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Residents weighing in on transit plans for 2040

Commutes, denser communities favored by many who have responded, officials say

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By Kristen Kridel
Special to the Tribune
August 19, 2009

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Schaumburg resident **Mike Williams** never realized road construction costs would decrease if more people moved into condominium buildings.

At a recent workshop on planning for the future, he learned such a change also would reduce commute times, energy use – even government and individual household costs.

"I remember there were some surprising things that came out of that," he said. "It just made me think we can't leave things the way they are. If we leave things the way they are, it won't be a good future."

The **Chicago** Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for about two more weeks is giving northeast Illinois residents a chance to weigh in on every aspect of plans to guide development and transportation in the region through 2040.

So far, feedback from more than 4,000 residents throughout the Chicago area has been remarkably similar, CMAP officials said.

"For me, that's one of the more interesting things we've found," said Bob Dean, principal regional planner. "We are hearing very consistent results. It's good for a regional plan like this."

The majority of people want denser communities and greater protection of the environment and investment in transit, he said.

The support for denser communities is a surprise, said CMAP Executive Director Randy Blankenhorn. Density would mean residents live closer together in taller buildings, where people used to prefer homes on large lots in exurban areas, he said.

Mary Wells, who also attended a recent workshop in Schaumburg, said although she doesn't want to live

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in a high-rise, she would be willing to move to a larger building to better share a water system, roadways and transportation with her neighbors.

"The more closely you live together the fewer public goods you need," said Wells, a [Park Ridge](#) resident.

So far, more than 160 people have attended workshops in the north and northwest suburbs. People also can weigh in or find information on other meetings at [goto2040.org](#).

Blankenhorn said he understands that it's difficult for people to think 30 years ahead, especially when they're worried about their children's education next year or having a job tomorrow.

But he pointed to the transit system as a reason to plan ahead.

The current system works for people traveling to Chicago. But there is no public transportation available to take people from one suburb to another. Even Chicago residents who would take trains to work in the suburbs would have difficulty actually getting from the station to their jobs.

"Those [job patterns] are the things we obviously didn't anticipate 30 years ago," Blankenhorn said. "We need to have been thinking about this all along."

[Arlington Heights](#) Mayor Arlene Mulder, who serves on CMAP's Transportation Committee, said she's hopeful the 2040 blueprint will spell out a plan for a new mode of public transportation to connect all the suburbs. Now residents have no choice but to get in their cars, she said. The plan also needs to link all transportation systems.

"It should be in the 2040 plan so people start planning for it today," she said. "Projects of this magnitude take decades."

By state and federal law, CMAP must produce the region's official, integrated plan for land use and transportation for Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will Counties.

During the fall, CMAP will design a "preferred scenario." The regional plan will be put in final form in 2010.

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