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MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Coordinating Committee

Date: May 5, 2010

From: Don Kopec, Deputy Director Planning and Programming

Re: Major Transportation Capital Projects

The *GO TO 2040* plan will include a fiscally constrained list of major capital projects, as required by federal regulations. An initial staff proposal was discussed with the Planning Coordinating Committee in March, and has also been presented to various stakeholders. During March and April, staff has presented the initial proposal for fiscally constrained major capital projects to the Councils of Mayors, CMAP's working committees, non-profit and civic organizations, and others. The purpose of these presentations was to identify and address any concerns that stakeholder groups had with the major capital project proposal. (This was not a formal public comment period, which will be held over the summer.)

Concerns were raised about a few of the project categorizations. These, and CMAP's response to them, are below. This is not a full list of comments received, but highlights those concerns that emerged repeatedly.

Illiana Expressway—

- **Concern:** A number of groups, including many stakeholders from Will County, expressed concern that the Illiana was not included as a fiscally constrained project. They pointed out that the project is supported by state-level elected officials in both Indiana and Illinois and is supported by local officials and the business community as well. The Will County Board as well as several municipalities have passed resolutions supporting the inclusion of the project in the fiscally constrained list.
- **Suggested treatment:** Funding for Phase I engineering for the Illiana – the next step in the development of the project – should be included within the fiscally constrained project list. The project's construction costs should remain on the fiscally unconstrained list.

- **Rationale:** The inclusion of engineering costs for the Illiana on the fiscally constrained project list demonstrates the region's support for its continued development. The rationale for including construction costs on the unconstrained list is two-fold:
 - First, while the project's assumptions include tolling of some sort, initial revenue projections show that tolls significantly higher than those charged on the rest of the tollway system would be necessary to cover construction and maintenance costs. Additional analysis of financing options needs to take place. CMAP also supports state legislation that would allow the use of public-private partnerships for this and other projects.
 - Second, the segment of the project between I-55 and I-57 has not been studied, and a wide variety of alignments and interchange points with I-55 are possible. The cost of the project, as well as its benefits, are dependent on the option chosen. CMAP supports initiating Phase I engineering for the project in order to narrow the project scope to a few feasible alternatives, and recommends that these activities begin as a high priority.

Southeast Service--

- **Concern:** Stakeholders in south Cook County expressed concerns that the Southeast Service is categorized as a fiscally unconstrained project. This project has been undergoing Alternatives Analysis by Metra, and the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative may be occurring in the near future.
- **Suggested treatment:** The project should remain a fiscally unconstrained project until such time as a Locally Preferred Alternative is accepted by the FTA. The Alternatives Analysis work should include detailed cost estimates; a demonstration of the financial capacity to cover the capital and operating costs; and, a financial commitment detailing the availability of state and local funds to match federal New Starts funds. These documents will provide the material necessary to determine if changes in the capital project's financial plan should be made to include the Southeast Service.
- **Rationale:** At this point there is a need for additional material to determine the financial feasibility of building and operating the proposed service.

STAR Line--

- **Concern:** Stakeholders in northwest Cook County expressed concerns that the STAR Line is categorized as a fiscally unconstrained project. As with Southeast Service, the project has been undergoing Alternatives Analysis by Metra, and the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative may be occurring in the near future. Though the project does demonstrate benefits and has strong local support, its cost is quite high.
- **Suggested treatment:** The STAR Line should remain a fiscally unconstrained project, but other options – such as including a transit component with the I-90 Managed Lanes project – should be used to improve transit service in a similar corridor.

- **Rationale:** There is a need for improved transit service in northwest Cook County, but significant funding issues concerning the STAR Line need to be resolved.

I-290 Managed Lanes--

- **Concern:** The fiscally constrained project list contains a “managed lane” project on I-290 which could involve tolling, vehicle restrictions, and special accommodations for transit. This expansion of I-290 is a significant concern for the Village of Oak Park and other communities in the project corridor. Of particular concern is that the I-290 expansion might preclude future transit extensions in the corridor.
- **Suggested treatment:** The “managed lane” project should be replaced on the fiscally constrained list with a multi-modal corridor. IDOT’s Phase I engineering work for I-290 and the results of the Cook-DuPage corridor study will determine the specific mode to be chosen. Regardless of mode, the project should require careful attention to minimizing any negative project impacts on the adjacent communities and preserving options for multiple modes in the corridor.
- **Rationale:** Transportation improvements in this corridor are clearly needed, and a multimodal approach is favored over a simple add-lanes project.

Central Lake County Corridor--

- **Concern:** The Central Lake County corridor (involving the northern extension of IL 53 and improvements to IL 120) raised concern among a number of environmental and civic groups. These are covered in more depth in a memo from the Environment and Natural Resources committee that will be distributed at the meeting. The project does have potential negative impacts on the natural environment and on immediately adjacent communities. It also has significant positive impacts, and a number of stakeholder groups expressed support for the project.
- **Suggested treatment:** CMAP recommends that IDOT work closely with Lake County and affected communities to use an aggressive Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach for the planning and design of this facility, and that environmental protection and preservation of nearby community character should be high priorities. Various design alternatives, including designing for lower speeds and using innovative interchange ideas, should be strongly considered during project planning.
- **Rationale:** Transportation improvements in the corridors are clearly needed. The project ranks extremely well using the adopted performance measures. However, it is realized that even major highway projects need to be consistent with the character of the communities that they pass through. A commitment to a CSS approach will ensure that these concerns will be addressed.

Other concerns--

- Several comments were also received which questioned the exclusion of a number of projects. These included the North Central Line Service Improvements, the Inner Circumferential Line, the Mid-City Transitway and the DuPage "J" Line. None of these projects are currently far enough along in their planning to warrant inclusion in the constrained element of the plan, but their further development is recommended.
- There was support expressed for inclusion of the Yellow Line extension. However, this project is not very cost effective in terms of new ridership generated, nor is there overwhelming local support.
- The Environment and Natural Resources Committee expressed a number of general concerns that dealt mostly with the operation and maintenance of the transportation system. Project-specific concerns covered sensitive environmental issues within the area of the project.
- A number of stakeholders expressed concern regarding the amount of resources devoted to new capital projects. Some agencies have suggested that funding be shifted from the maintenance and operations or system improvement portions of the financial plan to capital projects, allowing additional projects to be included in the constrained list. It was pointed out that federal law requires that the current system first be maintained and operated in a safe manner, while the Preferred Regional Scenario calls for the modernization of the system, eliminating maintenance and improvement backlogs and creating an attractive transit system that the public sees as a first choice.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion.

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