



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** MPO Policy Committee

**Date:** March 3, 2009

**From:** CMAP Staff

**Re:** Improvements to the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) Process

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The CMAQ Project Selection Committee is continually striving to improve the processes in place that help to program and implement the CMAQ program. Attached are two memos that describe changes recommended for Policy Committee approval.

The memo dated January 30, 2009 is recommending revisions to the programming procedure strategies used to program and manage CMAQ funds. The strategies will help assure that the region gets the congestion reduction and air quality improvements of CMAQ projects more quickly and reduces the large amount of unobligated funding which is at risk of being lost to the region. The procedures were an informational item at the January 8, 2009 meeting of the MPO Policy Committee.

The primary strategy used to date has been multi-year programming, begun in FY 2007. Under multi-year programming, project phases are programmed in successive years, so that funds for later phases do not automatically increase the unobligated balance. The recommendations also address timely implementation of already programmed projects. By actively adjusting when funds are available and dropping projects that are not making progress, we hope to ensure the benefits of the projects come to the region more quickly and the unobligated amounts will be reduced.

The memo date February 27, 2009 has to do with changes in the programming policies and ranking methodologies used in the selection of bicycle and pedestrian facilities projects for CMAQ funding. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force has identified potential deficiencies in the current policies and methodologies and recommended changes to the CMAQ Project Selection Committee. The changes are described in more detail in the attached memo.



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation Committee

**Date:** January 30, 2009

**From:** Ross Patronsky, Senior Planner  
Doug Ferguson, Associate Planner

**Re:** CMAQ PSC Recommendations for Programming Changes

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A: Programming of CMAQ funds for new projects

- 1) Application materials
  - a) Applications submitted without the following will be rejected:
    - i) Complete project financing & CMAQ funding request section
    - ii) Input module worksheets (traffic flow improvement projects only)
    - iii) Scoping document (traffic flow improvement, commuter parking and pedestrian/bicycle projects only)
  - b) If an application is missing other information, only one attempt will be made via both e-mail and certified mail to collect that information. If the sponsor does not respond by the deadline then the application will be rejected. Staff recommends 30 days from the date of the letter as the deadline.
  - c) Project applications submitted by municipal agencies (villages, cities, park districts, school districts, townships, etc.) are required to be reviewed by their Council of Mayors staff (Planning Liaison (PL)).
    - i) The individual PLs would be responsible for reviewing applications and advising the sponsor of missing information.
    - ii) A PL sign-off will be incorporated into the application forms.
    - iii) A deadline for submitting applications to the PLs will be included in the CMAQ program development schedule. The "review deadline" will be two weeks in advance of the deadline for submission to CMAP.
    - iv) The applicant is ultimately responsible for application completeness. If a municipal agency submits an application with missing information (other than items a) i), ii) and iii), b will apply.

## 2) Programming Funds

- a) Normally funding for all phases of a project will be considered in one application.
- b) On an exceptional basis, proposals will be considered for funding phase I engineering separately from other phases
  - i) in this case, future phases are not eligible for funding until the project has been submitted for design approval.
  - ii) Sponsor must apply for future phases, phase II engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction; funding of the future phases is not automatically guaranteed.
- c) Proposals that don't seek funding for phase I engineering must be submitted for design approval by June of the application cycle to be considered for funding of the later phases in the fiscal year of the application cycle.
  - i) Applicants completing phase I engineering with local funds must certify that they will meet federal standards.
  - ii) Proposals that seek funding of later phases in an out year will be considered on a case-by-case basis. (Out years are, for example, 2011 and 2012 in the 2010 application cycle.)
- d) Proposals seeking phase 1 engineering as well as subsequent phases will have phase II engineering programmed in the third year (i.e., the program year plus two) rather than the second year as is the current practice.
  - i) Construction in such cases will be programmed in the fourth year.
  - ii) Funding for subsequent phases can be moved up on request if the project is ready.
- e) The CMAQ program mark will be the northeastern Illinois share of the state's federal apportionment.
- f) Create a "B" list of projects in the programming cycle approved by the MPO Policy Committee. It will include all projects with a reasonable cost/benefit ratio as well as partially funded projects. The projects will remain in the list until the end of that Federal Fiscal Year<sup>1</sup>.
- g) All sponsors will be required to attend a mandatory project initiation meeting once the eligibility determination has been received from USDOT. The meeting will distribute necessary forms and information for sponsors to initiate their projects and will go over project schedules.

### B: Active Program Management of Projects

- 1) Projects with funds programmed prior to FFY 2007
  - a) Move funding (reprogram) for these projects to realistic out years for the unobligated phases.
    - i) The funding made available by moving the phases out of 2009 would be available for potential cost increases for already approved projects.

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<sup>1</sup> The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) runs from October 1<sup>st</sup> of the prior calendar year through September 30<sup>th</sup>. Example: FFY 2007 is October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007.

- ii) If the amount of funds made available is of a sizeable amount, then new projects could be considered.
  - iii) Once this is done the project could move funding for an approved phase one more time before it is considered for withdrawal of funding.
  - iv) If phases of the projects move beyond the final year of the TIP (2012) into MYB, the funding for those MYB phases will be withdrawn. Sponsor will need to reapply at the appropriate time for funding.
- 2) For projects programmed FFY 2007 and later
- a) Projects approved only for phase I engineering would have only one fiscal year to initiate phase I with a job number request form submitted to IDOT or a FTA grant agreement. Failure to do so would cause funding to be considered for withdrawal from the project. This decision will be by recommendation of the CMAQ Project Selection Committee to the Transportation Committee.
  - b) Projects programmed in the multi-year programming with phases beyond phase I engineering could move funding to new fiscal years only once. The exception to this rule is if the moving of a phase to a new fiscal year is the direct result of actions out of the control of the sponsor. Funding will be considered for withdrawal if the funding is not obligated in that new fiscal year.
- 3) Review of projects with phases in the annual element would be conducted in May and October.
- a) Projects that will not obligate their annual element phase by the end of the fiscal year will be able to use their one time adjustment to their project schedule.
    - i) If the phase is phase I engineering, however, the phase still must be initiated by the end of the fiscal year.
    - ii) Projects that have already adjusted their schedule once will be considered for withdrawal of funding if the additional delay is not the direct result of actions out of the sponsor's control.
  - b) Funds freed up by schedule adjustments will be reprogrammed
    - i) Funds available for reprogramming will be considered for cost increases as needed.
    - ii) In May, projects included in the "B" list will be reviewed to identify candidates for programming the funds.
    - iii) In October, new projects from the just-completed programming cycle will be reviewed for programming the funds.
  - c) Job number requests forms are required to have been submitted to IDOT by the time of the May review for non-transit projects. Grant applications are required to have been submitted to FTA by the time of the May review for transit projects.



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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation Committee

**Date:** February 27, 2009

**From:** Doug Ferguson, CMAQ Project Manager

**Re:** CMAQ Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Ranking Methodologies

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The CMAQ Project Selection Committee requests your consideration of modifications to the project ranking methodologies now employed by the CMAQ Project Selection Committee. Over the past several selection cycles, concerns have been raised regarding the project selections of bicycle and pedestrian projects. Staff suggested that the best way to address concerns about project selection was to improve the ranking process to assure that project rankings use the best information available.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force selected a subcommittee to draft recommendations for project ranking improvements. At its February meeting, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force recommended CMAQ Project Selection Committee consideration of the attached recommendations. The CMAQ Project Selection Committee reviewed the changes and is requesting that the Transportation Committee recommend Policy Committee and Board approval.

Implementation of the recommended changes would take place in stages, pending the availability of research and review by the CMAQ Project Selection Committee, as appropriate. At this time, staff recommends the following staging for implementation, following Policy Committee approval (see following pages):

1. The following changes are recommended to be included in all rankings for FY 2010 and beyond:

I.B.1. Pedestrian Project Rankings: Improve Analytical Basis by Reducing Area Impacted to 0.5 Mile on Either Side of Proposed Facility

II.A.2. Bicycle Project Rankings: Principle to Review On-Street Alternatives

2. To address the following recommendations, 2010 project rankings will be conducted using current ranking procedures alongside rankings addressing the recommendations. Full implementation will occur in 2011 project selection:

I.A.1. Pedestrian Project Rankings: Principle to Include Transit Access in Ranking Methodology

I.A.2. Pedestrian Project Rankings: Principle to Serve the Greatest Number of People by Identifying Origins and Destinations

II.A.1. Bicycle Project Rankings: Principle to Prioritize the Development of a Bikeway Network

II.A.3. Bicycle Project Rankings: Principle to Serve the Greatest Number of People by Identifying Origins and Destinations (Including Transit Access).

3. To address the following recommendations, staff will modify the call for projects in for FY 2011, and implement the change for that project call and beyond:

I.A.3. Pedestrian Project Rankings: Principle to Target Arterials and Collectors for Pedestrian Projects

4. To address the following recommendations, CMAP staff will engage in further research and will implement improved ranking procedures as appropriate no sooner than FY 2011 project rankings:

I.B.2. Pedestrian Project Rankings: Improve Analytical Basis for Spot Projects

II.B.1. Bicycle Project Rankings: Improve Analytical Basis for Spot Projects

The full text and explanations of the recommendations follow. The recommendations reflect the fact that while walking and bicycling travel choices are important for all locations and trips, there is a greater regional interest in some classes of walking and bicycling projects, and that these greater interests should be reflected in project rankings used for regional programming decisions.

## I. Considerations for Pedestrian Project Rankings

Reference	Recommendation	Commentary
I.A.1. Principle to Include Transit Access in Ranking Methodology	In programming for the FY 2010 call for projects and beyond, revise the pedestrian project ranking methodology to include transit access trips as part of the destinations served by a pedestrian project.	Concern has been expressed at many levels that a regional priority for CMAQ-funded pedestrian projects should be pedestrian access to transit services. The Methodology Work Group felt that the most equitable way to do this was to assure that the rankings reflected transit access. They do not now reflect transit access. CMAP has obtained the CTA bus stop file, is preparing a request for Pace Bus stops, and has station locations, all with boardings.
I.A.2 Principle to Serve the Greatest Number of People by Identifying Origins and Destinations.	In programming for the FY 2010 call for projects and beyond, include the origins and destinations for trips in ranking methodology, rather than just trip origins.	Concern has been expressed that the current CMAQ pedestrian ranking methodology favors local neighborhood sidewalk projects. Population is included in the rankings, but employees are not. Since trips require origins and destinations, ranking procedures should evaluate both ends. This will likely favor more balanced projects.
I.A.3. Principle to Target Arterials and Collectors for Pedestrian Projects	In programming for the FY 2011 call for projects and beyond, do not select projects primarily on local streets.	Concern has been expressed that the current CMAQ pedestrian ranking methodology favors local neighborhood sidewalk projects. This proposal addresses that issue directly. The intent is to focus primarily on travel along and across roads functionally classed as collector and above, where many travel destinations occur, but where there are many missing links in pedestrian infrastructure.

Reference	Recommendation	Commentary
I.B.1. Improve Analytical Basis by Reducing Area Impacted to 0.5 Mile on Either Side of Proposed Facility	Beginning with the analysis of FY 2010 projects, reduce the area considered in ranking pedestrian projects from 1 mile on either side of a proposed project to 0.5 miles on either side of a proposed facility.	The 1-mile buffer area now considered for pedestrian projects was adopted from the bike facility analysis used as the original model for project ranking. However, given what we now know about pedestrian behavior, a new facility is unlikely to affect trips more than a 10-minute walk away (½ mile). This is also consistent with rail transit access trips, which are typically up to ½ mile.
I.B.2. Improve Analytical Basis for Spot Projects	Establish an improved ranking mechanism for spot pedestrian improvements, e.g., bridges, signal improvements, new signalized crossings, etc. [requires research]	The current methodology was designed for corridor pedestrian improvements. Given the buffer of such projects, the current method may misrepresent the air quality and congestion mitigation benefits.

#### I. Considerations for Bicycle Project Rankings

Reference	Recommendation	Commentary
II.A.1. Principle to Prioritize the Development of a Bikeway Network	In programming for the FY 2010 call for projects and beyond, prioritize bicycle projects extending or connected to existing facilities or important bicycle destinations.	The region has been criticized for building “bike trails to nowhere.” We need to assure that the facilities we build enhance regional bikeway connectivity and facilitate trip-making.

Reference	Recommendation	Commentary
<p>II.A.2. Principle to Review On-Street Alternatives</p>	<p>In programming bicycle facility projects for the FY 2010 call for projects and beyond, select (1) bicycle facilities where alternative on-street facilities with a “Bicycle Level of Service B” or higher (as defined in Soles and Spokes Existing Conditions Report) is not achievable, OR significant bicycle facilities meeting one of the following criteria: (a) more than one-mile in length, (b) included in the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan, or (c) included in a subregional bikeways plan.</p>	<p>The CMAQ staff is collecting information relative to alternatives to off-street bikeways. However, several regional and subregional plans have preferences for off-street facilities. The proposed principle establishes a balance between on-and off-street facilities, consistent with adopted plans.</p>
<p>II.A.3. Principle to Serve the Greatest Number of People by Identifying Origins and Destinations (Including Transit Access).</p>	<p>In programming for the FY 2010 call for projects and beyond, include the origins and destinations (including transit access) for trips in the ranking methodology, rather than just trip origins.</p>	<p>Concern has been expressed that the current CMAQ bicycle ranking methodology does not account for destinations, including transit services. Population is included in the rankings, but employees are not. Since trips require origins and destinations, ranking procedures should evaluate both ends. This will likely favor more balanced projects.</p>
<p>II.B.1. Improve Analytical Basis for Spot Projects</p>	<p>Establish an improved ranking mechanism for spot bicycle improvements, e.g., bridges, signal improvements, new signalized crossings, etc. [requires research]</p>	<p>The current methodology was designed for corridor bicycle improvements. Given the buffer of such projects, the current method may misrepresent the benefits.</p>