

Springfield Hearing on the Proposed Capital Program

Testimony by Randall S. Blankenhorn

Executive Director

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is a new organization responsible for the seven-county region's official long-range planning of transportation and land use. Our board consists of 15 voting members, with balanced representation from across the region -- including nine current or former mayors. I direct the CMAP staff, who also serve as staff to the MPO Policy Committee.

CMAP supports a new capital program for infrastructure investments for the State of Illinois and the Chicago region. It is more than three years since Illinois First ended, and our state is feeling the strain.

The continued economic success of Illinois and the Chicago region depends on our ability to maintain and expand the region's road, transit, and freight rail systems, but also commit funding to build and maintain water-treatment facilities, schools, open space, and other necessary infrastructure. Without new investment dollars, we risk losing our competitive advantage.

We have to address the whole transportation system, not just the roads. Illinois and metropolitan Chicago clearly need strategic capacity improvements, but we can't build our way out of congestion. We need to find innovative solutions that maximize the benefit of existing infrastructure, including rail, buses, and all other forms of local travel. Giving people more transportation options can help keep the economy strong and improve our quality of life.

So I urge you not to address highway needs to the exclusion of other pressing transportation needs, especially mass transit.

Last December, the CMAP Board took an early and forceful position on the need for a capital program. At that point, our Board passed a set of five principles that I would like to briefly summarize.

- 1. Make it Significant.** The unmet needs for capital are substantial, and the opportunity to pass a capital bill is limited. Therefore, we should ensure that the program is large enough to meet forecasted needs. A limited program that meets very few of our capital needs will be detrimental to our state's long-term funding outlook.
- 2. Make it Comprehensive.** Surface transportation in metropolitan Chicago is made up of complex, interrelated systems. These include our transit system, which is an essential component of the overall network. It includes the freight rail system, which is essential to maintaining the region's position as the freight capital of North America. And it includes maintenance and expansion of the road network. No part of the network can be neglected without affecting the whole.

Other non-transportation infrastructure cannot be ignored. Improvements to our water and sewer systems, school buildings, recreational facilities, and open spaces are a basic ingredient to our competitive position.

- 3. Make the Project Selection Process Transparent and Results-Driven.** Capital projects must be selected based on regionally approved evaluation criteria that produce agreed-upon results. We can no longer afford to select projects that do not meet the region's basic needs to improve our transportation and other infrastructure systems in ways that strengthen our communities.
- 4. Support it with New Revenue.** Any program should have an identifiable source of revenue to be used as a pay-as-you-go funding source, as well as to pay off bonds. Increasing the State's debt burden by enacting a program without a revenue source is not a sustainable method of supporting our basic infrastructure.
- 5. Set Funds Aside for Planning.** The expenditure of capital dollars for transportation must be done through careful planning so that we can determine the most cost-effective investments. The public deserves to know that their dollars are being spent wisely, effectively and according to a well-thought out plan. Illinois should adopt a funding approach to planning that is structured much like the federal system of setting aside funding out of new capital revenues for metropolitan planning across the state.

Funds are desperately needed just to maintain the current transportation system, which is necessary to protect people's mobility and the movement of goods essential to the region's prosperity. CMAP and its partners are committed to a transparent planning process whose goal is to ensure the most cost-effective use of public funds. *As a region, we should not be approving projects that haven't undergone a rigorous review process that considers the broad priorities of northeastern Illinois as a whole.*

The program should also invest in new technologies and innovative approaches, which are increasingly important to maximizing the benefits of our infrastructure. Open-road tolling is an important success story, but we need more examples of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) in use. Illinois ought to lead the way by deploying -- and not just studying -- tools such as:

- Managed lanes to reduce congestion with information technology
- High-speed information network enhancements for monitoring road conditions and providing travelers with real-time status reports
- Improved freight rail infrastructure and flyovers to separate cars and freight trains
- Compact intersections with signal timing for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists alike
- Congestion pricing and "value pricing" to improve system efficiency and reduce congestion, while also raising needed funds for infrastructure and operations
- "Design-build" combines two usually separate services into a single contract, which can streamline projects by allowing a single, fixed-fee contract for both architectural/engineering services and construction
- Truck-only facilities are also among the ways to better manage our transportation assets to move critical freight to and through our region

Freight is a critical area requiring strategic capital improvements that can increase throughput for everyone, not just trucks and freight trains. The Chicago region handles one-third of the nation's rail and truck cargo, making it the busiest U.S. rail freight hub. The CREATE (Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency) program is a public-private partnership that seeks to maximize the efficiency of five major rail corridors. Grade separations at 25 rail crossings would eliminate waits for motorists, and CREATE would also reduce transit delays via six rail-to-rail "flyovers" – overpasses and underpasses to separate conflicting train movements, including many freight-passenger rail conflicts.

We ask the Governor and the General Assembly to act quickly on a new capital program for the State.