Rising into resiliency in northeastern Illinois
A letter from the executive director and the board chair

Last year in our annual report, we noted the COVID-19 pandemic has been a defining challenge. We’re at a moment in time when business as usual has to change. The region needs to make decisions and investments that increase wealth and opportunity for all people. That’s why in 2021 the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) embraced a bold new vision to create an inclusive and thriving region.

As we enter the third year of a global pandemic, CMAP is more focused than ever on building a more resilient future with equity as a priority. We have made great progress toward achieving the goals of ON TO 2050, the long-range plan for northeastern Illinois. Our core focus areas remain transportation, climate change, and a competitive regional economy.

In this annual report, you’ll see examples of how our staff leads with excellence in how they support people and places across northeastern Illinois. CMAP created a technical guide to help local governments improve how they use development incentives. We worked with five communities to create a plan for a walking and bicycling network along the Lake Michigan shoreline. And through our Capacity Building Program, we embedded staff planners in two communities and helped them receive more than $3.75 million in grants.

Our strong relationships allowed us to foster collaboration and drive innovation throughout fiscal year 2021, including convening people around increasing mobility, improving traffic safety, and strengthening the region’s economy. Our progress would not be possible without significant contributions from local leaders and community partners like you.

In 2022, we are excited to pursue equity through more inclusive public engagement and improve accessibility for those facing mobility barriers through our work to support the Americans with Disabilities Act locally. There are opportunities for advancing inclusive growth in all parts of the region.

Long-range plans like ON TO 2050 set forth a roadmap for a region that guides every aspect of what we do. Where others see challenges, we see opportunities to seize. And with your partnership, we can make a difference in the lives of our 8.6 million residents.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment over the past year. We look forward to our work together in the months and years ahead.

Erin Aleman
Executive Director

Gerald Bennett
Board Chair
2021 in review

As northeastern Illinois’ federally mandated metropolitan planning organization, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) serves 284 communities and 8.6 million residents within the seven counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. We work with our partners on implementing ON TO 2050, the long-range plan for an inclusive and thriving region.

In 2021, while continuing to adapt to challenges from the pandemic, we provided guidance on transportation, equity, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues. To build more resilient systems, we led an economic recovery task force comprised of key regional leaders and are convening stakeholders to address mobility recovery needs in our region as a result of the pandemic. Overall, we made great progress toward achieving the goals of ON TO 2050.

Advancing equity

We recommitted to critical focus areas, including work to ensure an equitable transportation system and apply an equity lens to our engagement practices.

- CMAP released a new report, *Improving equity in transportation fees, fines, and fares*, that reveals how transportation costs burden residents with low income.

- We began a multi-year project to make our public engagement more equitable and inclusive with nonprofit and grassroots leaders representative of the region’s diversity.

Providing critical data and analysis

We continued to supply communities throughout northeastern Illinois with data and information not found anywhere else.

- CMAP published *Improving local development incentives*, a guide for local governments that identifies strategies and practices to balance community needs with long-term economic goals.

- A CMAP analysis found that if 25% of pre-pandemic transit trips are replaced by car trips in the region, drivers would spend an extra 193,000 hours on the road each weekday. That could cost the region more than $1.2 billion in lost productivity.

Supporting communities locally

Despite another unusual year, CMAP moved forward with local planning projects and helped communities develop capacity.

- Through our technical assistance program, we worked with communities across northeastern Illinois, while awarding 25 new planning projects to those with the greatest needs.

- With support from the MacArthur Foundation, CMAP helped Harvey and University Park apply for over $73 million in potential funding for transportation improvements.

Driving innovation

As planners, we see opportunity where others may only see challenges. We tried new approaches to better support our partners and the region’s residents.

- CMAP conducted our first-ever public opinion survey to gauge residents’ attitudes toward key quality-of-life issues and public support for policy recommendations.

- We also launched a new awards program to honor communities and organizations for their work to make northeastern Illinois a better place to live, work, and do business.
At CMAP, you have shown when regions work together, you can tackle anything. You can make cleaner investments in transit, prioritize equity in how you’re programming federal funds, and make roads safer and more accessible for all users.

Carlos Monje
Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy for the U.S. Department of Transportation

CMAP has the unique ability to gather partners from across the region to foster collaboration that benefits our communities. Thanks to CMAP’s leadership, we were able to stretch resources and harness our collective expertise to really make a difference in the region’s economic recovery.

Beth Marchetti
Executive Director, DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau
Regional snapshot

- 8.6 million residents
- 284 communities
- 7 counties
- 1 regional plan
- 3rd largest metropolitan area in the U.S.
- 4,071 square miles
- 1,338 square miles of agricultural land
- 527 square miles of open space
- $3 trillion in goods moves in and out of the region each year
- 3,123,330 total households
- 3,963,942 total commuters
- 14% of commuters use transit
- 60% of workers commute across county lines
CMAP helps envision redevelopment in McHenry County

Working with officials in Algonquin and Cary, planners with CMAP provided technical support to envision a new future for a former gravel mine that spans hundreds of acres in McHenry County.

CMAP worked with both villages to establish a long-term plan for the area along Route 31, crafting a vision that could transform the old industrial site into a recreational, residential, and commercial destination.

The plan, which both villages approved in May 2021, also creates stronger transportation connections through pedestrian and bicycle improvements that will make it easier for residents in neighboring communities to use the area.

“CMAP senior planner Kate Evasic told The Daily Herald in February.

CMAP socioeconomic forecast helps communities plan ahead

When Kane County officials adopted a new long-range transportation plan earlier this year, they relied on data from CMAP to make it happen. Socioeconomic projections from ON TO 2050, the region’s comprehensive plan, helped forecast population increases and informed the county’s plan for future infrastructure improvements.

Kane County is the latest example of a local government in northeastern Illinois using CMAP’s forecast to plan ahead. Counties and other public agencies have used projections from CMAP for local transportation planning, as well as water demand and facility planning. CMAP will update the socioeconomic forecast with the latest data on population trends as part of the agency’s overall update to ON TO 2050 in fall 2022.
Helping Oswego plan for the future

Through our technical assistance program, CMAP began working with officials in Oswego this year to modernize the village’s zoning codes and implement a comprehensive plan that dates to 2015.

Planners with CMAP have been gathering feedback from the public and local stakeholders as the agency works with Oswego to align the village’s development regulations, land-use practices, and long-term vision. Staff members even celebrated holidays during the Oswego Christmas Walk earlier this winter to talk with residents directly about the unified development ordinance project. The public still can share their ideas before final approval by visiting the project’s engagement page.

The planning project exemplifies the essential purpose of CMAP’s technical assistance program. Since 2012, the program has assisted communities — often with limited capacity and resources — in developing more than 200 planning projects. By providing communities in northeastern Illinois with additional resources and expertise, CMAP is helping them turn their long-term visions into reality and ensure a more prosperous future for the region.

Building local government capacity in Calumet Park and Sauk Village

CMAP’s Capacity Building Program offers training, technical assistance, and support to local governments in northeastern Illinois. The program launched in early 2019 with the embedded staff planner program, which assigned CMAP planners to work directly with the villages of Calumet Park and Sauk Village.

Two years later, their efforts led to the villages receiving more than $3.75 million in grants, including a $1.5 million Rebuild Illinois grant for Calumet Park. The embedded staff planners also worked on a range of projects, including revitalizing a major business corridor in Calumet Park and planning for a new 53-home “smart neighborhood” subdivision in Sauk Village.

Community-driven plan guides development in McKinley Park

A neighborhood plan for Chicago’s McKinley Park, adopted in February 2021, has already helped guide decision-making and development in ways that align with community priorities.

The plan — the first of its kind for the neighborhood — was developed with technical support from CMAP planners. CMAP worked with the McKinley Park Development Council and received extensive input from residents, business and property owners, and community leaders.

This fall, the McKinley Park Development Council was awarded a grant to support equitable development around the 35th/Archer Orange Line station, implementing a recommendation of the plan.

“It has been a blessing. For the very first time, I think the village really got — I got — the opportunity to realize how we needed to be doing business.”
Ronald Denson
Calumet Park Mayor

“The plan encompasses a wide variety of issues that the neighborhood is currently facing and provides great comprehensive goals that we as a community can strive for.”
John Belcik
President of the McKinley Park Development Council
Collaboration paves way for walking, bicycling routes throughout northern lakeshore

Five communities in Lake County joined together to create a plan for a robust walking and bicycling network along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The Northern Lakeshore Trail Connectivity Plan, released in late 2020, was created through CMAP’s technical assistance program. The plan calls for more than 100 miles of walking and bicycling trails across the communities of Beach Park, North Chicago, Waukegan, Winthrop Harbor, and Zion. The trails will offer residents a safe, healthy, and affordable transportation option, as well as allow better access to the area’s natural resources.

Less than six months after the plan was adopted, the five communities had already forged ahead on implementation. For example, Winthrop Harbor, Beach Park, and North Chicago adopted complete streets policies, better positioning the municipalities to take advantage of transportation funding opportunities.

The plan was also honored by the American Planning Association – Illinois Chapter with the 2021 Healthy and Active Community Award.

Guiding land use and addressing local needs in DuPage County

A new plan will help five communities along Route 83 plan for the future of unincorporated areas. The DuPage County Route 83 Corridor Plan, adopted in 2021, was supported by CMAP’s technical assistance program.

Route 83 is one of the primary arterial roadways connecting communities in DuPage County and across the region. Areas along the corridor include business districts, employment centers, open spaces, and residential neighborhoods. Much of the corridor is developed in areas that are currently unincorporated. While the plan focuses on future land use of these unincorporated properties, it also addresses related issues, including transportation and economic development.

The planning process included extensive engagement with residents and officials in neighboring communities Addison, Bensenville, Elmhurst, Villa Park, and Wood Dale.

Balancing truck traffic and land use in Will County

The Moving Will County study was conducted as an implementation activity of the 2017 Will County Community Friendly Freight Mobility Plan. The study concluded this year, wrapping up an extensive planning project to look at truck traffic in a county experiencing significant industrial growth.

The project, which began in fall 2019, involved about a dozen communities, as well as local transportation departments and area forest preserves. The study focused on strategies to improve freight movement and ensure safer conditions for residents. In particular, the project provides local officials with tools and resources to designate local trucking routes, identify infrastructure improvements, and guide future land-use decisions.

By streamlining truck routes and balancing development needs, the project provides solutions that can spur economic activity and preserve natural areas critical to a strong quality of life in Will County.
CMAP planners were flexible, creative, and thoughtful. They really delve deep — researching, getting to know the community, and helping us form a project that really fits our needs.

Zoe Heidorn
Community Development Administrator
Morton Grove

Having a CMAP embedded staff planner helped me to start thinking bigger about things we can do in the community. Not just one home at a time, but one block at a time.

Antonio Cooper
Community Development Director
Sauk Village
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Board

Executive committee
- Gerald Bennett, chair
- Carolyn Schofield, vice chair
- Anne Sheahan, vice chair
- John Noak, at-large member
- Diane Williams, at-large member
- Paul Goodrich, at-large member

City of Chicago appointments
- Frank Beal, Civic Consulting Alliance, senior executive
- Paul Goodrich, City of Chicago, chief operating officer
- Nina Idemudia, Chicago Department of Planning and Development, assistant commissioner
- Stefan Schaffer, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), city strategist, American Cities Climate Challenge
- Anne Sheahan, HNTB Corporation, vice president

Cook County appointments
- Gerald Bennett, Palos Hills mayor (southwest Cook)
- Karen Darch, Barrington village president (northwest Cook)
- Richard Reinbold, Richton Park village president (south Cook)
- Matthew Walsh, former Indian Head Park trustee (west Cook)
- Diane Williams, former Flossmoor village trustee (suburban Cook)

Collar County appointments
- Matthew Brolley, Montgomery village president (Kane/Kendall)
- James Healy, former DuPage County Board member (DuPage)
- John Noak, Romeoville mayor (Will)
- Nancy Rotering, Highland Park mayor (Lake)
- Carolyn Schofield, McHenry County Board member (McHenry)

Non-voting members
- Abolfazl (Kouros) Mohammadian, PhD, University of Illinois at Chicago, professor and department head, Civil, Materials, and Environmental
- Leanne Redden, Regional Transportation Authority, executive director

MPO Policy Committee

Municipal government
- Gia Biagi, Chicago Department of Transportation commissioner
- Jeffery Schielke, Batavia mayor, Council of Mayors

Counties
- Jenifer (Sis) Killen, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways superintendent
- Dan Cronin, DuPage County board chair
- Corinne Pierog, Kane County board chair
- Scott Gryder, Kendall County board chair
- Sandy Hart, Lake County board chair
- Mike Buehler, McHenry County board chair
- Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, Will County executive

Federal agencies
- Arlene Kocher, Federal Highways Administration division (FHWA-IL) administrator
- Kelley Brookins, Federal Transit Administration regional administrator (Region 5)

Regional agencies
- Frank Beal, Civic Consulting Alliance, senior executive
- Matt Brolley, Montgomery village president
- Leanne Redden, Regional Transportation Authority executive director**

Operating agencies
- Dorval Carter, Chicago Transit Authority president
- Liisa Stark, Union Pacific Railroad, assistant vice president, public-affairs-northern region
- Omer Osman, Illinois Department of Transportation secretary*
- José Alvarez, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority executive director
- Jim Derwinski, METRA executive director/CEO
- Richard Kwanseski, Pace Suburban Bus chairman

* Chair **Vice Chair
Operational budget

Revenues

- Federal
- State
- Local contributions
- Foundations, non-public agencies
- Other public agencies
- Product sales, fees, and interest
- Reimbursements

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Expenditures

- Personnel
- Contractual services
- Occupancy expenses
- Commodities
- Operating expenses
- Capital outlay

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region’s comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See cmap.illinois.gov for more information.