

We're lagging behind

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Merritt Becker tracks transit trends, especially around the Midwest, which is the territory he covers for Cummins Crosspoint, which provides sales, parts and service for Cummins engines. The more buses and other transit on the roadways, the more business for this Indiana company and its subsidiary, Crosspoint Kinetics, which makes paratransit vehicles and shuttles.

Even though Indianapolis lags behind other Midwestern cities for public transportation, transit still plays a big part of the overall economy, Becker says. Transit drives the workforce.

What Becker would like to see is improved transportation corridors that would better connect Indiana's top manufacturing cities, such as rail or rapid transit between Columbus and Indy or Indy and Kokomo.

Right now, he's not seeing a lot of growth in transit, with the exception of the Indianapolis market. It's not like in Knoxville or even Louisville, which have strong transit systems. Part of Indiana's issue – at least in the Indy market – is that gas and parking is cheap. Becker would propose increasing parking fees to incentivize people to take the bus, and then use the increased fees to help fund public transit.

It's time for Indiana to figure out a solid transit strategy to connect the key manufacturing cities in the state. It's important for Indiana's economy and certainly for Indiana-based businesses.

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