



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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Transit Focus Group for CMAQ Agenda 1:30p.m., Wednesday February 23, 2011

**Lake County Conference Room
233 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois**

Participants Present: Bob Huffman, Pace, David Tomzik, Pace, Jan Ward, Kane County DOT, Thomas Weaver, Metra, Bill Lenski, RTA, Mark Pitstick, RTA, Michael Connelly, CTA, Keith Privett, CDOT, Sarah Chadderdon, McHenry County (via Phone), Sharon Feigon, CNT/I-GO

Staff Present: Jose Rodriguez (Chair), Ross Patronsky, Thomas Murtha, Don Kopec, Holly Ostdick

1.0 Call to Order and Introductions

Rodriguez called meeting to order at 1:30pm and initiated introductions.

2.0 Purpose of the Transit focus group in relation to the GO TO 2040 –focused CMAQ programming process.

Rodriguez explained the Transit Focus Group's purpose as using CMAQ programming for the next funding period help implement the general and specific goals and strategies of the GOTO 240 Plan. Patronsky described the upcoming CMAQ 2012 Program project selection schedule for both the call for projects and direct implementer submittals. The focus groups will evaluate submitted projects from assigned project categories. The groups should submit their recommended package of projects to the CMAQ Project Selection Committee well before the release of the ranked group of projects which is scheduled for July. The Transit Focus group, as all the three other focus groups – Bicycle Pedestrian, Regional Transportation Operations Coalition (RTOC), and

Direct Emissions, will have an advisory role that will enhance but not override the existing project evaluation methodology, ranking and selection process

In response to a question about reauthorization, Mr. Kopec said that the MPO Policy Committee will commit to funding programmed projects if the CMAQ program is incorporated into a larger program such as sustainability.

Weaver asked whether projects on the current B list had to be resubmitted. Patronsky replied yes, and clarified that current A list projects will not need to be resubmitted.

Connelly asked whether directly programmed projects will be assured CMAQ funding. Patronsky replied that the CMAQ Project Selection Committee will recommend which projects should receive CMAQ funding; directly programmed projects will not necessarily be recommended.

Weaver asked if the group will look at all applications. Patronsky indicated that the focus group will receive applications within its particular area of expertise (transit in this case), but can look at the other applications for opportunities for synergy.

3.0 Transit Focus Group Approach

The group began considering an approach toward evaluation and recommendation of proposed CMAQ projects. Rodriguez distributed a breakdown, by project category, of CMAQ funding awarded from the program from 1992 through 2010.

Tom Murtha provided a summary of the RTOC group's draft goals and strategies in regards to its role in the CMAQ project selection. Murtha provided a draft document (Goals and Strategies Synthesis Document) plus individual goals and strategies statements from IDOT, CDOT, Pace, FHWA and CMAP. Asked if a project could be selected by multiple focus groups (example given was transit signal priority, traffic signal coordination, and shelter locations for a bus route that would increase transit mode share and improve arterial traffic operations) Murtha and other CMAP staff responded that it would be the preferred action for multi-modal projects. Pitstick concurred that this would be a positive approach, to foster communication between the focus groups.

Murtha added that a project prioritization process could also allow groups to have a set group of projects ready for submittal to other federal funding programs similar to the Urban Partnership and ARRA programs in the past.

The group agreed that maintenance of the existing system should be funded from a more consistent source of funding than the CMAQ program. Mr. Kopec also indicated that both modernization and major capital projects are important aspects of implementing GO TO 2040.

The group concurred with Murtha's assertion that increasing transit mode share was the most-cited goal of the group's project prioritization process. They also cited the following objectives as leading to that goal – improving arterial system performance and improving person throughput (CTA). They agreed that mode share improvement would also reduce emissions and improve system performance by removing drive-alone vehicles.

Pitstick cautioned that the Transit focus group should focus narrowly on air quality since those reduction guidelines will be part of the selection process anyway. The group felt the Transit focus group should highlight projects that promote its goals and strategies without sole regard to air quality performance.

Pitstick also recommended that the focus group should concentrate on things that transit can do, and leave actions that other focus groups can address to them.

Tom Weaver cautioned that major capital projects were large expenditure items and that CMAQ may not have the financial capacity to address them; Murtha responded that it would be appropriate to fund transit elements that could be supported and enhance the oncoming capital facility such as the Elgin-O-Hare improvements and upcoming improvements on the UP West and UP Northwest.

The RTOC's approach gave greater emphasis to quantitative performance measures; additional project screening will be based also on a project's inclusion in a system or local long-range plan or program.

Weaver added that many CMAQ projects promising mode share shifts resulted in much less benefits than projected; he also stated that many transit projects have benefits limited to their existing ridership. He concluded that

because the GO TO 2040 Plan tends to encourage investment in already developed parts of the region, many potential Metra projects would not conform to this standard because those projects seek to capture potential ridership in far outlying areas. Tomzik stated that the recent 2010 census shows that it is the suburbs that are having the employment growth and that the farther-out suburbs are where the workers are living.

Feigon of CNT stated that there should be a place in the Transit group process for innovation and new ideas that are typically provided by demonstration projects.

Weaver referred to Chapter 11 of the GO TO 2040 Plan and stated that the Implementation Action Area goals should be the source of the Transit Group's goals and we should figure out what strategies will help achieve them.

Jan Ward recommended looking at the CMAQ project goals and work from those to develop the strategy set.

Patronsky added that the goals and strategies of the Transit group should be in place prior to the call for projects deadline, but that for projects directly submitted, the Transit group should be prioritizing and finding sponsors for projects determined to be positive to advancing its goals.

As far as performance measures, Pitstick advised that the group should consider more qualitative type performance measures since some level of quantitative measurement is used to project air quality benefit. Mike Connelly recommended a 2001 TRB report "Quantifying the Value of Transit Station and Access Improvements for Chicago's Rapid Transit Systems " (co-authored by CDOT's Richard Hazlett) as a source of transit utilization performance measures for several types of improvements.

4.0 Timeline

Since The RTOC approach was well received by the group, and several asked for a blanked-out document that would allow the Transit Group to outline its goals, strategies, and screening criteria. This would be released to the group on Monday February 28.

March 14 will be the deadline for individual goals and strategies submissions. CMAP staff will develop a draft synthesis in time for the next meeting of the Transit Focus Group on March 21.

5.0 Other Business

6.0 Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Transit Focus Group will be Monday, March 21, 2011, 1:30pm at CMAP.

7.0 Adjournment 2:50pm