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Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting Notes – September 8, 2009

The meeting was held at the CMAP offices, Cook County Conference Room, 233 South Wacker Drive, Suite 800, Chicago, Illinois. Those present were:

Citizens' Advisory Committee Members

Alba Alexander
William Balling
Geno Bilotto
Jim Giblin
Jennifer Hill
Steve Lazzara
Rosemary McDonnell
Allan Mellis
Sherry Meyer
Andrea Powell
Harry Solomon
Dan Strick
Amaal Tokars
Stephenie Todd

CMAP Staff

Randy Blankenhorn
Gordon Smith
Erin Aleman
John Allen
Janet Bright
Hubert Morgan
Holly Ostdick

Others

Len Cannata
Jill Hutnick

West Central Municipal Conference
Private Citizen

MEETING SUMMARY

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Chairman Andrea Powell.

II. Minutes

Minutes from the July 6, 2009 meeting were tabled until the October meeting due to lack of a quorum.

III. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Blankenhorn said CMAP staff has met with representatives of the governor, area legislators and the Illinois House and Senate Appropriations Committee chairmen to discuss the state's failure to include funding for Regional Comprehensive Planning in the stopgap budget approved in late June. He said they all realize that a mistake had been made, but at this point nothing can be done because the state has no money. IDOT has agreed to match \$2.7 million in federal transportation funding, he said, but that still leaves CMAP short of funds for non-transportation planning.

The water supply plan will be completed by the end of the year, he said, because other participants, including the Department of Natural Resources, have found money in their budgets to cover the shortfall. CMAP has taken the lead in implementing spending for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program authorized under the federal stimulus bill, and is ready to lead on allocating energy efficiency and conservation block grant funds to local governments. Both are contingent on the awarding of funding by respective agencies.

Mr. Blankenhorn said the focus of this week's CMAP Board meeting will be the federal [transportation reauthorization bill](#). While CMAP prefers the bill introduced by Rep. James Oberstar (D-Minn.) that would spend \$500 billion over six years and, among other things, create a national strategic transportation plan, consolidate or eliminate more than 75 programs and provide funding for high-speed rail, there's currently no money available for it. Instead, Congress is expected to approve an 18-month extension for the current SAFETEA-LU program.

He said he met with the Los Angeles Metropolitan Planning Organization to talk about the need to emphasize large urban areas in any transportation bill because cities drive the nation's economy. He said the U.S. needs a national vision for transportation funding to help figure out its priorities, adding that we've connected communities with the interstate highway system, but we now need to work within communities.

Mr. Blankenhorn then opened the floor for questions.

Ms. Tokars said more public transportation is needed in outlying areas. She said her agency (Kendall County Health Department) regards public transit as a housing and

human services issue because they see how much clients have to spend on auto travel while trying to obtain needed services.

Mr. Blankenhorn said transit impacts a number of areas. For example, he said, CMAP wants to focus on neighborhood stabilization through transit. A soon-to-be-published [Regional Snapshot](#) will look at how we spend energy on transportation. We are trying to tie each of our core planning areas to transportation.

Mr. Mellis asked what CMAP's role will be in allocating federal funds if Chicago is selected as the host city for the 2016 Olympics. Mr. Blankenhorn replied that the government won't commit any money until the games are awarded, adding that any transportation funds must be in CMAP's plan and housing funds should also be included.

Mr. Mellis asked if CMAP has been involved in choosing sites for Olympic housing. Mr. Blankenhorn said no.

Mr. Giblin asked for an update on the [Illiana Expressway](#). Mr. Blankenhorn said CMAP's position is that it should begin at I-55 instead of the currently proposed I-57. He said neither governor has taken a position on the road, but since there is no money to build it, it most likely would be a toll road if it ever is built. He said the Borman Expressway is at full capacity and that 70 percent of the residents in northwest Indiana work in Illinois, so at the very least the corridor must be protected.

Mr. Mellis asked if the Illiana would have a negative effect on Chicago's economy by making it easier for shippers to go around the city. Mr. Blankenhorn said there's a significant economic benefit to Chicago being a freight hub, adding that freight traffic is expected to double over the next 20 years, with or without the expressway.

Ms. Meyer asked if public transit will be included in the expressway plan. Mr. Blankenhorn replied that it would be looked at in Phase I engineering. Right now, he said, we're looking at how to move people and goods and finding a corridor.

IV. Invent the Future Workshops

Ms. Aleman thanked CAC members for all their assistance as she presented a [preliminary report](#) on the results of the summer "Invent the Future" outreach phase of the *GOTO2040* Regional Comprehensive Plan.

She said CMAP conducted 57 workshops, participated in 15 fairs and festivals and placed informational kiosks in 19 locations. More than 1,300 people participated in the workshops, 2,800 voted at the CMAP booth at fairs and fests, and 12,000 voted using the kiosks. Another 2,200 submitted responses online.

Two questions were asked at the fairs, festivals and kiosks: "How would you plan for new development? A. Unfocused Development, B. Community Focus, C. Metropolitan Focus;" and "How would plan for more trips? A. Automobile Focus, B. Transit Focus, C.

Combined Focus.” Ms. Aleman said the most common responses were Community Focus for the first question and Combined Focus for the second.

She said each workshop was unique, but several common themes emerged. Residents want better transit, safer communities, better schools, more energy conservation and a cleaner environment.

Mr. Giblin asked how the fairs and festivals stacked up against the workshops in terms of participation. Mr. Smith said staff will be evaluating that question prior to the next phase in the planning process.

Ms. Alexander asked how many people were invited to attend the workshops. Mr. Blankenhorn said eight million – anyone who can read. Mr. Smith said CMAP does have a database containing the number of invitations sent out, but hasn’t had a chance to incorporate those numbers into a final outreach report.

Ms. Todd asked how we would know if attendees weren’t all planners, adding that she received comments from some citizens that [on-line results](#) don’t match the results from their meetings. She also said one person who attended the Waubensee Community College workshop said CMAP’s agenda was designed to obtain a pre-determined result.

Ms. Aleman said there was no effort to skew results, adding that the workshops were meant to show participants how the MetroQuest tool worked and how different scenarios would work. All workshop participants were encouraged to use their home computers to create their own scenarios.

Ms. Todd countered that Yorkville’s comprehensive plan was based on extensive public input and calls for larger lots and less density. The CMAP workshop results don’t show that, she said.

Mr. Strick said Beecher’s comprehensive plan also calls for large lot sizes, but the workshop results call for more density.

Mr. Morgan said the people who attended the workshops he conducted were committed to bettering their communities, but were not planners. He said attendees realized we have finite resources and need to build where infrastructure already exists.

Ms. Powell said there were no planners in the room at the workshop she attended, although there were elected officials and/or their representatives. She added that some attendees had their own agendas, but were unable to sidetrack participants.

Mr. Giblin said CMAP should compare workshop results with results obtained at fairs and festivals. He said the results from the Wheaton workshop and the Downers Grove Heritage Festival seemed similar. At the festival, he said, people wanted to talk about immediate issues such as teardowns.

Ms. Tokars said there is a land preservation movement in Kendall County, but that doesn't contradict the denser growth issue. She added that people at the Kendall workshop were interested in how scenarios are developed.

Ms. Hill said media coverage of the workshops seemed pretty substantial. She said some of the answers in the preliminary report don't match the questions.

Ms. Aleman said most respondents favored moderate housing densities, better transit and a better environment, adding that roads and transit were the most controversial issues. She promised the committee that a full report will be forthcoming.

Mr. Mellis asked if there is a plan to provide feedback to workshop attendees and how many people are now on CMAP's contact list.

Ms. Aleman said all workshop attendees were sent an e-mail with a link to their results and a request to go on-line to create their own scenarios. Also, fairs/festivals participants who provided e-mail addresses were sent an e-mail asking them to get involved.

Ms. Alexander asked if Mr. Blankenhorn's weekly update is being sent to everyone who provided e-mail addresses. Ms. Aleman said CMAP first wants to send them a report on the outreach results and that e-mail may contain a link to Mr. Blankenhorn's updates.

Mr. Solomon suggested CMAP include in the e-mail a summary of where we are in the planning process.

Mr. Lazzara said CMAP representatives did a good job at the Will County Fair, adding that fairgoers wanted to know if CMAP will implement the results of the public input.

Mr. Blankenhorn said CMAP and the public have developed the vision for the region and we now need to work with communities to implement it. He added that we will shift from plan development to plan implementation in October, 2010.

Mr. Blankenhorn said people need to understand that the term "higher density" does not mean downtown Chicago density. He said people want to be able to walk around in their communities and want density that's appropriate for their communities. Some communities will opt for larger lots, others for more density. That was the purpose of this summer's conversations.

Mr. Mellis said CMAP needs to have examples for people who can't visualize what we're talking about. Mr. Blankenhorn said that's exactly why we conducted [community design workshops](#). We wanted to show people what could work.

V. Director's Report

Mr. Smith said External Relations Division staff will conduct an in-house debriefing on all the summer outreach activities next week. In the meantime, he said, staff wants CAC members to talk about their experiences.

Mr. Morgan asked committee members what they thought worked well during the summer.

Mr. Giblin said the workshops produced detailed responses but had low attendance. Conversely, the fairs/festivals had better numbers, but less detailed responses.

Mr. Lazzara said the connection made with the public was outstanding.

Mr. Strick said the MetroQuest tool was very powerful.

Ms. Tokars said workshop materials were well constructed and the options for dialog were excellent. She added that people thought it was time well spent.

Mr. Solomon said the MetroQuest software was very good, but it only gave the flavor of what we're doing, while presenting limited models.

Mr. Blankenhorn said CMAP knows the tool didn't ask and answer every conceivable question and the agency is fully aware of its weaknesses. Mr. Morgan added that if CMAP had "geeked up" the software any further, people might not have responded. Mr. Blankenhorn said the on-line version of the software offered an opportunity to delve far deeper into scenario development and that some people took advantage of that feature.

Mr. Solomon said workshop attendees favored more density for the 2.8 million new residents expected by 2040, but CMAP needed to find out what they wanted for themselves personally.

Mr. Morgan said that when CMAP asked, people said they want more walkable communities, but you can't do that without more density. He added that people need choices and we're planning a region that offers choices.

Mr. Blankenhorn said he grew up in the City of McHenry, which had 8,000 residents when he was young, but now has 28,000. He said McHenry residents like having a Home Depot on the edge of town, but don't like having to put up with traffic to get there.

Ms. Todd asked if anyone has told the public what taxes will be required with more density, adding that we must find a way to let them know about the economic impact of their choices. Mr. Blankenhorn said we tried to show in the workshops that government services aren't free. He added that this fall CMAP will have experts look at the economics of the choices, adding that local tax structures drive development choices.

Mr. Balling said mobility was the most divisive question at the workshops. He said transportation is where the big government money is spent and the ultimate question is what we're going to fund. Our entire land use pattern is based on transportation, he said, and we need to find the right mix because people won't go to Home Depot on the bus. We need to show workshop results to local officials and get their plans to tie in with ours, he said.

Mr. Solomon said CMAP needs to start thinking about the post-plan mechanism. He suggested creating 2040 Community Committees, which would represent the 2040 plan for each community and act as a sustaining organization to support the plan.

Ms. Meyer said CMAP needs to personalize the plan so people will invest in it. She said we should point out the benefits of density – lower energy costs for example – and tell people we can pay \$5 a gallon for gasoline or divert that money into a fund for common goals.

Mr. Blankenhorn said if the plan doesn't touch people personally we're missing our opportunity. He added that this isn't a plan for the planners or government officials; it's a plan for people.

Ms. Tokars said the U.S. has a segregated transportation system and a love affair with cars and roads. She added that when leaders plan public transportation they plan it for others, not themselves.

Ms. Todd responded that the suburbs were built on the automobile. She said taking the train from Oswego to the CAC meeting takes seven hours out of her day, adding that time is money. People won't ride buses to Home Depot or bicycles in the winter, she said, so we need to plan for everything.

Mr. Smith said the discussion had veered off track and members need to talk about what worked and didn't during the public outreach.

Mr. Strick said prior to being merged to form CMAP, the Chicago Area Transportation Study and Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission were accused of not getting the public involved. He said we have reversed that and brought several thousand people into the process.

Mr. Giblin asked if there is a bias in the outreach results based on where people live. Ms. Aleman said results were different in every community.

Mr. Morgan said CMAP will need more time to analyze results, but may have it for the October CAC meeting.

Mr. Mellis said he would like a written list of who participated and what their purpose was. He said the CAC has come a long way in three years and staff should be commended.

Mr. Lazzara asked what CMAP thinks worked well. Ms. Aleman said it was a challenge to tell if people were thinking about today or 2040, adding that the MetroQuest tool was the best part of the process.

Mr. Morgan said people on the south side of Chicago said their area was too dense, while people in Yorkville said they wanted more density. He said we can't make presumptions, but must listen to the people.

Mr. Morgan said the next opportunity for CAC members to get involved will come Saturday, Sept. 12, when the Future Leaders In Planning ([FLIP](#)) program relaunches. He asked committee members to help find more high school students for the program, noting that only 19 have registered thus far. They include eight from Chicago, three from suburban Cook County, four from Lake County; three from DuPage County; and one from Will County. Kane, Kendall and McHenry counties still need representation, he said. The program is open to high school sophomores, juniors and seniors and meets one Saturday each month at CMAP.

VI. CAC Blog

This discussion was tabled.

VII. CMAQ Program Update

Ms. Ostdick said 62 comments had been received from the public on the proposed 2010 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality ([CMAQ](#)) program. She said the proposal would be considered first by the CMAP Transportation Committee, then the Policy Committee, then the CMAP Board.

Mr. Mellis asked if programs such as I-GO car sharing are eligible for funding. Ms. Ostdick said they are, and that I-GO had been funded in previous years.

VIII. CMAP Committee Reports

Mr. Lazzara said the Freight Committee is conducting a regional study and is looking for providers for input. Also, he said, committee members went on a field trip to visit a plant that retrofits diesel engines.

IX. Other Business

Mr. Lazzara reminded members that the American Planning Association will hold its Upper Midwest Conference in Chicago from Sept. 24-26.

Mr. Solomon noted that several outside agencies have posted strategy papers on CMAP's website, but they're only outlines. He asked when full reports would be posted. Ms. Aleman said that would be in mid-September.

X. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 a.m. The next meeting will be held at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, October 13, 2009, at the CMAP offices.