



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

233 South Wacker Drive
Suite 800, Sears Tower
Chicago, IL 60606

312-454-0400 (voice)
312-454-0411 (fax)
www.chicagoareaplanning.org

Memorandum

To: UWP Committee

From: Matt Maloney

Subject: Reporting on UWP Work

Date: August 28, 2007

Developing a System of Accountability for UWP Projects

Background

Over the past several years, the FHWA, CMAP Board, CMAP staff, and other regional civic organizations have recommended that CMAP and the MPO Policy Committee implement a process to account for the results of over \$18 million annual in federal metropolitan planning funds in the UWP. While such a system may not be statutorily required under federal law, our region will benefit from a clearer indication of the products produced by these funds, especially given the growing demand to maintain and enhance our transportation system against the backdrop of increasing fiscal constraints. Developing a system of accountability will not only inform the region about what is being accomplished with federal planning dollars, it will also help in the construction of a more efficient and effective UWP process moving forward.

Moreover, in the past few years many of our peers at metropolitan planning organizations across the U.S. have taken considerable steps toward greater transparency by instituting simple yet effective monitoring systems to account for their UWP funds. These systems need not be overly burdensome. Among other regions, Boston and Dallas, both similar in size and scope to Chicago, have developed processes to report on their UWP projects. It is the recommendation of the CMAP staff that member agencies on the UWP Committee, including CMAP, should implement a similar model this year to report on progress for funded projects in the FY 2008 UWP.

Summary of Recommendations Regarding UWP Monitoring

FHWA Certification of CATS, October 2005:

Recommendation: "The MPO should consider creating a tracking database to determine the success of past projects in UWPs. It would benefit the planning process in the region if this database was made public, either through the website or some other means. But the initial goal of this process should be to analyze the results of past planning studies within the UWP."

Chicago Metropolis 2020, in a presentation to UWP and Transportation Committees, Sept 2006:

Recommendation: “Develop a system of accountability for UWP projects, including reports of results for UWP projects and review by the UWP Committee and CMAP.”

Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2001:

“There is no serious accounting for results from the recipients of UWP funds. A UWP “Year-End Report” (has in the past been) produced by the Chicago Area Transportation Study. Planning projects consuming hundreds of thousands of dollars are accounted for with a one or two line summary.”

Other MPO Processes

Earlier this month a CMAP intern researched the largest 25 metropolitan regions in the U.S. to determine the extent to which other regional planning agencies had implemented monthly or quarterly processes for monitoring their UWPs. This project consisted of initial web research followed up by phone calls to the responsible individuals at the twenty-five largest agencies. We found that at least seven of them currently have processes in place, above and beyond expenditure reporting, to account for the results of their UWP projects. These regions are New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Dallas, Washington D.C., Columbus, and Indianapolis. In most cases, these systems take the form of monthly or quarterly reporting. The reports typically both summarize the amount expended to the amount budgeted as well as describe progress toward deliverables on the funded projects.

CMAP has studied Boston specifically as a model for developing a template and process to account for the results of UWP funding. The organizational structures of the Chicago and Boston MPOs are very similar. Like Chicago, the Boston MPO also has a UWP subcommittee to a Transportation Committee, and various regional agencies both participate in the UWP process and receive funding. Monitoring on Boston UWP projects is conducted via quarterly progress reports. These contain short narrative fields summarizing work status, products produced, and future tasks, as well as information related to amount expended and amount budgeted. At the end of the fiscal year, projects are divided into four categories: completed, continuing, inactive, or ongoing. These projects are then listed in the UWP document for the following year.

Recommendation

The CMAP staff recommends that funded agencies on the UWP Committee complete progress reports on UWP projects at the close of each quarter using the attached form. The form is a simple word template and should not require extensive effort to complete. All agencies, including CMAP, should relay expenditure information via *percentage of budget expended* and also complete four short narrative sections to detail work status, progress, products, and short term future objectives. CMAP staff recommends that this process begin in this fiscal year (FY 08). Reports should be furnished by the middle of each month following the close of each quarter, or the fifteenth of October, January, April, and July. In the FY 2009 UWP, a short chapter or appendix will use the narratives in these progress reports to detail the UWP work of the past year.