

The Need for and Some Kinds of Multi-county Regional Planning in Indiana

THOMAS FRANK BARTON

Department of Geography

Indiana University, Bloomington 47401

Abstract

The need for multi-county regional planning has become so critical and Indiana lags so far behind other states in the eastern half of the United States in adopting multi-county planning that expansion of this form of government may take place rapidly in the Hoosier state in the next two decades. At the present time the most extensively used multi-county planning organization is the council of governments and a second type receiving popular support is the resource conservation and development project. However if a bill entitled "Regional Planning and Development Act of 1971" is enacted into law, it will create a Planning Commission for each of the official 14 Indiana Planning and Development Regions.

Introduction

A variety of factors make it imperative that multi-county planning and zoning of the natural and cultural environments be widely implemented in Indiana during the 1970's. Some of these are: 1) the rapid growth of the rural non-farm dwellers; 2) the movement of industries, shopping centers, and service complexes from cities to the countryside; 3) mobility and increased accessibility of work, to shop, for recreation and education; 4) the paucity of inter-county governmental cooperation in the 1960's; 5) restriction of the content of county comprehensive surveys and plans to individual county boundaries; 6) the inter-county distribution of problems and the need to develop inter-county solutions to these; 7) the implementation of small watershed districts generally not confined to county boundaries; and 8) various acts of the Federal Government which encourage and financially subsidize multi-county organizations.

Although Indiana has multi-county or regional planning, perhaps only $\frac{1}{3}$ of its counties are involved. Some of these planning developments are: 1) regional council of governments; 2) a regional planning commission; 3) small watershed districts; and 4) a resource conservation and development project.

Two vital questions are: 1) will these and perhaps other types of inter-county planning, concerned with the numerous problems of water, land and air use in both cities and countryside, be attempted by most of the state's counties during the 1970's?; and 2) will the various planning agencies use the multi-county system established by Executive Order No. 18-68 on December 4, 1968?

Need for Multi-County or Regional Planning

The need for multi-county or regional planning is recognized by leaders, laymen and administrators who attempt to identify rural and

urban problems and for which they recommend alternate solutions. But the general public in Indiana seems not to be aware of the urgency of this new form of governmental administration. Technology and the life-style of the last $\frac{1}{2}$ of the Twentieth Century have made the townships and counties with their diminutive areas almost as obsolete as the horse and buggy. Yet these small units refuse to wither and die. In Indiana, governmental and civic leaders have apparently "thrown in the sponge" in attempting to discard and/or re-organize these impractical units into larger areas. In the present technological society, public services can only be supplied at a reasonable per capita cost if there is a large enough minimum population base of 50,000-100,000. If population densities are low, then larger administrative units are essential.

Not only are most of the present 92 counties in Indiana too small for efficient administration but the boundaries have been determined without giving consideration to the distribution of the major physical factors as soil characteristics, climatic elements, local relief, drainage, bedrock, potentially useful minerals, natural vegetation, etc. Of course, 100 to 150 years ago when the present county boundaries were drawn, detailed surveys were not available. The county boundaries were drawn and remained—frozen in time. Rivers, as a physical environment factor were considered and some of the boundaries are river channels. But river boundaries have helped create some of the present day problems; river channels are the core of watersheds and not natural dividers. The river county boundaries only divide water and land use problems into separate political administrative units.

Physical and social engineers, technical personnel, planners, lay members and some administrators today recognize that water and land problems are related to the natural processes—the environment of a river basin. The river watershed should not be ignored but manipulated and/or adjusted to in an attempt to supply man's needs for long periods of time. One of the most discouraging things about reading county comprehensive surveys is that the people preparing them apparently seem to feel that they should not identify problems that overlap with adjoining counties which can only be solved by multi-county planning, zoning and development (3).

In addition to the need to have large enough governmental units with a population size sufficient to provide governmental services efficiently and economically and to consider problems and public services in a river basin framework, the multi-county region can be effectively used to bridge the gap between state and local administration. Too often state talents, services, and resources peak in the Capitol where they are relatively inaccessible to distant counties or the state administration faces the enormous cost of attempting to duplicate many of these items in 92 counties. For example, in the fall of 1970, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction put into operation the Southwestern Regional Service Center in Huntingburg to provide schools in a 19-county area with permanent staff personnel from the state super-

intendent's office, special consultants hired with federal funds and a wealth of films, tapes, sample textbooks and other educational materials (4). The long-range plan was to establish other regional centers. No attempt was made to evaluate this program but counties included under the jurisdiction of this new administrative unit were delimited on a county outline map. To my knowledge, this region does not conform to any other system of regions in the state nor does it combine two or more of the Planning and Development Regions, as established by Executive Order No. 18-68 (6).

Regional planning is needed and potentially can be very useful but if too many different regional systems are created, an undesirable situation may develop. Apparently, no one knows how many regional administrative systems have been created.

Because of federal funds, these regional systems may be expected to multiply rather rapidly in the 1970's; since in order to take advantage of the funds of many federal agencies, the local people must form multi-county administrative units. For example, to qualify for federal road money, administrators in counties with sparse populations must group counties together to form a region with a minimum of 50,000 people (5).

The people in Spencer County may be already confused or may become so during the 1970's as to what regional planning division is responsible for what activity. For example, Spencer County is already in 1) the Lincoln Hills Resource Conservation and Development Project, authorized for operation in October, 1964; 2) Southwestern Regional Council of Governments formed in December, 1968; and 3) the Southwestern Regional Service Area of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction established in 1970 and perhaps several or many others. By 1980, will it be necessary for some counties to issue a booklet on what regional agency to approach for different kinds of service, and/or for some state agency to serve as coordinator for dozens of regional planning and administrative divisions of the state?

Councils of Governments

While in 1966, there was only one multi-county council of governments serving Floyd and Clark Counties in Indiana and Jefferson County in Kentucky, before 1970 an additional three regional organizations of this type were in operation. In 1966, the Falls of the Ohio Metropolitan Council of Governments was formed. It includes in Indiana the city of New Albany, Floyd County, the city of Jeffersonville, the town of Clarksville and Clark County and in Kentucky, the city of Louisville, Jefferson County and the Jefferson County Municipal Government Conference. The second council of governments in which Indiana counties are engaged was formed in November, 1967, and involves counties in three states. The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Planning Authority's membership consists of the following counties: Dearborn and Ohio in Indiana, Butler, Clermont, Hamilton and Warren in Ohio and Boone, Campbell and Kenton in Kentucky. Organized in

December, 1968, the Southwestern Regional Council of Governments also serves counties in both Indiana and Kentucky. This council includes the cities of Evansville, Mount Vernon, Boonville, Rockport and Princeton and the counties of Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Spencer, Gibson and Pike, all in Indiana and the city and county of Henderson, Kentucky. To the north with South Bend, Indiana, as the nodal point, the South Bend Regional Council of Governments consists of St. Joseph, Elkhart and Marshall counties in Indiana and Berrien and Cass counties in Michigan. These four councils of government are located astride state boundaries and involve Indiana counties and cities working with and planning with counties and cities in the adjacent states of Kentucky, Ohio and Michigan, and Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas in which there are mutual problems not respecting state lines. Perhaps, in time, there will be a council of governments involving Terre Haute and Vigo County with other counties in Indiana and some Illinois counties and cities to the west.

In addition to the four interstate multi-county council of governments just identified, there are two organizations of this type confined to county boundaries in Indiana. Cities, incorporated towns, townships and other forms of governmental units in a single county can organize councils of government; this has been done successfully in Allen and Madison counties but an attempt to provide this type of planning organization in Monroe County, which had the greatest population growth of any in Indiana during the 1960's (1), failed to materialize in 1969 (2).

Theoretically councils of government involving inter-county cooperation between counties in the same state or two or more states, if properly utilized, can be superior administrative units. But these councils to be effective must be comprehensive in depth as well as broad in scope. Problems need to be identified, and listed in some tentative order of priorities; broad policies, proposals and tentative programs need to be formulated, discussed and agreements reached; and regional transportation, public facilities, and general policies concerning such things as building codes and zoning need to be finalized. Then significant programs need to be financed and carried out with wholehearted support and vigor.

The acid test to use in evaluating the success of councils of government is to examine what policies and programs are being or have been implemented.

Unfortunately, these councils of government, having been organized in the 1960's, are in a delicate, infant and research stage of development and their vitality and vigor are sometimes sapped by less than 100% support by representatives of the various governmental units involved. Naturally, these new regional planning units should not forge ahead blindly implementing programs before scientific surveys and studies are made. It takes time to secure money and make surveys.

Arriving at a consensus of opinion and securing wholehearted and intelligent support from representatives of intra-county governmental units is often difficult and sometimes impossible. Cooperation on the implementation of programs and projects becomes more difficult when representatives of governmental units in two counties are expected to work together, and still more difficult when local representatives of governmental units in different states become involved. One must never forget that county and state boundaries as divisional lines have been nurtured and strengthened as administrative units for 150 years and it is difficult to change these boundary images in the minds of the lay people.

Furthermore, states, including Indiana, are creating regional planning and development systems based on state territory and terminating at state boundaries.

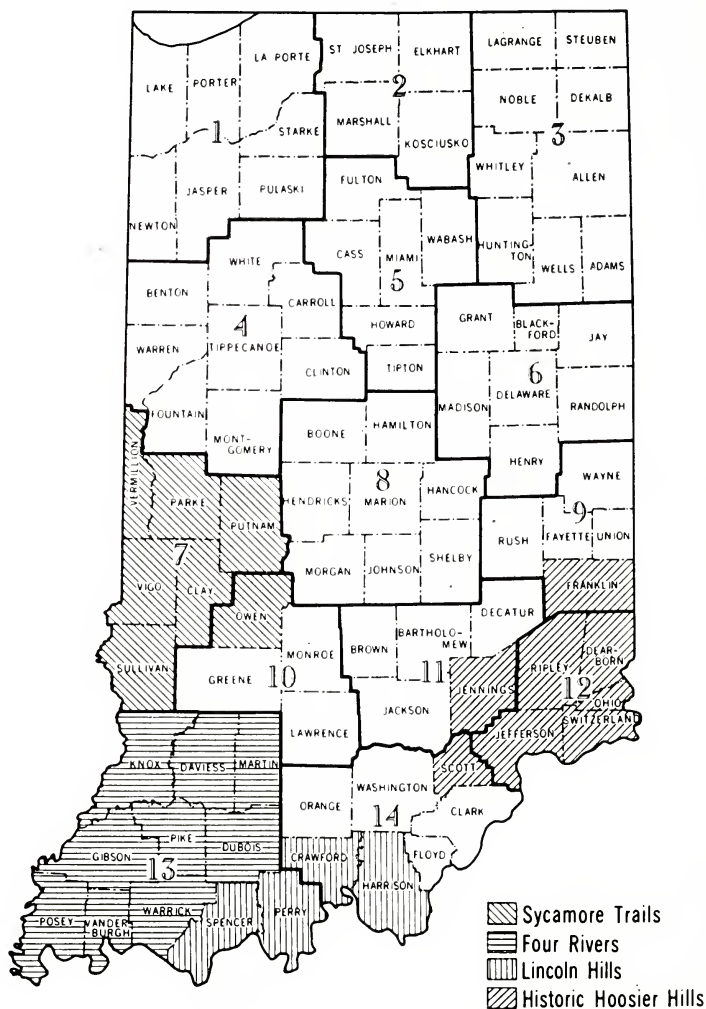
Resource Conservation and Development Projects

Another form of official multi-county developmental regions are the federally-approved and funded resource conservation and development projects. To date there is only one of these in Indiana, 46 in the United States. Authorized for operation in October, 1964, the Lincoln Hills Resource Conservation and Development (RC & D) Project is concerned with four counties, namely Spencer, Perry, Crawford and Harrison (Fig. 1). All of these abut the Ohio River on the south and are in the unglaciated hilly section of Indiana. This locally-initiated, sponsored and administered project has designs for and is implementing a program of land and water conservation and utilization which is helpful to both rural and urban people. The project is officially sponsored by the County Commissioners, Park Boards, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, City Councils and other legal units of government. Personnel from various federal agencies contribute technical know-how. Money from different federal, state and local sources help implement sound economic and social programs to improve the economy and the standard of living of the people. A 16-man steering committee, with equal representation from all 4 counties, administers the overall coordination and directs both the planning and implementation of plans. An adequate evaluation of this project during its first 6 years of existence would require another paper.

Partly due to the successes in the Lincoln Hills RC & D Project and also because of many similar needs and problems in Southeastern Indiana, the local people in the eight counties of Franklin, Dearborn, Ohio, Switzerland, Ripley, Jennings, Jefferson and Scott have applied for a resource conservation and development project in their area based on a study entitled *An Overall Economic Development Study of Southeastern Indiana* (8). Before the Historic Hoosier Hills Project can become a reality, this application must secure approval from the federal government which provides the funds.

Two additional potential resource conservation and development projects, the Four Rivers and the Sycamore Trails, are in the study

Resource Conservation and Development Areas



BARTON/Hollingsworth

Numbers indicate Planning and Development Regions.

FIGURE 1. Resource conservation and development areas.

and application-preparation stage. Located in Southwestern Indiana, the potential Four Rivers RC & D Area contains the nine counties of Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Gibson, Pike, Dubois, Knox, Daviess and Martin (Fig. 1). All of these are in Region 13 of the Indiana Planning and Development Regions (Fig. 2), which Region also contains the two additional counties of Spencer and Perry but these cannot be placed in the Four Rivers RC & D Area because they were placed in the Lincoln Hills RC & D Project established over 4 years before the Indiana Planning and Development Regions were established. The Sycamore Trails RC & D Area, located in west central Indiana, includes Sullivan, Vigo, Vermillion, Parke, Clay, Putnam and Owen counties. The boundaries of this area almost coincide with those of Region 7 of the Indiana Planning and Development Regions. The exception is Owen County which is not in Region 7 but in Region 10.

Official State Planning and Development Regions

Governor Roger D. Branigin, in response to memorandum and directives from President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Executive Office of the President, Bureau of the Budget, sent during 1966, 1967 and 1969 (6), established by Executive Order No. 18-68, the Planning and Development Regions of Indiana (6). This executive order divided the state into 14 planning and development regions (Fig. 2). These regions have been named unofficially after the largest city or cities in each region in the following manner: Region 1, Gary-Hammond-East Chicago; Region 2, South Bend-Elkhart; Region 3, Fort Wayne; Region 4, Lafayette; Region 5, Kokomo-Logansport; Region 6, Anderson-Muncie; Region 7, Terre Haute; Region 8, Indianapolis; Region 9, Richmond-Connersville; Region 10, Bloomington-Bedford; Region 11, Columbus; Region 12, Lawrence-Madison; Region 13, Evansville and Region 14, New Albany-Jeffersonville (7).

Since these regions did not become official until December 4, 1968, some regional administrative systems pre-date their establishment by five or more years, as an example, the Lincoln Hills RC & D Project. But some administrative regional systems have been formed during 1969 and 1970 which have apparently ignored the 14 official Planning and Development Regions. For example, the Southwestern Regional Service Center, serving 19 counties in Southwestern Indiana, encompasses all 11 counties in Region 13, 4 in Region 14, two in Region 10 and one each in Regions 7 and 8. Theoretically the Center might have been created to serve the 21 counties in Regions 13, 10 and 7 rather than taking all the counties of Region 13 and some from 4 others. Fortunately, some agencies have adopted and are using the official regions.

It is now becoming apparent to many informed citizens that there is an urgent need for consistent regions. A maze of regional systems tend to: 1) waste the talents of the people, 2) lead to duplication, 3) create antipodal policies and programs leading to disagreeable controversies, and 4) be inefficient and ineffective.

Planning and Development Regions

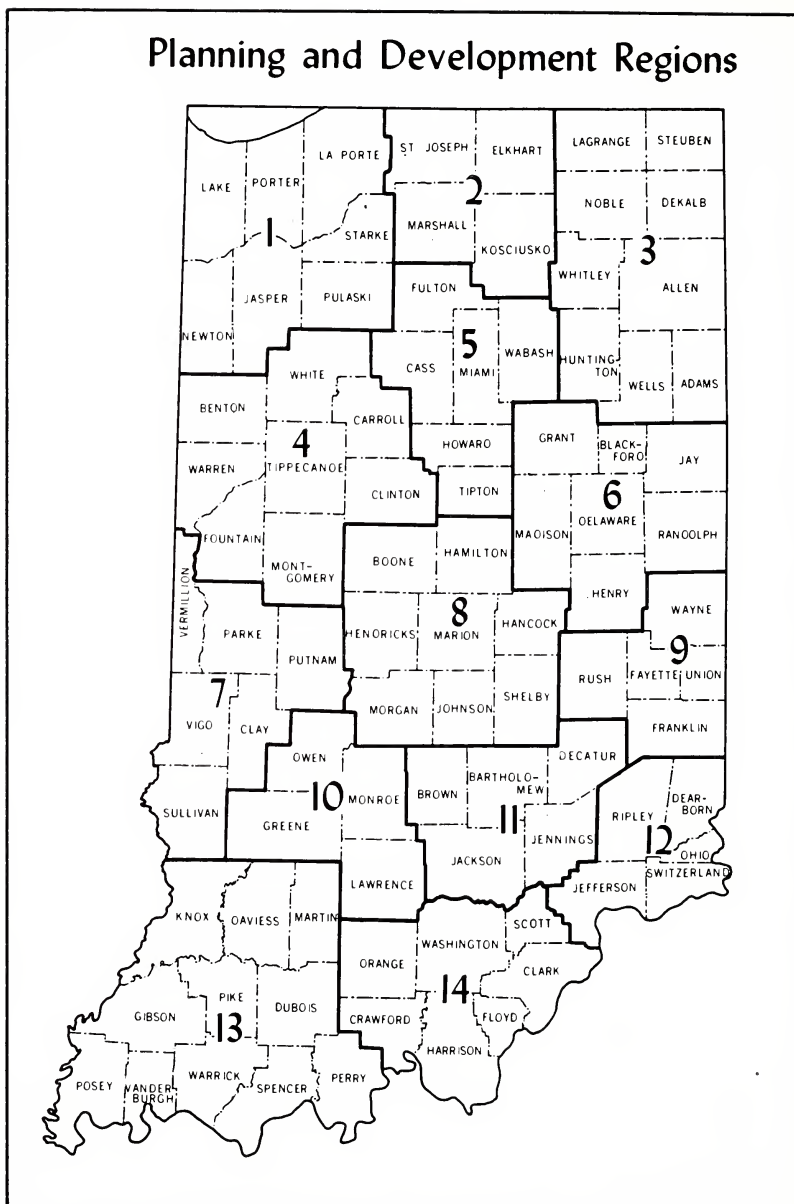


FIGURE 2. *Planning and development regions.*

If the official Planning and Development Regions are adopted, many advantages accrue to the various agencies contributing to the standardization. Some of these advantages are: 1) people have only one system to keep in mind; 2) these regions provide a uniform framework for research and study, and the data collected on a common basis makes possible comparability; 3) region-wide common problems can be identified, priorities agreed upon, and programs implemented, thereby permitting different regions to develop at different rates of speed but maintaining multi-county interest and uniformity; and 4) a uniform system of regions permits each region to capitalize on securing money and technical assistance from various agencies, levels of government, and improvements from private enterprise.

Fourteen Regional Planning Commissions

Some administrators and leaders believe that the time is right to push ahead with planning by creating 14 regional planning commissions within the state, one for each developmental region. Plans are being made for the introduction of a bill in the 1971 Indiana legislature entitled "Regional Planning and Development Act of 1971" which will, if enacted into law, create a Planning Commission for each of the official 14 Planning and Development Regions. Should this bill be enacted in substantially its present form, it may prove to be the second major milepost in implementing regional developmental planning in Indiana.

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