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**Oak Parkers asked to 'picture the future'**  
*Planning agency seeks input from 7-county region for 2040 Plan*

By **BILL DWYER**  
 Staff Reporter

Looking to kick off their summer-long survey of public opinion on key long-term development issues in the Chicago region, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, or CMAP, visited Unity Temple last Thursday.

The group, which is formally charged with land use and transportation planning in Chicago and its seven collar counties, conducted two presentations Thursday night for 68 attendees, first a 45-minute presentation on historic preservation, followed by a transportation and land use survey.

The transportation and land use segment was the first of 50 such planned presentations this summer, intended to develop a broad regional vision of what Chicago-area residents want to see 30 years from now.

CMAP's Hubert Morgan, who called Oak Park "one of my favorite places," noted its proximity to employment and culture, as well as plentiful Lake Michigan water. Oak Park and the rest of the Chicago region, Morgan stressed, will face challenges over the next 30 years that demand thorough and thoughtful planning.

"As we're planning, we have visions of a community like this one," said Morgan, who invited the attendees to imagine "pictures of the future."

Morgan noted that the Chicago region, which now includes Kendall County, will grow by three million people in that period - with two million additional jobs. Where, he asked, not so rhetorically, will those people live, where will those jobs be, and how will people get to them.

That impacts transportation in ways you won't believe," he said, "impacts land use patterns."

"One thing we want to do at CMAP is engage the public to the fullest extent we can," he said. "We feel the public needs to be part of shaping the community, shaping the strategies that we need to put in place for our long-range planning."

While the historic preservation and transportation/land segment were two separate presentations, there are strong crossover connections. Most people want to live "in a place that feeds us at a deep level," one presenter offered during the historic preservation segment. "At some level, we all realize there is a difference between a dead neighborhood and a live neighborhood."

Creating and preserving such communities will be a function of strong and focused transportation and land use planning, said both Morgan and CMAP colleague Erin Aleman.

Central to the public input process this summer will be electronic tallying of preferences regarding the issues of population density, development location, road networks, transportation systems and transportation policy. To facilitate that, CMAP personnel passed out palm keyboards wirelessly connected to a laptop. After getting some basic demographic info (54 percent male with 79 percent between 30 and 69 years old), Aleman conducted the survey, but not before Morgan injected a bit of Chicago-centric humor.

"You can press it as many times as possible. You're close enough to Chicago to feel free to vote as often as you like," he said to waves of laughter. "It's only the last one that counts."

The results showed a strong preference for transportation alternatives over additional roads, with just 9 percent favoring a "significant increase" in roads, and 89 percent favoring a significant increase in transportation systems. Absolutely no one favored a "minimum increase" to transportation systems.

Equally as important as what "can be" is what "will be" if there is no change in both the public's practices and attitude. The consequences of not planning for that future will inevitably be devastating, CMAP officials say. As one presenter put it, "If you're living in an outlying suburb when there's \$6 per gallon gas, you have a problem."

Those interested in contributing to the CMAP survey can log onto [www.goto2040.org](http://www.goto2040.org).

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**Favored changes**

Here is how attendees of the CMAP presentation rated their priorities for the future of the area:

**Density**

Low density growth 6%  
 Current pattern 8%  
 Moderately compact 62%  
 Highly compact 25%

**Development location**

Unfocused 9%  
 Community and Metro 79%  
 Metro Center 12%

**Road Network**

Minimum maintenance 49%  
 Moderate increase 42%  
 Significant increase 9%

**Transportation systems**

Minimum maintenance 0%  
 Moderate increase 11%  
 Significant increase 89%

**Transportation policy**

Favor driving 2%  
 Maintain current mix 7%  
 Support alternatives 39%  
 Strongly support alternatives 52%



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