

Purpose and Need of Double Track NWI

A purpose and need statement identifies problems to be solved and enables decision makers to determine which improvements best address issues that pertain to the project and the transportation needs of the region.

What is the Purpose of Double Track NWI?

The SSL is a vital transportation link between NWI and Chicago. The purpose of the Double Track NWI Project is to provide improved local and express service, accommodate more passengers, reduce travel times, and improve safety, mobility, and reliability.

What is the need for Double Track NWI?

Improve Local and Express Service

Trains traveling in opposite directions on the single track require strict scheduling so one train can wait at a designated siding while the other train passes. If a train is late for any reason, other trains must wait for it to pass, resulting in decreased reliability and poor on-time performance. In addition, planned and emergency maintenance on the track can stop rail service when there is no alternative to bypass the maintenance location.

Accommodate More Passengers

SSL’s rush hour trains currently have more passengers than seats. Additionally, forecasts predict a 28% gain in ridership by 2033, even if no improvements are made to the SSL. Neither the current ridership nor the growth in ridership can be met without the ability to accommodate more passengers by running more frequent and reliable service.

Reduce Travel Time

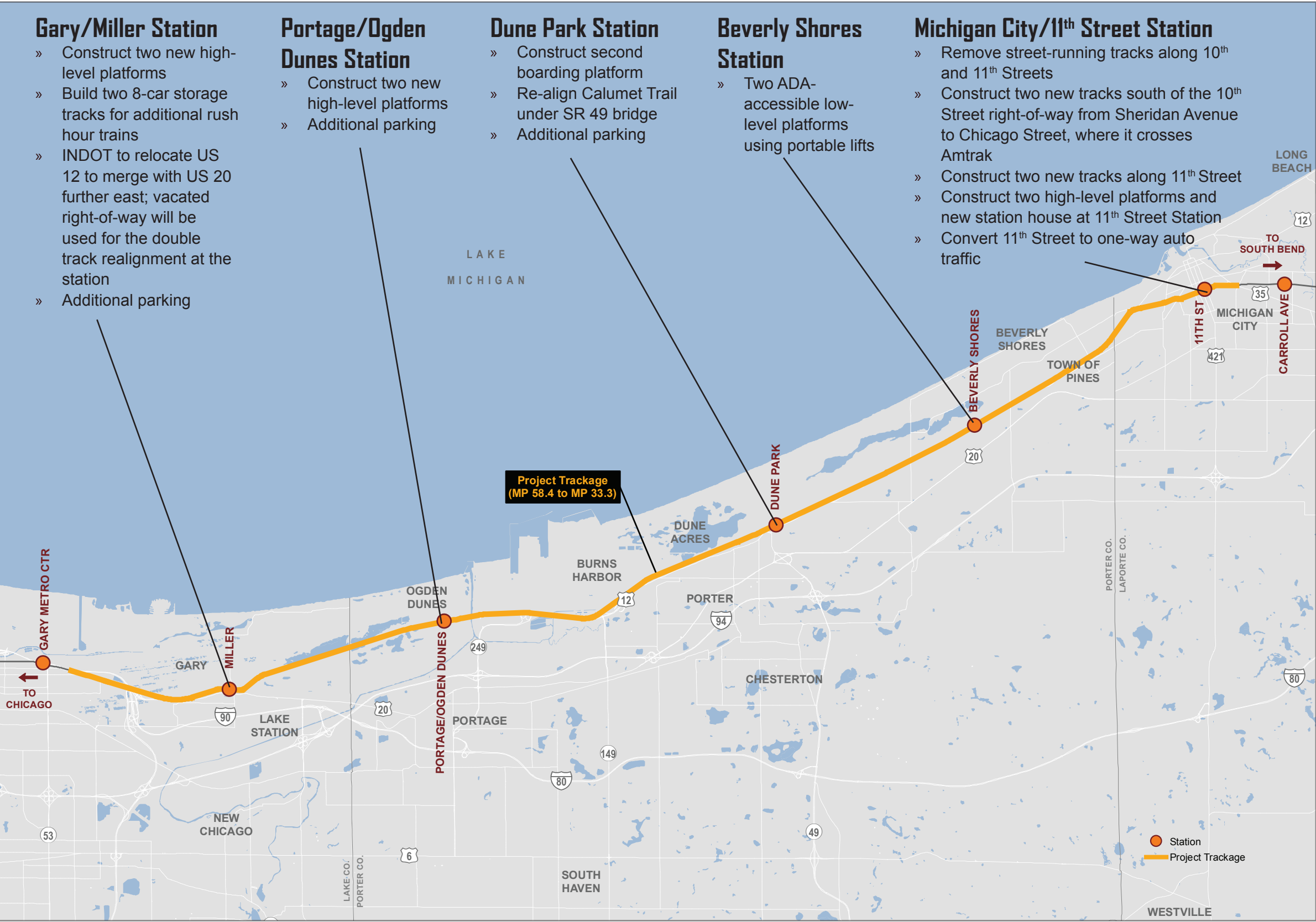
Travel time between Michigan City and Chicago on the SSL is longer than a trip by car, making it a less attractive option. Additionally, the need for passengers to board from low-level platforms at some stations can impact schedule and limits the ability to adequately serve disabled passengers.

Enhance Safety

Maintaining safe operating conditions becomes more difficult and costly as infrastructure degrades. In Michigan City, unprotected at-grade crossings and embedded, street-running track create safety concerns for passengers, freight users, pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles sharing the same travel space.

Proposed Improvements

The project is 25.1 miles in length. Approximately 8.7 miles of double track already exists, and very little construction will take place in that section. Approximately 16.4 miles of new second main track will be constructed, mostly within existing railroad right-of-way and next to the existing track. Within Michigan City, the street running tracks on 10th and 11th Streets will be removed and two new tracks will be constructed from Sheridan Avenue to Michigan Boulevard.



Next Steps

The SSL is developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and is gathering data to determine if there will be impacts to the following:

- » Historic Structures and Districts
- » Parks, Trails, and Recreation Areas, including Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and Indiana Dunes State Park
- » Wetlands and Streams
- » Social and Economic Environment
- » Threatened and Endangered Species
- » Freight and Auto Traffic
- » Special Waste Sites
- » Property Ownership





Your comments are an important part of the evaluation process. The SSL is also coordinating the project with federal, state, and local agencies. The EA will be available for public review and comment in summer 2017.

What Do You Think About the Double Track NWI Project and the Proposed Improvements?

We encourage you to attend public workshops, sign up for the project mailing list, and visit the website and SSL Facebook page for project updates and announcements.

Formal commenting period is open through October 24, 2016; however, input is welcome at any time.

How to Submit Comments:

-  Fill out a comment form today
-  View the online meeting and submit an online comment form: www.doubletrack-nwi.com
-  Email your comments to: DoubleTrackNWI@nictd.com
-  Mail your comments to: South Shore Line, Attn: Double Track NWI, 33 East U.S. Highway 12, Chesterton, IN 46304

You may also request a presentation to your group by calling Nicole Barker, SSL at: (219) 926-5744, x 313.

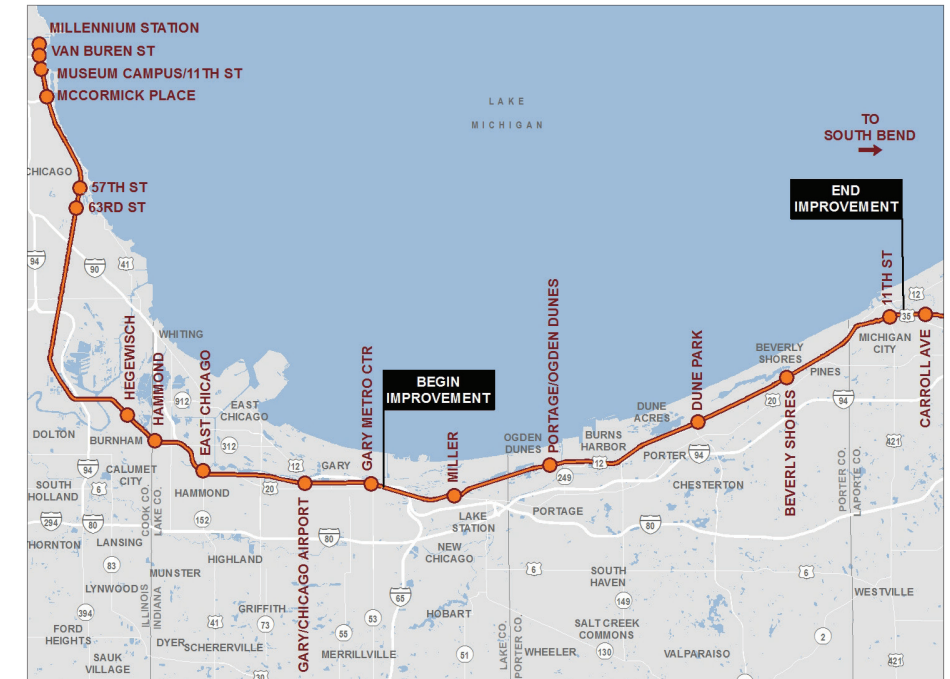


Public Workshops
October 2016

Thank you for your interest in Double Track Northwest Indiana (NWI) and the future of transit in the region. There will be a short presentation at 6:15 p.m. and a workshop starting at 6:45 p.m. Staff members are available to discuss the project and answer any questions you may have.

Connectivity for Accelerated Growth

The South Shore Line (SSL), in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), has begun preliminary engineering and environmental review to install a second track along the 25.1-mile segment of the South Shore Line between Gary and Michigan City. The SSL is an important component of NWI's transportation system and double tracking will provide a more competitive transportation option between NWI and Chicago. The proposed improvements will better connect the region by providing faster, more frequent, and more reliable train service.



A number of projects to expand the SSL have been identified as regional priorities by the SSL, NWI municipalities and planning organizations. The Double Track NWI Project has been studied or included in the following plans:

- » Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) and the City of Michigan City's Rail Realignment Study, 2013
- » NICTD and Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) Strategic Business Plan, 2014
- » City of Gary and RDA Lake Street Junction Plan, 2015

In addition to constructing a second track between Gary and Michigan City, the Double Track NWI project will improve five SSL stations and remove the embedded street-running track in Michigan City. The SSL is applying for Core Capacity federal funds administered by FTA and additional funding sources will be evaluated and pursued to progress through final design (2018) and construction, which is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2019.

The SSL's current planning efforts, coupled with these community initiatives, are the building blocks to develop a long term, sustainable solution for competitive, reliable commuter rail service in northwestern Indiana.



Project Schedule

