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To: Economic and Community Development Committee

Date: February 18, 2008

From: Bob Dean, Principal Regional Planner

Re: Vision Development

At the January 2008 meeting of the Economic and Community Development committee, committee members asked for a report on how their feedback on the draft vision statements would be used to create revised vision statements. This memo summarizes the comments made by the Economic and Community Development committee, and for each, explains how staff proposes to respond to these comments.

Currently, staff is focusing on identifying significant changes in content that have been recommended by different groups and addressing these. Feedback will be sought from the Planning Coordinating Committee at their March 12 meeting concerning areas where major changes were recommended. Staff has not yet reached the point of “wordsmithing” vision statements in response to comments received. This will occur primarily in April. Therefore, new vision statements are not provided below; instead, the general response to the committee’s comments is summarized.

Suggestion: Add “innovation” as an overarching theme, similar to quality of life, sustainability, and equity.

- Staff response: This was a very helpful suggestion, and innovation will be added as an overarching theme. New language will be created to describe the importance of innovation to the region, not just for economic development, but for all of the themes included in the vision (for example, energy, transportation, education, and others).

Suggestion: In the first sentence, “In 2040, the northeastern Illinois region will be a magnet attracting new, diverse residents from all over the world,” add language to indicate that new businesses, enterprises, or investments will also be attracted.

- Staff response: The suggested language will be added.

Suggestion: Improve the language in the equity theme, specifically removing reference to “winners and losers” and replacing this with a better alternative.

- Staff response: There has been widespread dissatisfaction with the treatment of equity, and staff recommends completely rewriting the section. Feedback from the Planning Coordinating Committee will be sought on March 12 on this point.

Suggestion: Move the vision statement concerning farmland to a different section.

- Staff response: Comments were received from a number of survey respondents and in other settings concerning the economic importance of farmland to the region. Therefore, staff recommends leaving this statement in the economic competitiveness section. However, it will be rewritten to focus more on its economic contribution.

Suggestion: Replace the first bullet in the economic competitiveness section with, “The economic strengths of our interdependent region will complement each other, with the entire region benefiting from its international recognition as a diversified center of commerce and its location in the heartland of our nation.”

- Staff response: The bullet will be replaced as suggested (although some additional wordsmithing may be done.)

Suggestion: Add additional language in the economic competitiveness section concerning good jobs.

- Staff response: This is a good suggestion, and additional language will be added, though exactly where it will be added is still being considered.

Suggestion: Add a new bullet reading, “The region will be recognized as a center of innovation across all disciplines, and will encourage creativity and entrepreneurial activity,” to the economic competitiveness section.

- Staff response: References to the importance of innovation will be added in several places in the document (see the first comment covered in this memo). While wordsmithing of this bullet may still occur, staff recommends using its content.

Suggestion: Replace the word “cog” with something else in the description of the region’s transportation system.

- Staff response: This was a common comment, and “cog” will be replaced with something that sounds more positive.

Suggestion: In the intergovernmental cooperation section, prioritize the last bullet, which reads: “Intergovernmental cooperation based on mutual benefit will structure taxation in the region to promote reinvestment and equitable access to resources among communities. The region will make decisions concerning physical infrastructure that consider long-term sustainability in terms of both operational and capital expenses.”

- Staff response: The points in this bullet are important, but its phrasing caused concern among local government officials who reviewed this statement. The Planning Coordinating Committee will address the treatment of this bullet at their March 12 meeting.

ACTION REQUESTED: Information