CHAPTER 2
THE SRA SYSTEM AND OPERATION GREEN LIGHT

2.1 OPERATION GREEN LIGHT

According to forecasts prepared by the Chicago Area Transportation Study, travel in the year 2010 in Northeastern Illinois is expected to increase by 23 percent over 1980 levels. In the last few years, rapid economic development and growing population have resulted in significant increases in congestion on the region's expressways, and on arterial and local roads in many parts of the region as well. Creation of the SRA system is a major component of Operation Green Light, an eight-point plan to deal with urban congestion and improve regional mobility developed by the Illinois Department of Transportation in cooperation with the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, the Chicago Area Transportation Study, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and the Regional Transportation Authority. In addition to creating the SRA network, Operation Green Light addresses the following major transportation issues:

- **Developing Major Transit/Highway Facilities**
- **Improving Other Key Arterial Roadways**
- **Identifying Strategic Transit Improvements**
- **Improving Freeway Traffic Management**
- **Improving Arterial Traffic Management**
- **Reducing Demand for Highway Use**
- **Increasing Environmental Consideration.**

Together, the components of Operation Green Light are a blueprint for a comprehensive approach to improve transportation in Northeastern Illinois. As part of this comprehensive approach, the SRA system is designed to **(1)** improve regional mobility by providing a comprehensive network of arterial routes designed to carry significant volumes of long-distance traffic across the region, **(2)** complement the region's major transit and highway facilities by providing access for regional trips on these facilities, and **(3)** provide for long-distance travel to supplement the regional expressway system.

2.2 OBJECTIVE FOR THE SRA SYSTEM

The SRA system is intended to accomplish certain specific objectives within the overall regional transportation system:

Supplement an expanded expressway system by:

- Improving access to expressways
- Providing alternatives for some portions of expressway travel
- Providing a lower-cost substitute for expressways in some corridors

Enhance public transportation and personal mobility by:

- Improving access to rail transit station
- Improving operating conditions for buses and other transit vehicles
- Identifying opportunities for future transit facilities
- Maintaining pedestrian and bicycle accessibility

Accommodate commercial vehicle traffic by:

- Improving structural clearances
- Maximizing through-traffic movement.

2.3 THE SRA SYSTEM AND REGIONAL MOBILITY

Although significant improvements to the overall regional transportation system have been made in recent years, forecasted growth in the Chicago area will create more traffic than the existing system can handle. Forecasts of 2010 socioeconomic factors prepared by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) show regional growth in population (15%), households (29%) and employment (23%) over the 1980 to 2010 time period. This growth represents the addition of over one million new residents, almost three-quarters of a million households and over three-quarters of a million new jobs.

Within these overall regional totals are changes in the spatial pattern of activity, which have implications for transportation. Three-quarters of the population growth is expected to occur outside Cook County. Household size will continue to decline, reaching 1.5 persons in 2010. Employment will increase across the region with the largest absolute gains in the city of Chicago, suburban Cook County and DuPage County. Employment in the Chicago central area is projected to increase to 890,000 in 2010, representing 21 percent of the regional employment, compared to 19 percent in 1980.

While the SRA system is a major element of the regional effort over the next 20 years to address problems of urban and suburban congestion, the development of the SRA system alone is not intended to solve the congestion problem in the Chicago area. Implementation of other components of Operation Green Light as well as ongoing programs of the Operation Green Light Task Forces, CATS and NIPC are integral parts of the comprehensive approach to improving regional mobility. These programs address several related issue which are not specifically part of this SRA planning process, but which have important implications for the SRA system. These issues are:

Arterial Traffic Management. Improved traffic management techniques offer cost-effective methods to improve traffic flow and enhance capacity on the SRA routes. Development of a regionwide incident detection network and creation of an overall congestion monitoring system on the SRA System are possible methods. With current technology, using detectors in the pavement, a monitoring system could identify congestion based upon speeds and occupancy, as is now done on the freeway surveillance system. Extension to the SRA system of the present system of motorists reporting incidents from car phones could also be accomplished. As more advanced driver information systems are developed, they could also be used on the SRA system.

Demand Management. In addition to improving capacity of the overall transportation system, Operation Green Light considers reducing demand for highway use to be essential for improving regional mobility. Strategies to promote alternative work schedules, ridesharing programs, parking incentives/

disincentives, improved transit service, and employer transit subsidies are possible components of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program. A TDM program may be implemented under two different approaches.

Through implementing legislation which sets mandated goals, performance standard and administrative procedures; or,

On a voluntary basis, often through the formation of a Transportation Management Association (TMA).

In the Chicago area, the legislative approach has been used only by a few local jurisdictions as a condition of approval for specific developments, but may be applicable elsewhere on a similar basis. The voluntary approach, with a TMA as a public-private partnership, has been established in several locations in the Chicago area. The TMA approach offers opportunities to coordinate TDM programs for individual route corridors or larger segments of the SRA system.

Coordination with Local Land Use Plans. Northeastern Illinois is composed of literally hundreds of jurisdictions. For the SRA system to successfully accomplish its objectives, coordinated planning with each of the jurisdictions is necessary along each of the routes. Local planning and development policies, particularly the arrangement of land uses adjacent to the arterial street and type of access, will greatly affect the ability of the facility to fulfill its function of carrying long-distance traffic. Right-of-way protection also should be coordinated with local planning and development. Land use planning techniques can also encourage use of alternate modes of transportation, with policies favorable to mixed use development.

Projected travel demand used in planning the SRA system reflects population, household and employment forecasts and local plans. Compatibility of future growth with these forecasts and plans is important to protect investment in the SRA system; by creating higher demand than the system is designed to carry, incompatible development results in lower levels of service and increased congestion. Local planning should also provide for an adequate system of local arterials and collectors, so that SRA capacity to serve regional trips is maintained.

Because SRA routes create a regional network, the impact of planning and development decisions crosses local boundaries. The need for cooperation among local governments and regional transportation agencies in coordinating land development with planned SRA improvements is important whether or not a formal framework is established. The Illinois Land Resources Management Act may provide a technique for communities to jointly plan development along an SRA route. Although relatively new, the Act has been proposed as the basis for an intergovernmental agreement among 17 municipalities participating in the Corridor Planning Council of Central Lake County.

Dedication or reservation of right-of-way on the SRA routes through the local development process is an effective means of protecting needed right-of-way to provide for future roadway improvements. Adoption of the Official Map and/or Official Plan as authorized by State Statute for municipalities and counties and would allow desirable right-of-way widths for SRA routes to be included as standards for subdivision approval.