



MEMORANDUM

To: Working Committees

Date: November-December 2010

From: Bob Dean, Principal Regional Planner
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Re: Implementation of *GO TO 2040*: Technical Assistance

With the adoption of *GO TO 2040* on October 13, CMAP has now begun to focus on the plan's implementation, including local technical assistance directed to communities across the region. At the working committee meetings of late October and early November, staff described examples of technical assistance programs in other regions and discussed some overall philosophical approaches to providing technical assistance. Committee reactions were overall positive; many committee members were interested in moving forward quickly with developing a technical assistance program.

Based on these discussions and the recommendations of *GO TO 2040*, **CMAP proposes an active program of technical assistance** to communities to begin in early 2011. This program should include both staff assistance and grants, and should cover a wide range of planning-related services. It should include components that provide assistance directly to individual communities, as well as broader training and coordination components. It will be important to "brand" this program to provide a unifying theme to the various services that will be provided, as well as to emphasize the link to *GO TO 2040*; ideas for program branding are welcome.

This memo provides more detail concerning this proposal in the following areas:

- Overall level of resources proposed to be devoted to technical assistance
- Types of technical assistance proposed to be made available
- Process(es) for allocating technical assistance resources to specific projects
- Role of CMAP committees and other organizations

Level of resources available

In October, CMAP received notice from HUD that our application for Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant funding was successful. This funding will primarily be used to hire staff

to work directly with communities to support local planning projects. The level of funding is sufficient to hire 10 full-time staff for a 3-year period. In addition, existing CMAP staff will be redirected to focus primarily on providing local technical assistance. This will be the principal responsibility of 10 current staff, and several others (approximately 5) will split time between technical assistance and other responsibilities.

Grant funding is also available to assist with local planning. In the current fiscal year, approximately \$700,000 is dedicated to local grants through federal and state sources. The application process for this funding will be coordinated with the RTA's annual grant programs. Additionally, approximately \$500,000 total is available through the HUD grant (over the 3-year period). This will likely be used for small grants to complement staff assistance, rather than major grants to communities for stand-alone planning projects.

Types of technical assistance

General ideas concerning types of technical assistance were discussed at the working committees in late October and early November. The following sections provide more detail about types of technical assistance that is expected to be provided.

Regional technical assistance

The term "regional technical assistance" is used here to indicate work that is not geographically targeted, but can be helpful to a variety of communities. Proposed regional technical assistance activities include:

- Plan Commissioner workshops. A series of workshops for Planning Commissioners will be provided, in coordination with the Illinois chapter of the APA and local COGs.
- Online case study library. This project will collect positive case studies from around the region of local governments advancing the principles of *GO TO 2040* through plans, ordinances, or other programs; it will make these available online in searchable format.
- Compendium of plans and ordinances. The initial Compendium of Plans was completed in 2009, and updates to this, as well as collection of various types of ordinances, will be pursued.
- Model ordinances. Model ordinances and codes will be prepared on topics of interest to local planners, determined through the municipal survey and input from committees.
- Trainings, webinars, and other workshops. Periodic trainings for local staff or officials will be held on topics of interest, often in conjunction with other organizations.
- Overall coordination of technical assistance with other providers. Many groups beyond CMAP, including Counties, the RTA, state agencies, and nongovernmental groups, provide technical assistance. This will be coordinated to avoid duplication and build on past and ongoing efforts by other groups.

In future years, other forms of regional technical assistance – such as award or recognition programs, or additional types of workshops, for example – will also be explored and potentially pursued.

Community technical assistance

The term “community technical assistance” includes work that is geographically specific, focusing on a single community or group of communities. Proposed community technical assistance activities include:

- Grants to local governments through the new Livable Communities grant program. These are described in more detail below.
- General review of plans and ordinances. CMAP will work with communities on request to review existing ordinances and plans, and in some cases, analyze or visualize their results if they were fully implemented.
- Staff assistance on local projects. This is the largest single element, and will be the primary focus of the staff hired through the HUD grant. Assistance will be provided in areas such as:
 - Land use, including preparation or updates of comprehensive plans, small-area plans, ordinance revisions, and similar regulations or programs. This can include review and revisions of individual elements of a local plan or ordinance (for example, reviewing parking regulations in a downtown area).
 - Transit Oriented Development, focusing on implementing existing TOD plans through ordinance changes, assessments of development potential, or similar activities. Preparation of new or updated TOD plans could also be undertaken.
 - Housing, including assessments of housing supply and demand, incorporation of housing into local comprehensive plans, or staff support for interjurisdictional housing groups.
 - Resource conservation, such as watershed plans that cross community boundaries, preparation of community-wide sustainability plans, and incorporation of water and energy conservation into local ordinances.
 - Other topical issues, such as public health, local food, parking, and others. Assistance in these areas will typically involve incorporating them into local plans and ordinances.
 - Outreach and engagement, including assistance in proactive public engagement, meeting facilitation, and communication of planning issues to the public.
 - This list is not exhaustive; other projects similar in scope and purpose could also be pursued.

Other project phases, such as land acquisition, engineering, or capital investment, are not intended to be pursued through CMAP’s technical assistance. Also, the technical assistance services are geared toward planning activities that are at a larger scale than an individual site. Some site-level projects may be undertaken, but these would be in the context of larger planning activities.

Process for resource allocation

A process is needed to prioritize which “community technical assistance” projects should be pursued. This process should meet several goals. First, it should efficiently use available resources; this involves both selecting effective projects and providing assistance to communities

that need it most. Second, the process should be defensible, with justification for which projects are selected to be pursued. Third, it should begin projects quickly; the HUD grant expires after 3 years, so using these new resources soon is a priority.

Processes for allocating staff assistance, as compared to grants, will differ. Financial assistance will follow a more formal process, with an annual application cycle and approval of grant recipients by the CMAP Board. Projects that principally involve staff assistance will be treated less formally. These two differing processes are described separately below.

Process for grants

The available funding for grants originates from federal transportation planning funds, allocated annually through the Unified Work Program (UWP), and supplementary state funds.

Approximately \$700,000 is available for grants in the current fiscal year.

- Coordination with other organizations. The program will be closely coordinated with the RTA's [Community Planning program](#), which provides grants to municipalities for planning that supports transit. While CMAP's grant program and the RTA's program will remain separate and distinct, they will share application materials and solicit projects during the same time frame. This is intended to reduce the burden on applicants, as they will only need to submit one application for both programs, rather than separate applications. In future years, it is recommended that IDOT also coordinate funding from its Statewide Planning and Research program to align with the CMAP and RTA grants.
- Eligibility. The grant program is targeted to local governments, and eligibility for this program is restricted to municipalities. Counties already access UWP funds directly, and the RTA also has a separate funding program (the [Subregional Planning program](#)) available to counties, COGs, and interjurisdictional groups. The RTA's program focuses on Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) projects and local transit improvements; CMAP's program will be somewhat broader, focusing on the intersection between land use and transportation in general.
- Application process and timeline. A Call for Projects will be issued in April 2011, with applications due in June. The RTA's [April 2010 application materials](#) are available online; next year's will change in light of CMAP's participation, but this general format will still likely be used. Once applications are received, CMAP and the RTA will jointly review applications, and will determine which funding source is more appropriate for each project. Each agency will then work with applicants to fully scope projects and will follow its designated approval process. In CMAP's case, this will involve discussing a proposed program of projects with the working committees during summer 2011, and ultimately receiving formal approval from the CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee.
- Criteria for selection. The criteria used by the RTA in the most recent application process are available on pages 13-14 of the [April 2010 application materials](#). CMAP will use a similar scoring system, and some criteria (such as levels of coordination with partner groups, public participation, and application quality and completeness) will be used by both CMAP and the RTA. Other criteria will differ between the two agencies. Development of application materials for the coming year is underway, and the new materials are scheduled to be brought to the CMAP and RTA Boards in February 2011.

The working committees will be asked to review drafts of these materials as they are available, likely beginning in December 2010.

Process for staff assistance

Staff assistance will be provided both by current staff, and by new staff supported through the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant. As noted above, allocation of staff time to projects is expected to follow a less formal process than the distribution of grant funds.

- Coordination with other organizations. Many other organizations already provide staff assistance to assist communities with planning. Among these are the Counties, the RTA, and a variety of nongovernmental organizations. The purpose of CMAP's staff assistance is to build on, not replace, these existing efforts. This will be a two-way effort: CMAP will participate in projects being led by other organizations, and involve appropriate external groups in CMAP-led technical assistance projects.
- Eligibility. Staff assistance can be provided to municipalities, counties, interjurisdictional groups, or nongovernmental organizations (though in the case of nongovernmental groups, participation of the appropriate local governments is also required). A variety of projects are possible, although all should relate in some way to land use, housing, and transportation; a list of sample project types is on pages 2-3 of this memo.
- Application process and timeline. Communities interested in receiving staff assistance will be asked to submit an "expression of interest" to CMAP. This will be a short, simple description of what kind of assistance is needed; the intent is to have it be non-technical, so that it can be completed by people who are not professional planners (e.g. local elected officials or community leaders). The "expressions of interest" will be due in late January 2011. Following this, in consultation with its committees and based on the criteria described below, CMAP will select a short list of projects to receive staff assistance. Some projects may require further scoping before work begins, while others will be ready for immediate initiation; timeframes for projects will vary dramatically based on their complexity. In later years, it is not certain whether there will be a formal application cycle, or an ongoing determination of needs and available resources; this will be determined at a later point.
- Criteria for selection. Requests for staff assistance will be judged primarily qualitatively, based on broad criteria including the following:
 - Alignment of the project with the recommendations of *GO TO 2040*.
 - Local need for assistance. Methods for determining this will need to be developed, but should consider existing local staff capacity and economic/fiscal situation.
 - Collaboration with other groups, including neighboring governments and local nongovernmental groups. This will also consider a project's ability to leverage ongoing work that is underway or planned by another grantmaker or technical assistance provider.
 - Input from relevant Counties and Councils of Government (COGs).
 - Geographic balance. The overall program should include projects across the region.

Likely sources for project proposals are the unsuccessful applications for HUD Community Challenge grants submitted by local governments in the region. Only a very small percentage of applications received funding nationwide, due to a high number of applications. Within the region, at least 20 applications were submitted, but only one received funding. Many of the unfunded projects appear beneficial, and it is possible that some can be advanced with staff assistance from CMAP. Community Challenge grant applicants will be encouraged to request assistance from CMAP if appropriate and useful.

Committee roles

While there may be some changes recommended to the CMAP committee structure, the general concept of having working committees and coordinating committees will likely remain. Within the technical assistance program, working committees are expected to have a role discussing program design, reviewing selection criteria for grants and staff assistance, commenting on requests for assistance from communities, and reviewing ongoing progress on projects. Coordinating committees will continue to provide a forum for discussions between working committee representatives.

Additionally, current technical assistance providers are expected to have a role, as an effort will be made to align CMAP's technical assistance work with their ongoing activities. The Technical Assistance Providers Committee, an existing committee which has been meeting occasionally for several years, will be strengthened. Its membership will be reviewed to ensure that it has representation from all of the working committees. Also, an expanded role for philanthropic organizations, which may provide funding support for some elements of plan implementation, will be sought.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion.