

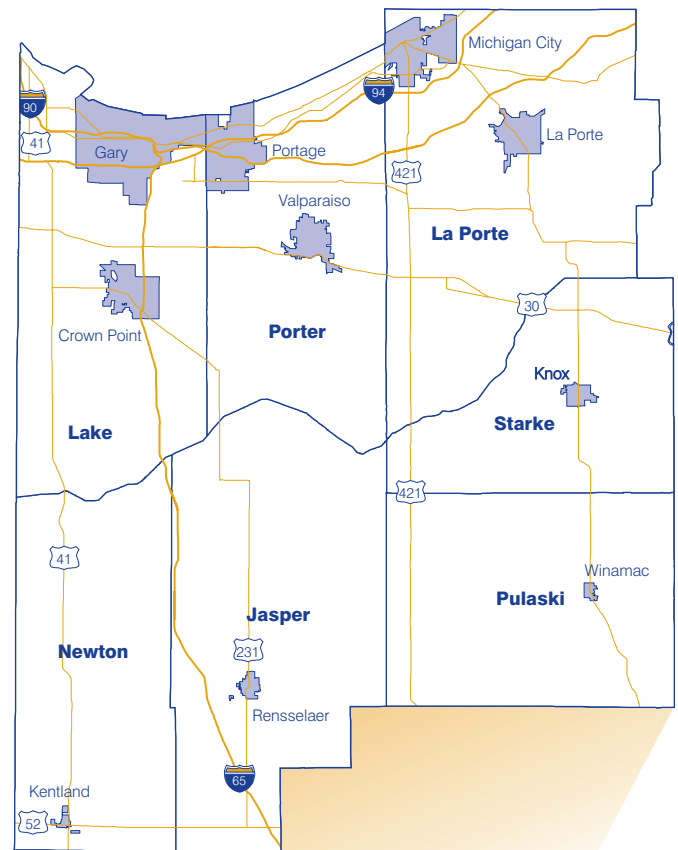
# Around and 'Round the Mulberry Bush: Intra-Region Employment Commuting in Economic Growth Region 1

Economic Growth Region (EGR) 1 includes Jasper, Lake, La Porte, Newton, Porter, Pulaski and Starke counties, and is home to firms that employ 313,320 Hoosiers (annual average for 2004). It boasts a population of 838,333, second only to Region 5 (the Indianapolis region) in terms of population and follows Region 5 and Region 3 (the Fort Wayne region) in employment. Region 1 has some of Indiana's most populous counties along with some of the least populous. Lake and Porter counties' populations are in the top 10, while Newton and Pulaski are in the bottom 10 (based on 2000 census data). Sharing borders with both Illinois and Michigan, Region 1 sends some of its workforce out of state, in addition to county-to-county commuting within Indiana. An examination of the counties' commuting patterns reveals that an average of 23 percent of the region's workforce commute outside their residence county to work, while the remaining 77 percent reside and work within the same county. Newton County has the highest rate of commuting at 40 percent, while La Porte has the lowest at 16 percent. Four of the seven counties have rates within 10 percent of the average (see **Table 1**). La Porte has the highest rate of in-county employment for its residents (84 percent), while Newton County has the lowest (60 percent). Four of the six counties are within 10

percent of the regional average for in-county employment.

The breakout of commuters into those who commute within the region, those who commute out of state, and those who commute to other Indiana counties outside the region shows more variance, with Lake County sending 84 percent of its commuting workers out of state, compared to 3 percent for Pulaski County and 4 percent for Starke County. Both extremes make sense geographically, considering Lake County's proximity to Chicago and the interior position of Starke and Pulaski counties. Intra-regional commuting, excluding Lake County, varies from 43 percent to 75 percent of those workers who commute out of their residence county for their employment. Conversely, Starke and Pulaski counties have the highest rate of extra-region Indiana commuting, while Lake and Porter counties have the lowest (see **Table 2**).

**Table 3** provides the detailed breakout for each county of the



workplace commuting within the region, based on summary data on place of residence and place of principal work activity collected via the 2003 Indiana individual tax returns. Lake County obviously enjoys the largest number of workers commuting in from surrounding counties, followed by Porter County at less than 50 percent

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**TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT, WAGES AND COMMUTING PATTERNS**

	Jasper	Lake	La Porte	Newton	Porter	Pulaski	Starke	EGR 1
2004 Average Employment	11,635	190,988	44,666	4,217	53,023	4,543	4,248	313,320
2004 Annual Wages (Covered Employment)	\$29,013	\$35,378	\$30,065	\$27,286	\$34,883	\$30,268	\$23,909	\$33,962
2004 Population	31,624	490,844	109,755	14,421	154,961	13,825	22,903	838,333
Persons Commuting Out of Residence County	5,942	53,856	10,861	3,678	33,773	1,905	5,394	115,409
Employed in Residence County	71%	81%	84%	60%	66%	78%	62%	77%
Commuting Out of Residence County	29%	19%	16%	40%	34%	22%	38%	23%

Source: Indiana Department of Revenue aggregated county data, U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics

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**TABLE 2: PERCENT OF COMMUTERS FOLLOWING A SPECIFIC COMMUTING PATTERN**

Commuting Pattern	Jasper	Lake	La Porte	Newton	Porter	Pulaski	Starke	EGR 1
Within EGR 1	74%	13%	55%	68%	75%	43%	45%	39%
Out of State	14%	84%	15%	22%	21%	3%	4%	47%
Within Indiana, But Out of EGR 1	12%	3%	30%	10%	3%	54%	51%	14%

Source: Indiana Department of Revenue aggregated county data

**TABLE 3: INTRA-REGION COMMUTING BY COUNTY**

		County of Principal Work Activity							Total*
		Jasper	Lake	La Porte	Newton	Porter	Pulaski	Starke	
County of Residence	Jasper		2,851	77	375	966	107	23	4,399
	Lake	253		1,157	108	5,535	<10	12	7,065
	La Porte	35	1,828		<10	3,974	<10	114	5,951
	Newton	715	1,664	15		115	<10	<10	2,509
	Porter	386	21,587	3,418	21		11	66	25,489
	Pulaski	229	111	88	14	168		209	819
	Starke	130	506	742	<10	800	241		2,419
	Total	1,748	28,547	5,497	518	11,558	359	424	48,651

\*Totals do not include cells with values less than 10.  
Source: Indiana Department of Revenue

of the Lake County level, then La Porte County at about half the level of Porter County. Jasper County exports 4,399 workers to other counties within the region, 74 percent of all its commuting workers, while the remaining counties experience immigration of less than 1,000 workers each.

Taken together, the percentage of residents who work in their home county and the significant rate of intra-regional commuting would suggest more inter-relatedness for the counties in Region 1 than might first be apparent based on location and population. Given the likelihood that consumer spending will occur in places where the consumers either live or work, it seems likely that many wage and salary dollars earned by the region's residents will be re-circulating within the region.

—Vicki Seegert, Manager, Advanced Economic and Market Analysis Group, Indiana Department of Workforce Development

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