



MEMORANDUM

To: MPO Policy Committee

From: CMAP Staff

Date: June 6, 2019

Re: Schedule for ON TO 2050 Update

The current comprehensive plan development schedule at CMAP overlaps the statewide election cycle (and some county offices), with the election itself falling less than a month after plan adoption. For example, GO TO 2040 was adopted in 2010, and the GO TO 2040 update was adopted in October 2014. ON TO 2050 was adopted in October 2018, and on the current schedule the update to ON TO 2050 would have to be complete by October 2022. Some stakeholders have suggested moving the plan cycle to avoid difficulties in crafting recommendations in during the most intense part of an election campaign. This memo is meant to help the MPO Policy Committee determine the degree to which the current schedule is a significant issue and to aid discussion by the committee of the pros and cons changing the schedule.

Options

Under federal law, metropolitan planning organizations serving regions that do not meet air quality standards -- like CMAP in the Chicago area -- have to update their long-range plans at least every four years. If CMAP were to change its plan cycle, it would need to do so by producing the update earlier than October 2022. (Producing an update on 2023 would be one year longer than permitted by law.) However, CMAP could do a brief technical update sooner to trigger a new long-range planning timeline. CMAP could then do a more significant update four years later and a new long-range plan four years after that. Based on these considerations, there are at least three options:

Adopt full update October 2021. This option would move the plan cycle one year ahead of the statewide election, which is the earliest time that CMAP staff would be able to carry out sufficient analysis, committee presentations, and public engagement that a full update would require. However, the schedule would be tight. One benefit is that offering state level proposals to the plan a year before an election could aid implementation, if a candidate that champions

them is elected. The risk, on the other hand, is that the opposite could occur. Furthermore, moving the update to the year before a gubernatorial election may do little to depoliticize issues given how long election seasons are. There may also be limited willingness to take up new initiatives in the year before an election, and a new administration may set aside the initiatives of the prior one, both of which could stymie early plan implementation.

Adopt technical update October 2020, then full update in October 2023. Because the next full update would be drafted in the year after the statewide election and the City of Chicago mayoral election, the plan could better reflect the initiatives of recently elected officials. And because of the longer timeframe before the full update, Census 2020 data will be available and CMAP's land use model should be ready for use, which will improve the technical basis of the plan.

Stay on current cycle. One benefit of this approach is that the plan's recommendations are fresh immediately after major election, which can help generate momentum soon after plan adoption when policy agendas are still in formation. The plan can help to shape policy. Garnering broad support for, and approving, a plan during a contentious time can show the strength of a planning process. The main downside is that the current cycle may make the plan more difficult for elected officials (or their appointees) to vote on when they are facing reelection.

Next Steps

The main reason for discussing the plan cycle so soon after ON TO 2050 adoption is because staff would potentially need to begin work on an update in the next fiscal year. This memo also addresses a persistent question from stakeholders about the effect elections have on plan development. The plan will always come soon after or soon before some election. The advantage or disadvantage of adopting a plan ahead of or after an election may depend unpredictably on the specifics of the plan and the campaign issues.

In the next few months, CMAP staff intends to hold further discussions with other stakeholders as well as soliciting the perspectives of the Federal Highway Administration and the Illinois Department of Transportation. The options considered may change as a result. Staff anticipates preparing a recommendation for the joint October Board and MPO Policy Committee meeting, which allows for input by the new CMAP executive director as well.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

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