Agenda Item No. 7.0

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

233 South Wacker Drive
Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60606

312 454 0400
www.cmap.illinois.gov

MEMORANDUM

To: CMAP Board

From: CMAP Staff

Date: January 5, 2010

Re: CMAP's 2011 Federal Agenda

The federal government is critical to the success of GO TO 2040. It must decide how to allocate billions in taxpayer dollars annually across a variety of different programs, services, and projects. It also must set priorities and develop criteria for how funding should flow through to the state, regional, and local levels. The *Federal Government* section in the Context and Best Practices part of the GO TO 2040 plan describes how federal decisions affect plan implementation, followed by examples of how GO TO 2040's implementation can be supported by federal actions. There are also numerous recommendations directed at the federal government outlined in the Implementation Action Areas throughout GO TO 2040.

For this calendar year, staff is recommending the following federal priorities be pursued as appropriate with our congressional delegation, relevant federal agencies, and key members of the administration. The agenda was based on the adopted GO TO 2040 plan, current priorities of the administration, and current and upcoming congressional priorities. Our interaction with the federal government, whether it is legislative, regulatory, programmatic, or policy related is oftentimes reactive. Our intentions with these priorities is to help shape our response to various legislation or other federal policy, as well as help guide us on what we should actively pursue. This agenda will result in various methods of implementation. Based on your feedback and direction at the Board meeting, we will outline a strategy to accomplish these priorities.

PURSUING COORDINATED INVESTMENTS

The Coordinated Investment section of the plan includes a number of key concepts and Implementation Actions that we think should be prioritized since they will help frame the way we work to develop and react to federal policy.

In summary, metropolitan regions drive the U.S. economy, and this should be reflected in federal policy and programs. An increasingly "regional approach" to investment decisions, which would both invest more in metropolitan areas as well as devolve more appropriate authority for funding decisions to the regional level, harnesses the economic power of regions. Comprehensive regional plans, like GO TO 2040, should guide federal investment decisions

since it identifies regional priorities by linking transportation, land use, the natural environment, economic prosperity, housing, and human and community development. The federal government has demonstrated great promise in helping to implement plans like GO TO 2040 by creating a set of guiding livability principles and the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a joint collaboration among the U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Housing and Urban Development, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Objectives:

- Work to encourage federal agencies to base investment decisions on comprehensive regional plans.
- Harmonize federal grant program requirements to support more comprehensive approaches to policy decisions and capital investments.
- Modify certain apportionment formulas, project selection criteria, and grant requirements that may be helping to cause unintended outcomes.
- Support a more robust investment in comprehensive planning.

REGIONAL MOBILITY

The Regional Mobility section of the plan makes a number of recommendations to improve our transportation network. Based on the current political climate, we are recommending that we actively promote and work towards creating a national vision and federal program outlined in the Freight recommendation in the plan, as well as continue to stay engaged in the forthcoming transportation authorization.

Freight

To summarize, freight is a national, interstate commerce issue and the U.S. economy depends on the efficient movement of freight. The benefits of the freight system rarely are confined to a single jurisdictional boundary and often the negative impacts are felt locally. Freight movement requires an interconnected system throughout our nation. A method needs to be established to formulate a national freight plan that can guide regional and state efforts to improve the freight systems.

Objective:

- Create a vision for a federal role in transportation that includes a national freight policy with dedicated funding and corridors of national significance.

Freight was included in the Board's previously endorsed reauthorization policy goals and we recommend pursuing it more aggressively in anticipation of the future transportation reauthorization. Additionally, if an opportunity should present itself, we feel the following reauthorization goals are still relevant:

CMAP's Transportation Reauthorization Policy Goals –endorsed September 2009

Leaders in Washington should give highest priority to the following overall policy objectives in crafting and implementing a new federal transportation bill.

- Provide transportation investments based on regional priorities using performance-driven criteria that lead to decisions that are transparent, outcome-based, and mode-agnostic.
- Evaluate and prioritize infrastructure investments in a comprehensive way that looks beyond transportation benefits to include land use, economy, environment, and other quality-of-life factors.
- Provide adequate federal investments in the nation's transportation systems.
- Reform the transportation funding system by placing a new emphasis on sustainable revenue sources.
- Establish a national transportation vision that includes the movement of goods and the development of a national high-speed rail network.

Objective:

- Based on the Transportation Reauthorization Policy Goals, work with the congressional delegation and the administration to adequately fund and pass a federal surface transportation authorization.

OTHER ISSUES

The following are other issues that we wanted to bring to your attention at this time. Staff will continue to monitor activities as they are relevant to the agency and GO TO 2040.

Innovation

Reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act, which invests in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education and fosters innovative research and commercialization, passed Congress on December 21 and awaits the President's signature. However, Congress must still appropriate funding. Of significant regional interest is that the legislation authorizes the creation of a "regional innovation program" to "encourage and support the development of regional innovation strategies, including regional innovation clusters". A new competitive grant program would make awards available to regional cluster initiatives on a matching basis. CMAP supports funding appropriations for this important federal effort and will closely monitor upcoming opportunities for regional involvement.

Water Conservation

While the federal government has made recent significant investments in energy efficiency through large scale retrofit programs, the federal government can also help consumers achieve efficiencies in water consumption while deferring the need for infrastructure expansion. As with energy, retrofits with more efficient appliances and plumbing fixtures can result in significant savings in water use. The U.S. EPA's WaterSense label, which is modeled after the longstanding and successful Energy Star program, makes it easier for consumers to identify products and services that use less water while performing as well as or better than conventional models. CMAP supports Congressional action toward authorizing Water Sense, an important step which would raise the program's profile and provide more market certainty to companies that produce and sell these products.

Transit New Starts
The Federal New Starts program is a competitive grant process that funds transit system expansions. While expansions are vital for many parts of the U.S., older and more well-developed systems should have the option to use these funds for badly needed maintenance and modernization efforts. The current New Starts program creates a strong incentive to pursue expansions, when maintenance and modernization should be the region's top priority. The criteria for federal New Starts grants should be expanded to support reinvestment in existing infrastructure rather than solely new expansions. Further, FTA regulations concerning use of funds for engineering of transit projects are stricter than those governing highway projects, and should be changed to create a "level playing field."

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion and direction to staff

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