



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Agenda Item No. 8.0

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** CMAP Board

**From:** Bob Dean, Deputy Executive Director for Local Planning

**Date:** December 1, 2010

**Re:** Implementation of GO TO 2040: Technical Assistance

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Following the adoption of GO TO 2040 in October, staff has now shifted focus to the plan's implementation. The plan recognizes the central role that communities have in shaping the future of our region, and calls for CMAP and other groups to support local planning projects. Therefore, staff proposes an **active program of technical assistance** to communities, beginning in early 2011.

This local technical assistance program will include both staff assistance and grants, and will cover a wide range of planning-related services. It will include components that provide assistance directly to individual communities, as well as broader training and coordination components. To be most effective, the program will need to offer a clear process for offering assistance to communities as well as provide enough flexibility to allow projects to be locally customized and respond to locally-identified needs.

The federal Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant, received by CMAP shortly after the adoption of GO TO 2040, is meant to support CMAP's technical assistance activities. This \$4.25 million grant will be used primarily to support additional staff who will be responsible for working with communities on planning activities consistent with GO TO 2040; a portion of this funding will also be used for a series of small grants that complement staff assistance.

(Please note that an additional program of grants to local governments is also being developed, working closely to coordinate these with similar grants currently offered by the RTA. Staff will describe this program to the Board in more detail at the January meeting.)

### **Project types and eligibility**

In general, the technical assistance program will support planning activities that advance the implementation of GO TO 2040. A variety of projects are possible, and sample project types are listed in the one-page program summary attached to this memo. Local planning projects that

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address issues of transportation, land use, and housing in some way are eligible for assistance; those that treat these issues comprehensively and also address the natural environment, economic growth, and community development are ideal.

Staff assistance will be able to be provided to municipalities, counties, interjurisdictional groups, or nongovernmental organizations, though in the case of nongovernmental groups, participation of the appropriate local governments is also required. Because the purpose of the program is to build local capacity in addition to assist with projects, the staff assigned to work on local projects will be based within the community if desired by the local project sponsor.

### **Allocation process and timeline**

It is expected that there will be more requests for assistance than can be accommodated with available resources, so review and prioritization of requests for assistance is needed. However, it should also be accessible to communities without full-time planning staff, meaning that a simple application form is desired. It is also necessary to begin working on projects quickly, as the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant has a three-year lifespan.

Staff proposes that interested communities be asked to submit “expressions of interest” which describe in several paragraphs what type of assistance is requested and attach any relevant supporting information. Communication to communities about this technical assistance opportunity will occur in a number of ways: local governments will be sent application materials directly, staff will be available to make presentations on request, materials will be distributed through the weekly email and posted online, and local Councils of Government and Counties will also be asked to assist in spreading the word.

Once “expressions of interest” are submitted, staff will be responsible for following up with communities to collect any additional information needed to fully understand the proposed project. It is likely that some projects will be fully scoped and ready to begin immediately, while others will be in an earlier stage of development and will need to be further scoped before they can begin.

Below are proposed criteria that will be used to evaluate the requests:

- Alignment of the project with the recommendations of GO TO 2040.
- Local need for assistance.
- Feasibility and ability to implement.
- Collaboration with other groups, including neighboring governments and local nongovernmental groups.
- Input from relevant Counties and Councils of Government (COGs).
- Geographic balance.

Staff proposes accepting applications for assistance several times each year, with the first “expressions of interest” due on January 28, 2011. After receiving the expressions of interest, staff will review them with the working committees as well as other technical

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assistance providers and funders. The Board will also receive an update on applications received at its February meeting. Following these discussions, staff will identify projects to be immediately pursued and will initiate work on them in March. At the same time, sponsors of applications that showed promise but could not be pursued immediately will be scheduled for future allocation of resources, or will be advised on ways that their applications could be improved and resubmitted.

For future applications, this process will likely be revised to reflect lessons learned in the initial round. For the initial round of applications, staff believes that this proposed process meets the goals of having a defensible, open, and criteria-based process; directing resources to where they have the most benefit; beginning to undertake projects quickly; and allowing staff sufficient flexibility to customize projects to local needs.

(As noted above, an additional program of larger grants will be discussed at the Board meeting in January. This will involve a more conventional grant application process involving formal approval of grant recipients by the Board.)

At the December 8 Board meeting, staff will distribute the draft application materials that will be used to solicit "expressions of interest" from communities. Board discussion of these materials and of the overall local technical assistance program is requested.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Information and discussion

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## GO TO 2040: Local Technical Assistance Program

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the regional planning organization for the seven counties of northeastern Illinois, will be offering planning assistance to communities within the region. In today's challenging economic and fiscal times, many communities have difficulty allocating enough resources to plan for their futures as proactively as they would like to. **CMAP will help fill this gap by making staff resources and grants available to assist with local planning projects.**

This program is meant to implement GO TO 2040, the regional comprehensive plan. The plan recognizes the central role that communities have in shaping the future of our region, and calls for CMAP and other groups to support local planning projects. This program will give communities the opportunity to request CMAP's assistance on important local planning projects of many types. Examples of projects that could be undertaken through the program include:

- Preparation or updates to a local comprehensive plan, either in whole or in part. This could include expanding an existing plan to cover new topics such as energy and water conservation, local food, public health, workforce training, arts and culture, and others.
- Revisions to ordinances or other land use regulations. This could include revising outdated ordinances that are inconsistent with the comprehensive plan, updating codes to address water and energy conservation, updating parking regulations in a downtown, or many others.
- Activities that help to implement previously-adopted plans. For example, this could include advancing Transit Oriented Development (TOD) plans or other small-area plans by making recommended ordinance changes, analyzing financing needs, or similar activities.
- Studies or specific plans related to important local issues. This could include planning for stormwater management in areas that experience flooding, projecting future housing supply and demand, studying local parking policies, identifying local open space needs, and others.
- Projects that involve interjurisdictional coordination, such as planning for housing cooperatively across several communities, planning for improvements along a transportation corridor, or preparing watershed plans that cross municipal boundaries.
- Assisting with public participation related to challenging local projects, including meeting facilitation or communication of complex planning issues to the public.
- Overall, local planning projects that address issues of transportation, land use, and housing in some way are eligible for assistance; those that treat these issues comprehensively and also address the natural environment, economic growth, and community development are ideal.

Assistance is available as *staff assistance*, involving contributions from staff at CMAP or partner organizations, and *financial assistance*, involving grants that communities can use to hire consultants. Application materials are currently in development for both the staff assistance and the financial assistance programs. **Additional details will be released on December 10, 2010.** CMAP will make program details available online at [www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov).

For additional background on CMAP and the GO TO 2040 plan, please visit [www.cmap.illinois.gov/2040](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/2040). For more information or to request a presentation from CMAP staff, please contact Erin Aleman at 312-386-8816 or [ealeman@cmap.illinois.gov](mailto:ealeman@cmap.illinois.gov).