

## From the Desk of the Chancellor

### Mass Transit?

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by Charles R. Bantz

Last week, the Indiana General Assembly's House of Representatives Roads and Transportation Committee held a hearing to discuss HB1011, a bill that would "authorize the establishment of a metropolitan transit district by specified eligible counties through local public questions," essentially approving a referendum to voters on a plan for public mass transit. The estimated cost is about \$1.3 billion over 10 years to build a functional transit system—with busses and possibly bus rapid transit or light rail—so legislators want to be sure that citizens understand the issue and its cost/benefit balance. And so, I bring the question to you. Would an expanded regional transit system be a good thing for IUPUI?

I spoke in favor of the bill since IUPUI is a major employer downtown and a major destination for tens of thousands of students and visitors (including patients to the hospitals) from our nine-county service area and beyond. Did you know that 95% of our total campus population uses an automobile to reach campus and 87% on average drive alone? Currently, IUPUI has nearly 20,000 parking spaces, most of which are filled by 10 am, most days of the week. It costs us between \$14 and \$18 million to build each new parking structure.

From my perspective, parking and transportation issues must be part of our thinking as we move forward on the Vision 2025 strategic plan. Now is the time to weigh in on investing in public transportation—both as stakeholders in the IUPUI campus and as citizens of Indiana.

These are the points I made to the committee considering HB1011. What do you think?

- Improvements in public transit support people making choices, including alternatives to driving.
- An increasing number of our students/faculty/staff live downtown near the campus and seek less expensive and more convenient ways of getting around than cars, parking fees, insurance premiums, etc.
- Many of our faculty, staff, students, as well as patients, do not have alternatives but to drive to and from campus. Public transportation would allow international students, people with disabilities, and others who don't have automobile access more independence and options for getting to class, work, hospitals, etc., as well as recreational activities.
- Our campus Sustainability Committee passed a resolution in support of HB1011 citing the environmental impact of the emissions from so many cars on campus every day. Is the health issue important to you?
- Research shows that 25-34 year olds—the age of many J.D.s, M.D.s, D.D.S.s, faculty—choose cities when thinking about where to begin their careers rather than jobs themselves. Do you look for transportation options among the urban amenities you seek?
- A public transportation system will improve our viability as a premier urban research institution and make us a more desirable location for students, faculty and staff which, in turn, will add to the economy of Indianapolis and central Indiana. Do you agree?

I invite you to share your thoughts on these questions and issues.

Comments? Write [chancldr@iupui.edu](mailto:chancldr@iupui.edu) or [plan2025@iupui.edu](mailto:plan2025@iupui.edu) or visit <http://strategicplan.iupui.edu/>.

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Chancellor Charles R. Bantz