

The current federal transportation authorization act, known as Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), expired on September 30, 2009. As the U.S. Congress continues to debate reauthorization, the Chicago region has the chance to provide policy guidance that could help shape this bill to the benefit of metropolitan areas such as ours. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) encourages the administration and Congress to address, influence, and support the role that major metropolitan areas have in the nation's transportation network and help transportation to improve the quality of life for the citizens of northeastern Illinois.

### CMAP's Reauthorization Policy Goals

On September 9, 2009, the CMAP Board adopted the following principles for reauthorization of a federal surface transportation bill. Leaders in Washington should give highest priority to these overall policy objectives in crafting and implementing a new federal transportation bill.

- Provide transportation investments based on regional priorities using performance-driven criteria that lead to decisions that are transparent, outcome-based, and mode-agnostic.
- Evaluate and prioritize infrastructure investments in a comprehensive way that looks beyond transportation benefits to include land use, economy, environment, and other quality-of-life factors.
- Provide adequate federal investments in the nation's transportation systems.
- Reform the transportation funding system by placing a new emphasis on sustainable revenue sources.
- Establish a national transportation vision that includes the movement of goods and the development of a national high-speed rail network.

### Transportation Trends and Challenges

To assert that our nation's transportation infrastructure is broken would be an overstatement, but there is much that needs to be done to bring it into a good state of repair. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, 27 percent of the bridges across the country as of December 2008 were listed as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Congestion in the major metropolitan areas is costing the nation \$87 billion a year in wasted fuel, lost time, and vehicle costs as reported in the Texas Transportation Institute's 2009 Urban Mobility Report.

The current federal motor fuel tax is not able to replenish the Highway Trust Fund at adequate levels to meet the demand for transportation investments. The National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Finance Commission estimated that the average annual capital needs for the country's highway and transit systems between 2008 and 2035 will be \$96 billion per year, but the current revenue levels will only meet 33 percent of that need at \$32 billion per year.

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, by the year 2040 there will be an additional 95 million people who require transportation services. By 2055, vehicle miles traveled are estimated to increase by 4 trillion to a total of 7 trillion. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials estimates that the movement of freight will increase from 15 billion tons per year to 29 billion tons per year by 2035.

Congestion problems in metropolitan Chicago are severe, with the region holding the unflattering national ranking of third worst congestion. Metropolitan regions drive the economy of the U.S. They are home to 80 percent of the nation's population, and they generate 85 percent of the gross domestic product. As the population centers and economic engines of our country, metropolitan areas must be a focus for the mobility of people and goods.

## Priorities and Recommendations

**Accountability.** Institute national goals and objectives for all the federal transportation programs and establish accountability to them through specific performance measures. Metropolitan planning organizations that are inclusive of all stakeholders should be given the responsibility for setting the performance targets and identify the strategies to reach those targets. Funding commitment levels should be tied into the ability of MPOs to meet the targets.

**Regional Comprehensive Programming and Planning.** Transportation does not operate in a vacuum so the prioritization of projects necessitates a regional perspective that takes into consideration economic development, housing, land use and the environment including climate change. Dedicate funds to the planning and programming of transportation infrastructure that are inclusive of these different objectives.

**Funding Commitments.** Set funding levels that can meet the demands for preservation and renewal of the current transportation system and allow for capacity increases on all modes. The nation's ability to do so will determine our position in the global economy, to improve the environment, to reduce our energy dependence on fossil fuels and to improve our quality of life.

**Sustainable Revenues.** Identify new revenue streams that will supplement the current motor fuel tax or replace it. Any new revenue sources should be constructed in a manner that gives them flexibility to adapt to shifts in market forces.

**National Vision.** Establish a method to formulate a national freight plan that can guide regional and state efforts to improve the freight systems. Create a systematic funding program for freight improvements. Establish a national plan for the development of inter-metro passenger rail service considering both high-speed rail along with standard services that link our nation's economic engines. This will help alleviate interstate highway and airport congestion and provide redundancy for the times when other parts of the national transportation system are overburdened.

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## About CMAP

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the official regional planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. CMAP developed and now leads the implementation of GO TO 2040, metropolitan Chicago's first comprehensive regional plan in more than 100 years. To address anticipated population growth of more than 2 million new residents, GO TO 2040 establishes coordinated strategies that help the region's 284 communities address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues. See [www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov) for more information.

*Principles adopted on September 9, 2009. Document revised on March 25, 2011.*