

# Councilor wasn't always a transit advocate

**Jan Dick**  
**Valparaiso; Porter County**  
**Landlord and Valparaiso City**  
**Council member for 24 years**



When Jan Dick grew up in Pittsburgh, he didn't think twice about using a streetcar to get around. It's how his father got to work. In fact, Dick was six years old before his dad bought his first car. Dick didn't buy his first car until he was 25. That was after he graduated from Valparaiso University, where he had spent his college years biking and walking wherever he needed to go. There was no public transportation in Valparaiso in those days.

By the time the city had to make a decision about financially supporting a bus line, in the early 2000s, Dick had joined the city council.

"I was involved from day one, and I'll admit, I was hesitant at first," he remembers.

That's because he knew public transportation wouldn't pay for itself. It never will. He now knows that's not the point. The point of public transportation is to meet the mobility demands of residents who have a disability or are elderly, or simply want the option of not having to rely on a car to get to their jobs, shopping, appointments or entertainment.

The decision to support public transportation has proven to be a good one.

Now, Valparaiso's V-Line and its bus service to Chicago are increasingly popular. But residents want and deserve more. For example, Dick is advocating for the bus line to extend to Porter Regional Hospital, which moved from downtown where it was on the bus line to a location about eight miles outside of downtown, with no bus access.

That's been a huge challenge, not only for residents but also for the hospital. If someone doesn't have a car, yet doesn't need an ambulance, he or she has to rely on friends or family to get to the hospital. As an example, Dick, who is a landlord to 20 residents throughout the city, told of one of his tenants with a disability who had no way to get to the hospital to visit his ill wife.

Such stories have made this former streetcar rider a strong transit supporter.



## INvest INtransit