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December 5, 2006

Via E-Mail

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Dear editor:

Regarding your November guest essay, "A Hitch in the Plan," as partners of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), we disagree with the suggestion that this important new organization represents anything like a missed opportunity. The enabling legislation for CMAP calls for full implementation over a three year period. In the interim, CMAP is working with its partners to define its role in the seven-county region and to establish its legislative agenda for the Spring 2007 session of the Illinois General Assembly.

By no means is that role simply an advisory one, as shown with the regional water-supply planning initiative that CMAP is spearheading to help our communities avoid potentially disastrous shortfalls of drinking water in coming decades. CMAP is also working to build on existing regional cooperation and play a leadership role in evaluating development and investment decisions that have significant regional impacts. This includes working collaboratively with partners toward a consensus on such issues as land use, transportation, housing, and economic development.

With anticipated growth of 2 million more residents by 2030, CMAP is taking an innovative, integrated approach to planning for land use and transportation. The agency was created in part to coordinate technical assistance to local officials who for decades haven't been getting sufficient help to facilitate good decision making about land use and how it relates to transportation. To a great extent, that gap has been due to a lack of funding for planning at the regional level.

An agency like CMAP exists to set the bar high, to take the long-term view, and to show the region a vision of how things can be if, together, we apply sound planning principles. At the end of CMAP's first year, it is quite premature to declare the effort a success or a failure. But as some of the most-staunch proponents of combining

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land-use and transportation planning, we remain extremely optimistic about the new organization. And as a region, we literally can't afford for CMAP not to succeed.

Sincerely,

Gerald W. Adelman (Executive Director, Openlands Project)

Mark Baloga (Executive Director, DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference)

Kenneth Koehler (Chairman, McHenry County Board)

Mark Koplin (Illinois American Planning Association)

Edward Paesel (Executive Director, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association)

Steven Quigley (Executive Director, Will County Governmental League)

Jerry Roper (President and CEO, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce)

Robert Schillerstrom (Chairman, DuPage County Board)

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Donald Storino, Jr (Executive Director, West Central Municipal Conference)

Lawrence Walsh (County Executive, Will County)

Karen McConnaughay (Chair, Kane County Board)

Vicky Smith (Executive Director, Southwest Conference of Mayors)

Jacky Grimshaw (Vice President, the Center for Neighborhood Technology)

Anna Bicanic Moeller (Executive Director, McHenry County Council of Governments)