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People with disabilities help design regional 2040 plan

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A group of people with developmental disabilities are sharing their unique insights to help develop the Chicago region's comprehensive plan for 2040.

SouthSTAR Services was selected by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to convene workshops tailored to gather feedback from people with developmental disabilities. People with developmental disabilities are often heavy users of publicly supported services such as transportation, housing, and employment.

Unfortunately, these same individuals rarely have input into the regional plans that impact these services. For example, people with developmental disabilities in the suburbs rely heavily on transportation services from PACE, METRA and the RTA to get to work, shop and visit friends.

SouthSTAR Services held its first workshop on March 6. The second workshop will be held on March 26 at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights.

The format of the workshop is for participants to select which topics are most important to them.

Among the 14 topics to select from are transportation, housing, public safety, quality of life, education, environmental and several others. The topics selected by the participants are then discussed, and opinions of how these factors impact their lives are shared.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is convening over 50 similar conversations throughout the Chicago area's seven county regions. Information from the regional conversations will be used to help influence the GO TO 2040 plan that CMAP expects to have ready in 2010.

The GO TO 2040 plan will provide a variety of scenarios about what the region could look like in 30 years and help guide planning efforts to achieve the proposed vision. Further information about CMAP is available at www.cmpa.illinois.gov.