

Introduction

Residents of northeastern Illinois deserve and expect a high quality of life, which depends on many diverse but interrelated factors. Our seven-county region has an enviable status as one of the world's great economic centers. It has abundant natural resources, including a magnificent system of parks, open spaces, trails, and waterways, with access to Lake Michigan for drinking water and recreation. It has a transportation system that enables mobility of people and goods, acting as the engine of jobs and prosperity.

And among all these assets, the residents of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties are themselves the region's greatest renewable resource. They constitute a diverse workforce that fuels economic development and sustainable prosperity, and their daily lives motivate and give meaning to all that occurs in metropolitan Chicago.

The region and its communities must build on and protect our many assets by planning collaboratively and comprehensively. Quality of life must not be taken for granted and is not uniform across our region. It needs to be preserved and improved, particularly in light of traffic congestion, economic uncertainty, housing insecurity, climate change, and other challenges that require a regional approach. These problems overlap, and so do their solutions, which largely depend on wiser use of resources such as land, energy, water, and funding for infrastructure.

What may at first appear to be obstacles are in fact opportunities for bold action, but that requires that the region set clear priorities and weigh a variety of tradeoffs involving policies and investments. As a region, we cannot solve every large-scale challenge at once. And certainly no organization or government entity can do it alone. But by acting in cooperation with one another, the region's municipalities and counties can assert a powerful vision with far-reaching benefits for their residents.

Put another way, **the region can no longer afford *not* to plan effectively.** CMAP was created five years ago because local officials and business leaders understood that reality. And the resulting GO TO 2040 comprehensive plan presents a set of clearly defined strategies to pursue the regional vision of sustainable prosperity for all residents. The plan serves as a sustainable roadmap for the region's future that will require changing the way in which major investment decisions are currently made.

Our region is expected to grow significantly by 2040, adding over two million people and more than one million jobs. Depending on how we plan for the future, the effects of this growth can be either positive or negative for our region and communities. By implementing the GO TO 2040 plan's recommendations, our region will reap significant and lasting quality-of-life benefits that include more livable communities, improved regional mobility, a highly skilled workforce, and efficient government that responds to the needs of residents.

GO TO 2040 is the region's long-range comprehensive plan to link transportation, land use, the natural environment, economic prosperity, housing, and human and community development. With a region as large and diverse as northeastern Illinois, CMAP chose to prepare a policy-based plan (dealing with the investments and the high-level choices that shape our region) as opposed to a land use plan (dealing with specific types of development in specific locations). This is an important distinction in terms of the plan's focus, the agency's future role, and overall implementation.

About CMAP

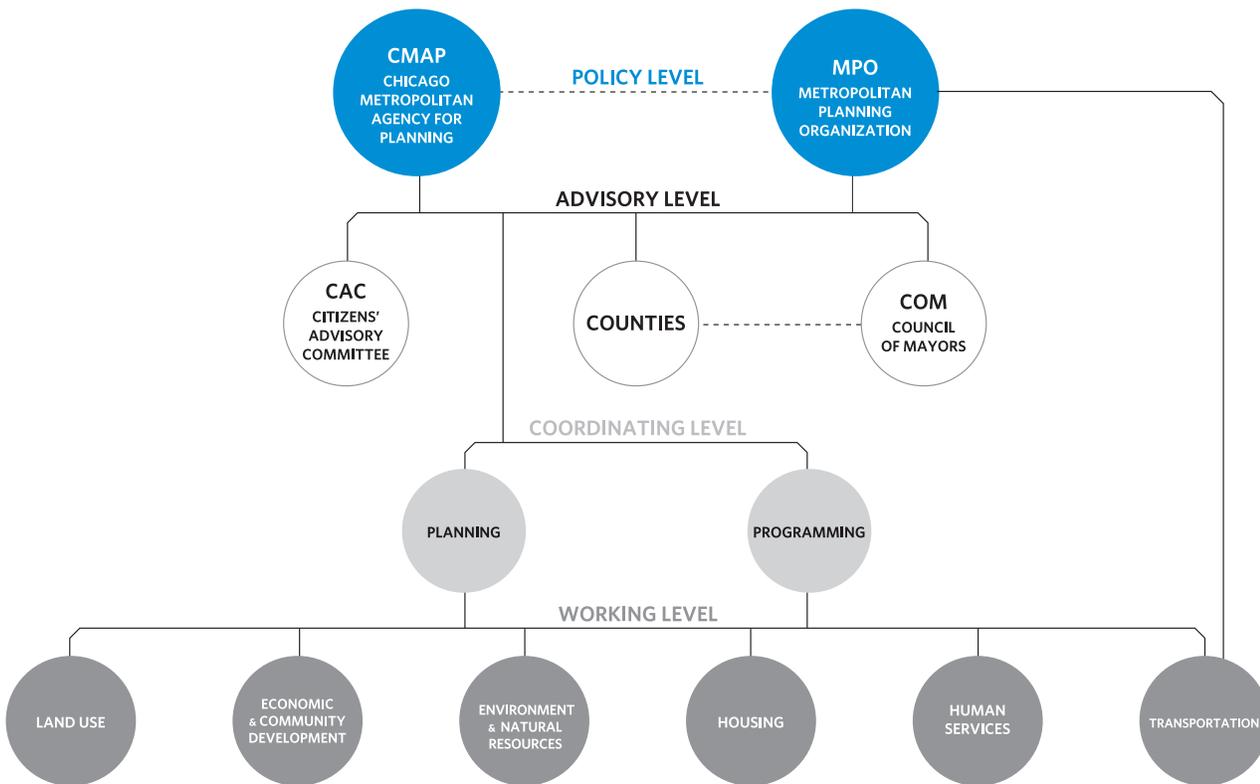
CMAP is the official regional planning organization for the seven counties of northeastern Illinois. The agency was created at a turning point for our region, as the business community and local elected officials recognized that many of the most pressing challenges are best addressed at the regional scale.

CMAP upholds the long-standing Illinois tradition of local control over zoning and land decisions. Yet, within that framework exist many opportunities for collaborative planning across jurisdictions in pursuit of common goals. The formation of CMAP was itself a prime example of such regional cooperation, and the agency has since sought to set high standards for collaboration, transparency, and accountability. Those virtues are important for building the support that will now be essential to the plan’s implementation.

The agency was created by State of Illinois law (Public Act 095-0677) and is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Together, these state and federal mandates require CMAP to conduct comprehensive regional planning, to program transportation funding, to provide technical assistance for communities, and to provide data resources for stakeholder organizations and residents across the seven-county region. The GO TO 2040 comprehensive plan has been prepared to fulfill and even exceed these requirements by encompassing the full range of issues that shape quality of life in the region.

The CMAP Board’s membership¹ reflects the regional consensus that led to creation of CMAP, featuring balanced representation from across the counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. CMAP has committees² at the policy, advisory, coordinating, and working levels that play integral roles in the agency’s planning processes, including the development of the GO TO 2040 plan (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1. CMAP committee structure



1 See <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/about/overview.aspx>.

2 See http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/committees/all_committees.aspx.

About GO TO 2040

With the publication of the GO TO 2040 plan, our region will have a clearly defined framework to bring about the policy and investment changes that are needed to sustain metropolitan Chicago's economic competitiveness and quality of life for decades to come.

GO TO 2040 is intended to help the 284 municipalities and seven counties of metropolitan Chicago face challenges that are strikingly similar but seldom identical. Implementing the plan's recommendations will help secure sustainable prosperity for this generation and for generations to come. The process of developing GO TO 2040 involved setting goals for the region's future, conducting technical research, and gathering feedback from residents and stakeholder groups, then setting priorities based on this research and public input.

Regional Vision

CMAP launched its comprehensive regional planning process on September 13, 2007, with a visioning event at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). From then until now, the agency and its partners have conducted extensive research and sought continual input from stakeholder groups and residents at large, which together have shaped the GO TO 2040 plan. Taking advantage of the latest technologies to facilitate public participation, the transparency of this process reflects an important theme of the plan itself, which seeks to make government more efficient and responsive to residents' needs.

The first major GO TO 2040 product, the Regional Vision,³ was approved by the CMAP Board on June 11, 2008. The GO TO 2040 vision describes the region's desired future in terms of quality of life, natural environment, social systems, economy, infrastructure, and governance. Each of these vision themes was also shaped by the cross-cutting issues of sustainability, equity, and innovation. The GO TO 2040 comprehensive plan is intended as the guide to achieving the Regional Vision.

Preferred Regional Scenario

Subsequently, the preferred Regional Scenario⁴ was approved by the Board on January 13, 2010. Based on two years of research and public input, the Regional Scenario was the final interim product prior to publication of the GO TO 2040 plan itself. It connected the Regional Vision's themes with the policy directions that would be addressed more explicitly in the plan. Organized in the Regional Scenario by the broad categories of Local and Regional Infrastructure and the Policy Environment, the scenario policy directions gave CMAP stakeholders and the public their clearest indication to that point regarding emphases of GO TO 2040.

The preferred Regional Scenario described a combination of actions that will prepare the region to achieve its goals for 2040. The scenario went beyond the broad goal statements of the Regional Vision by identifying in more detail the best course of action to reach the vision's goals. However, the scenario did not include detailed recommendations, which are now available in the GO TO 2040 plan.

As described in the preferred Regional Scenario, the region needs to:

Create more compact, mixed-use, livable communities to serve as the building blocks of our region's future development.

Invest more effectively in education and workforce development, while fostering a business climate that encourages job growth and innovation by the private sector.

Improve the region's high-quality system of parks and open space, while using conservation measures to reduce our consumption of energy and water.

Plan multimodally for transportation and target transportation investments to achieve outcomes such as economic growth, environmental protection, and congestion reduction, while finding more sustainable ways to finance infrastructure improvements.

Track our region's performance to assess where to make improvements to reach the desired future.

³ See <http://www.goto2040.org/vision/>.

⁴ See <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/2040scenario/>.

Public Participation

In addition to CMAP's highly participatory committee structure, efforts to engage the public have been a constant emphasis of GO TO 2040.⁵ The plan's development coincided with major, regionwide celebrations of the 100-year anniversary of the landmark 1909 *Plan of Chicago* by Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett. CMAP staff partnered with centennial organizers, capitalizing on the year-long commemoration to help educate residents of the need for effective planning and of the significant opportunities for input to the region's new plan. The agency's outreach efforts reached a peak during the summer of 2009, when more than 35,000 participants had their say at CMAP "Invent the Future" workshops, kiosks, web tools (including customized MetroQuest scenario-planning software and social media like Facebook), and booths at community festivals. Their preferences are reflected throughout this plan.

Technical Research

During the GO TO 2040 process, CMAP and its partners authored 47 strategy papers⁶ describing best practices in a range of issue areas. Each report was made available to the public as a draft, with comments solicited online and through CMAP's committees. CMAP also published a series of Regional Snapshot reports⁷ that further explored trends and data points that shed light on issues such as State and Local Taxation, Air Quality, Jobs-Housing Balance, and more. Throughout the two-year research process, CMAP relied heavily on its committee members and partner organizations to identify and help thoroughly study the topics now reflected in the GO TO 2040 plan.

Strategy papers on nine topics were prepared in partnership with the Chicago Community Trust.⁸ These papers — covering topics including arts and culture, education, emergency preparedness, food, human relations, hunger, public health, public safety and crime, and workforce development — are somewhat different from other CMAP strategy papers, as they were authored by external groups with subject-area expertise and guided by advisory committees. GO TO 2040 supports the recommendations of these strategy papers and encourages organizations working in these areas to continue to work toward implementing them.

Regional Indicators Project

CMAP has partnered with the Chicago Community Trust to develop information and collaborations in quality-of-life topics — including health, education, and many others — not traditionally included in regional plans. CMAP and the Trust together have created the Regional Indicators Project to collect data on over 200 factors that project participants will measure to track the region's progress toward achieving its 2040 vision. This extremely thorough and user-friendly data repository will be launched in fall 2010 as a web resource to facilitate effective decision making for local officials, planners, businesses, and other stakeholder groups.

5 GO TO 2040 public participation is summarized at <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/public-engagement>.

6 See http://www.goto2040.org/strategy_papers.aspx.

7 See <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/snapshot.aspx>.

8 To view these full reports, or executive summaries of them, see the main GO TO 2040 Strategy Reports page at http://www.goto2040.org/strategy_papers.aspx.

The GO TO 2040 Plan

The plan’s main body begins with a chapter that describes Challenges and Opportunities in terms of existing conditions that require coordinated responses to achieve positive outcomes as stated in the GO TO 2040 Regional Vision.

The GO TO 2040 plan’s high-priority recommendations are organized within four thematic chapters, each of which includes sections that distill critically important strategies for achieving clear and measurable outcomes. Near the end of every section are tables that describe Implementation Action Areas, with detailed steps that specific implementers should take. The themes and their recommendation sections are as follows:

Livable Communities

This theme addresses diverse factors that together shape quality of life in terms of “livability” — what attracts people to a particular community. The chapter on Livable Communities includes four sections of recommended actions:

1. Achieve Greater Livability through Land Use and Housing
2. Manage and Conserve Water and Energy Resources
3. Expand and Improve Parks and Open Space
4. Promote Sustainable Local Food

Human Capital

This theme addresses factors that determine whether our region’s economy will thrive due to the availability of skilled workers and a climate in which business creativity can flourish. The chapter on Human Capital includes two sections of recommended actions:

5. Improve Education and Workforce Development
6. Support Economic Innovation

Efficient Governance

This theme addresses the need for increased effectiveness of governments in the region and beyond, which is important to meet residents’ needs regarding accountability and transparency. The chapter on Efficient Governance includes three sections of recommended actions:

7. Reform State and Local Tax Policy
8. Improve Access to Information
9. Pursue Coordinated Investments

Regional Mobility

This theme addresses the vitality of our region’s transportation system, which is crucial for economic prosperity and overall quality of life. The chapter on Regional Mobility includes three sections of recommended actions:

10. Invest Strategically in Transportation
11. Increase Commitment to Public Transit
12. Create a More Efficient Freight Network

This chapter also includes descriptions of major capital projects that have been carefully selected to help achieve the GO TO 2040 Regional Vision.

After its four thematic chapters, the plan concludes with a chapter of Context and Best Practices, which are organized according to the broad categories of CMAP stakeholder organizations and individuals who can help to drive implementation of GO TO 2040:

Federal Government

State Government

Regional Authorities

Counties and Councils of Government

Municipalities

Nongovernmental Organizations

Development Community

Individuals