



MAP-21 Highway Reauthorization Bill

On November 9, 2011, the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) highway reauthorization [bill](#). For an overview of MAP-21, view this November 7 [Policy Update](#) from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). As it currently stands, MAP-21 authorizes highway programs only; the Senate Banking, Commerce, and Finance Committees each have jurisdiction over other components of the surface transportation system, and their input is needed before MAP-21 can be approved by the full Senate. Any transportation reauthorization bill will need to pass both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate before being sent to the President for approval.

Two years ago, CMAP published five transportation reauthorization [principles](#) that now provide a framework to analyze MAP-21. These principles are reflected throughout the [GO TO 2040](#) comprehensive regional plan adopted unanimously in October 2010 by leaders from across the seven counties of metropolitan Chicago. CMAP urges leaders in Washington to give highest priority to the following 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.

CMAP's Immediate Concerns with MAP-21

While recognizing that MAP-21 is a good starting point for the reauthorization of federal surface transportation programs, CMAP has concerns with the bill as it is currently written. Foremost of these concerns is that MAP-21 fails to provide adequate funding for our nation's transportation system, both in the short- and long-term. The bill does not raise traditional user fees, nor does it establish new sustainable revenue sources, which is the crux of two of CMAP's priorities for the next transportation bill. Funding of our transportation system is in peril without additional dedicated revenues. CMAP believes strongly in the philosophy of user fees to fund transportation, and given the extreme pressures that exist on the federal budget, we have concerns about the stability and practicality of MAP-21's approach of using General Revenues as the funding mechanism for the Projects of National and Regional Significance (PNRS) program. We also question the bill's significant increase in financing programs like the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) when the federal government is decreasing or, at best, maintaining levels for its core direct funding programs. Additionally, states and regions need to be given essential tools, such as broad tolling authority, to ensure long-term funding of the transportation system.

CMAP is also concerned about how the funding will be distributed and the likelihood of major metropolitan areas receiving even less funds than they currently receive from the federal government. While we applaud the consolidation of programs to allow more flexibility in meeting the disparate needs that our regions face, we are concerned that the funding levels of these new programs and the suballocation methods will not allow us to adequately address those needs. The Transportation Mobility Program, which appears to consolidate a number

of existing programs, suballocates a smaller percentage than the existing federal Surface Transportation Program (STP). Because a number of additional activities would be made eligible by MAP-21, it is quite possible that less funding would be available for traditional local projects. The bill's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) not only adds eligibility and requires set asides, it also suballocates just 50 percent to nonattainment areas in contrast to the current 100 percent. Overall, while funding allocated to metropolitan regions might equal or exceed current allocations, this cannot be left to chance when metropolitan regions, particularly Chicago, require additional funding to ensure their vitality at a time when the U.S. economy needs them most.

CMAQ believes that MAP-21 has missed an opportunity to improve the metropolitan planning process and to address the significant needs facing our metropolitan regions. There is a disconnect between the planning and programming process at the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) level and how states intend to direct funds to project types through performance measures. This bill takes important steps toward performance-based planning and programming. However, it appears that MPOs play a relatively passive role in this process. MPOs should be involved in the identification of goals, targets, and performance measures, in cooperation with the states. The current MAP-21 language places the burden on regions for meeting performance targets that are set by the state and federal governments, with little MPO influence on those targets or performance measures and limited authority to direct funding in pursuit of clear regional goals. Performance-based programming is essential in a time of limited resources, and the MPO's role should be an integral one, rather than mere bean counting.

Similarly, while CMAQ applauds the MAP-21 focus on freight, MPOs appear to have little role in the proposed National Freight Program (NFP), despite key metropolitan areas' importance in the national goods movement system. While the current bill is only the highway component of a broader surface transportation reauthorization, freight needs to be addressed from a multimodal point of view; this legislation does little to move us in that direction or to establish a process for determining national priorities for freight investment.

Despite these important concerns, MAP-21 delivers on some of CMAQ's reauthorization principles. Its emphasis on performance management and more strategic decision making for investments is commendable. CMAQ also supports MAP-21's promotion of accelerated project delivery and streamlined regulatory processes, both of which promise to advance innovation and cost savings.

As Congress crafts and implements a new federal transportation bill, our agency looks forward to working with the Illinois delegation and other members of Congress in strengthening MAP-21 to address these concerns and to incorporate CMAQ's reauthorization principles.

Please see the CMAQ Policy Updates blog for [additional analysis of MAP-21](#).

Updated on November 18, 2011.