalism. However, as indicated in Table 5, how long they lived in Porter County had a significant effect on their attitudes towards regionalism with persons who have lived here the longest being the least supportive of cooperating with other parts of the region. Education also has a positive effect on support for regionalism. Likewise support for regionalism goes up as income increases. Finally, support for regionalism goes up as persons say they are more likely to vote.

Table 5
Factors Related to Support for the RDA

Groups	Anti	Low	Some	High	N	p
<u>Years in Porter Co.</u>						
< 11	21.3%	17.6%	22.2%	38.9%	108	0.001
12 - 26	17.8%	24.8%	27.1%	30.2%	129	
27 - 41	27.0%	28.8%	21.6%	22.5%	111	
42 +	39.7%	25.9%	17.2%	17.2%	116	
<u>Income</u>						
< 35,000	21.6%	34.3%	19.6%	24.5%	102	0.036
35,000 - 75,000	25.3%	22.0%	19.8%	33.0%	91	
75,000 - 100,000	31.5%	21.7%	24.5%	22.4%	143	
100,000 +	19.4%	17.3%	30.6%	32.7%	98	
<u>Education</u>						
Some High School	21.4%	50.0%	14.3%	14.3%	14	0.001
High School / GED	28.5%	32.7%	21.2%	17.6%	165	
Associates Degree	28.8%	28.8%	19.7%	22.7%	66	
Bachelor's Degree	27.8%	16.7%	20.4%	35.2%	108	
Post-Grad Degree	17.3%	13.6%	31.8%	37.3%	110	
<u>Likely to Vote</u>						
Unlikely	12.1%	45.5%	24.2%	18.2%	33	0.008
Not Sure	14.3%	38.1%	21.4%	26.2%	42	
Likely	28.6%	21.2%	22.8%	27.4%	391	

The Regional Development Authority (RDA)

Knowledge and Information about the Regional Development Authority. The study also sought to determine residents' information about and opinions of the Regional Development Authority. First, respondents were asked about how much knowledge and information they had of the RDA prior to receiving this questionnaire. The responses are presented in Table 6. Overall, respondents do not say they have a lot of knowledge or information about the RDA. As indicated, 41.0% report they have some information, 23.0% said they have "a little" information, 19.7% say they have no information, and 16.2% said they have "a lot" of information.

Table 6
Self-Reported Knowledge of or Information about the RDA?

Prior to receiving this questionnaire, did you have knowledge of or information about the RDA?	%	N
None	19.7%	90
A little	23.0%	105
Some	41.0%	187
A lot	16.2%	74

Support for the RDA. Respondents also were asked about their support for the RDA, whether or not Porter County tax dollars should be spent on the RDA, and whether or not Porter County should withdraw from the RDA. The responses to these questions are reported in Table 7. There is not majority support for any of these issues. When asked "Do you think the residents of Porter County should support the RDA?" 41.8% say yes, 36.3% say no, and 21.8% are not sure. Not surprisingly, when taxes are involved and they are asked "Do you think tax dollars from Porter County should be used to support the RDA?" support declines and 45.4% say Porter County tax dollars should not be used to support the RDA, 31.8% say yes, and 22.8% say they are not sure. When residents are asked "Do you think Porter County should withdraw from the RDA?" 43.4% say no, 34.2% say yes, and almost a quarter (22.3%) are not sure.

Table 7
Support for the RDA

Given what you know or what you have heard about the Regional Development Authority	Yes	No	Not Sure
Do you think the residents of Porter County should support the RDA?	41.8%	36.3%	21.8%
Do you think tax dollars from Porter County should be used to support the RDA?	31.8%	45.4%	22.8%
Do you think Porter County should withdraw from the RDA?	34.2%	43.4%	22.3%

Factors Affecting Attitudes Toward Support for the RDA.

Support for the RDA. In looking at factors that may affect whether people think the RDA should be supported, variables like gender, whether people rent or own their own homes, level of income, and area of the county have no statistically significant impact on the belief that we should support the RDA. However, support does increase with level of education and whether people are more likely to vote. On the other hand, support decreases with age and the number of years that persons have lived in the region.

Spending Tax Dollars. When the issue of providing tax support to the RDA is examined, gender, whether people rent or own their homes, age, income, and area of the county they live in do not have statistically significant relationships. Willingness to pay taxes to support the RDA does increase with education and whether they are likely to vote. Once again, the longer a person has lived in Porter County the less likely they are to support using taxes to support the RDA.

Withdrawal from the RDA. Variables such as age, income, area of the county, and whether they rent or own do not have a statistically significant relationship to whether they think we should withdraw from the RDA or not. Women, persons with more education, and those more likely to vote are more likely to oppose withdrawing from the RDA. The longer a person has lived in Porter County the more likely they are to want to withdraw from the RDA.

Self-Reported Knowledge and Support for the RDA

In addition to those factors already considered, one additional question concerns the effect of a person’s level of knowledge about the RDA on their attitude towards the RDA. There was not an independent and objective indicator of knowledge of the RDA, but persons were asked to give their subjective indication of their degree of knowledge about the RDA. As indicated previously in Table 6, respondents were grouped into four categories. To see the effect of reported levels of knowledge, this variable was crosstabulated with beliefs about whether Porter County residents should support the RDA, if we should use tax dollars to support the RDA, and if we should withdraw from the RDA. These results are presented in Table 8. As indicated, there is a statistically significant relationship between reported knowledge of the RDA

and support for it. Those persons who claim to have the most knowledge are the ones least likely to indicate the RDA should be supported. Similarly, when it comes to using tax support and whether we should withdraw, it is those persons who report having the most knowledge that are least likely to support using tax dollars and the most likely to support withdrawal.

Table 8
Level of Information and Support for the RDA

Level of Information and Support for the RDA					
	None	A little	Some	A Lot	N
Not Sure	38.2%	32.0%	17.9%	1.4%	101
No	21.3%	21.4%	38.6%	63.5%	159
Yes	40.4%	46.6%	43.5%	35.1%	190
TOTAL	89	103	184	74	450
Level of Information and Support for Taxes for RDA					
Not Sure	42.7%	29.8%	16.8%	5.4%	104
No	28.1%	35.6%	49.7%	64.9%	202
Yes	29.2%	34.6%	33.5%	29.7%	146
TOTAL	89	104	185	74	452
Level of Information and Withdrawal from the RDA					
Not sure	34.8%	34.3%	18.4%	4.1%	104
No	46.1%	47.6%	45.4%	32.4%	199
Yes	19.1%	18.1%	36.2%	63.5%	150
TOTAL	89	105	185	74	453

Attitudes Towards the RDA

To examine attitudes toward the RDA more closely, respondents were presented with six statements about the RDA and asked if they agree or disagree, and how strongly they agree or disagree with each of the statements. The responses to these statements are presented in Table 9.

Regional Cooperation. In some instances the responses are similar to what we have seen already. For example, there is support for regionalism in general. Most (72.7%) disagree with the statement “it’s not just the RDA, I don’t think we should cooperate with other counties on anything.”

RDA and Taxes. Also as before, when taxes are entered into the equation, support declines. For example, 37.3% agree and 27.8% disagree with the statement that “the RDA is a poor use of our tax dollars.”

Not Sure About the RDA. The most apparent pattern in these responses is that people are not sure or don’t know what to think about the RDA. In response to the question about taxes, 34.9% indicated they did not know or were unsure. More significantly, 71.5% don’t know or are not sure if “the money spent by the RDA in Porter County already exceeds the amount Porter County has contributed to the RDA.” Similarly, while 41.0% agree that the RDA will ultimately cost us more than we receive, 45.6% are not sure or don’t know. Likewise, 45.6% don’t know whether “projects supported by the RDA increase jobs for people in the region,” and 37.5% don’t know or are not sure whether “without the RDA or a similar organization, many of the projects necessary for economic development in the region would not get done.”

Table 9

The following comments have been made about the Regional Development Authority. Indicate your agreement or disagreement by checking the response that most closely represents your opinion.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agree	Total Disagree	N
It's not just the RDA, I don't think we should cooperate with other counties on anything.	5.8%	7.5%	14.1%	52.2%	20.5%	13.3%	72.7%	469
The RDA is a poor use of our tax dollars.	17.9%	19.4%	34.9%	20.6%	7.2%	37.3%	27.8%	470
The money spent by the RDA in Porter County already exceeds the amount Porter County has contributed to the RDA.	6.4%	13.4%	71.5%	5.5%	3.2%	19.8%	8.7%	470
The RDA will ultimately cost us more than we receive.	16.8%	24.2%	45.6%	10.2%	3.2%	41.0%	13.4%	471

Table 9 Continued

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Agree	Total Disagree	N
Projects supported by the RDA increase jobs for people in the region.	4.8%	33.2%	43.3%	13.7%	5.0%	38.0%	18.7%	476
Without the RDA or a similar organization, many of the projects necessary for economic development in the region would not get done.	6.4%	27.1%	37.5%	20.8%	8.3%	33.5%	29.1%	472

Support for the RDA II

To look more closely at attitudes toward the RDA, the responses to the six statements about the RDA were combined and an index measuring a person's overall attitude toward the RDA was created. Respondents were then divided into three categories including those who were low supporters, moderate supporters, and high supporters of the RDA. The question then was what factors affected attitudes towards the RDA. Analysis indicated that sex, whether persons owned or rented their homes, where they lived, age, and income, did not seem to have much of an effect on RDA attitudes, or at least they did not reach levels of statistical significance. However, levels of education and whether they were likely to vote had a positive effect on RDA attitudes. On the other hand, as we have seen before, how long they had lived in Porter County had a negative impact on RDA attitudes. This data is presented in Table 10.

At the bottom of Table 10 are the results of a comparison between attitudes on regionalism and attitudes towards the RDA. Note how strong the relationship is. In addition to the statistical significance the Gamma correlation coefficient is .832 indicating an extremely strong correlation between the two variables. Attitudes towards the RDA are very dependent upon attitudes towards regionalism in general.

Table 10
Support for RDA: RDA Scale

Education and RDA Scale	Group	Low	Moderate	High	N	p
	Some HS	23.1%	53.8%	23.1%	13	0.004
	HS / GED	32.5%	33.8%	33.8%	151	
	Assoc. Degree	33.3%	28.8%	37.9%	66	
	Bach. Degree	32.7%	21.8%	45.5%	101	
	Post-Grad	15.0%	31.9%	53.1%	113	
TOTAL		124	135	185	444	

Years Lived in Porter County and RDA Scale	Group	Low	Moderate	High	N	p
	<11	18.8%	29.7%	51.5%	101	0.001
	26-40	22.7%	29.7%	47.7%	128	
	27-41	30.8%	32.7%	36.4%	107	
	42+	43.1%	30.3%	26.6%	109	
	TOTAL		128	136	181	

Likely to Vote and RDA Scale	Group	Low	Moderate	High	N	p
	Unlikely	17.2%	44.8%	37.9%	29	0.043
	Not Sure	15.8%	44.7%	39.5%	38	
	Likely	30.7%	27.6%	41.7%	381	

Regionalism and RDA Scale	Group	Low	Moderate	High	N	p
	Anti	81.7%	15.7%	2.6%	115	0.001
	Low	26.2%	51.4%	22.4%	107	
	Some	1.0%	39.2%	59.8%	102	
	High	3.3%	17.2%	79.5%	122	
	TOTAL		128	136	181	

The Regional Development Authority and Specific Projects

Respondents already were asked about their support for four projects: the Gary/Chicago airport, the South Shore, a regional bus system, and the development of the South Shore Line, and their willingness to pay taxes for each one of these. In addition, they were asked about their support for the Regional Development Authority handling these same projects. The results are presented in Table 11 and represented graphically in Figure 31.

Commuter Rail transportation. More than one-half (59.4%) support the RDA handling Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line. A total of 14.3% are not sure while 13.6% oppose it and 12.8% strongly oppose it. Women, persons with greater income, more education, and likely voters are more supportive. Renters indicate about the same level of support, but much less opposition.

Gary/Chicago International Airport. Barely a majority (53.1%) support the RDA handling the airport with 29.1% strongly supporting and 34.4% supporting. A total of 13.2% are not sure while 18.5% oppose this, and 12.3% strongly oppose this. Women differ from men on this issue primarily because they are less sure about the RDA handling of this issue.

Lake Michigan shore. Only 41.4% support the RDA handling the development of the Lake Michigan Shoreline, while 33.6% oppose this and 21.8% are not sure. There is more support for this as persons get older.

A regional bus system. A total of 41.7% support the RDA handling a regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties. A total of 33.6% oppose the RDA handling the bus system and 25.1% are not sure or don't know. Women, renters, and persons between the ages of 57-66 tend to support this more. Persons who have lived the longest in Porter County support this less.

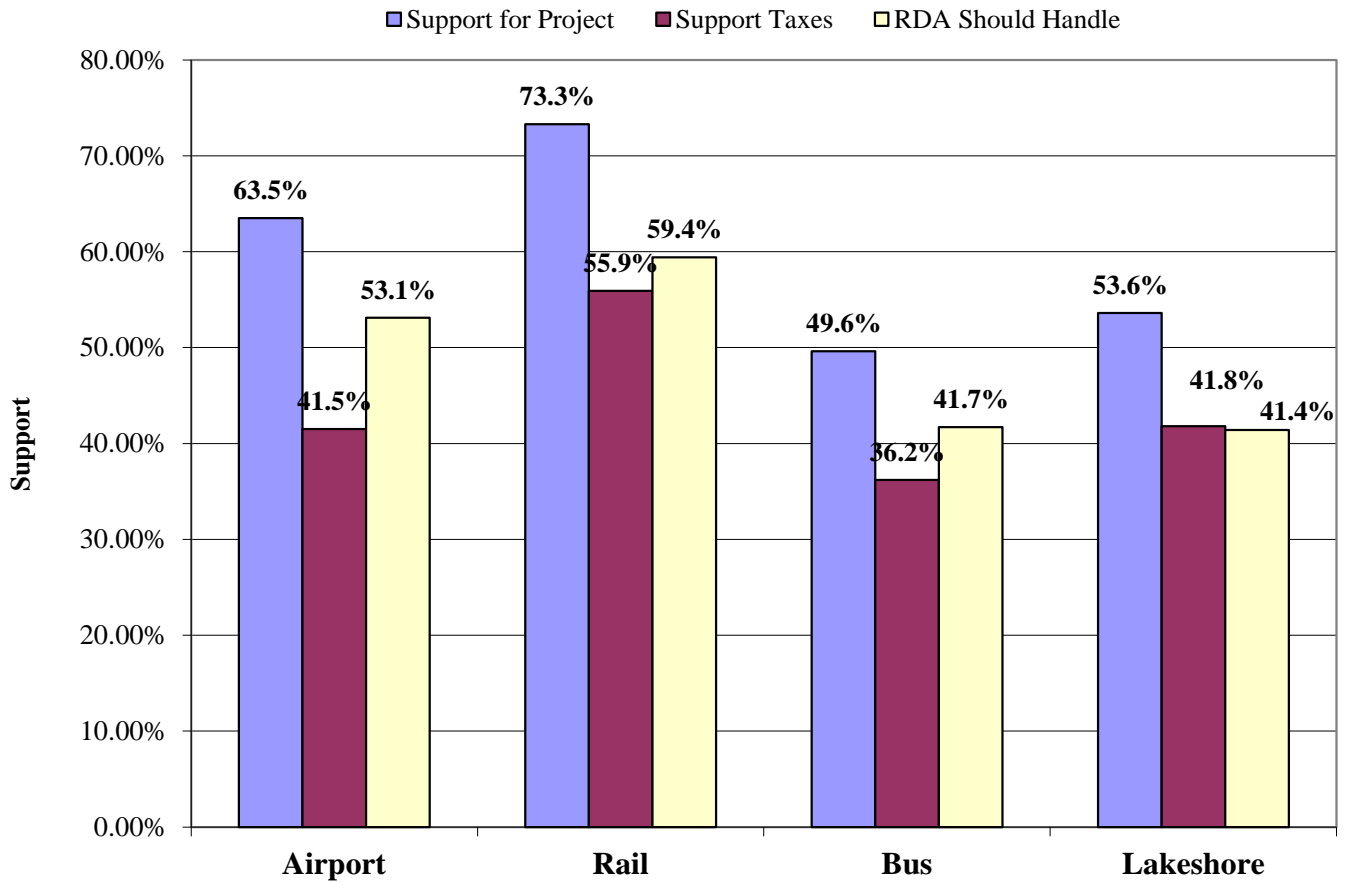
Figure 31 compares support for these same four projects in the abstract, paying taxes for them, and having the RDA handle them. As indicated, there is considerable more support for these projects in general and that support declines when people are asked about paying taxes for these projects. While RDA handling of the projects does not generally equal support for these projects in the abstract, it does get some degree of support.

Table 11

We are interested in your support for the Regional Development Authority handling the following projects. Indicate your support by checking the response that most closely represents your opinion.

Projects	Strongly Support	Support	Not Sure Don't Know	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Total Support	Total Oppose	N
The development and expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport.	17.2%	35.9%	16.1%	18.5%	12.3%	53.1%	30.8%	471
Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line.	18.5%	40.9%	14.3%	13.6%	12.8%	59.4%	26.4%	470
A regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties.	11.0%	30.7%	21.1%	21.6%	15.6%	41.7%	37.2%	473
The increased development of the Lake Michigan shore line.	13.6%	27.8%	25.1%	16.8%	16.8%	41.4%	33.6%	471

Figure 31: Comparing Support, Taxes and RDA Handling of Projects



Summary

Support for Projects

Commuter Rail Transportation. Almost three fourths of respondents (73.3%) support Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line.

Gary/Chicago International Airport. Almost two-thirds (63.5%) support this.

Lake Michigan Shore Line. 53.6% support this.

A Regional Bus System. The regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties garners the least support of the four areas with less than one-half (49.6%) supporting it.

Taxes and Support

Commuter rail transportation. Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line is the only project that is able to get support for taxes from a majority of respondents (55.9%).

Lake Michigan shore. While the increased development of the Lake Michigan shore line was supported by a majority of respondents, only 41.8% were willing to pay taxes to support this.

Gary/Chicago International Airport. A plurality (44.2%) oppose spending taxes on this and 41.5% support it.

A regional Bus System. Almost a majority of respondents (45.6%) oppose spending tax dollars on a regional bus system.

Support for Regionalism

Support for Cooperation. In the abstract there is substantial support for regional efforts. For example, 75.1% agree that “it is a good idea to cooperate more with other cities and counties in Northwest Indiana to address issues and possibly save tax dollars.

Less Support on Specific Issues. When you get to more specific issues involved with cooperation, support for regional efforts begins to decline.

Taxes and Regionalism. While most agree with cooperating with other areas of the region, almost two-thirds (61.5%) agree that “I don’t want my tax dollars spent on issues in other counties.”

Leadership and Accountability. Porter County residents have other concerns about regional efforts that relate to control and accountability. For example, 58% agree that “regional efforts sound good, but we lose our ability to control our own local issues.” Similarly, 69.6% agree that “leaders of regional organizations are not always elected and not accountable to the people they serve.”

Factors affecting Attitudes Towards Regionalism

Gender, whether people owned or rented, age, and the area of the County they live in have no effect on attitudes towards regionalism. However, how long they lived in Porter County has a significant effect on their attitudes towards regionalism with persons who have lived here the longest being the least supportive of cooperating with other parts of the region. Education also has a positive effect on support for regionalism. Likewise support for regionalism goes up as income increases. Finally, support for regionalism goes up as persons say they are more likely to vote.

The Regional Development Authority (RDA)

Knowledge and Information about the Regional Development Authority. Respondents do not say they have a lot of knowledge or information about the RDA; 41.0% report they have some information, 23.0% said they have “a little” information, 19.7% say they have no information, and 16.2% said they have “a lot” of information.

Support for the RDA. When asked “do you think the residents of Porter County should support the RDA? 41.8% say yes, 36.3% say no, and 21.8% are not sure. When taxes are involved and they are asked “do you think tax dollars from Porter County should be used to support the RDA?” support declines and 45.4% say Porter County tax dollars should not be used to support the RDA, 31.8% say yes, and 22.8% say not sure. When residents are asked “do you think Porter County should withdraw from the RDA?” 43.4% say no, 34.2% say yes, and almost a quarter (22.3%) are not sure.

Factors Affecting attitudes Towards Support for the RDA.

Support for the RDA. Gender, whether people rent or own their own homes, level of income, and area of the County they are from have no statistically significant impact on the belief that we should support the RDA. Support does increase with level of education and whether people are more likely to vote. On the other hand, support decreases with age and the number of years that persons have lived in the region.

Spending Tax Dollars. When the issue of providing tax support to the RDA is examined, gender, whether people rent or own their homes, age, income, and area of the county they live in do not have statistically significant relationships. Willingness to pay taxes to support the RDA does increase with education and whether they are likely to vote. The longer a person has lived in Porter County the less likely they are to support using taxes to support the RDA.

Withdraw from the RDA. Variables such as age, income, area of the County and whether they rent or own do not have a statistically significant relationship to whether they think we should withdraw from the RDA or not. Women, persons with more education, and those more likely to vote are more likely to oppose withdrawing from the RDA. The longer a person has lived in Porter County the more likely they are to want to withdraw from the RDA.

Self-Reported Knowledge and Support for the RDA

There is a statistically significant relationship between reported knowledge and whether residents should support the RDA. Those persons who claim to have the most knowledge are the ones least likely to indicate the RDA should be supported. Similarly, when it comes to using tax support and whether we should withdraw, it is those persons who report having the most knowledge that are least likely to support using tax dollars and the most likely to support withdrawal.

Attitudes Towards the RDA

Regional Cooperation. There is a sense that cooperation with other parts of the region is ok. Most (72.7%) disagree with the statement “it’s not just the RDA, I don’t think we should cooperate with other counties on anything.”

RDA and Taxes. When taxes are entered into the equation, support declines. For example, 37.3% agree and 27.8% disagree with the statement that “the RDA is a poor use of our tax dollars.”

Not Sure About the RDA. The most apparent pattern in these responses is that people are not sure or don’t know what to think about the RDA. For example, 71.5% don’t know or are not sure if “the money spent by the RDA in Porter County already exceeds the amount Porter County has contributed to the RDA.” Similarly, while 41.0% agree that the RDA will ultimately cost us more than we receive, 45.6% are not sure or don’t know. Likewise, 45.6% don’t know whether “projects supported by the RDA increase jobs for people in the region,” and 37.5% don’t know or are not sure whether “without the RDA or a similar organization, many of the projects necessary for economic development in the region would not get done.”

Support for the RDA II

Gender, whether persons owned or rented their homes, where they lived, age, and income, did not seem to have much of an effect on RDA attitudes, or at least they did not reach levels of statistical significance. However, levels of education and whether they were likely to vote had a positive effect on RDA attitudes. On the other hand, as we have seen before, how long they have lived in Porter County has a negative impact on RDA attitudes.

Attitudes towards the RDA are very dependent upon attitudes towards regionalism in general.

The Regional Development Authority and Specific Projects

Commuter Rail transportation. More than one-half (59.4%) support the RDA handling Commuter rail transportation including maintaining and expanding the South Shore Line.

Gary/Chicago International Airport. Barely a majority (53.1%) support the RDA handling the airport. Women differ from men on this issue because they seem to be less sure about the RDA handling this issue.

Lake Michigan shore. Only 41.4% support the RDA handling the development of the Lake Michigan Shoreline.

A regional bus system. A total of 41.7% support the RDA handling a regional bus system that would run between cities across Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties. Women, renters, persons between the ages of 57-66 tend to support this more. Persons who have lived the longest in Porter County support this less.

There is considerable more support for these projects in general and support declines when people are asked about paying taxes for these projects. While RDA handling of the projects does not generally equal support for these projects in the abstract, it does get some degree of support.