

# Principles for a Regional Freight Authority

It is important to set principles for a potential Regional Freight Authority<sup>1</sup> in order to provide a framework for the Task Force's recommendations. These principles should be mindful of the main challenges facing the regional freight system. To date, the Task Force has identified four major challenges:

- Too little funding. Budgets are tight across many transportation agencies as traditional sources of revenue have stagnated or fallen. At the same time, agencies face significant maintenance backlogs, and have multiple priorities for modernization and expansion projects. New revenues are needed to support adequate investment in the regional freight system.
- Too little coordination among jurisdictions. Northeastern Illinois is home to hundreds of jurisdictions responsible for components of the highway system. Jurisdictions' funding sources are generally tied to the components of the system for which they are responsible, complicating attempts to consider the system holistically. Additionally, various jurisdictions impose different regulations and fees on freight activity, which can lead to an inefficient patchwork across boundaries.
- Too little prioritization of freight. While existing entities do invest in projects relevant to goods movement, freight needs are not often explicitly addressed. And freight investments, on the public side, do not benefit from dedicated funding sources. While it is important to build partnerships with freight stakeholders, no single agency in the region is charged with safeguarding the interests of the freight system.
- Too little recognition for regions in national freight policy. MAP-21, in establishing a framework for a national freight policy, does not recognize a role for regions or MPOs in its strategic vision. No model for regional freight governance is recognized in national freight policy. CMAP is currently working with other large MPOs to advocate for a regional role.

**Any Regional Freight Authority must be designed to address all four of these challenges if it is to deliver meaningful improvements.** Solving only one or two of these issues will ultimately fall short of the reforms needed to sustain the region's long-term economic competitiveness and quality of life.

This document presents seven principles to guide the Task Force's discussion of a potential Regional Freight Authority. These principles will act as **screening criteria** in developing recommendations to the CMAP Board. Once adopted, these principles will be considered by the Task Force as **minimum requirements** that any Regional Freight Authority must meet.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that "Regional Freight Authority" is used in this document as a placeholder for any institutional response to address regional freight issues; the Task Force could recommend that existing agencies and/or a new agency take on various functions under the principles outlined in this document.

The principles are the following:

- Robust freight planning. Freight should be a robust component of the comprehensive regional plan, GO TO 2040. A multimodal freight component should include a detailed list of capital improvements, as well as a list of recommended operational strategies (e.g., truck routing, off-hours delivery programs), to help meet the region's strategic vision. Freight planning must be done in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including local governments and collective business interests.
- User-pays principle. Fees raised from users of the freight system must be spent on projects that benefit the freight system. This connection should be as direct as possible, matching fees paid to the benefits received.
- Performance-based programming. Freight projects must be selected for funding through a transparent, data-driven process. This is ensured by tying the selection of capital projects to the robust freight planning process described above.
- Project delivery. Implementing agencies should be responsible for arranging construction management and long-term operations and maintenance of facilities. This principle reflects GO TO 2040's preference for a Regional Freight Authority to be housed within existing agencies.
- Sustained, focused advocacy. The region would benefit from a single freight champion and clearinghouse for regional freight information. A Regional Freight Authority will fulfill this function, in addition to any others recommended by the Task Force.
- Capability and accountability in programming. With the input of stakeholders, including local governments, a Regional Freight Authority must have the authority to fund projects and ensure their delivery by implementing agencies.
- Encourage private capital to participate. It is important to work with the business community to encourage private investment in freight projects. Leveraging this participation helps to extend the reach of public investments, and also helps to identify meritorious projects with high benefit-cost ratios.