

Hobart board of works OKs traffic plan

Officials plan adjustments to accommodate Amazon data center

By Maya Wilkins
POST-TRIBUNE

As construction on Hobart’s Amazon data center continues, the Hobart Board of Public Works unanimously approved a traffic request near the site.

All three board members were present at Wednesday’s afternoon meeting.

According to city documents, the board approved a right-of-way permit for 61st Avenue restriping and temporary signals for data

center construction traffic.

“This is a mitigation plan to basically help the traffic all along 61st Avenue as they start to move forward and more workers are going to site,” City Engineer Alex Metz said.

Amazon Web Services completed several studies, doing calculations based on how many employees and trucks would run through the site. The city sent Amazon’s study to BF&S Civil Engineers, an Indianapolis-based firm, who verified the study’s findings.

According to city documents, BF&S Traffic Department Head Troy Williard said in a letter that the firm will continue to provide Hobart with a “professional traffic engineering representative” while they “discuss potential roadway impacts and additional mitigation measures” through construction phases.

BF&S also consulted Indiana Department of Transportation engineers and advised Amazon to include the state agency in future discussions.

“We believe that this ongoing collaborative effort, and willingness to adjust traffic mitigation efforts as needed, will continue through the next phases of site planning and construction to ensure that the City of Hobart’s concerns are met and addressed in the best ways possible,” the letter said.

An intersection on Arizona Street and 61st Avenue, Metz said, had an “intersection rating of D, which is fairly low.” Improvement plans include adjusting the striping on-site to make a right turn lane for trucks and anyone entering the site.

On that same road, the middle

lane will be for eastbound travel and the north side will be for west-bound drivers. Two temporary traffic signals will also be at each of the construction entrances, Metz said.

Traffic changes are only temporary, he added.

“We don’t want this to be the full-time plan,” Metz said. “We don’t want everybody to drive in the center lane.”

Hobart Mayor Josh Huddlestun told Metz Wednesday that the plan is a step in the right direction. He also said that the city and Amazon

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Cousins Ozzy Wallace, 8, of St. John, on left, and Adam Owensby, 6, of Gary, ride the swings on the first day of the Lake County Fair in Crown Point on Aug. 1, 2025. **KYLE TELECHAN/FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE**

Lake County Fair opening

New vendors, entertainers join typical attractions

By Alexandra Kukulka
POST-TRIBUNE

The 174th annual Lake County Fair kicks off Friday with new vendors, concerts, a few booth location changes, and a moving performance during the first weekend, officials said.

The fair will have a lot of new food booths, including a chocolate covered strawberry booth, and a few new vendor booths, said Dawn Casey, the fair board secretary.

The fairground’s conservation building has been repaired and updated in the last year, Casey said, and fair officials are excited to debut the new building at this year’s fair.

The family arts and crafts building will be closed this year amid a restoration project, Casey said, but the family arts and crafts department will be open in the industrial building. The flower show will also



Ela Ripperdan, 11, of Hebron, stands nearby as her bunny, Romeo, is judged in the 4-h show rabbit competition at the Lake County Fair in Crown Point on Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024.

be held in the industrial building, she said.

“That’s a huge change for us this year. As far as I can recall, family arts has always been in the same building. It was a huge project to move it all to a separate building this year,” Casey said. “The inside vendors that were previously in that building are now moved into the previous flower show building and the previous

you’ll join us in celebrating another fantastic fair.”

The industrial building will have 12 vendors inside, including Dan’s Bird Houses, Bonesteel’s Flag Pole, B’s Marketplace and Emma’s Beauty Boutique. The old art building will have Dune-land Labradoodles and the Conservation Building will have Games2u NWI, which includes inflatable courses, a rock climbing wall and mini golf, according to the fair website.

New this year, for the first weekend of the fair, a strolling piano — a performer riding around a moving piano playing and singing — will be moving throughout the fair, Casey said.

“We’re very excited to have him,” Casey said.

Returning this year will be the animal tents and 4-H animal shows, Casey said. The 4-H horse and pony show will be held Aug. 10 and Aug. 11, she said.

“We’re a very agricultural focused fair. We pride

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Portage board OKs tighter zoning for data centers

By Doug Ross
FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

The Portage City Council created a new zoning category for data centers, restricting where they can be built.

“This will make it, in my opinion, much more difficult to build a data center,” Mayor Austin Bonta said.

Until Tuesday’s vote, a data center was considered a warehouse for zoning purposes. With the new technology campus category, anyone proposing to build a data center would have to bring the request to the council for a decision. The council could vote yes, no or yes but with conditions, Bonta said.

Councilwoman Penny Ambler, R-4th, convinced the council to amend the ordinance to effectively limit a data center to 65 feet high, instead of 75 feet as originally proposed to allow two-story buildings, and to reduce the maximum noise level at the property line from 65 decibels to 55 decibels, so less than the 66 decibels for industrial operations and roughly the level of a conversation.

Bonta said a semiconductor factory or pharmaceutical operation would also be allowed in the technology campus zone.

The ordinance allows data centers, but it creates a series of hoops for developers to go through before one can be built. First, no land is currently zoned for a technology campus, so rezoning for that category would require Plan Commission review and City Council approval. Second, any hyperscale data center, as defined by the ordinance, would have to be in a planned development, meaning a special zoning category just for that property. That gives the council even more power in setting conditions for that zone.

A moratorium on data centers or making it impossible to build one in Portage would open up the city to a lawsuit it likely would lose, Bonta said.

It’s like Prince Charming having a glass slipper that’s really too small to fit anyone, said Councilman Ferdinand Alvarez, D-At-large.

With this ordinance, the city has

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GPTC in expansion mode for buses, bikes

By Doug Ross
FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

Ridership continues to grow for Gary Public Transportation Corp., Director of Planning and Marketing David Wright told the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission Transportation Committee on Tuesday.

The 2.3% increase brought the total number of riders to more than 476,000, he said.

“We’re continuing to see an increase in ridership as we get out of the pandemic,” Wright said.

GPTC is in expansion mode, having added three new routes last year — West Central via Grant, Crosstown Connector and Lake-shore North.

The Cycle 219 program continues to grow, with bikeshare stations now serving Calumet College of St. Joseph and commitments made to put bikes at the South Shore Line’s Hammond Gateway and Miller stations. Dune Park is also in GPTC’s sights for the bikeshare program, with plans to put bikes there if a grant is approved, consultant Gretchen Sipp said.

Some of the uses of the bikes are eye-opening. “You would never know what people use bikes for,” she said. The bikes have tracking devices to help ensure their recovery.

“Bikes are really important at 1 a.m. to go to Taco Bell,” Sipp said.

“We have seen tourism go up quite a bit,” including using the bike-share program to explore Indiana Dunes National Park, Sipp said. A member of Finland’s Ministry of Justice wanted to use bikes to explore the trail and went to West Beach, Wright said.

“Such an incredible story about tourism in Northwest Indiana,” Sipp said.

GPTC found that half of its bus passengers don’t own a personal vehicle. The flip side of that is that half of the riders prefer public transportation.

Sipp said GPTC’s fares are well below the \$2.50 CTA fares in Chicago, at \$1.60 for the base rate with lower rates for seniors, people on Medicare and people with disabilities.

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A pair of the Gary Public Transportation Corporation’s new all-electric buses are seen during a celebration of the organizations acquisition of the vehicles on Aug. 9, 2023. **KYLE TELECHAN FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE**