

PAART

Plan of Action for Regional Transit Northeastern Illinois

Our region's transit system is in crisis — facing a drastic funding cliff of more than \$730 million annually by 2026.

Transit providers alone cannot solve this challenge through service cuts or fare increases. And doing nothing will have enormous costs. Big, bold solutions are needed to secure the financial viability of our region's transit system and avoid cascading social, economic, and environmental impacts.

A diverse group of leaders from across northeastern Illinois have committed to developing a Plan of Action for Regional Transit with recommendations to address these challenges.

Recommendations report on our region's transit system

The General Assembly approved Public Act 102-1028, tasking the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with developing legislative recommendations on the region's transit system, including its impacts on racial equity, climate change, and economic development. CMAP is convening representatives from the business, community, environmental, labor, and civic sectors to develop and submit this plan to the Governor and General Assembly by January 1, 2024.

Why is this a priority for our region?

Transit is the backbone for our region. In addition to providing vital transportation options for our residents and workers, it drives our economy, impacts equity and climate change, and more.

The pandemic changed where, when, and how people travel. Drastic shifts in ridership resulted in significant revenue loss and transit agencies have been forced to rely on federal assistance to operate. Those funds will be exhausted in three years. The General Assembly and transportation leaders recognize we need to focus attention on a better regional system and sustainable funding.

Households with low income and communities of color relied on transit for jobs, healthcare, and more during the pandemic.

60% of regional jobs (in sectors like transportation, manufacturing, food service, and health care) can't be done from home.

Without reliable public transit, the region will fail to meet emission reduction goals and will exacerbate a rapidly changing climate.

"We must strive to provide reliable access to public transit, and with it, access to job opportunities, health care, and other essentials. Illinois must build an equitable future for public transportation that prioritizes all of our neighbors."

- Senator Ram Villivalam (District 8), legislation sponsor

"My hope is that ten years from now, our transit system looks very different. We must reimagine our system. It needs to be a first choice for people."

- Representative Eva-Dina Delgado (District 3), legislation sponsor

The report will address these complex challenges



Financial viability and funding

The Regional Transportation Authority anticipates that northeastern Illinois' transit system could face an annual budget shortfall of \$730 million when federal relief funding ends in 2026. The structure that funds our transit system does not match today's needs. Funds are distributed based on formulas set in statute more than 40 years ago, and state law requires using fares to cover half of operating costs.

To prevent damaging service cuts that will weaken transit, CMAP will analyze and present opportunities for operational savings, new revenue sources, and funding allocation reforms to ensure the long-term viability of the regional transit system.



Rider experience

Transit is fundamentally about people. Through PART, we will identify recommendations to improve riders' experiences: integrating fares, providing better bus service, and improving the safety, security, and accessibility of the system for all users.



Community and economic development

Policies and programs that promote equitable development near transit can help close socioeconomic gaps and enhance community development and recovery (e.g., incentivizing transit-supportive land use in the context of existing transit centers).



Governance

Long-term, sustainable solutions will require strong communication and collaboration within a system that has three overlapping transit providers. Changes to governance should enhance accountability and regional decision-making (e.g., fare policy, funding allocations, and service coordination).

Principles to guide recommendations

- Focus on ensuring the transit system is financially viable in 2026 and beyond
- Identify recommendations where the state has a role in implementing solutions
- Rebuild a transit system that is stronger than it was before COVID-19
- Center the users of the system
- Be bold

The plan will leverage findings and input from the Regional Transportation Authority's strategic plan



PART timeline and milestones

| January - July | July - September | October - December | January 1, 2024 |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Launch steering committee and working groups | Refine and finalize recommendations | CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee consider report approval | Submit report to Illinois General Assembly and Governor's Office |
| Working groups discuss and develop recommendations | Engage with stakeholders and partners | | |

Learn more and get involved

Visit www.cmap.illinois.gov to learn more about PART. If you're interested in someone speaking to your group, please email communications@cmap.illinois.gov.



Throughout the project, CMAP will be sharing new information and engaging with stakeholders and the public. Use the QR code to learn more.

Contact

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Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning