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MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Committee

From: CMAP staff

Date: September 2016

Re: Update to Regional Greenways and Trails Plan

Over the past year CMAP has been in the process of updating the Northeastern Illinois Greenways and Trails Plan (RGTP). The current RGTP, adopted by the CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee in 2009, is a long-range, multi-jurisdictional plan that presents a vision for a network of multi-use trails and greenways across the region. This update revisited previously proposed trails to ensure they are still valid recommendations, making any technical corrections needed, such as altering alignments, and proposing new multi-use trail linkages where appropriate. To accomplish the update, CMAP staff met with personnel from all the counties, forest preserve districts, Councils of Mayors, and the City of Chicago to review potential changes to the RGTP. The resulting draft trails map is available at http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/about/involvement/committees/working-committees/transportation/minutes. This memo provides background on the RGTP, explains the method used to update it, and describes next steps. Staff is presenting the updated map to the Transportation Committee for feedback and will request interim approval of the updated map later in the fall.

Background on Regional Greenways and Trails Plan

Originally completed in 1992 and updated in 1997 and in 2009, the **Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan** sets out a vision for an interconnected network of stream- and land-based green corridors and 2,700 miles of multi-use trails throughout the seven-county region. The plan envisions a network of continuous greenway and trail corridors, linked across jurisdictions, providing scenic beauty, natural habitat, and recreational and transportation opportunities. The plan includes two main components: conceptual alignments for the planned trail and greenway network, and an accompanying text that lays out values, goals, objectives, and recommended actions. The regional trails plan assists implementers and funding agencies in advancing their projects, as proposals that relate to the plan can be more attractive to funding agencies. Since 2013, CMAP has been using the RGTP to guide funding decisions for the Transportation Alternatives program.

In addition to its role in trail planning, the 2009 plan has a broad goal of advancing greenway preservation and reducing conflicts with other development activities. The 2009 plan includes both trail greenways and stream greenways, corridors of undeveloped landscape along land or water features. The plan identifies trails that offer a "green experience" with large amounts of vegetation or scenic vistas. It also identifies stream greenways, considering buffered areas around the region's streams and waterways.

As of 2015, a total of over 1,100 miles of an envisioned system of nearly 2,700 miles of regional trails have been completed, an increase of 160 miles since 2009 (Table 1). Approximately half of the trail mileage in the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan is on greenway corridors.

Table 1. Regional Trails Plan Implementation, 2009-2015

County	Completed Trails System Miles, 2009	Completed Trails System Miles, 2015	Percent of Regional Trails Element Complete, 2009	Percent of Regional Trails Element Complete, 2015
Cook	294	350	40%	47%
DuPage	192	208	69%	75%
Grundy (Part)	9	9	75%	75%
Kane	146	153	37%	40%
Kendall	17	22	7%	9%
Lake	158	189	45%	54%
McHenry	60	65	31%	33%
Will	121	166	24%	33%
Total	**998**	**1162**	**37%**	**43%**

Approach to updating the RGTP

The chief means of identifying plan priorities was direct individual discussion with the counties, forest preserve and conservation districts, councils of mayors and governments, and any other regional stakeholders that have created bikeway and trail plans. Through these discussions, previously proposed trails were evaluated to ensure they are still valid recommendations and technical corrections such as revised alignments were considered. New linkages are recommended as appropriate. CMAP staff carried out advance work to identify needed changes in the regional trail map based on local and subregional plans adopted since 2009. The CMAP Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force was also an important forum for seeking guidance on the project. Task force members were asked to provide feedback on project direction and plan progress through regular discussion at Task Force meetings.

The vision of the RGTP is a network of regional trails that serve longer-distance travel, often crossing several jurisdictions. As a long-range plan, many of its current alignments are conceptual and identify a need to establish a trail link, with routing details to be established during more detailed local planning or preliminary engineering. To update the RGTP to include new planned trail segments, staff used the following guidelines:

- Planned trails added to the RGTP should make strategic connections between regional trails. While spurs are often important as access to regional trails, these are not part of the RGTP.
- An approximate spacing of 3 – 4 miles between regional trails should be maintained, as in the current RGTP, although limited trail opportunities in some areas of the region may increase spacing. Conversely, barriers and unique opportunities for connectivity call for decreased spacing.
- Facilities added to the RGTP should be off-street multi-use trails, except in limited instances where on-street facilities are needed to make connections.
- Trails added to the RGTP should typically be identified in county, open space district, or municipal planning documents, except in limited cases where CMAP staff has noted additional opportunities for further discussion, such as connections between different county trail systems.

In total, the 2016 RGTP includes 3,160 miles of trails in the seven-county region, an increase of 443 miles or 16 percent from 2009.

County	RGTP System Miles, 2009	RGTP System Miles, 2016	Additional Miles
Cook	743	986	243
DuPage	278	307	29
Grundy (Part)	12	13	1
Kane	381	396	15
Kendall	240	242	2
Lake	353	437	84
McHenry	201	238	37
Will	511	541	30
Total	**2719**	**3160**	**441**

Next Steps

The primary deliverable for the RGTP update is an updated map of planned multi-use trails for northeastern Illinois. A text update to the plan is not included for this project, but the discussions that were part of the update process will inform strategies in the ON TO 2050 regional plan. It is ultimately expected that the trails plan update will be presented for adoption by CMAP's governing boards as part of the overall regional comprehensive plan adoption process in 2018. In the interim, the updated map should be used to guide funding recommendations for the Transportation Alternatives Program, for which the next call for projects begins in January 2017. Recommendation for approval by the Transportation Committee is expected to be sufficient for guiding TAP programming. Staff will seek this recommendation from the TC later in fall.

Action requested: Discussion