



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

233 South Wacker Drive  
Suite 800, Sears Tower  
Chicago, IL 60606

voice 312-454-0400  
fax 312-454-0411  
[www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov)

November 10, 2008

Via Facsimile: 630.241.6102  
First Class U.S. Mail

Mr. John Mitola  
Board Chair  
Illinois State Toll Highway Authority  
2700 Ogden Avenue  
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515

Dear Mr. Mitola:

Thank you for this opportunity for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to comment on the Congestion Relief Program Phase II (referred to below as "the Program") that was recently proposed by Governor Blagojevich and the Illinois Tollway. CMAP applauds this plan for \$1.8 billion in necessary operational improvements to the region's existing expressway system. In particular, our agency supports the use of managed, multi-modal lanes to improve traffic flow and the emphasis on promoting public transit. This is an important new phase of the Congestion Relief Program that should help people and goods move more freely throughout our region. CMAP is eager to work with the Tollway and its partners to help implement measures that will reduce congestion in northeastern Illinois. The following letter comprises our agency's comments on the Program based on our region's adopted plans and programs.

The letter has four sections:

- CMAP Background
- Green Lanes
- Interchange Improvement Program
- Financing

## **CMAP Background**

Formed in 2005, CMAP integrates planning for land use and transportation in the seven counties of northeastern Illinois which have an estimated population of 8.5 million people and includes 283 municipalities. The region is expected to grow by 2.8 million residents and 1.8 million jobs by 2040. To accommodate that growth, CMAP's innovative *GO TO 2040* planning campaign is developing and implementing strategies to 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)

## **Board Members**

Gerald Bennett,  
Chair  
Rita Athas  
Frank Beal  
Alan Bennett  
Roger Claar  
Zenovia Evans  
Russell Hartigan  
Elliott Hartstein  
Al Larson  
Marilyn Michelini  
Raul Raymundo  
Andre Rice  
Rae Rupp Srch  
Dan Shea  
Nigel Telman

## **Non-voting Members**

Ian Doughty  
Stephen Schlickman

## **Executive Director**

Randy Blankenhorn

and [www.goto2040.org](http://www.goto2040.org) for more information. The agency works closely with local governments, transportation providers (both public and private), environmental agencies, business leaders and advocacy groups, among other interests. For more information about CMAP, please see [www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov) or contact the undersigned.

### **Green Lanes**

CMAP supports the Green Lanes concept. Providing a dedicated lane for high-occupancy vehicles, including transit, has been shown to facilitate higher person-throughput than conventional lanes. In very congested conditions, high-occupancy lanes even have higher vehicle throughput than conventional lanes. The proposed supplemental single-occupant vehicle use of these lanes, managed by dynamic toll collection, will optimize the use of these lanes. This system, conceived to provide a free-flow alternative to congested conditions, will provide more transportation choices to Illinois travelers, and is supported by CMAP.

In implementing Green Lanes, CMAP requests that further study and implementation by the Illinois Tollway consider the following, as appropriate:

- Transit service is critical in making the Green Lanes a success. The Tollway's staff has worked with CMAP, Pace and the RTA in developing transit service concepts and we encourage a continuation of those discussions. Specific issues needing to be addressed include the following:
  - Park and ride lot locations at Tollway interchanges. Park and ride facilities are important to make transit services a viable option for commuters and other long-distance transit use. In addition, park and ride lots may be used by carpoolers.
  - Coordination of Green Lanes access points with off-system bus stations and stops. Again, such coordination is critical to Green Lanes success.
  - Potential slip ramps for bus operations, allowing buses to access the Tollway.
  - Until Green Lanes are implemented, consider permitting interim bus-on-shoulder operations where geometric and highway operating conditions permit. Bus-on-shoulder operations will facilitate building a transit market prior to Green Lanes operations, ensuring Green Lanes success from day-one of operations. While interim bus-on-shoulder operations would not operate at highway speeds, bus-on-shoulder operations would make transit schedules more reliable and transit services more attractive to commuters.

- Transit service is an integral element to the success of the Green Lanes. Revenue collected from Green Lanes tolls should fund a portion of the capital and/or operating cost of transit services within the Tollway's right-of-way as part of the Program.
- Consider flexible management authority for the Tollway. Flexible, active management by toll road operators -- supported by advanced technology to maintain free-flow operations -- is a key to success on the Green Lanes. In particular, highway operators should have the following flexibility:
  - Flexibility to require carpool registration for the use of Green Lanes at standard rates, as appropriate.
  - Flexibility to move from a "2+ HOV" to a "3+ HOV," as needed to keep the Green Lanes free-flow.
  - Technological innovations. Support for technological innovations to monitor and manage the Green Lanes will be important.

### **Interchange Improvement Program**

CMAP supports the Interchange Improvement Program. The two interstate-interstate projects, at I-90/I-290 and at I-294/I-57, are key points in the region. The two projects will facilitate regional mobility for both the southwest and northwest suburbs as these areas continue to grow.

As the I-90/I-290 interchange is designed, flexibility to implement the STAR Line should be maintained.

In addition, CMAP supports the initiative by the Tollway to participate in funding system-wide local interchanges as part of the Program. Enhanced local access may be beneficial for the mobility of our residents and the accessibility of our communities. However, we request that the Tollway prioritize access to regional activity centers. In addition, we request that the Tollway prioritize interchange projects with the potential to substantially improve traffic flow. For new access projects that will substantially *improve* mainline traffic flow and have a regional benefit, we request that the Tollway specifically consider partial relaxation of its 50-percent match requirement, where that requirement will affect the financial feasibility of the project for the region.

More generally, future consultation is requested as interchange locations are considered to assure consistency with current and future adopted regional plans. Clearly, Tollway interchange locations are closely related to land development and arterial congestion issues. In addition, the functional areas of such interchanges should be established to maintain access

November 10, 2008

Page 4

control and improve traffic flow. Thus, we request close cooperation between the Tollway and CMAP to identify and develop local interchanges consistent with adopted regional plans.

### **Financing**

CMAP supports the financial solvency of our transportation system operators. To this end, the High-Occupancy Toll operation of the Green Lanes that strategically collects revenues to improve system operations is supported by CMAP.

CMAP is concerned that all users share in the cost of using the Illinois Tollway. Thus, while toll-price indexing is proposed for commercial vehicles, the Tollway should consider whether this price indexing should be extended to passenger vehicles at a future date. We cannot rely on commercial vehicles alone to fund our transportation system. Moreover, too-high and disproportionate commercial vehicle prices may increase truck diversions to the arterial or IDOT expressway systems, which we want to avoid.

Lastly, with regard to financing, consider indexing Tollway prices not to the Consumer Price Index, as proposed, but the Bureau of Labor Statistics Highway Construction Cost Index or a similar index that better reflects Tollway price trends. We are concerned that using the Consumer Price Index will be insufficient to finance the Tollway's Program as proposed. Again, we support the Program and wish to assure that it is reliably funded.

In closing, we commend the Illinois Tollway and Governor Blagojevich on this program to improve the mobility of our area's residents. Our agency is eager to assist in implementing this plan. We are also eager to work with our partner agencies to assure regional coordination as the Program is put in place.

Sincerely,

Randall S. Blankenhorn  
Executive Director

TG:RSB/stk

cc: Jeff Daley  
Dawn Catuara, Acting Executive Director  
Rocco Zucchero, Deputy Chief of Engineering for Planning