

regional **planning** board

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To: RPB Members
Date: June 15, 2006
From: Randy Blankenhorn, Executive Director
Re: Governance Issues

The staff and Board members have had a series of meetings with our partners over the last several weeks regarding governance of the planning process as we transition the relationships between the RPB, CATS and NIPC. These discussions are in no way complete, but I would like to update you regarding my views of the issues and concerns of those agencies.

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus has been supportive of the RPB and a process that would not re-designate the MPO. They are interested in the role of elected officials, particularly mayors, in the transportation project programming process and want to ensure that a process of selecting Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) projects remains consistent with the current CATS process.

The Chicago Area Transportation Study is also concerned about re-designation of the MPO and will not support any governance structure that recommends a change in designation. Beyond that, their major issue is that in a shared decision-making process with the RPB regarding transportation issues, the CATS Policy Committee must have meaningful decision-making authority. In other words, they don't want to be a rubber stamp for the RPB. They also want to ensure that the staff and committee support for transportation planning remains available and that they have some influence over the spending of transportation planning funds.

The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission's primary concern is that the functions that NIPC now serves are kept strong and remain a priority for the RPB. They recognize the fact that it is unlikely that the Commission itself needs to remain in its current form. They want to make sure that the committee structure allows for input from those specialized areas, such as parks and water resources, whether they are added to the RPB or become an integral part of the committee structure. They also believe that NIPC's base of elected officials provides policy guidance, but they understand this might

Memo to RPB Members

June 15, 2006

Page 2

duplicate the role of the RPB. They understand that any part of the committee structure must add value and not be duplicative of other efforts.

We have tried to tell people not to look so much at boxes and lines right now as at functional relationships and decision structures. I believe that the direction that we should pursue is one that keeps a transportation policy committee as the MPO and structures a shared decision-making process regarding transportation issues between the RPB and the MPO. We need to ensure that the functions of NIPC and its areas of responsibility are represented in the committee process and remain a key component of the mission of the RPB.

The real issues to be discussed over the next few weeks are centered upon the details of these relationships and the committee structure under the Board. Obviously the Council of Mayors will remain an integral part of the process as well the Citizen's Advisory Committee. One of the questions that staff is looking for direction on is whether there is a need or desire for a coordinating committee to deal with the non-policy issues of the RPB and to make recommendations regarding certain policy areas. If this is a direction that we wish to pursue, is this committee made up of the chairs of the functional committees, or is it appointed via some other mechanism? I think that this committee could ease the concerns of CATS and NIPC, but I don't want a committee that either is redundant or serves no meaningful purpose. If we create this type of committee we need to be very clear on its role and relationship to the RPB and the MPO.

Finally, the question of how we incorporate the RPB's existing committees and the role of RPB members on any subservient committees needs to be addressed. One of staff's thoughts is to have these committees chaired or co-chaired by RPB members and try to incorporate the existing RPB committees into this new structure (with the exception of the executive committee). We would be interested in your thoughts regarding roles and relationships in the committee structure.

At the June RPB meeting, we will be asking the Board to agree that we are headed in the right direction with these discussions and give us policy guidance regarding remaining issues so that a governance structure can be approved at your July meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (312)386-8600.

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