



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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## **Regional Operations Group Meeting Minutes**

October 28, 2008 10:00 AM

Offices of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)  
Lake County Conference Room  
Suite 800, 233 S. Wacker Drive, Sears Tower, Chicago, Illinois

### **Attendees:**

John Benda, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority  
John Dillenburg, IDOT  
Christopher DiPalma, Metropolitan Planning FHWA  
Jerry Hron, IDOT (conference call)  
Matthew Letourneau, Jacobs Engineering  
Stephen Peters, District 1 – Operations and ComCenter Management IDOT  
Charles Sikaras, IDOT ITS Office  
Steve Travia, IDOT (conference call)  
Gerry Tumbali, RTA  
David Zattero, City of Chicago OEMC  
David Ziesemer, DuPage DOT

### **Staff Present:**

Claire Bozic  
Tom Murtha  
Todd Schmidt

### **1.0 Introductions**

### **2.0 Federal Perspective on Transportation System Management and Operations (C. DiPalma, FHWA)**

Chris DiPalma's presentation briefly covered the cost and cause of congestion, but mainly focused on recommendations on how to better position the region to obtain future federal funding to minimize congestion. The secretary of USDOT and AASHTO has proposed the possibility of the consolidation of transportation programs in the next transportation bill. Mr. DiPalma recommended a three phase process the regional stakeholders should implement. His recommendations arose from his own view of how the region should proceed and was not an official recommendation from FHWA.

The first phase should examine the region's expressway network. This was suggested because the region has collected the most data from these facilities. Stakeholders should create a regional forum for collaboration, create a traffic data warehouse, identify

performance measures, find the worst performers, select top multi-modal projects based on performance measures and evaluate the expected impact (benefit/cost). The impacts from the selected projects should be analyzed and the results should be published. The second phase will be focused on the arterial network. The regional arterial data is lacking and all agencies should be involved in data collection and sharing. Similar methods from the first phase will be deployed such as data collection and warehousing, performance measures, and multi-modal project selection. The third phase will be to update data and performance measures, identify future projects, show how effective previous projects were, and maintain open communication networks between stakeholders.

Chris asked if the stakeholders are interested in forming an operations group. Tom Murtha discussed the process of creating an official committee. The new group would have to be approved by the Transportation Committee, Policy Committee, and the CMAP Board. John Benda discussed the current disconnect between planners and operators in the region today. The new operations group should be focused on planning support for improved operations. Claire reminded the group that the task they set out for themselves was to consider whether a group was necessary, how such a group would be structured and what their mission would be. Operations staff has declined to participate on such groups in the past because they didn't feel like they were getting any value for the time they put in.

John Benda discussed how the Gateway system was suppose to be continually updated, but never was. He also emphasized the need for a true regional data archive that agencies use, update, and financially support. He mentioned that data for both interstate and arterials are needed for planning and operations in the region.

Chris DiPalma mentioned the FHWA series of workshops which provided a forum which linked planning and operations. Information from the workshops is available on the FHWA website.

David Zavattero expressed interest for the operations side of large events. A coordinate efficiency of all modes and agencies in the region sharing resources and plans for large special events would be very useful.

Tom Murtha stated we need to identify priorities for funding operations and planning and Chris DiPalma added the need for all communities to buy into the idea of a true urban partnership with everyone working together. They should change the focus in funding from capital to operations.

Charles Sikaras brought up the old ITS committee from CATS where operators met every quarter to discuss upcoming projects in the region. This committee was very useful for coordinating and planning construction and other projects. This group could be like the former CATS committee.

### **3.0 Agency Updates**

CMAP – Tom Murtha discussed the projects that CMAP has been working on in regards to operations and planning. CMAP is currently processing 2007 traffic data obtained

from traffic.com. Congestion scans, along with other congestion indicators such as travel time index, planning time index and congested hours are being calculated for segments making up the regions expressway network. CMAP also had an action strategy paper, Security and Emergency Management, prepared for the region by the Volpe Center. CMAP welcomes any comments on the paper from outside agencies in the region involved in security and emergency management.

City of Chicago OEMC – David Zavattero discussed a project the OEMC is working on which uses CTA buses as probes to estimate travel times on major arterials. This project could help detect the level of traffic on the arterial network and if traffic signals are operating correctly. He also mentioned the city of Chicago OEMC has a data archive with traffic light data, crashes, and other operations data available.

IDOT – Charles Sikaras reviewed the projects going on at IDOT. IDOT is in the final process of hiring 24/7 support staff for GCM. New Gateway database and conversion is currently underway. A new uninterruptable power supply for Gateway is in the works. The geography for GCM is being updated and will go all the way west to the Iowa border; Ohio and Michigan are also in the works to be added. The frequent questions and answer portion of the GCM website is also in the works to be updated.

Tom Murtha asked about the special events feed into GCM and IDOT suggested CMAP educate local municipalities about GCM special events page. This page was created to present this data but municipalities and special events venues were never pursued in an attempt to populate it.

Stephen Peters discussed the updates to IDOT communications with other agencies which included Starcom and an integrated CAD system.

ISHTA – John Benda discussed some of the projects in the works for the tollway. The tollway is adding many RTMS sensors on its network and will have greater frequency on areas that already have the sensors. The tollway is moving away from calculating travel time using toll tags and will use the sensor data in the future. Because the tags are connected to customers, there is always the issue of privacy and the sensor data will eliminate any issues with that. The second phase of the congestion reduction program is underway and HOT lanes could be added to many of the urban tollways. They are also continuing to work on the I-90 dedicated bus lane study. A 5-year ITS program was also just approved for the tollway.

RTA – Gerry Tumbali updated the group on RTA projects which included the RTA board approval of a 10 million Innovation, Coordination, and Enhancement (ICE) fund for the region. The Pace signal priority study around Harvey station is also kicking off. The RTA is in the final testing phase of a multi-modal trip planner which compares the travel across many modes and could be released as early as this December.

Dupage County – David Ziesemer updated the group on projects currently underway in DuPage County. Jacobs Engineering is working on a ramp detection system with video in DuPage County. The county recently experienced a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA) shutdown and wanted to know how other agencies contacted the media. Mr.

Benda described how the tollway sends updates to the media for emergency notices, and offered to provide Mr. Zieseemer information about the individuals on that contact list. David Zieseemer also inquired if the Gateway had accommodations for the entire region's traffic video. DuPage County would like to install more cameras but would like to make use of hardware and software the region has already invested in to support the system. They would like to avoid building an entire system if they could piggyback on existing equipment. Mr. Dillenburg stated that at this time, the Gateway mainly accommodates "snapshots" not live video. However, if the region invested in the buildout of "Gateway II" and "Gateway III" this could change. There are no current plans to make all the agencies traffic video available at one central location.

John Benda would like to see a critical review of Gateway. The original plan called for Gateway to progress and grow throughout the years, but many agencies have lost interest or gone on their own for a central location of traffic data. Mr. Benda stated that the region must build out Gateway for sharing traffic information, because right now it is happening on a very piecemeal basis under multiple agreements. This is creating unnecessary fragmentation of the information flows which will turn out to be inefficient in the future and the region will come to regret it.

The original meetings of the group charged the members to go after "low hanging fruits" at first. These are projects that are low cost and can be deployed rapidly. Once the benefit of the committee is realized with the smaller projects being implemented, larger projects will be planned.

#### **4.0 Next Steps**

For the next meeting, members of the group will hash out five major projects that they would like the region to pursue. David Zavettero would also like the new committee to have a charge or purpose. Charles Sikaras would like to see operators from the counties to be included in the group. A structure for the new committee will also be discussed. The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 9 at 1 PM.