Agenda Item No. 9.0

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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MEMORANDUM

To: CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee

From: Matt Maloney, Deputy Chief of Staff

Date: January 5, 2010

Re: FY 2012 UWP Priorities

Background

The Unified Work Program (UWP) lists the planning projects the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and other agencies undertake each year to enhance transportation in northeastern Illinois and to fulfill federal planning regulations. The UWP is designed to run in conjunction with the State of Illinois fiscal year timeline of July 1-June 30. The final UWP document includes the transportation planning activities to be carried out in the region, detailing each project's description, products, and costs.

The sources of federal planning funds are the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. The FY 11 UWP awarded more than $15 million in federal funding, along with the required 20 percent of local matching funds, resulting in nearly $20 million dedicated to transportation planning in the northeastern Illinois region.

During last year's UWP process, a number of representatives on CMAP's Transportation Committee and Programming Coordinating Committee suggested that the UWP process should strive for more focus, especially given the recent adoption of the plan. Aligning these UWP planning funds with the priorities of the long range plan is also required by current federal transportation policy.

Furthermore, the GO TO 2040 section on coordinated investment recommends that "CMAP's programming activities should, as far as possible, be oriented toward implementing GO TO 2040. CMAP should realign its current programmatic and review responsibilities to support the plan. These responsibilities now include staffing project selection committees and selecting criteria for the allocation of Unified Work Program (UWP) funds."

In response to these charges, the UWP project selection committee has examined how to align the FY 12 UWP process with the regional priorities described in GO TO 2040. This remainder of this memo summarizes this process and the results.

Process for Determining FY 12 UWP Priorities
At its last two meetings, the UWP Committee worked to utilize GO TO 2040's implementation action areas as a way to guide priority setting for the FY 12 UWP process. Since UWP funds relate to transportation planning, the committee primarily focused on recommendations from the regional mobility chapter of the plan, while also assessing land use, environment, economic development, and governance actions with a strong connection to transportation. The committee ranked these action areas "high," "medium," and "low," with "high" signifying an action that should be completed in the nearer term, as opposed to signifying a degree of importance. From this exercise, a number of "themes" emerged which should be help guide the FY 12 process.

It should be noted that the UWP process includes both a "core" and a "discretionary" element. The core program primarily includes work central to the MPO's primary function under federal law. Thus, the vast majority of CMAP's operating budget, which includes the core functions of long range planning, the transportation improvement program (TIP), the congestion management process, public participation, and regional information and data, is typically funded under the core element. Other recipient agencies, including the transit boards, the City of Chicago, and the Regional Council of Mayors also typically apply in the core element to propose work that contributes directly to the MPO process.

It should be stressed that while the results of the prioritization exercise will help inform this core element, they will likely inform the discretionary element to a greater degree. This is because the discretionary element typically contains a wider array of special studies and other planning initiatives, which are also subject to a quantitative scoring process and considerable deliberation by the Committee.

Emerging Themes to Guide the FY 12 UWP
The following five overarching themes (which are not in any rank order), have emerged from the prioritization process. At their December meeting, the UWP Committee reached a consensus that these priorities should be used to guide the project selection for the FY 12 UWP.

- *Modernization of the Public Transit System.* GO TO 2040 recommends an enhanced focus on prioritizing planning work for the modernization of the existing transit system. Actions include work on coordinating services and fares, including pursuit of a universal fare payment system, work on traveler information systems, and technological improvements including transit signal priority and ART. It is clear that FY '12 project proposals, especially from the transit agencies, should feature these elements as a primary component.

- *Financial Planning Including Innovative Financing Strategies*. GO TO 2040 also stresses an array of recommendations related to transportation finance, including improved financial planning. Actions include strengthening transit financial

oversight, planning for efficiencies that reduce transit operating costs, the identification of funding sources for CREATE, and continued planning/policy work on other important issues of fiscal policy to improve the transportation system.

- *Improving Decision-Making Models and Evaluation Criteria for Project Selection.* GO TO 2040 also emphasizes improving decision-making processes for transportation projects, as well as the overarching importance of prioritization for making investments given constrained funding. This includes constructing improved models for answering the most pressing questions about major projects and designing appropriate and regionally-vetted evaluation criteria for judging projects.

- *Planning Work Toward Implementation of* GO TO 2040 *Major Capital Projects, Including Supportive Land Use.* The continuation of near-term work to further GO TO 2040's short list of fiscally constrained major capital projects is also a high priority. Potential work includes planning for the inclusion of transit components as part of major highway projects, advancing recommended transit projects through the New Starts program or other discretionary funding programs, and planning for supportive land use around transportation, including active technical assistance to local governments.

- *Local Technical Assistance and the Formation of Collaborative Planning Efforts.* A major emphasis area of GO TO 2040 is providing targeted technical assistance to local governments, information sharing, and formal planning efforts that focus on transportation and other interconnected issues of livability. CMAP is currently engaged in implementing many of these types of efforts through the UWP Livability grant, which was funded in last year's process, as well as the HUD-funded Sustainable Communities Initiative. The UWP Committee continues to view these and other related elements as high near-term priorities.

Next Steps

The above themes are "overarching" in nature and thus do not present the full universe of what should be considered for the FY 12 UWP- however these should offer an initial sense of how the UWP Committee will prioritize project submissions, particularly in the discretionary part of the program. Core proposals are due on January 28 and discretionary proposals are due on February 25. As is required, the recommended FY 12 UWP will be presented to the CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee for approval in June 2011.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

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