



## Environment and Natural Resources Committee

### Minutes

Thursday, July 9, 2020

9:30 a.m.

### Via GoToMeeting:

**Members Present:** Keary Cragan – U.S. EPA, Jack Darin – Illinois Sierra Club, Martha Dooley – Village of Schaumburg, Aaron Durnbaugh – Loyola University Chicago, Elena Grossman – BRACE-Illinois at UIC, Andrew Hawkins – Forest Preserve District of Will County, Stacy Meyers – Openlands, Ted Penesis – IDNR, Jackie Forbes (for Tom Rickert) – Kane County, Deborah Stone – Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability, Sean Wiedel – Chicago Department of Transportation

**Members Absent:** Lindsay Birt – Xylem, Paul May – Northwest Suburban JAWA, Mike Warner – Lake County Stormwater Management Commission

**Staff Present:** Courtney Barnes, Anna Botsford, Brian Daly, Patrick Day, Kate Evasic, Jenna Gonzales, Jane Grover, Quinn Kasal, Catherine Kemp, Timi Koyejo, Jason Navota, Lily Neppl, Gordon Smith, Tina Fassett Smith, Emily Spangler, Ryan Thompto, Simone Weil

**Others Present:** John Baczek, Elaine Bottomley, Noah Jones, Vanessa Ruiz

### 1.0 Call to Order

Chair Jack Darin called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

### 2.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

- CMAP staff explained procedures for participation in the online meeting.
- The committee thanked former member Mike Sullivan for his service on behalf of IDOT and welcomed Vanessa Ruiz, who will be joining the committee as IDOT's representative.

### 3.0 Approval of Minutes – March 5, 2020

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting carried with all in favor.

#### 4.0 Committee member updates

Members of the committee shared their recent experiences, challenges, and emerging best practices related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and efforts to contain it—as well as renewed calls for racial justice and equity.

- Kate Evasic summarized input received from committee members over the past several months, including discussion of delays to capital projects and concern about revenue losses leading to competition in budgets for environmental priorities.
- Sean Wiedel said that Chicago has been one of the few cities to maintain full capacity of its public transit during the pandemic (other than suspensions during protest activity). As people start returning to work, the city is looking to provide options other than everyone driving to work. The city sees it as an unprecedented opportunity to get people biking and using active transportation. The city will be expanding Divvy service, looking at bike giveaways, and educating people about biking. They are also opening open streets and café streets, which could become permanent.
- Martha Dooley said Schaumburg started a program for outdoor dining in parking lots that is simple and streamlined. Restaurants are a big part of the village's economy. They are working on opening their well-supported farmers market, which attracts about 2,000 people every Friday, with COVID accommodations.
- Stacy Meyers described the challenges and opportunities facing Openlands. Some work is proceeding as usual, including the progress on land acquisition for the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and pushing the region on conservation. There have been challenges to work in the city with volunteers, making tree planting work difficult during COVID. The LTA plan they are involved with in Will County is successfully moving forward virtually. Overall they have seen good momentum on virtual participation, but find that people miss open forums where they can learn from and connect with one another in person.
- Deborah Stone said that along with other counties, Cook County is advancing a Solarize program with the Midwest Renewable Energy Association. They are curious about how widespread working from home would affect residential solar and whether people would be able to participate if their incomes are impacted. The program is going well and reached a target for kilowatts installed. Cook County is working with Seven Generations Ahead on a September GreenTown event with a focus on environmental justice and public health. Cook County has seen impacts on staff due to COVID, including staff being quarantined.

- Ted Penesis discussed the challenges to outdoor recreation programs, some of which have not been able to run. IDNR cannot run all its programs now, but hope to in the future, and would benefit from help from CMAP and the ENR Committee in raising awareness of programs to boost schoolyard habitat and pollinators in parks. They also see a need for a “Plan B” – how can youth environmental education happen online? Social justice is an IDNR priority. Ted discussed his work on a commission to end hunger, which is currently having listen sessions. Hunger is growing and will likely get worse absent continued funding for unemployment. IDNR is collecting Asian carp and distributing free samples. It could be a cheap, stable meat substitute.
- Kate Evasic noted that CMAP’s FLIP youth program has moved online for 2020.
- Keary Cragan said that the EPA is still getting grants out and working with states and community partners, including on its brownfields programs. They are expecting their budget will be a continuing resolution due to the upcoming election. State partners are worried about capacity, with Michigan putting 20% of staff on furlough. There are many items on hold with extensions granted. There are bills circulating about infrastructure, but none passed yet. They are seeing interest in directing funding through Opportunity Zones, but concern about how effectively that program is benefiting the communities that need investment. Staff cannot currently travel for inspections but are working on ways to do more remote sensing. Field labs are starting to open again.
- Aaron Durnbaugh discussed uncertainty about students’ status due to federal immigration decisions, state quarantine requirements, and shifting plans for the fall. Loyola is planning on in-person instruction in part, but may switch to entirely online instruction if necessary. There is a lot of uncertainty regarding data and ability to track sustainability performance. He is part of [STARS](#), a rating system for university sustainability, and they are not sure they can give ratings based on 2020 data. There have been federal funds for higher education, plus Loyola is using its own funds to keep students connected. The current situation has given him more time to connect with a wider range of campus units, such as the procurement office. He is trying to find more ways to engage people to avoid burnout on online video meetings.
- Elena Grossman said that the UIC School of Public Health is focused on assisting the city, county, and state public health departments. They are focusing support on contact tracing, including receiving funding from the city to assist its contact tracing efforts. In other states, staff of Building Resilience against Climate Effects (BRACE) affiliates have been reassigned to help

with COVID response. Her office sees co-benefits of addressing both climate and COVID in the recovery.

- Jackie Forbes said that the Kane County Division of Transportation hasn't slowed down during the pandemic, with projects continuing to move forward. As of July, staff is again working out of their office, but in staggered shifts. They are seeing big changes in motor fuel tax revenues. The fact that MFT rate doubled last summer helps – they are basically at the level they were at before last year, so it's challenging but not unprecedented. They should have enough that they can meet match requirements, but some fully locally funded projects may be put on hold.
- Jack Darin said that the Sierra Club's office is closed through the end of August. Outings and engagement activities, which are usually their bread and butter, are cancelled. People have been more responsive to calls and online engagement than usual, which has been helpful. Project work has been either suspended (if unrelated to current crises) or stepped up (if more urgent). The Clean Energy Jobs Act pushes for jobs in Black and Brown communities and feels timely, so they have been encouraged by the positive movement they are seeing on the act. They have been stepping up their advocacy related to utilities and shut-offs. Since the killing of George Floyd, they see new urgency to work to center on racial justice and environmental justice, included respiratory health and other important topics.

## 5.0 COVID-19 Regional Recovery Survey

CMAP, in partnership with the City of Chicago's COVID-19 Recovery Taskforce, Cook County, DuPage County, and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, has conducted a survey of the region's municipalities on their needs, concerns, and anticipated COVID-19 impacts and expenditures. Staff discussed the survey and initial findings.

- Capital projects. Martha Dooley said Schaumburg has been more inclined to move forward with projects with federal (or other) funding that they don't want to risk losing. They have delayed village-funded projects to prioritize projects with a match. Jackie Forbes explained that some Kane County communities have paused their participation in the new bike share program. Each community makes their own decision on whether to participate, and they are expecting four to move forward instead of the 10-15 they were initially hoping for. Stacy Meyers said that because regulatory standards on water quality and discharges are still in full force, capital projects and commitments to best management practices are still moving forward. Aaron Durnbaugh discussed the impact on utility-scale renewable energy; with financiers getting more conservative, they are wary of risk due to COVID and policy uncertainty, which poses a barrier to renewable generation development. Patrick Day discussed how fully locally

funded projects seem to be the first candidates for delays or cancellations and asked whether another impact may be communities eliminating elements of locally funded projects seen as less essential, such as green infrastructure or active transportation. Martha Dooley said she has not seen this happening.

- Staffing. Martha Dooley noted the significant impact on staffing. Under the state's Phase Four guidelines, Schaumburg's department for cultural programming and the Prairie Arts Center had little they could do, leading to layoffs. There has also been a hiring freeze, canceled raises, and no funding for overtime. Their department heads are working with the administration to assess how staffing limits affect their ability to meet unchanged key performance indicators. In response to a question about how CMAP has been impacted, Jesse Elam explained that staff has been working remotely but that staffing levels are unaffected.

## 6.0 Climate Initiatives

The CMAP Board approved the FY21 agency work plan at its June meeting. CMAP staff presented the agency's FY21 Climate Focus Area work plan projects. CMAP staff also engaged committee members in a brief discussion about the potential for a low-carbon economic recovery effort.

- Climate topics to address. Stacy Meyers said it is tremendous that CMAP is continuing this work that they have been doing for a long time. She is glad to see transportation mitigation included and will be curious to see how freight and its compatibility with agriculture and other industries is addressed. She also said she would like to see how nature-based strategies and water quality concerns are included, as well as how CMAP is working at the state and federal policy levels on topics like equity, integrating national climate assessments, conservation jobs corps, and standards for gray and green infrastructure. Jason Navota responded that The Nature Conservancy has done a lot of work on the region's green infrastructure as a means of carbon sequestration and that CMAP will consider strategies for landscape-scale sequestration. He noted that CMAP is mindful of the need to address equity in climate work and is working with partners in the advocacy world who can carry that work further. Jason also suggested that members look at CMAP's recent [blog posts](#) on COVID response and recovery, which talk about the impacts of the pandemic and how they intersect with other regional priorities like flooding, air quality, and other topics.
- Peer MPOs. Aaron Durnbaugh asked what organizations CMAP looks to as peer comparisons when researching MPO best practices. Jason Navota responded that it depends on the topic. CMAP staff is just starting new research into what other MPOs are

doing on climate and will look to staff with past work experience at MPOs in other regions such as northern California and Seattle. He also welcomed suggestions of MPOs and other regional organizations from committee members. He discussed the [Transportation and Climate Initiative](#), a consortium of New England states working on regional carbon pricing and reinvestment. Aaron Durnbaugh discussed the Great Plains Institute and the work of Doug Scott, an expert on the potential for carbon markets in the Midwest. Jack Darin noted that Scott is now working with the Governor of Illinois.

- Low-carbon recovery. Aaron Durnbaugh discussed the Illinois Green Alliance's Project Drawdown. He suggested that green building is an area to look for partnerships because there is already good work happening. Jack Darin said that while there is promising progress on the electric sector, more work is needed on building electrification. He sees an opportunity to connect with the benefits for cost and rates, and sees it as an emerging priority although without a clear role for CMAP. Aaron Durnbaugh noted that there are national renewable thermal groups emerging, but less activity in our region. Jason Navota noted that many people agree the best approach is to seek to direct funds through existing programs and structures rather than creating new ones.
- Jobs and recovery. Jason Navota asked about the potential for job creation through a low-carbon recovery. Jack Darin said the Sierra Club still sees it as a priority and that a report will be released shortly on clean energy jobs in the Midwest. Stacy Meyers discussed the Chicago Region Trees Initiative's work to grow jobs planting and maintaining the region's tree canopy. Tying it to climate could be valuable. Openlands' Daniella Pereira is envisioning a "green force" that could be a more decentralized approach similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps but less dependent on federal funding, especially if connected to the Clean Energy Jobs Act.
- Transportation. Aaron Durnbaugh said he sees a path toward electrifying buildings, but wonders whether the shift for passenger vehicles will depend on consumer preference and take longer. He asked whether there is a lever to advance the shift toward electric medium and heavy vehicles and whether there are models from other regions. He noted the importance of that shift not just for climate, but for local air quality as well. Jason Navota mentioned a recent Transportation Research Board webinar on levers for electric vehicles, which cited cost parity as the biggest with range being important as well. Aaron Durnbaugh replied that state incentives could help with cost parity. Jack Darin said the Clean Energy Jobs Act envisions more of a utility/grid model for change. Jason Navota discussed truck electrification, noting

that electric semi trucks are gaining interest due to their lower operation and maintenance costs. He also noted that there had been progress on high-efficiency diesel rail engines, but that changes in federal trade policy has disrupted the market. Aaron Durnbaugh said the new Chicago electric vehicle ordinance should lead to more chargers, and that the LTA program should push for similar ordinances in the region. Martha Dooley brought up the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' [EV Ready](#) program. She said Schaumburg adopted a new ordinance but has seen little implementation. Schaumburg requires new single-family residential construction to be ready for EV charging capacity. Jason Navota said that Illinois received money in the Volkswagen settlement for EV infrastructure but that it is moving slowly.

## **7.0 Other Business**

### **8.0 Public Comment**

This is an opportunity for comments from members of the audience. The amount of time available to speak will be at the chair's discretion. It should be noted that the exact time for the public comment period will immediately follow the last item on the agenda.

- Aaron Durnbaugh said that Loyola University is hosting a [webinar](#) series on sustainability trends in the region on Tuesdays beginning July 14<sup>th</sup>. Topics will include climate, transportation, buildings, and equity. Erin Aleman will be featured in the transportation webinar.

### **9.0 Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

### **10.0 Adjournment**

The motion to adjourn, moved by Martha Dooley and seconded by Deborah Stone, carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brian Daly and Kate Evasic  
July 9, 2020