

Proposed CMAP Board letter on Illinois Tollway Capital Plan

Transportation is one of our region's greatest challenges as we look to the future. Our infrastructure is aging fast and requires more investment. High levels of traffic congestion create a significant drag on regional productivity, and addressing it through careful, targeted expansion will provide substantial benefits to businesses and residents. The Illinois Tollway's 15-year capital plan proposal is both a necessary and brave step in the right direction. Implementation of this plan will make our transportation system work better for everyone.

To make our system truly "world class," the GO TO 2040 regional comprehensive plan emphasizes that we must prioritize investments toward *maintaining* and *modernizing* our existing assets. By directing \$8 billion of a total \$12 billion toward maintenance and modernization, the Tollway capital plan is right in line with this principle. Your plan also reflects the region's top priorities with a select group of major new projects that will add capacity, improving mobility and bolstering the region's status as one of the world's greatest economic centers.

While your plan emphasizes investment efficiencies, financing these needed improvements is certainly a challenge. GO TO 2040 makes the case for increased revenues to fund transportation and notes that the region should emphasize funding options that require users to pay an amount closer to the actual cost of using the highway system, where each additional user imposes congestion costs on others. These types of strategies will both help raise revenue and enable the system to operate more efficiently.

While a toll increase will be difficult for many to accept, the current rates on the system are extremely low relative to other places in the U.S. While prices for all other goods and services have risen over the last 30 years, tolls have remained flat for most users. Without an increase, these revenues will continue to lose purchasing power, leading to an erosion of the system. Realizing that a goal of future economic prosperity requires better than this, CMAP supports the financing plan that the Tollway has put forward for maintenance, modernization, and system expansion.

The Tollway has identified the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) as a near-term priority for reconstruction and modernization, including planning for transit in the corridor. Along with the Jane Addams, the Tollway's other two major capital project priorities, the Elgin O'Hare West Bypass and the I-294/I-57 interchange, clearly reflect GO TO 2040's prioritized list of major capital projects over the next 30 years. GO TO 2040 specifically recommends a managed lane treatment for the Jane Addams and the Elgin O'Hare West Bypass, and CMAP urges the Tollway to consider innovative strategies like congestion pricing for managing both the *type* and *cost* of traffic in these corridors.

Your plan also commits funding to advance the Central Lake County Corridor, another GO TO 2040 major capital priority project, and the CMAP Board supports the recent formation of the Blue Ribbon Advisory Council to develop consensus on design and planning options for the corridor. We want to stress again that of the 52 major highway and transit projects examined in the GO TO 2040 process, the Central Lake County Corridor would have by far the highest congestion reduction benefits. This remains a vital project for enhancing regional mobility, and CMAP supports moving this project past the planning phases and into construction within the next 15 years.

As the official regional planning organization for the seven counties of northeastern Illinois, CMAP is governed by a Board whose membership reflects a regional consensus on how to bring about the policy and investment changes that are needed to sustain metropolitan Chicago's economic competitiveness and quality of life for decades to come. With this capital proposal, the Tollway has demonstrated tremendous leadership toward implementing the vision laid out in GO TO 2040.