



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

## Agenda Item No. 6.0

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### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Local Coordinating Committee

**From:** Bob Dean, Deputy Executive Director for Local Planning

**Date:** October 1, 2014

**Re:** Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program Evaluation

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Over the last several months, staff have held a series of discussions with the working committees concerning the first three years of experiences with the LTA program, with the intention of drawing conclusions that can be used to guide the program moving forward. Each working committee hosted discussions at several of their meetings, on topics including basic program statistics, results of external surveys by project sponsors, implementation progress, and results of internal evaluation. Staff prepared three separate memos to inform these discussions, which are attached to this cover memo.

At the October 8 meeting of the Local Coordinating Committee, staff will review and summarize the key findings from each of these memos, and will discuss overall conclusions that can be drawn from the evaluation. These have influenced the recommendations for project selection this year, and will be used to further shape the program in future years.

Following the Local Coordinating Committee discussion, staff will prepare an overall report on conclusions and next steps, and will discuss this with working committees, the CMAP Board, and other stakeholder groups over the next few months.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Discussion





## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Working Committees and Partners

**From:** Bob Dean, Deputy Executive Director for Local Planning

**Date:** June 2014

**Re:** Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program Evaluation, Part 1: Program Statistics and External Surveys

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Over the next several months, CMAP will engage its working committees and other partners in an evaluation of the first three years of the LTA program, with the intent of using the results to focus future resources most effectively. This will be a multi-part discussion, held over a series of committee meetings. A rough timeline of topics is contained below, although please note that this may vary from committee to committee based on meeting schedules.

- Basic program statistics – June/July
- Results of external surveys by project sponsors – June/July
- Review of new applications – July/August
- Implementation progress – July/August
- Results of internal evaluation – August/September
- Results of municipal survey – August/September

This memo covers the first two bullets above – basic program statistics, and the results of external surveys by project sponsors. Committee and partner comments on the attached report are welcomed.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Discussion



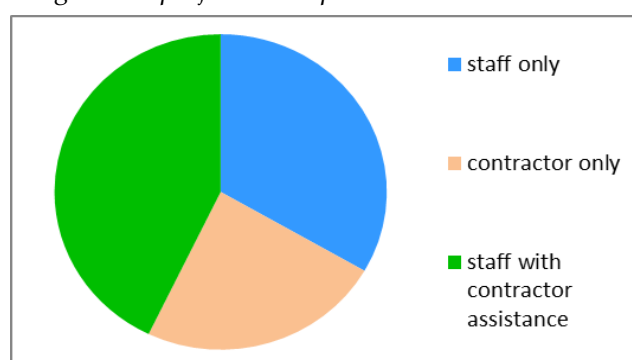
## Basic program information and statistics

### ***Project delivery***

The overall philosophy of the LTA program has been to identify projects that are priorities to accomplish, and then use a variety of methods to accomplish them, including staff assistance, consulting assistance, and grants. Three major types of assistance have been used to support the LTA program. The first type includes projects that are led entirely by CMAP staff, with no external contracts. The second type involves CMAP contracting directly with a consulting firm to complete a local planning project, or providing a grant to a local government to hire a consultant; in both cases, a competitive RFP process is used. The final type includes projects that are led by CMAP but also involve smaller contracts that are used to hire a contractor, either a consulting firm or a nonprofit partner, to contribute to a project.

As Figure 1 shows, the LTA program has used each of these methods to accomplish projects. The most common arrangement has been projects that have been led by CMAP staff with assistance from specialized contractors to assist with portions of the projects that CMAP does not have the expertise to address. In these cases, the bulk of the work is done by CMAP staff, and contractors are used to prepare visualizations, analyze market conditions, assess the workforce development structure, or other specialized project elements.

*Figure 1 – project accomplishment methods*



The average size of a project in the LTA program, whether it is accomplished by staff assistance, consultant assistance, or a combination of these methods, is approximately \$90,000-\$100,000. While most projects are in this range, size varies considerably; some have been as small as \$20,000 or as large as \$250,000.

Over the past three years, the management of the LTA program has become systematized to a large degree. CMAP staff track time by project, which helps to estimate resources allocated to any given project and also improves CMAP's understanding of the amount of time that different project stages take. Projects typically involve teams, with an explicit role on most projects for a project manager, project director, outreach staff, and a data/mapping expert, as well as other support as needed. Most project teams are formed from the Local Planning division of CMAP in which LTA is housed, but others are brought in from the Policy, Programming, Research and Analysis, and Communication divisions as needed.

### ***Outreach and involvement***

Outreach and involvement have been critical parts of the LTA program from its beginning. A broad consortium of partners was responsible for submitting the application to HUD to initiate the LTA program, and these partners have remained involved. CMAP tracks involvement of partners in its projects; of the 48 projects completed (as of April 2014) that were led by CMAP

staff, 43 included the involvement of at least one external partner organization. Among staff-led projects that are currently underway, 40 of 43 involve at least one external partner.

The groups that have been most involved include the region's transit agencies (CTA, Pace, Metra, and RTA), as well as two regional civic organizations, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) and the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT). Other groups with frequent involvement include the Chicago Jobs Council (CJC), a workforce policy organization; the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), an organization of the region's municipalities; Openlands, an environmentally-focused nonprofit; and the Urban Land Institute (ULI), which represents groups in the development industry.

Stakeholder groups are involved in project selection as well. After receiving applications, CMAP discusses them with the region's counties, Councils of Governments (COGs), transit agencies, and nonprofit partners, as well as CMAP's working committees. These groups provide valuable insight into past work in many communities, and their involvement ensures that the projects selected for inclusion in the LTA program build from past and ongoing work by other organizations.

The LTA program includes a commitment to engage the general public. Each LTA project is assigned a dedicated community outreach staff person, whose primary responsibility is to engage residents and other stakeholders. This begins with a project outreach strategy, which describes activities and target populations appropriate for a given community's demographics. Each outreach strategy targets stakeholders who will be most affected by the project, and includes a particular focus on individuals who have been traditionally left out of past planning processes. As the project progresses, the outreach staff and project managers work to incorporate the findings of the public engagement into the plan's recommendations.

A diverse group of five full-time staff form CMAP's outreach team, and significant resources are devoted to outreach. Typically, about 20% of the resources dedicated to an average project are spent on outreach, usually in the early stages of the project. This consistent allocation of resources has provided the LTA program with a reputation for extensive and effective outreach, and has helped to build local support for the plans that are produced.

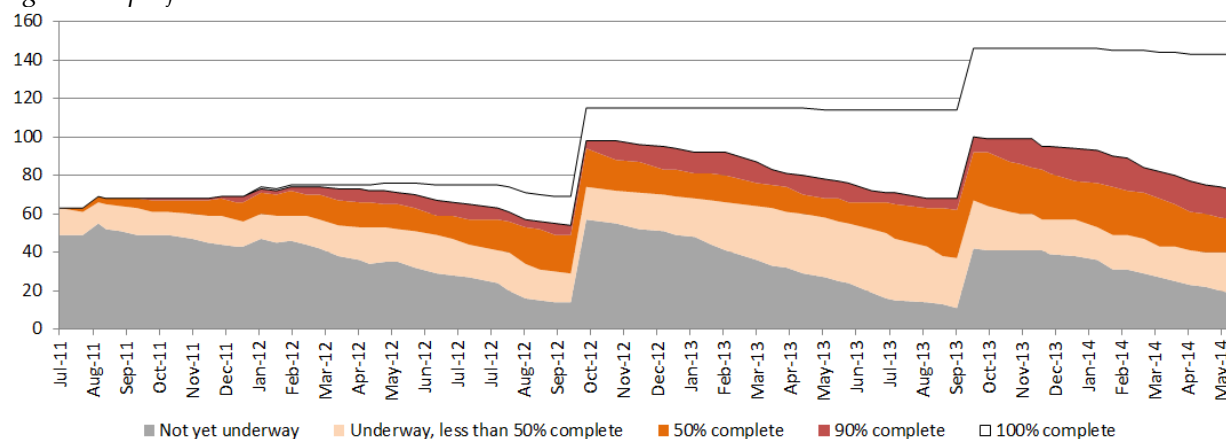
In total, over the past three years, the LTA program has held over 250 outreach "events" – including meetings, focus groups, online interactive web surveys, and others – and reached over 18,000 individuals. Among the most successful tools is MetroQuest, an online, interactive web tool that allows the development of interactive online surveys and maps. Depending on the character of each community, in-person meetings can be just as valuable.

### ***Project statistics***

Since its initiation in 2011, over 70 projects have been completed through the LTA program, with 50 more underway and 20 more set to begin in the near future. For purposes of tracking progress, CMAP divides projects into several stages and regularly assesses their status. Early stages include project scoping and administration; later stages include completion of the existing conditions assessment (which corresponds to a project being approximately 50% complete), and preparation of a draft plan (90% completion). Figure 2 shows project status over

time. Changes in the size of the colored sections indicate project progress over time, and the large changes in October of each year result from the addition of new projects. As this shows, the LTA program has made constant progress, and the rate of project advancement has accelerated as the process has become more efficient.

Figure 2 – project status timeline chart



CMAP maintains a separate webpage for each completed project, as well as many ongoing projects. These are available on CMAP's LTA website:

<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs-and-resources/lta/projects>

To date, the most common projects in the LTA program have been comprehensive plans, with 33 projects of this type. Other common types include transportation plans, as well as plans that focus on a specific corridor or area (which may be within a single community or may cross municipal boundaries). Between them, projects in these three categories make up nearly 60% of the projects and 70% of the resources devoted to the LTA program. More information on project types is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – project type

Project type	Total projects	Completed projects	Active/upcoming projects
Comprehensive plan	33	14	19
Corridor or area plan	28	16	12
Transportation plan	23	11	12
Housing plan	10	5	5
Water resources plan	9	9	0
Zoning update	9	1	8
Sustainability or green infrastructure plan	8	3	5
Other	23	11	12
Total	143	70	73

As a supplement to the LTA program, CMAP's Local Ordinances and Toolkits Program develops resources that help municipalities advance the goals of GO TO 2040. Each year, CMAP works with municipal officials and experts to deliver toolkits that describe the process of addressing a specific topic at the local level. Recent topics include parking, climate change adaptation, and immigrant integration. Currently, toolkits are underway on topics including aging in place, conservation design, sustainability planning, and complete streets; CMAP

intends to also begin work on a toolkit on fair housing, if external funding support can be found.

By design, projects undertaken through the LTA program have touched all parts of the metropolitan area. Figure 4 shows that the geographies with the most projects are west and south suburban Cook County. This is expected, as the LTA program has focused on assisting low-capacity communities, and these areas contain the region's greatest concentrations of small, low-income communities. The smallest number of projects (two) have been undertaken in Kendall County, which is also expected, as Kendall County is the region's smallest county. Per capita, relatively few projects have taken place in the City of Chicago; CMAP is currently working with City staff to correct this imbalance in future years. This information is also shown spatially in Figure 5.

*Figure 4 – number of projects by geography*

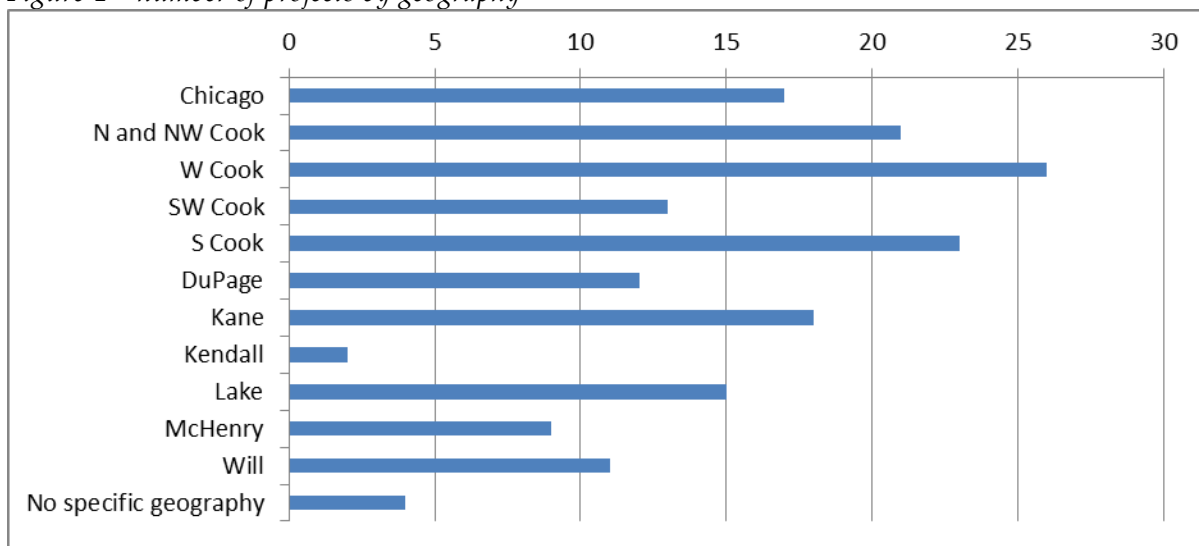
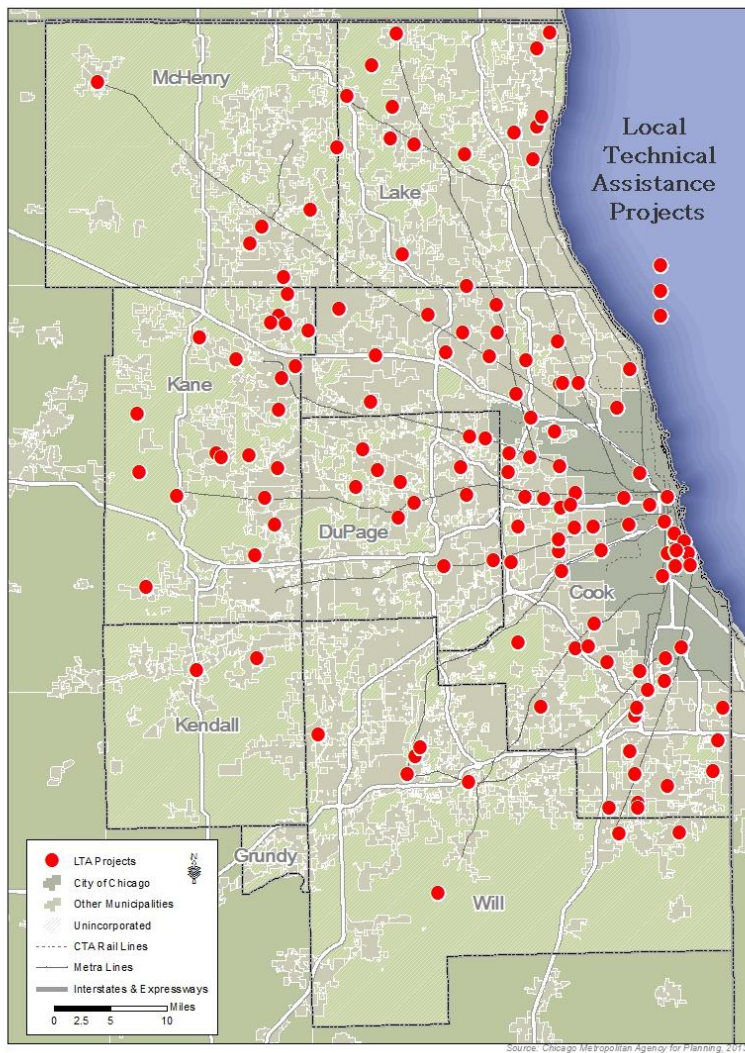




Figure 5 – project location map



## External survey results

Following the conclusion of each LTA project, CMAP sends a follow-up survey to the local project sponsor. Surveys are sent in batches approximately every six months; the most recent surveys were sent in February/March 2014, at which point approximately 55 projects had been completed. To date, 48 complete survey responses have been received.

### Quantitative results

Compiled results to the survey questions are shown in Figures 6-9. The survey includes questions meant to gauge satisfaction with elements of the LTA program – the CMAP project team, overall outcome, responsiveness, outreach, technical work, and timeliness. As shown below, local sponsors have been very satisfied with the elements of the LTA program to date; at least 90% of respondents selected “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement. There are slight differences in responses from question to question, but these are not significant.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether implementation steps were clearly laid out, and most (90%) indicated that they were. Respondents were also asked whether implementation had begun yet. In 70% of the cases, implementation had begun at the time of the survey; in other cases, it had not yet begun at that point but has since been initiated.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they were likely to submit another project to the LTA program, or to recommend that others apply to the LTA program. Most respondents (90%) indicated that they were “likely” or “very likely” to do both.

Figure 6 – responses to survey question “I am satisfied with...”

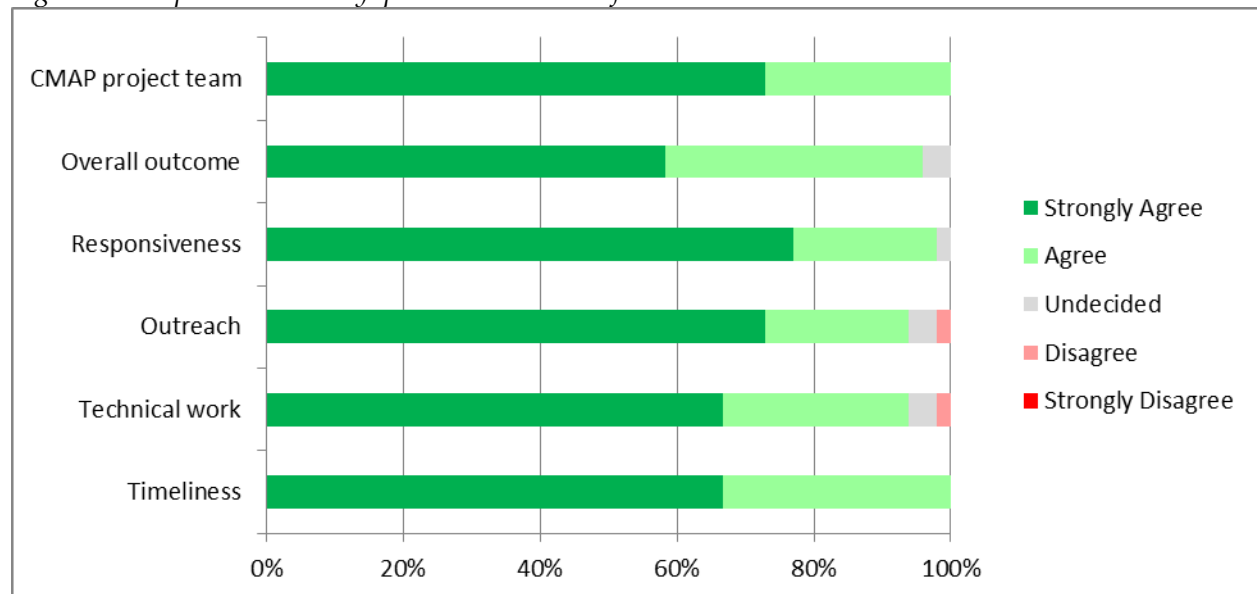


Figure 7– responses to survey question “Were implementation steps clearly laid out?”

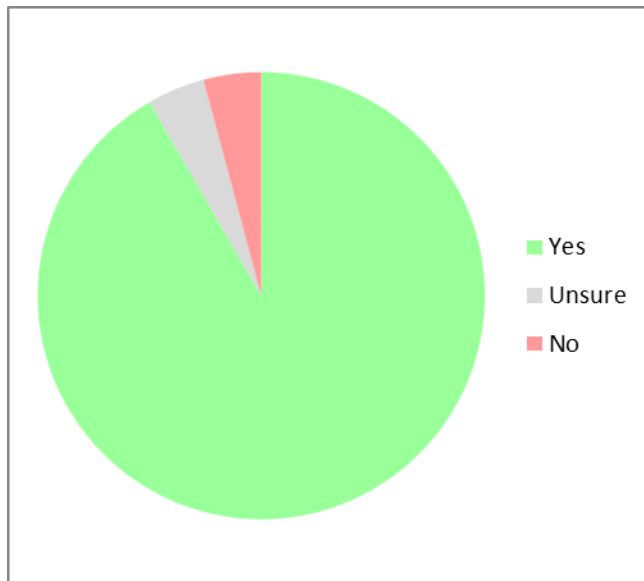


Figure 8 – responses to survey question “Has implementation begun?”

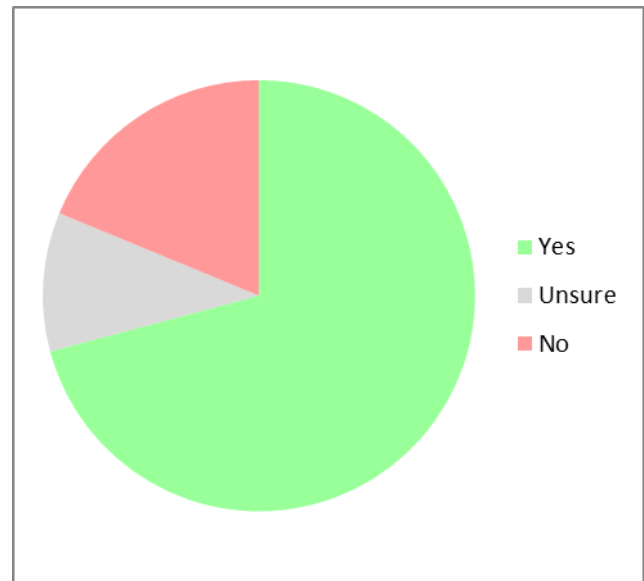
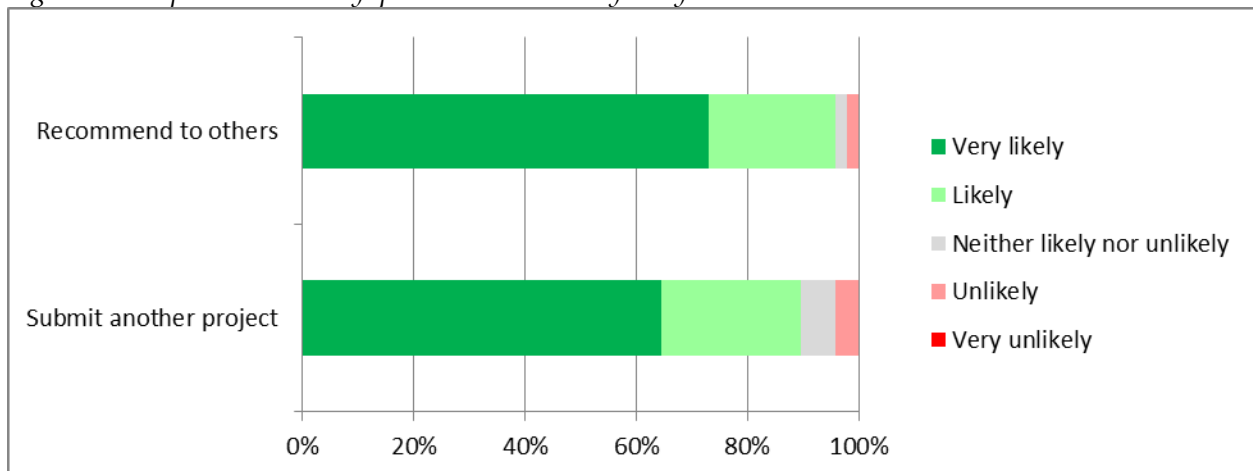


Figure 9 – responses to survey question “How likely are you to...”



As noted earlier, projects are delivered using several methods, including allocation of staff time and funding for consultant contracts. Results for staff-led projects and consultant-led projects were compared, and no significant differences were observed.

### Open-ended results

The survey also asked several open-ended questions about the program. The vast majority of responses to these questions were positive, and are not included below for sake of brevity. Instead, comments that included constructive criticism are summarized below. It should be noted that many of these were offered in response to a question that specifically asked what CMAP could improve upon in the future.

- Two respondents indicated that they underestimated the amount of their time that was necessary to produce a good product. This confirms CMAP’s own experience, which is that communities need to participate actively in an LTA project to get the best result.

- One respondent stated that completing the project on scope and on schedule seemed to be given higher priority than being flexible in response to shifting needs and priorities. However, other respondents commended the program for its flexibility. This highlights a continual tension in any program like LTA: responsiveness to changing community priorities versus adherence to the agreed-upon scope.
- Three respondents suggested that the outreach process for Homes for a Changing Region projects could be improved. Since receiving these comments, CMAP has already made some changes to the outreach process, including using MetroQuest, an online engagement tool, to supplement public meetings.
- Finally, many respondents requested that CMAP remain involved to assist with implementation. Respondents asked for help with securing infrastructure funding, applying for other grants, assisting with follow-up planning or zoning projects, convening other relevant public agencies, or sharing best practices. Other respondents indicated that simply having regular check-ins to discuss implementation progress, or providing advice to staff on implementation activities, was also beneficial.

### ***Conclusions***

The results of the survey of project sponsors are overall very positive. This helps to reinforce the level of local support for the LTA program, but does not provide much to help evaluate and focus the program in future years.

This is the first of several memos related to LTA program evaluation that will be discussed with the working committees and other partners. Committee and partner comments and feedback are welcomed.



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Working Committees and Partners

**From:** Bob Dean, Deputy Executive Director for Local Planning

**Date:** July 2014

**Re:** Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program Evaluation, Part 2: Project Implementation

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Over the next several months, CMAP will continue to engage its working committees and other partners in an evaluation of the first three years of the LTA program, with the intent of using the results to focus future resources most effectively. This will be a multi-part discussion, held over a series of committee meetings. A rough timeline of topics is contained below, although please note that this may vary from committee to committee based on meeting schedules.

- Basic program statistics – June (complete)
- Results of external surveys by project sponsors – June (complete)
- Review of new applications – July/August (covered in separate memo)
- Implementation progress – July/August (covered in this memo)
- Results of internal evaluation – August/September
- Results of municipal survey – August/September

This memo covers the fourth bullet above – implementation progress. New applications will also be discussed at committee meetings in July and early August but will be covered in a separate memo.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Discussion



## Implementation – definitions

In this memo, implementation is described in two ways. The first involves implementation of GO TO 2040, the region’s long-range plan. Many recommendations of GO TO 2040 can best be implemented by reflecting them in locally-adopted plans and regulatory documents. The first part of this memo tracks how the recommendations of GO TO 2040 have been integrated into products of the LTA program, under the heading “Implementation of GO TO 2040.”

The second part of this memo addresses implementation of the LTA products themselves. Reflecting a recommendation of GO TO 2040 in a local plan is not particularly helpful if that plan is not actively used by the local community. Therefore, this memo also discusses actions that have been taken to implement plans produced through the LTA program, under the heading “Implementation of LTA Plans.”

## Part 1: Implementation of GO TO 2040

### ***GO TO 2040 recommendations***

GO TO 2040 made recommendations in twelve areas, divided into four themes. These include:

#### **Livable communities**

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**

5. Improve education and workforce development
6. Support economic innovation

#### **Efficient governance**

7. Reform state and local tax policy
8. Improve access to information
9. Pursue coordinated investments

#### **Regional mobility**

10. Invest strategically in transportation
11. Increase commitment to public transit
12. Create a more efficient freight network

GO TO 2040 also recognized the importance of many other topics, and included treatment of these within the twelve major chapters, as well as in the “Context and Best Practices” chapter of the document. For example, health is a significant issue, and is referenced and linked to other topics in several areas in GO TO 2040. Other issues like historic preservation, arts and culture, demographic change, and many others are also touched upon within GO TO 2040.

### ***LTA alignment with GO TO 2040***

Each completed LTA plan has been assessed in terms of its alignment with the policies and principles of GO TO 2040. The twelve recommendations of GO TO 2040 are used for this purpose. Some recommendations (like land use and housing) that are particularly relevant for local planning have been further subdivided into key components; others that are less focused on local government action (like education and workforce development) are not subdivided, as they are less commonly the focus of local plans.

The recommendations and their key components are shown below:

1. Achieve greater livability through land use and housing
  - Infill and reinvestment
  - Housing choice
  - Mixed-use, context-sensitive development
  - Dense, transit-supportive development
  - Multi-municipal collaboration
2. Manage and conserve water and energy resources
  - Water supply
  - Stormwater
  - Energy
3. Expand and improve parks and open space
  - Parks
  - Preserves
  - Greenways
4. Promote sustainable local food
  - Production
  - Access
5. Improve education and workforce development
6. Support economic innovation
7. Reform state and local tax policy
8. Improve access to information
9. Pursue coordinated investments
  - Service sharing
  - Intergovernmental coordination
10. Invest strategically in transportation
  - Maintenance and modernization
  - Bicycle and pedestrian
  - Parking
  - Major capital projects
11. Increase commitment to public transit
  - Transit service
  - Supportive infrastructure
12. Create a more efficient freight network
  - Cargo-oriented development
  - Truck routes
13. Other

Each completed LTA plan has been “scored” by CMAP staff in terms of its alignment with these recommendations. Each plan is assessed in terms of whether it has a high, moderate, or low focus on each GO TO 2040 recommendation. It should be noted that some projects (like comprehensive plans) are broad in scope and address many GO TO 2040 recommendations, while others (like water supply studies) are considerably narrower by design. The scoring of LTA projects is not meant to imply that a higher score is better; it simply demonstrates a broader scope.



Figure 1 shows the scoring of two sample projects – the Park Forest sustainability plan and the Joliet Correctional Center redevelopment study. The scoring reflects the degree to which the plan addressed each GO TO 2040 recommendation: high, moderate, or minimal / did not address (indicated by a blank cell). A score of “high” indicates that the plan had this topic as a central focus of its recommendations. A score of “moderate” indicates that the plan addressed this topic at some level, but not as a highly significant or central element. Plans were limited to no more than five “high” scores each, to ensure that these only represented the truly central elements of the plan.

**Figure 1. Relationship of GO TO 2040 recommendations to selected LTA projects**

GO TO 2040 theme	GO TO 2040 recommendation	Key component of recommendation (if applicable)	Joliet Correctional Center redevelopment study	Park Forest sustainability plan
Livable Communities	Land Use and Housing	Infill and Reinvestment	high	high
		Housing Choice	moderate	moderate
		Mixed-use, Context-sensitive Development	moderate	moderate
		Dense, Transit-supportive Development		high
		Multi-municipal Collaboration		
	Water and Energy	Water Supply		moderate
		Stormwater		moderate
		Energy		high
	Open Space	Parks	high	
		Preserves	high	moderate
		Greenways	moderate	moderate
		Conservation Design		
	Local Food	Production	moderate	moderate
		Access		moderate
Human Capital	Education and Workforce	N/A		moderate
	Innovation	N/A	moderate	
Efficient Governance	Tax Policy	N/A	moderate	
	Access to Information	N/A		moderate
	Coordinated Investment	Service Sharing		
		Intergovernmental Coordination	high	moderate
Regional Mobility	Transportation Investments	Maintenance and Modernization	moderate	moderate
		Bicycle and Pedestrian	moderate	high
		Parking		moderate
		Major Capital Projects		
	Public Transit	Transit Service		high
		Supportive Infrastructure		moderate
	Freight	Cargo-oriented Development		
		Truck Routes		
Other	Other	N/A	moderate (historic preservation)	moderate (health, arts and culture)

As this shows, both projects are similar in some areas, such as the high degree of focus on supporting infill development within existing communities. In others, they are quite different; for example, the Joliet project focuses significantly on converting elements of the Joliet Correctional Center to serve as local parks and regional preserves. In Park Forest, on the other hand, significant parks and preserves already exist, and the sustainability plan focuses instead on other issues like energy efficiency, public transit, and walking and biking.

The chart below shows the number of LTA plans with “high” and “moderate” focuses on each of GO TO 2040’s recommendations. For example, the two plans described earlier as examples – Joliet and Park Forest – are two of the 23 plans that have a high level of focus on infill development. For comparison, this analysis includes a total of 66 completed projects.

**Figure 2. Relationship of GO TO 2040 recommendations to overall LTA program**

GO TO 2040 theme	GO TO 2040 recommendation	Key component of recommendation (if applicable)	# of LTA plans that address this recommendation at a high level	# of LTA plans that address this recommendation at a moderate level
Livable Communities	Land Use and Housing	Infill and Reinvestment	23	16
		Housing Choice	13	21
		Mixed-use, Context-sensitive Development	22	18
		Dense, Transit-supportive Development	10	26
		Multi-municipal Collaboration	11	22
	Water and Energy	Water Supply	12	7
		Stormwater	13	12
		Energy	4	14
	Open Space	Parks	6	17
		Preserves	8	7
		Greenways	9	22
		Conservation Design	6	3
	Local Food	Production	6	7
		Access	3	13
Human Capital	Education and Workforce	N/A	1	15
	Innovation	N/A	2	7
Efficient Governance	Tax Policy	N/A	3	14
	Access to Information	N/A	3	7
	Coordinated Investment	Service Sharing	0	5
		Intergovernmental Coordination	14	38
Regional Mobility	Transportation Investments	Maintenance and Modernization	10	33
		Bicycle and Pedestrian	19	27
		Parking	5	18
		Major Capital Projects	1	5
	Public Transit	Transit Service	5	8
		Supportive Infrastructure	8	27
	Freight	Cargo-oriented Development	1	2

GO TO 2040 theme	GO TO 2040 recommendation	Key component of recommendation (if applicable)	# of LTA plans that address this recommendation at a high level	# of LTA plans that address this recommendation at a moderate level
		Truck Routes	3	5
Other	Other	Other	3	14

The most common GO TO 2040 recommendations that are addressed at a high level of detail in local plans relate to infill, mixed-use and context-sensitive development, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. This is not surprising, as these recommendations of GO TO 2040 include a number of implementation actions targeted directly to local governments, who are the most common participants in the LTA program.

GO TO 2040 recommendations that are most commonly addressed at a moderate level involve intergovernmental coordination and maintaining existing transportation infrastructure. The fact that these are generally addressed at a moderate level rather than a high level is notable; few LTA plans have these topics as their primary focus, but most plans address them in some way.

In contrast, some topics that were featured in GO TO 2040 have rarely been addressed in LTA plans. Many of these topics, like education and workforce development, innovation, and access to information, are less relevant for local governments to address. Others, like service sharing between local governments, are local issues but are highly specialized and have not been the focus of any completed projects (although one current project focuses on this issue). Finally, the limited number of projects addressing freight is somewhat surprising, and indicates an area where LTA plans could focus more.

These results should be considered in light of CMAP's funding sources. LTA plans most frequently address issues at the intersection of land use and transportation, which reflects CMAP's primary reliance on federal transportation funding to support the LTA program. Topics like workforce development, innovation, service sharing, and others have often required CMAP to secure external funding before pursuing projects that focus on these elements. While this has not prevented CMAP from considering these topics, it has contributed to the lower number of projects that address them.

## Part 2: Implementation of LTA plans

The first half of this memo focused on the alignment of LTA plans with the recommendations of GO TO 2040. While important, alignment between local and regional plans matters little if the local plans are not implemented. The remainder of this memo uses a number of approaches to describe the implementation of LTA plans themselves.

First, case studies for three plans (Joliet, Park Forest, and Will County/Fairmont) are presented. These plans were selected because they were among the first completed through the LTA program in spring 2012, and implementation activities for each have been underway for two years. Second, this part of the memo describes CMAP's process for reporting on implementation. Finally, this memo discusses implementation roles and responsibilities, and concludes with further discussion of potential approaches to implementation.

### ***Implementation case study: Joliet Correctional Center redevelopment study***

The Joliet Correctional Center redevelopment study recommends ways to reuse the vacant Joliet Correctional Center, an iconic but deteriorating facility. The study was sponsored by the City of Joliet, and conducted through a Technical Assistance Panel by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) with funding from CMAP. Leadership on plan implementation has been taken by the Collins Street Task Force, which is led by Illinois State Senator Pat McGuire and Representative Larry Walsh Jr., with representation from many other public, private, and nonprofit groups.

The study recommends separate approaches to the prison's east and west sites. The 160-acre Prison East site contains primarily open space, and the Prison West site contains the majority of the former prison buildings. The Will County Forest Preserve District is exploring the acquisition of the Prison East site, and has begun to investigate the existing conditions of the Prison East parcel to assess environmental issues. A Phase One Environmental Report has been completed, and a more detailed Phase Two Environmental Report is expected to be completed later this year.



The Prison East parcel has significant potential for recreational and open space use. This photo shows Will County Forest Preserve District staff and partners touring the site.

Realignment of Woodruff Road was necessary to improve access to the Prison East site, and this has been accomplished. The City of Joliet worked with the Canadian National Railway and the Illinois Department of Corrections to construct the new road. The realignment removes the previous street-level railroad crossing on the southeastern edge of the site, and Woodruff Road now runs parallel to the rail line. As part of the realignment, a nearby State of Illinois shooting range was relocated to the grounds of Statesville Prison. The newly realigned Woodruff Road opened in fall 2013.



Less progress has been made on the Prison West site. The City of Joliet is envisioned to become the owner of the Prison West property. During a January 2014 tour with the Collins Street Task Force, a preliminary visual inspection by City staff identified the most pressing building upgrades and estimated costs. This spring, legislation was introduced by State Representative Larry Walsh Jr. to permit the property to be sold to the City of Joliet. The legislation stalled in early June, as did a second bill that would offer tax credits to private investors to develop state-owned properties such as the prison.

### ***Implementation case study: Park Forest sustainability plan***

The Park Forest sustainability plan, Growing Green, comprehensively addresses sustainability in this south suburban community. The plan is divided into fourteen chapters, addressing issues such as transportation, the built environment, local food, and municipal policies and practices, and less common topics like education, health, and arts and culture.

Immediately following the adoption of the sustainability plan, the Village was awarded a grant from the Chicago Community Trust to hire a Sustainability Coordinator, who was tasked with implementation of the plan. This grant has subsequently been renewed for two additional years. The Sustainability Coordinator has been instrumental to many of the Village's implementation efforts, and has also worked with the Sustainability Team, an internal group of representatives from the Village's various departments, to assign specific implementation responsibilities to Village departments.

Other municipal policy changes have also occurred. The Village adopted an environmentally preferable purchasing policy, and staff now purchase biodegradable, reusable, and other environmentally-friendly options when possible. The lighting in four Village facilities has been updated with DCEO and Illinois Clean Energy Act grants. Education of community members is part of the sustainability plan, and the Village has incorporated information on sustainability on its website, in community announcements and publications, and at Village Hall. The Village has installed interpretive signage at three locations within the Aqua Center complex (rain garden, butterfly garden, and solar panels) to explain those demonstration projects.

The local food recommendations of the sustainability plan have advanced significantly. In the Village's third year of its community gardening program, six gardens have been established and a food forest is approved for the Wildwood School site. Community interest in the program is expanding, and the Village continues to look for further sources of funding to support it.



Consistent with the sustainability plan's recommendations on local food, a community garden has been established at St. Irenaeus Church.

CMAP is conducting two follow-up LTA projects in Park Forest. The first, a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), will merge the current Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances and be consistent with the sustainability plan. The second project is a bicycle and pedestrian plan, which also involves resources from the RTA's Community Planning program – the first local project that CMAP and the RTA have undertaken jointly.

In part due to its implementation efforts, the Village's sustainability efforts have begun to be externally recognized. In 2014, the Village was one of twenty communities nationwide invited to participate in the 2014 Leadership [Star Community Program](#), and is expected to achieve Star certification next year.

### ***Implementation case study: Will County Fairmont neighborhood plan***

The Fairmont neighborhood plan covers an unincorporated area of Will County between Joliet and Lockport – coincidentally, immediately adjacent to the Prison East site discussed earlier. The neighborhood plan seeks to improve infrastructure and attract reinvestment to this disinvested community.

Since the plan's adoption, significant infrastructure improvements have been made, in line with the plan's recommendations. The County, through a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grant, constructed approximately 1,000 feet of sidewalk along Green Garden Avenue in 2013, and recently reapplied to install more sidewalks in the neighborhood.

Lockport Township installed a new drainage pipe along Barrett Street, in an area that had significant flooding issues that were raised during the development of the Fairmont plan. Finally, several new Pace bus shelters, along with informational signage, benches, and concrete pads, were installed in 2012 along Green Garden Avenue.



The first bus shelters in the Fairmont community, including the one shown in this photo, were installed following the completion of the Fairmont plan.

Further infrastructure improvements are also being planned. The County recently hired an engineering firm to create a stormwater management plan for the neighborhood. The County has involved the Township, local residents, and CMAP in this process. At the same time, Lockport Township Park District is working on completing their master plan, which will consider the Fairmont plan's recommendations for new park space.

Other small-scale improvements that improve quality of life in the community have also been accomplished. A community garden opened in 2013 on Lockport Township Park District property adjacent to the Fairmont Community Center. The local senior club – the Fairmont Silver and Gold Club – has begun to plant, maintain, and harvest the garden. The Fairmont plan also recommended that the rich history of Fairmont be preserved, documented and

celebrated. In 2012, a County intern interviewed a number of long-time residents to create a written history of the community, completed later that year.

Continued involvement of community members in decisions affecting their community was another element of the Fairmont plan. Will County and Fairmont residents have created an advisory council of residents and business owners (termed the “Fairmont Community Partnership”) that meets on a monthly basis to discuss various issues and initiatives.

One of the more complex elements of the Fairmont plan was the creation of a faith-based community development corporation (CDC) to lead redevelopment efforts, particularly the creation of a new Neighborhood Center. Before jumping into forming a new organization, the plan recommended conducting a feasibility study and coordinating among the Fairmont churches to ensure the CDC’s viability. The County has pursued several potential philanthropic funding sources, but without success, restricting progress on this recommendation.

### Implementation tracking

Following the completion of LTA projects, CMAP remains involved with the local sponsor for two years. The information contained in the case studies on the previous pages was taken from implementation update memos prepared by CMAP on the two-year anniversary of completion of each plan. There are only a few examples of two-year implementation memos, as the initial round of projects had just begun to be completed in 2012.

During the two-year implementation period, CMAP tracks progress through quarterly discussions with the project sponsor. Quarterly updates are provided to the CMAP Board as part of the monthly LTA updates (see the [April Board report](#) for an example). Each quarter, CMAP staff also works with the community sponsor to update an implementation matrix. Typically, implementation matrices laying out specific tasks, responsibilities, and timelines are included within LTA plans.

Below, a sample matrix for the Park Forest sustainability plan shows specific strategies identified for one of the sustainability plan's fourteen chapters. For each strategy, CMAP updates phasing and status each quarter, and writes a brief update on recent progress (if any). Shaded rows indicate that the relevant strategy is currently an area of focus. The final column in the matrix identifies whether any role for CMAP is expected over the next quarter. The cells in this column are typically blank, as CMAP will typically target a small number of activities to assist with.

**Figure 3. Park Forest Sustainability Plan implementation matrix: Local Food Systems recommendation**

Strategy	Pg.	Phasing	Status	Dept. Lead*	Quarterly Update	CMAP Role
1. Establish a community garden program.	66	Ongoing	Underway	DRP	Terra Engineering prepared a site plan for the Wildwood School community garden site. Applied for a grant from Fiskars.	Forward grant opportunities
2. Explore the creation of standards for raising honeybees and fowl on residential lots.	66	Mid-term	Not yet begun	DCD	LTA ordinance revisions project will address this.	LTA project
3. Support the farmers' market and South Suburban Food Cooperative.	67	Ongoing	Underway	VPF	SC has remained involved with Food Co-op Board and members. EBT was recently launched at farmers market.	
4. Expand food-related educational opportunities.	67	Ongoing	Not yet begun	DRP, HD		
5. Work with schools to launch "Farm to School" programs.	67	Mid-term	Not yet begun	HD		

DRP: Department of Recreation and Parks. DCD: Department of Community Development. VPF: Village of Park Forest. HD: Health Department.



### ***Implementation roles***

Leadership on implementation needs to be locally driven. Over the past two years, it has become extremely evident that local commitment to project success is the primary driver of implementation. “Local commitment” does not necessarily mean commitment of financial resources or staff time, although these certainly help. Instead, the term is used to mean a combination of responsiveness, energy, leadership, and willingness to use plan recommendations for day-to-day prioritization and decision-making.

While local leadership of implementation is a precondition of success, supportive roles can be played by other organizations. As noted above, CMAP remains involved following plan adoption for a period of two years. Tracking of implementation progress – the focus of the previous section of this memo – is an important activity on its own merits. But to advance implementation progress, CMAP often takes a more active role. Each quarter, CMAP discusses potential upcoming roles with the sponsor community and identifies a few limited activities to take on. CMAP allocates about 20 hours per quarter (80 hours over the course of a year, or approximately 5% of an FTE) to each completed project, but actual time spent varies considerably.

Roles taken on by CMAP often include the following:

- Conducting a follow-up LTA project. A common example is a zoning project that follows a comprehensive plan. CMAP is currently doing just this for Berwyn, where a zoning revision is following a completed comprehensive plan.
- Assisting with grant applications. CMAP has helped several communities submit applications to philanthropic, federal, or state funding sources, often with success. For example, CMAP assisted Park Forest in writing their first application to the Chicago Community Trust for funding for staff support to implement the sustainability plan. CMAP does not help communities submit applications to funding sources that are administered by CMAP, for obvious reasons.
- Linking communities with other public agencies. Many communities need assistance making the right contacts at state or regional agencies. CMAP has played an intermediary role in these cases, in terms of identifying the best points of contact, setting up and facilitating meetings, and ensuring follow-up afterwards. For example, CMAP facilitated a series of discussions between Blue Island, IDOT, and the Southwest Conference of Mayors which resulted in Blue Island receiving funding for an important transportation infrastructure project.
- Training. Through an arrangement with the Illinois chapter of the American Planning Association (APA-IL), CMAP has sponsored plan commissioner trainings in multiple communities. For example, CMAP just sponsored plan commissioner trainings in Lynwood and Geneva, following completion of LTA projects, and invited the surrounding communities to participate as well.
- Other types of assistance have also been provided in a few cases. CMAP has assisted with proposal review and consultant selection, sponsored workshops to discuss redevelopment potential, and served on steering committees for follow-up projects.

Most of the above examples, while facilitated by CMAP, have involved resources and expertise from other groups. Other examples can be found in the case studies earlier. In all of these cases, CMAP's role was limited in terms of time and resources committed, but involved linking good projects with relevant pools of resources and expertise. This finding may help to shape CMAP's implementation approach in the future.

Most implementation activities involving partners, including all of the examples identified above, have occurred on a case-by-case basis. Typically, CMAP, the local community, or a partner organization identifies an opportunity for collaboration on implementation, and then relationships are formed around that opportunity. While this has worked for the examples above, there are almost certainly missed opportunities. It may be possible to approach partner involvement in implementation more systematically.

An example of a more systematic approach can be found in the most recent round of local grants approved by the Chicago Community Trust. With CMAP's help, two nonprofit groups – IFF and Enterprise Community Partners – each identified three communities in south and west Cook County that had completed LTA plans that recommended infill development. Each nonprofit then applied to the Trust for funding to conduct more detailed development feasibility assessments for one site in each community and to begin to recruit developers and solicit proposals for viable sites. Each organization is a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI), meaning that beyond assessing development feasibility, they can help to provide financing for appropriate development types. This approach differs from opportunistic, project-by-project implementation: instead, CMAP identified the strengths of a partner organization, and then guided them to appropriate opportunities to assist with implementation.

### ***Conclusions and further discussion***

This memo summarizes CMAP's initial efforts to describe and organize implementation of LTA plans, which is by its nature a messy topic. While it is premature to arrive at firm conclusions without committee input and further internal evaluation of project success, a few findings – summarized in the bullets below – may provide a good starting point for discussion.

- Some elements of GO TO 2040 are not commonly found in LTA plans. For some topics, like education or access to information, this is to be expected. For others, like housing choice or water supply planning, securing external funding to allow these topics to continue to be addressed in LTA plans is a priority. And for one notable topic, freight, the limited focus indicates a missed opportunity that should be addressed.
- There is an ongoing implementation role for CMAP beyond simply tracking progress. This includes linking local sponsors with partner organizations that can supply resources for implementation. Approaching this systematically rather than as a series of individual case-by-case activities is worth exploring.
- Partnerships with nonprofit (or private) groups are common while LTA plans are being developed, and are tracked carefully until plan completion. However, CMAP does not currently track partner involvement in implementation. Part of

the systematic approach to implementation described above could include tracking partner involvement after plan completion.

- The projects summarized in this memo include only those that were conducted with staff time. Projects that were contracted to consulting firms – about 25% of LTA plans – may be a different story. The role of consulting firms in implementation should be discussed.
- Implementation should be considered more strongly during development of LTA plans. Potential implementing partners should be included in project steering committees, which may require adding them partway through the project. Also, infrastructure recommendations, which often emerge from LTA plans, could be more carefully evaluated for feasibility and then directed explicitly to the most appropriate funding source.
- Even if resources per project are fairly limited, the number of completed projects (now approaching 75) means that even modest commitments per project add up to a large total. Therefore, devoting staff or financial resources to implementation will inevitably reduce the new projects that can be taken on through the LTA program – but is preferable to producing large volumes of new plans that are not implemented.
- Finally, while this discussion has focused largely on potential roles for CMAP, it is clear that local commitment is the single largest factor driving successful implementation. Ideally, CMAP could assess and predict local commitment during the evaluation process for new LTA projects – but how exactly to do that is uncertain. It is also possible that a good planning process can increase local commitment – but whether this can compensate for low initial commitment levels is also uncertain. Committee feedback on this issue is particularly welcome.



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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Working Committees and Partners

**From:** Bob Dean, Deputy Executive Director for Local Planning

**Date:** September 2014

**Re:** Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program Evaluation, Part 3: Internal Project Evaluation

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This summer, CMAP is engaging its working committees and other partners in an evaluation of the first three years of the LTA program, with the intent of using the results to focus future resources most effectively. This is a multi-part discussion, held over a series of committee meetings. A rough timeline of topics is contained below, although please note that this may vary from committee to committee based on meeting schedules.

- Basic program statistics – June (complete)
- Results of external surveys by project sponsors – June (complete)
- Review of new applications – July/August (complete)
- Implementation progress – July/August (complete)
- Results of internal evaluation – September (covered in this memo)
- Results of municipal survey – September (covered in separate memo)
- Overall conclusions – October

This memo covers the fifth bullet above – the results of an internal evaluation of individual projects. The results of the recent municipal survey will also be discussed at committee meetings in September but will be covered in a separate memo.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Discussion



## Introduction

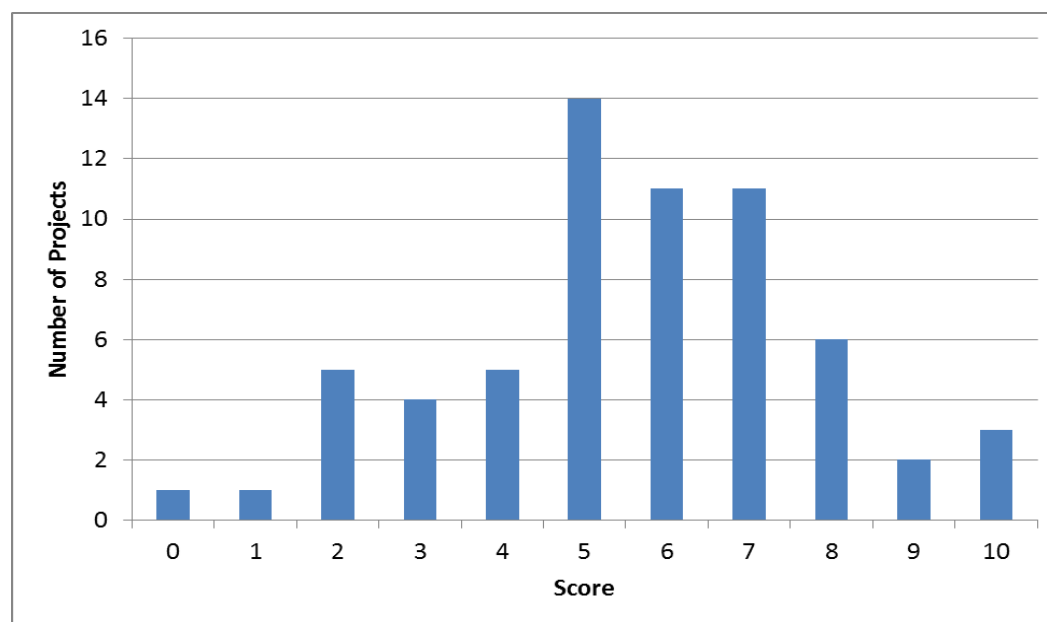
This memo describes the results of an internal evaluation of individual projects within the LTA program. The key findings of the evaluation will be described below, but the quantitative methods used will not be discussed in much detail to allow a more direct focus on findings.

Throughout this memo, individual projects are not called out. The point of this memo is to draw general conclusions from the analysis, rather than identify individual projects. Because of this, the discussion is fairly general, without the use of specific examples, to keep the focus on the program as a whole.

Please also note that this analysis focuses entirely on staff-led projects. Many projects have also been led by consulting firms, and CMAP is in the process of evaluating these projects, but these results are not yet ready for discussion.

## Project scoring

Each LTA project was scored internally on a number of different elements. Qualitative elements included quality of deliverables, advancement of GO TO 2040, level of innovation, involvement of partner organizations, quality of outreach, and progress toward implementation. Two elements, adherence to schedule and adherence to budget, were assessed quantitatively. Each project was scored on each of these elements, which were then combined into a final score that ranged between 0 (the worst) and 10 (the best). The following chart shows the number of projects with each score.



As this chart shows, projects most commonly have scores in the 5-7 range, and the mean project score is 5.5. Projects with scores over 7 are among the best products of the LTA program, and are typically characterized by very high quality products and processes, significant partner involvement, on-schedule completion, and progress toward implementation. On the other hand, projects with a score of 3 or less typically display less innovation, are more likely to have experienced major delays, and are less likely to have seen implementation progress.

## ***Analysis of project scores***

The purpose of scoring projects is to allow correlations and trends to be identified and analyzed for the LTA program as a whole. CMAP used the data on project scoring to ask and attempt to answer the questions below. Committee members should feel free to suggest other questions, with the understanding only simple analysis is possible due to the relatively small dataset.

Question: Does the *overall project size* (in terms of budget) have an influence on project outcomes?

Answer: Yes, but in different ways. In general, larger projects – meaning those with a larger budget – are more successful in terms of overall quality, outreach, partner involvement, implementation, and other qualitative elements. Larger projects, however, are also more likely to fall behind schedule and are less likely to adhere to initial budget expectations – partly because the level of effort for these projects was often underestimated at their outset.

Question: Does *local commitment* have an influence on project outcomes?

Answer: Without a quantitative measure of local commitment, this question could not be answered. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the answer is a very strong yes. All of the projects with low scores had significant issues with the project sponsors, often involving turnover of staff or elected officials during the planning process.

Question: Does *community need* have an influence on project outcomes?

Answer: No. Community need is calculated based on a combination of median income, local tax base, and community size. Since its inception, the LTA program has prioritized projects in higher-need communities. This has led to questions about the ability of higher-need communities to conduct good planning projects and then implement them: is there a tradeoff between community need and implementation potential? Based on CMAP's analysis, this does not appear to be the case. Local commitment does matter, but local commitment and community need are not mutually exclusive, and a number of higher-need communities have shown the ability to produce and implement good plans.

Question: Does *project type* have an influence on project outcomes?

Answer: Not for most types. All major project types – including comprehensive plans, subarea plans, zoning ordinances, transportation plans, environmental plans, and housing plans – have average scores in the 5-7 range. However, projects in the “other” category, which are unique projects that do not fit neatly into a category, have an average score of 4. This is not surprising, as it is easier to conduct projects which have an established process and scope.

Question: Does *project sponsor type* (e.g. municipality, county, multijurisdictional group, or other group) have an influence on project outcomes?

Answer: Yes, although it is difficult to tell if the results are meaningful. Projects sponsored by Counties have averaged the lowest scores (4), and those submitted by multijurisdictional groups of municipalities have been the highest (6), but there are many exceptions to this general finding.

Question: Does *location within the region* have an influence on project outcomes?

Answer: No. Projects in Chicago, suburban Cook County, and the collar counties have average scores that are nearly identical.

Question: Can CMAP's *initial review of applications* predict project outcomes?

Answer: Yes, to some degree. Evaluation results from past years show that CMAP's initial impressions of a project are a fairly good predictor of its success. Projects which were initially considered "iffy" to be selected for the program, but which were ultimately selected, ended up with an average score of 4. In contrast, projects which were immediately judged to be good fits had an average score of 6. Put another way, more than half of "iffy" projects ended up having scores of 3 or less, compared to only 10% of the projects that were immediately seen as good fits.

### ***Discussion and conclusions***

The project evaluation supports the continuation of some elements of the LTA program but also should lead to consideration of some changes. Current practices include prioritizing resources to lower-capacity communities, and seeking a geographic balance in projects selected; these should continue. Project eligibility should remain broad (as broad as possible, given funding restrictions), although new, untested project types should be entered into with caution.

As noted in past memos in the LTA evaluation series, local commitment is very important, although this cannot be demonstrated quantitatively. Commitment to a particular project can fade over time, particularly with turnover of local staff or elected officials, so starting projects quickly after selection is important. Immediate project startup is currently a challenge due to a full slate of ongoing projects, and CMAP should keep this in mind during future project selection.

Several of this memo's findings can be addressed during project selection. Local commitment should also be assessed, as much as possible, when reviewing applications, and a high level of commitment should be a precondition to receiving assistance. Applications that show flaws during the selection process are likely to have significant problems later on. Therefore, CMAP should be more aggressive about screening projects before they are selected, as well as addressing emerging problems early in the scoping process.

The findings of this analysis will begin to be used immediately during the current LTA project selection process. Already, CMAP has begun to conduct more extensive follow-up with some shortlisted projects. Committee members should expect a more competitive selection process than previous years, partly due to increased commitment of resources to implementation, but due also to the other factors noted above. Also, CMAP will begin more extensive use of a new project type, a "planning priorities report," which allows community needs and commitment to be assessed before taking on a significant planning effort.

The longer-term impacts of these findings will be communicated, along with the findings from previous memos, in a summary memo on LTA evaluation that will be presented in October.