

CMAP Process for addressing Developments of Regional Importance

Assessing the impacts and providing planning guidance on Developments of Regional Importance (a.k.a “DRIs”) is a new element to the work program of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). The preceding regional planning agencies had occasional involvement in regionally significant land use or economic development proposals in addition to including major capital transportation improvements in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). But CMAP’s DRI process provides a new opportunity for regional partners to more comprehensively assess the regional implications of large-scale development proposals, reconcile regional priorities associated with these proposals and coordinate independent actions in support of regional goals. In order for the process examining Developments of Regional Importance to add true value by improving the development and investment decision making process in the region and improving intergovernmental coordination, there needs to be a thorough investigation of the impacts of a proposed project. Obviously, this type of analysis cannot be conducted for every project within the region. Therefore, CMAP, in conjunction with its partners and stakeholders, needs to develop a value-added and meaningful review process for examining DRIs.

In developing a CMAP process for addressing DRIs, the enabling legislation and content of CMAP’s Strategic Vision should be considered. In addition, the relationship between DRIs and the major policy, operational and capital recommendations that will appear in the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) should be coordinated.

The focus of this document is to facilitate ongoing discussions regarding the thresholds and criteria CMAP will use to identify DRIs for evaluation.

Background

The value of assessing and evaluating major land use and transportation proposals at the regional level is well recognized. Large-scale development proposals have the possibility of introducing widespread primary and secondary impacts to the daily activities of significant numbers of people. Examining these impacts at the regional level offers the potential to help improve a proposal through coordinated actions among affected jurisdictions.

Legislation

While the predecessor agencies had varying roles in helping in planning for large-scale regional developments, the Illinois Legislature specifically enabled¹ CMAP’s function in this type of activity:

¹ Illinois General Assembly, Public Act 095-0677.

Sec. 47. Developments of Regional Importance. The Board shall consider the regional and intergovernmental impacts of proposed major developments, infrastructure investments and major policies and actions by public and private entities on natural resources, neighboring communities, and residents. The Board shall:

(a) Define the Scope of Developments of Regional Importance (DRI) and create an efficient process for reviewing them.

(b) Require any DRI project sponsor, which can be either a public or private entity, to submit information about the proposed DRI to CMAP and neighboring communities, counties, and regional planning and transportation agencies for review.

(c) Review and comment on a proposed DRI regarding consistency with regional plans and intergovernmental and regional impacts.

Strategic Vision

The CMAP Board, in its first year of operation, established a Strategic Vision for the agency that included six areas of planning inquiry:

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Economic and Community Development
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Housing
- Human Services

These topics establish the parameters within which CMAP will conduct its DRI evaluations.

Relationship to Regional Comprehensive Plan recommendations

CMAP is preparing the region's first Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), scheduled for adoption in 2010. A significant part of the plan development work involves identifying, analyzing and evaluating proposals for large-scale land use development and public infrastructure investment. These proposals are evaluated in the context of thematic regional scenarios that couple the proposals with strategies that define the coordinated policy actions needed to ensure desired regional outcomes and efficient investment of public capital resources.

There is a significant overlap between the definition of DRI and the proposals sought for inclusion in the RCP. Efficiencies may be gained by establishing the DRI evaluation process as the entry point for inclusion in the RCP.

Regional Impact Assessment Preparation

The first step in identifying whether a proposal is a DRI is for CMAP staff to prepare a preliminary Regional Impact Assessment (RIA).

The preliminary RIA is a consistent method for gathering, interpreting and processing relevant information that will permit CMAP to objectively comment on the consistency of the proposal with existing regional plans and to recommend appropriate additional evaluation or remedial planning steps.

Each preliminary RIA report will be organized as follows:

1. A project “literature-review” documenting the proposal’s history and background, a bibliography of relevant documents and previous public decisions.
2. A qualitative assessment of the likely comprehensive planning implications of the action. This should conclude by proposing one or more anticipated outcomes that can be subjected to further analysis if desired.
3. The results of a search for digital data resources that can be systematically analyzed in order to conduct the proposed tests. This step will also reveal any new data collection necessary to adequately assess the proposal’s impact.
4. A recommendation for conducting (or not conducting) additional planning analyses to substantiate the hypothesized regional impacts. The recommendation should include an estimate of appropriate time and resources needed to complete the analysis and the set of likely outcomes resulting from CMAP action on the project.

CMAP Thresholds and Criteria for identifying Developments of Regional Importance

CMAP’s role is to place the DRI in a comprehensive regional context and objectively identify how external costs and benefits of the DRI will accrue to the region’s residents and businesses. Comparing the proposal with existing regional plans and policies may lead CMAP to recommend refinement of the proposal or mitigation of external impacts. Based on preliminary discussions with the DRI Programming Subcommittee, a two tiered approach is proposed to initiate the DRI process. This document focuses on Tier 1, which would identify the criteria and thresholds. Tier 2 would focus on the analysis, both quantitative and qualitative. The following thresholds that are identified came primarily from our own experiences with what constitutes a “regional scale” and examples from other parts of the country that have similar processes. Discerning whether they are “low”

or “high” will come from continued discussion among partners about what is acceptable and feasible.

For purposes of this discussion, potential DRIs have been categorized according to their regional planning context:

- Physical Planning
- Economic and Community Development
- Environmental Stewardship

Physical Planning

Thorough assessment of the physical planning requirements of DRIs are key to ensuring that regional growth is coordinated and that public investments are efficiently programmed.

Infrastructure Investment

Transportation

- A new or expanded limited access highway
- A new or extended passenger rail transit line
- A new or expanded public airport

Water Supply

- An extension of public water supply (to serve over 1,000 households or 500 jobs)

Sewer Facilities

New and extended sewer mains (to serve over 1,000 households)

- Constructing or expanding wastewater treatment facilities (to handle over 1 million gallons per day).

Stormwater Management

- New and extended stormwater mains (to carry over 1 million gallons per day).
- New detention or retention facilities (over 10 acres in size).

Land Use (Re)Development

Housing

- Developments greater than 1,000 homes
- Homes priced at >125% of median housing value (5 mile radius)
- Homes priced at >3 times the annualized median wage of jobs (5 mile radius)

Employment

- Developments expected to hold greater than 500 jobs
- Median job pays <3 times the median housing value (5 mile radius)

Transportation Terminals

- Intermodal Freight Facilities (offering > 25 acres truck storage or > 1 mile train storage)
- Passenger facilities (offering > 1,000 parking spaces).

Recreation

- Public Parks (offering > 1,000 parking spaces)
- Entertainment Facilities (offering >6,000 seats)

Economic and Community Development

Public and private enterprises often collaborate to promote a healthy business environment. Business decisions made entirely by a private enterprise may be of a scale where economic impacts are felt region-wide. Often public action is undertaken to influence private the region's benefit.

Business Attraction and Retention

- Federal or State incentives or legislation are offered in exchange for the creation or retention of jobs.

Human Services

- Construct or abandon a public or private educational institution serving > 1000 students

- Construct or abandon a public or private health care facility serving over >1000 persons

Taxation

- General purpose tax changes of greater than ½ percent
- Fee changes with a per capita incidence of >500,000
- Public Bond issues > \$100M

Regulated Management and Operations

- A change in Federal or State regulated transportation management and operations that will alter the provision of local public service in > 5 jurisdictions.

Environmental Stewardship

Continued regional growth will pose regular challenges to the region's goal of preserving and protecting its natural resources and amenities.

Natural Preserves

- Proposals to create a natural preserve > 100 acres.

Land conversion

- Proposals to convert > 100 acres from rural to urban use.
- Proposals to convert > 100 acres to or from predominantly industrial use.

Wetlands

- Proposals that include specified toxics or generating >### runoff that are adjacent to identified wetlands.