2021 Annual Report





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COLLABORATIVE PLANNING FOR NORTHERN ILLINOIS



This report was produced thanks to the writing, photography, and design contributions of the following staff: Gabrielle Torina, Myranda Gould, Julia Halsted, Sydney Turner, Shelby Best, Isaac Guerrero, Janna Bailey, Jason Holcomb, Eric Setter, Michael Dunn, Jr., and Kayla Gipson.

R1 PLANNING COUNCIL

An engine for regional collaboration and governmental efficienty in Northern Illinois.





Michael Dunn Jr. Executive Director

I am very proud to present to you Region 1 Planning Council's first annual report to the community. I am particularly proud of our past and present staff for the work they performed in 2021 to benefit the community on the host of initiatives presented in this report.

The average age of the roughly 500 regional planning councils in the United States is 33. Though we are still considered to be a young planning council, this report demonstrates that we have made great strides in delivering regional impact for the work we do on behalf of our public and private sector partners. This report is a great next step in reflecting on our mission and holding ourselves responsible to you.

We are committed to continue employing best practices to provide this region a greater resource of planning, funding, and actionable data. Thank you for taking an interest in this region's shared assets, and I look forward to celebrating more regional impact and success in partnership with you.



Mayor Greg Jury Loves Park, IL **Board Chairman**

On behalf of R1 Planning Council's Board of Directors, I am pleased to present this annual report to you.

Since first being elected Mayor of Loves Park, I have served and chaired multiple committees of Region 1 Planning Council, and I am honored to serve as the present Chairman of the R1 Board. The City of Loves Park recognizes the benefits of working with Region 1 staff, and more importantly, partnering on multijurisdictional projects with other governments through the council.

Our future prosperity and ability to reinvest in our infrastructure depends on a high degree of regional collaboration. Only by working together can we tackle future challenges and seize opportunities for the benefit of Northern Illinois. Region 1 Planning Council has demonstrated its ability to provide technical assistance to local governments in Northern Illinois, and its success has been all of our success.

GOVERNING BOARD

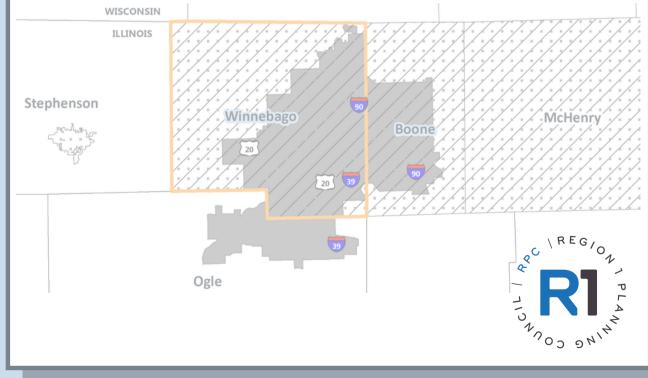
Standing Members

Boone County City of Belvidere City of Loves Park City of Rockford Illinois Dept. of Transportation – Dist 2 McHenry County Rockford Mass Transit District Village of Machesney Park Winnebago County

Special thanks to the numerous local officials, professionals, and volunteers who serve on our various committees and councils to lend their expertise and valuable perspective to our work.

Associate Members

Chicago Rockford International Airport City of Freeport City of Rochelle City of South Beloit ComEd Greater Freeport Partnership Greater Rockford Growth Partnership/RAEDC Growth Dimensions Highland Community College Nicor Gas Northern Illinois University North Park Public Water District Rochelle Economic Development Rockford Park District Four Rivers Sanitation Authority **Rock Valley College** Stephenson County Village of Cherry Valley Village of Poplar Grove The Workforce Connection



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is fundamental to our work as a planning council.

Engaging with the public provides us the opportunity to distribute information to citizens and other interested parties regarding plans and programs to allow for early participation in the planning process. In 2021, R1 increased our presence in the community in new ways with new partners. We look forward to increasing our interaction in the region and continuing to bring innovation in public engagement.

For current public comment opportunities, please visit **r1planning.org/publiccomment**

MAJOR ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Alignment Rockford Academy Expo RPS 205 Urban Planning Job Shadow Drive Electric Week City Market Booths Keith Creek Corridor Clean-Up Solid Waste Public Comment Meetings

Visit **<u>r1planning.org/calendar</u>** for upcoming events.









THE FUTURE IS NOW

Educating the region on the future of electric vehicles.







Electric





An Exelon Company





Thank you to our main sponsor ComEd as well as Schneider Electric, Goodwill, and Kishwaukee 365 who made this incredible week possible.

For the first time ever, R1 brought a one-of-kind experience to the Rockford Region: a series of events making up Drive Electric Week. Drive Electric Week is a nationwide celebration which raises awareness of the many benefits of allelectric and plug-in hybrid cars, trucks, motorcycles, and more. We hosted a virtual forum with national industry experts, a virtual ride and drive experience, and three in-person community events in Belvidere, Machesney Park, and Rockford.

At our community events, we discussed the benefits of driving electric cars. We provided hands-on education, food trucks, prizes, and giveaways. The public familiarized themselves with electric vehicles by taking test drives with a Tesla Model 3 and Model Y. Additionally, Anderson Automotive showcased a Kia Niro and Lou Bachrodt a Chevy Bolt. Bird was also present with helmets and scooters.

Drive Electric Week was a great success! We want to thank everyone again who was a sponsor, a vendor, or a guest at one of our events. We look forward to hosting the event again, Summer 2022.







READY

Eliminating the digital divide.



Region 1 Planning Council won a **\$50,000 grant** from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity in 2021 to assist Rockford Public Library develop a Chromebook and mobile hotspot lending program and devise a **Digital Divide Elimination Plan** for Boone and Winnebago Counties. The purpose of the Regional Engagement for Adoption + Digital Equity (READY) program is to accelerate progress toward eliminating the digital divide with a focus on broadband program adoption and implementation. A steering committee of education, IT, and local government leaders helped R1 craft the **Digital Divide Elimination Plan**, which provides a template for how to advance broadband programming and adoption in the two-county region.

Rockford Public Library has used the grant funding to obtain **38 Chromebook and mobile hotspot devices** that since July 2021 have been available for checkout at its Hart Interim Library, Montague Library, and mobile library locations. Chromebooks are available for a one-week or 90-day checkout while hot spots can be borrowed for up to three weeks.

The library, in partnership with Rockford Public Schools, is providing **five hours of weekly instruction** to teach patrons how to use the devices and perform simple tasks such as word processing and navigating the internet. Education, email, and job searches are the most common uses for the devices, according to patron surveys conducted by the library in late 2021.



RAISE

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will receive a \$16,384,905 RAISE grant for the **Downtown Complete Streets Revitalization Project.** RAISE, Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity, is a federal grant program, which funds transportation projects that create high-quality jobs, improve safety, protect the environment, and generate equitable economic opportunities. The grant, written by Region 1 Planning Council, will invest in the **reconstruction of Chestnut and Walnut streets** and will provide funding to Rockford Mass Transit District for **three battery-electric buses** and **recharging infrastructure.**

The project will provide investment and innovation to traditionally underserved populations that reside in and around the project area. With higher than average populations of low income, people of color and elderly residents in downtown Rockford, the project represents a significant equity investment. These **underserved** populations will gain greater access to essential services like healthcare, workforce support and education services all while gaining greater access to the rapidly growing amenity-based economy of downtown Rockford. Reducing the numbers of lanes on Chestnut/Walnut Street will help increase roadway safety by reducing vehicle crashes along the current four-lane one-way and will allow for the implementation of a bi-directional bike path and other pedestrian improvements.

A downtown circulator route will be established to connect the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center and UW Health Sports Factory to the south, UW Health/Swedish American Hospital to the east, the Riverfront Museum Campus to the north, and the U.S. District Court to the west. Other locations that can be accessed along or near the proposed route include the Social Security Office, the RMTD Downtown Transfer Center, Rockford Public Library downtown branch, Riverfront Museum Park, the Coronado Theater, BMO Harris Bank Center, several public and low-income housing sites and the Family Peace Center. This service will be a benefit not only to visitors and downtown workers, but also to low-income residents and others who may not have access to a car.

The three new battery electric buses will run the downtown circulator route, as well as be part of RMTD's regular fleet operation. The battery electric buses could reduce diesel fuel consumption by 35,600 gallons per year for RMTD. The buses are zero emission vehicles and the miles between road calls are anticipated to triple, thus bringing more efficiencies to RMTD's internal maintenance shop operation. "We are incredibly grateful to Senators Durbin and Duckworth for their advocacy on behalf of Rockford for these federal funds" says Mayor McNamara. "This project will help connect our residents to community assets including work, essential services and recreational opportunities."



RESILIENCY INITIATIVE

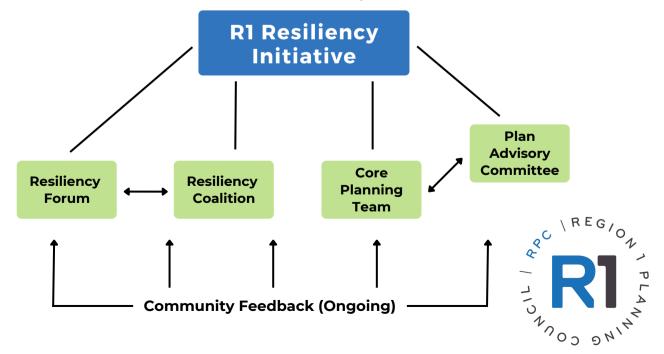
Integrating social, economic, and natural systems in all areas of regional planning.

Region 1 Planning Council has begun to facilitate the process of creating a more resilient region through the newly formed **R1 Resiliency Initiative**. In November 2021, the R1 Board adopted a resolution in support of its implementation. The goal of the initiative is to foster resilient social, economic, and natural systems in all areas of planning across the Northern Illinois region. The Resiliency Initiative will integrate projects across all local departments and disciplines to anticipate risk, limit impacts, and strengthen the region's ability to recover rapidly from shocks.

The **RI Resiliency initiative** will also address and provide support to crucial community infrastructure issues, including but not limited to: energy security, transportation, job education and retraining, disaster preparedness, local food system support, and waste reduction. As always, equity and transparency will be the driving forces of this initiative and one of the several guiding principles. Resiliency is defined as the ability to anticipate risk, limit impacts, and recover rapidly from regional shocks to social, economic, and natural systems. Resilient communities can minimize adverse impacts to the aforementioned systems and improve quality of life for residents, to which local governments play a crucial role.

R1's creation of the Resiliency Initiative was inspired by the successes of other regional planning councils (Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, etc.). The Initiative utilizes an established national model for planning councils to address sustainability and resiliency issues. This work will be streamlined to effectively meet the needs of our Region.

Moving forward, Region 1 Planning Council will be convening local governments, businesses, and community organizations to co-create and lead the Resiliency Initiative as a collaborative body.



RESILIENCY INITIATIVE

Three-Year Plan

Year 1

Listen and Learn

- Launch the Resilience Coalition and Forum
- Collaborate and empower the community to inform the planning process

Year 2

Planning for Progress

- Plan and convene the R1 Regional Resiliency Leadership Summit
- Complete the Resiliency in Action: A Framework for the Northern Illinois Region Plan



Year 3

Action and Implementation

- Apply for funding opportunities
- Begin project
 implementation
- Launch the Resiliency Center

For more information, visit **r1planning.org/news**

GREENTOWN CONFERENCE

GreentownConference.com

We are proud to be among the sponsors for the first **Greentown Rockford Conference** held at the Embassy Suites in downtown Rockford. The conference brought in expert speakers from around the country, as well as our own R1 team speaking on several panels. The Greentown Conference provided an impetus for us to later announce and establish the **Resiliency Center Initiative**.

Subscribe to our newsletter at **<u>r1planning.org/newsletter</u>** for more on sustainability and resiliency.





Photo Credit: a5 Inc.





COMMUNITY IMPACT



Community Impact

Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) is a growing field within the investment world, generally focused on maximizing impact from investment to create a financial return on investment while also generating a positive social or environmental impact. In recent years, IMM has spread to the non-profit, philanthropic, and public sectors as well. It is now common to think of public investment and grants in terms of measurable social impact. R1 Planning considers itself an **emerging leader in the field** of public sector Impact Measurement and Management and provides expertise and technical support to local non-profit and public partners seeking to maximize the impact of their investments.

Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board

In 2020, voters of Winnebago County passed a ½ cent sales tax that now projects to generate more than \$15 million dollars per year for mental health and substance (ab)use services. The Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) partners with R1 to maximize the impact of this taxpayer investment; through community engagement, strategic planning, competitive grantmaking, evaluation, and systems coordination. In the first year of funding, \$8.8 million was committed to local non-profit and public organizations for innovative programs that expand services in Winnebago County, while also filling much needed services gaps that are not covered by other sources of funding. After the first six months, more than 30 new positions were filled and programs had already achieved nearly 25% of their intended outcomes, in aggregate, for the first year of funding.

For more information, including progress reports, visit **<u>r1planning.org/wccmhb</u>**

WCCMHB partnered with R1 to maximize its impact through community engagement, strategic planning, competitive grantmaking, evaluation & systems coordination.





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Regional Data

R1 has also expanded is data services, including increased capacity for **data analysis** and **data visualization**. Our team has been working with the City of Rockford Mayor's Office on Domestic Community Violence prevention to identify, measure, and disseminate data indicators for domestic and community violence prevention efforts. The team also has begun the development of interactive **data dashboards** which are a unique way to engage the public in the analysis of community impact. Interactive data dashboards can show trend-line analysis to display the progress of efforts overtime or can disaggregate data to show how different populations within a community are impacted by community initiatives.

Learn more about our Research & Data Services at **<u>r1planning.org/data</u>**



COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

Fighting blight in neighborhoods and communities.



LAND BANK

The Land Bank works to reduce and return vacant land and abandoned buildings back into reliable and sustainable community assets. To date, the Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority (NILBA) has acquired and sold 13 houses, totaling over \$400,000 in sales. These houses were once vacant and had unpaid property taxes for at least two years prior. In addition to the acquisition of vacant houses, NILBA partnered with the Rockford Public School District to accept a donation of three vacant lots. These lots are former elementary school sites that were demolished. NILBA is working to market these properties to find good long-term use for the parcels.

TRUSTEE

As Agent for the Winnebago County Trustee Program, Region 1 Planning Council, provides an online sales system to sell Trustee property parcels. R1 has **sold nearly 500 Trusteeowned parcels**, with over 300 additional parcels expected to sell in 2022. The total sales revenue from the County Trustee program through 2021 was nearly **\$1.5 million**. The growth in sales revenue allows Trustee-owned parcels to be maintained to a standard that promotes neighborhood wellness and redevelopment.

For more information and to subscribe to property updates, visit **r1planning.org/revitalize**







ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ARTS STUDY

A comprehensive summary of the Art's impact on the Rockford regional economy.

While the Arts nourish the soul, inspire, and provide a respite from the stresses of daily life, they also have an impact on the economy – nationally, regionally, and locally. The **Economic Impact of the Arts Industry in Northern Illinois Study** demonstrates the local Arts industry's impacts on the economy and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Arts. Produced in cooperation with the Rockford Area Arts Council (RAAC), the City of Rockford, and Winnebago County, the study focuses on the Arts agency's four county region.

To determine the local economic impact, RI staff utilized REMI economic modeling software and surveys. The REMI economic modeling software analyzed the Arts impact, pre-COVID-19, to determine the per employee and per dollar impact the Arts industry has on the regional economy. These forecasted results showed **increased employment and economic impact over time by the arts industry in Winnebago and Boone counties**, where the majority of RAAC members are located. The study also predicted an increase in Arts-related jobs in DeKalb County, but a decrease in neighboring Ogle County.

Arts organizations in the RAAC's four-county region (Boone, DeKalb, Ogle, and Winnebago) were also surveyed to determine the impact COVID-19 had on the local Arts industry. The survey found that the largest impacts were felt by in-person activities such as festivals, student programs, and field trips. Fundraising, day-to-day operations, and volunteerism at the organizations were also affected. While the number of volunteers decreased, volunteer hours worked actually increased from 2019 to 2020.

Overall, the local Arts industry follows national and state trends in terms of jobs and output lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally, 1.3 million jobs associated with the Arts Industry were lost between February and April of 2020. This accounts for nearly one-fifth of all such jobs nationwide. By July 2021, just 500,000 of those jobs had returned. Also by July 2021, not-for-profit Arts and culture organizations lost \$17.97 billion. Additionally, a loss of \$17.6 billion was recorded by businesses that support the Arts, like the accommodations, food and beverage, and retail sectors. The State of Illinois showed losses in line with national trends but the Arts industry saw a larger job loss than 14 other industries in the station, losing 25,200 jobs. Between March 2020 when statewide shutdowns began and February 2021, the Arts Industry lost an estimated \$12.5 million in Illinois, with the median loss per organization being \$16,000.

Despite the struggles of the past two years, our region has kept a vibrant and resilient Arts

industry. This study highlights that and will be of use to grant seekers and others who wish to demonstrate its economic impact in Northern Illinois.

To review the full study, visit r1planning.org/researchreports

COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



Fostering cooperation for the betterment of our region.



In a remarkable multi-jurisdiction partnership with several local taxing bodies, we were proud to inaugurate the Northern Illinois Council of Governments (COG), otherwise known as **NorthCOG**. A COG is a voluntary association that represents members of local governments that seek to provide cooperative planning, coordination, and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern that cross jurisdictional lines.

The mission of **NorthCOG** is to develop and represent unity among local governmental bodies for **shared legislative priorities** and to participate in **joint ventures** as a means to **overcome regional challenges** and **reduce the legacy costs** of local government operations. The COG advocates for enhanced state and federal investment in the region and for the advancement of long-term regional planning priorities, as set by the Region 1 Planning Council Board. The COG provides a vehicle through which member entities may jointly introduce, support, or oppose state and federal legislation where it is deemed in the best interest of the Region. The COG also charters studies and reports, and makes recommendations on innovative, proactive solutions to regional issues and best practices in good governance and other issues as approved by the Board.



GRANT AWARDS

Significant grants awarded in 2021.



\$16,384,905

RAISE

Downtown Complete Streets Revitalization Project.

\$2,660,600

IDOT & THE ILLINOIS TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGAM (ITEP)

For Winnebago County and Loves Park to improve alternate transportation systems.

\$1,755,345

FEMA AND ILLINOIS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Village of Machesney Park food mitigation assistance.

\$520,790

FAMILY PEACE CENTER

City of Rockford, Family Peace Center R3 Juvenile Recovery and Crime Prevention Program.

\$50,000

READY

Pilot Chromebook lending program through Rockford Public Library to create a regional Digital Divide Elimination Plan.

AWARDED 2019 - 2021

R1 is proud to have written and/or contributed to more than \$30 million in successful grant applications supporting regional development and services between 2019 and 2021.



For more information about our grant services, visit **r1planning.org/grants**

CEDS

Progress made on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

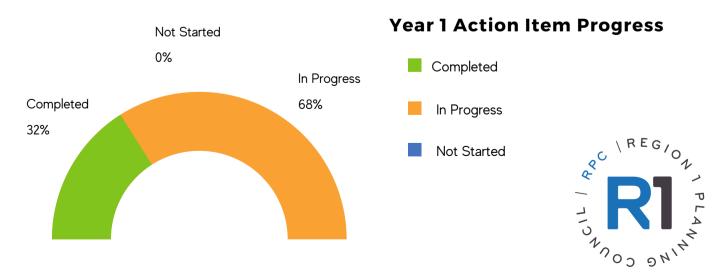
R1 and its public and private sector partners in Winnebago, Boone and McHenry Counties made substantial progress during 2021 on implementing the goals, strategies and action items of the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Northern Illinois.

As the Economic Development District for the three-county region, R1 serves as the liaison to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), which provides federal economic development funding for projects that align with both EDA and CEDS priorities. The five-year CEDS plan, which is a requirement for obtaining federal funding, was developed by dozens of regional stakeholders and approved by the R1 Governing Board in 2020 and by the EDA in 2021.

R1 asked the **38 organizations** listed as responsible parties for CEDS action items to report progress on **114 action items**. Many of these action items are the responsibility of multiple parties, so completion of any individual action item varies according to the responsible party or parties for that item. Regardless, 93 of the 114 action items were reported as "In Progress," while another 43 action items are "Completed." This indicates healthy progress made after the first year of implementation of the five-year CEDS.

Action Item 2.1C of the CEDS provides one example of economic development progress that's been made within each of the three counties of the EDD. This action item states: "Explore and seek funding for the reuse of existing developed facilities in the region, such as Barber Colman in Winnebago County and the Motorola site in McHenry County."

In Winnebago County, the City of Rockford executed a purchase agreement last year with a private developer for the Barber Colman property with the intent to support a master redevelopment of the idle industrial campus. In McHenry County, a private entity has purchased the former Motorola plant, while McHenry County Economic Development Corporation continues to work closely with state and federal authorities to seek funding and opportunities to maximize future redevelopment efforts. In Boone County, the City of Belvidere demolished the woodframe portion of the city-owned Leath Building on Meadow Street along the Kishwaukee River.



PLANS ADOPTED



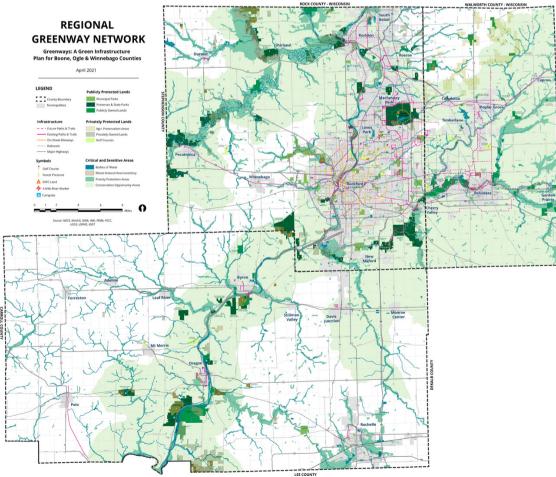
2021 Greenways Plan for Winnebago, Boone, & Ogle Counties

In 2021, R1 Planning released the fifth iteration of the Greenways Plan and Map. The purpose of the 2021 Greenways Plan and Map is to promote a regional greenway network that protects natural and cultural resources in a manner which supports equal access to green space; provides alternative forms of transportation and recreational benefits; enhances environmental and scenic qualities; and stimulates sustainable, equitable economic development.

This Plan and Map will serve as a comprehensive regional planning tool that will help leverage and secure additional funds for government agencies, nonprofits, and others involved in transportation and land use planning, sustainability initiatives, natural areas preservation, and recreation. R1 Planning was excited to expand the geographic scope of Greenways Plan this year to incorporate Ogle County.

Additionally, an online interactive Greenways Map was created to help facilitate spatial understanding of the greenway network elements. The online interactive map presents geospatial information to the public without the use of specific software. The creation of an online interactive map also shows more detailed content that is difficult on a small-scale static map.

The interactive Greenways Map can be viewed at **<u>r1planning.org/greenways-plan</u>**



PLANS ADOPTED

Electric Vehicle Readiness for the Rockford Region

As a way to support local governments in the evolving automobile market, R1 Planning began investigating how to prepare for the proliferation of electric vehicles (EV) at a regional level and assist local jurisdictions in becoming EV-Ready. The Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan for the Rockford Region is a comprehensive, regionally coordinated approach to introducing electric vehicles and electric vehicle supply equipment in north-central Illinois.

Three overarching goals were created to drive the region in achieving its desire to be EV-Ready. These goals included:

- 1. Establish a robust network of public charging station infrastructure within the study area.
- 2. Integrate electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) into public policies and planning efforts.
- 3. Act as a leader in coordinating efforts to make Northern Illinois EV-Ready.

Transportation Safety Plan

Each year the MPO Policy Committee adopts a series of performance targets related to transportation safety. In 2021, it established targets for an annual reduction of at least two percent in the following categories: number of fatalities, rate of fatalities, number of serious injuries, rate of serious injuries, and number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries.

In an effort to foster continued communication, coordination, and education related to transportation safety and reach the identified targets, the MPO has developed the following Regional Transportation Safety Plan. The guiding principles behind the document's development are:

- To develop a comprehensive understanding of the state of transportation safety in the region;
- Identify local and regional trends, establish goals to improve safety; and
- Create a framework for action items that can be worked towards in the future.

Human Service Transportation Plan

Public transportation can transform the lives of residents and workers within communities by spurring economic development, promoting sustainable lifestyles, and providing a higher quality of life. However, current service gaps in the network of transportation providers and human service agencies exist in the region due to constrained resources and limitations in fixed-route, paratransit, and demand-response services. With limited funding available to local municipalities and statewide funding shortfalls in Illinois, finding areas of coordination and partnership can reduce the impact of those gaps by bringing together the strengths and resources of multiple agencies and partners.

In 2021, the MPO updated the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) which addresses these service challenges by identifying the needs and gaps in public transportation services, particularly services for seniors, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes, and other transit-dependent populations in the Rockford MPA.

This plan will also further strengthen coordination among transportation providers within the region and enhance the opportunity for mobility among residents, specifically seniors and individuals with disabilities. It is intended to support local agencies, transportation providers, and planners in their efforts to improve the overall quality of the region's transportation services.









FINANCIAL REPORT



R1 is proud to provide a wide array of services to serve the region and its stakeholders. This report highlights financial results for Fiscal Year 2019, July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

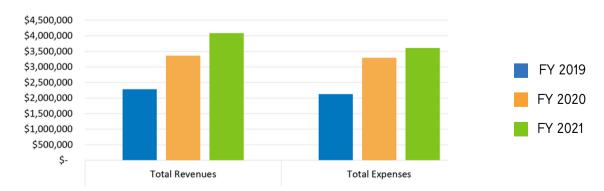
Revenue

State and federal grant award revenue make up the largest portion of R1's income. Total revenue for FY2021 totaled \$4.08 million, compared to \$3.36 million in FY2020 and \$2.28 million in FY2019. The year-overyear increase is due to additional grant awards and the effective operation of various departments within the organization such as the Land Bank program. Despite being a governmental body, R1 operates without a tax levy. Instead, relying on providing value to local government members and securing grant funding for other local agencies as sub-awards.

FY2021 Revenue Sources

Expenditures

Total expenditures for FY2021 totaled \$3.60 million, compared to \$3.29 million in FY2020 and \$2.12 million in FY2019. The year-over-year increase is due to providing additional grant awards. Sub-awards totaled over \$475,000 in FY2021, \$1.21 million in FY2020 and over \$200,000 in FY2019. The spike in FY2020 sub-awards is due to the Illinois Department of Human Services 2020 Census grant and US Department of Justice Project Safe Neighborhoods grant.



Revenues & Expenditures





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R1 Planning

►





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