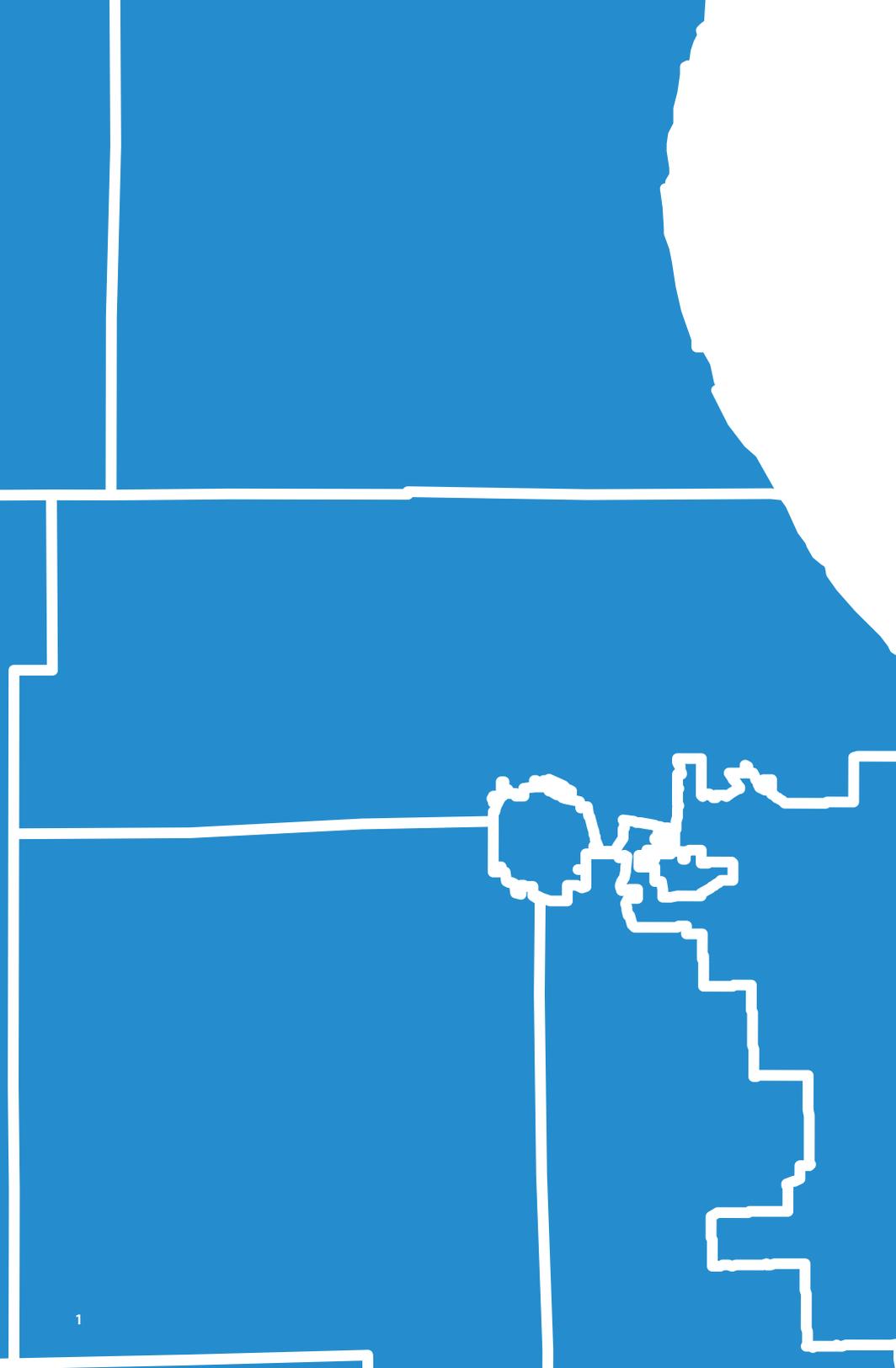




2021  
**Federal  
Legislative  
Agenda**





# Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a light on the strengths of northeastern Illinois but also has exposed underlying problems that have long existed. Through bold planning and regional leadership, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is committed to ensuring the region's 284 communities are stronger following the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, CMAP, which was created in 2005 (70 ILCS 1707), serves as the region's federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and guides comprehensive planning throughout northeastern Illinois.

The region is home to one of the world's greatest economic centers, with abundant natural resources and a vast multimodal transportation system. To capitalize on these vital assets, ON TO 2050, CMAP's long-range plan for the region, recommends policy changes and legislative actions that can strengthen the region's communities in the decades to come. Framed by three principles — **inclusive growth, resilience, and prioritized investment** — ON TO 2050 builds on past planning efforts to maintain metropolitan Chicago's competitive advantages, address persistent challenges, and achieve regional prosperity. The plan was adopted in 2018.

The 2021 Federal Agenda first presents CMAP's COVID-19 stimulus and relief principles, followed by the agency's policy positions on federal transportation, climate, housing, and regional economic development.

# One Regional Voice: **COVID-19 Recovery Principles**

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, CMAP has responded by working with implementers and civic partners to address the impact of COVID-19 on northeastern Illinois. The region calls on policymakers to ensure the following guiding principles are prioritized as Congress continues to consider relief and stimulus packages that can help the region recover stronger post-COVID.

## **Provide fiscal relief across all levels of government with increased assistance for those most severely impacted**

The revenue impacts of the pandemic will be felt by states, counties, and localities; all levels of government should be eligible to receive relief funds. Federally funded transportation projects are matched with both local and state funds, and all entities providing non-federal match need assistance to continue delivering the federal highway program. Metropolitan areas will be impacted the most by the current pandemic. Cities and communities that were already disadvantaged and disconnected will feel the impacts more acutely than others. Focused resources in these areas will be necessary to address communities' needs and rebuild the economy.

## **Continue and increase support for transit**

The ridership and revenue impacts facing transit agencies are severe. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act provided vital support for transit agencies; importantly, funds were flexible and 100 percent federal. As medium- and long-term impacts become known, additional support will be necessary to keep these vital services operational and in a state of good repair.

## **Broaden eligibility for relief funds**

The federal role in many programs is focused on capital investment, which is particularly true for transportation. However, funds should have broad eligibility, including for operating budgets and debt service. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic has created uncertainty regarding revenues, and funds originally intended to match federal transportation funds may need to be reprioritized. Flexible federal support is needed.

## **Infrastructure stimulus investments should be both timely and strategic**

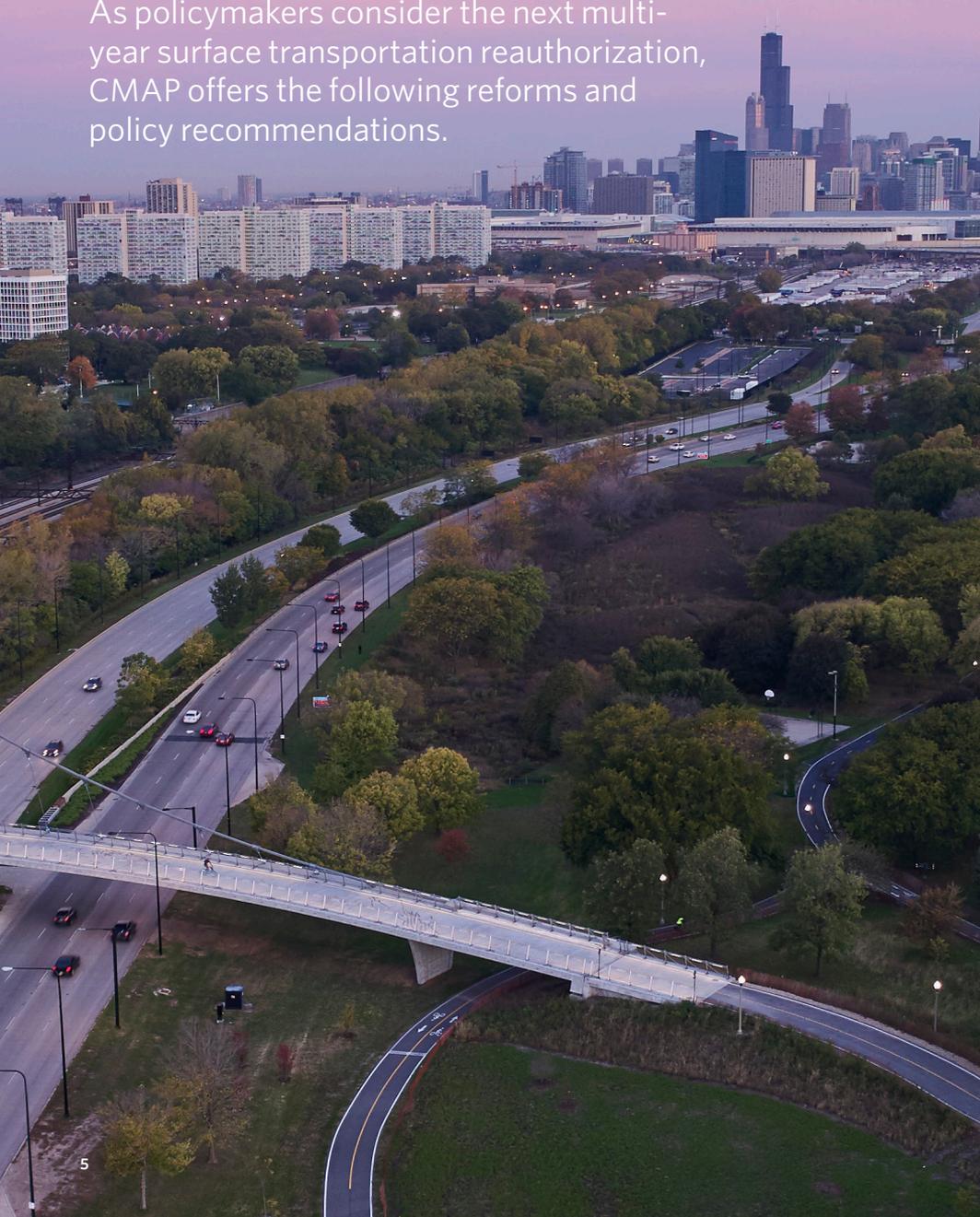
For stimulus funds beyond those needed for immediate relief, there is a potential conflict between making the right investments and making investments quickly enough to have an economic impact. A focus on reconstruction and maintenance of existing infrastructure can provide the needed balance between timeliness and long-term benefit. Stimulus funds should go to projects that provide the greatest benefit using performance-driven criteria that lead to transparent, outcome-based, mode-neutral decisions. Transportation, housing, environment, and economic development programs must be aligned to leverage the greatest economic recovery benefit.

## **Stimulus investments should support resilience and mitigate a changing climate**

Stimulus funds should support communities' ability to prepare for and recover from acute shocks and chronic stresses. This requires making infrastructure, natural systems, and social structures more durable in order to rebound quickly from climate change occurrences, such as stronger storms and more frequent flooding. In addition, funds should focus on programs and activities to mitigate climate change in order to reduce reoccurrences of disruptions and disasters impacting public health and safety.

# Surface transportation authorization recommendations

As policymakers consider the next multi-year surface transportation reauthorization, CMAP offers the following reforms and policy recommendations.



## Ensure sustainable, adequate revenue sources for multimodal transportation investments

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inadequacy of transportation revenue sources. The federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF) has required non-transportation revenue infusions of \$153.5 billion since 2008. A primary revenue source for the HTF, the federal motor fuel tax has not been raised since 1993 and remains at a rate of 18.3 cents per gallon on gasoline purchases and 24.3 cents per gallon on diesel purchases. Absent any new or increased revenue sources, the fund is expected to face cumulative revenue shortfalls of \$189 billion by 2030.

As more commuters turn to driving over transit due to the pandemic, CMAP analysis indicates gridlock and longer travel times may cost northeastern Illinois \$1.2 billion annually in productivity costs. Innovative approaches to funding the system are needed improve safety and mitigate congestion. Changes in travel behavior and increased vehicle fuel efficiency will require replacing the HTF's motor fuel tax with a per-mile road usage charge in the long term. Looming reconstruction needs on the interstate and expressway system in northeastern Illinois will require substantial funds, but current federal law limits the ability to toll existing interstate capacity. New operational approaches that can limit congestion, such as managed lanes, also require the ability to price roadway use.

### CMAP supports:

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Increasing the federal motor fuel tax rate, indexing it with inflation rates, and replacing it with a per-mile road usage charge in the long term.

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Continuing funding for per-mile-road-usage-charge pilot programs, expanding pilot program eligibility to MPOs, and developing a streamlined national solution that allows each state to collect road-usage charges from out-of-state drivers and long-distance commercial vehicles.

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Offering greater flexibility for states and regions to impose user fees by removing federal restrictions on tolling the interstate system.

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Removing restrictions on commercial activity on the Interstate system, e.g., the provision of power to electric vehicles and parking for commercial vehicles.

## Strengthen the transit system

Even before the pandemic, the public transportation system in northeastern Illinois required billions in new funding just to reach a state of good repair. Federal funding reforms are needed to level the playing field between transit and highways for large expansion projects. For example, the New Starts grant program for transit infrastructure improvements requires a substantial local match and the completion of significant engineering work before officials start considering federal funding. In contrast, a large highway expansion project is subject to a lower local match and afforded more flexibility with using federal funds for engineering work. Transit, commuter rail, and intercity passenger rail play an important role in providing affordable transportation options, reducing emissions, and limiting congestion. To ensure a level playing field, federal agencies also should prioritize transit-oriented development through their transportation, housing, and economic development investments.

### CMAP supports:

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Increasing funding for transit from the Highway Trust Fund and other transportation system user fees.

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Revising federal requirements to eliminate the funding disparity between transit projects and highway projects.

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Aligning transportation, housing, and economic development programs to support equitable transit-oriented development.

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Providing more resources for maintaining and modernizing transit systems, transit-oriented development, increased transit capacity, and state-supported intercity passenger rail routes.



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## Reform funding to achieve national performance goals

Performance-based approaches ensure that limited resources are allocated based on the ability to address established goals and targets, rather than relying on historic percentages, arbitrarily derived formulas, or earmarking. CMAP remains committed to transparent, data-driven approaches to programming transportation funds. The highway program's existing national goals — along with requirements for performance measurement data reporting by states and MPOs — have set the stage for funding reform. CMAP analysis shows that lower income people of color have longer-than-average commutes and are often traveling to jobs in places or at times with limited bus or rail service. The existing goals should be amended to prioritize people and their connections to jobs and services. Programmatic changes may be necessary to ensure transit projects are eligible for funding if they can best address the goal.

### CMAP supports:

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Applying performance-based funding principles across programs.

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Amending the national highway goals in 23 U.S.C. § 150 to add a measure for how well the transportation system connects people to jobs and services.

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Funding apportionments based on national goals through a mix of formulaic and discretionary programs while ensuring a certain level of year-over-year continuity for each state or region to enable long-term planning.

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Continuing discretionary programs, such as Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) and Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA), with reforms that increase transparency and address multimodal needs.

## **Provide a greater role for metropolitan planning organizations to program funds**

Increasing the authority of MPOs that program federal resources allows a stronger connection between regional plans and investment decisions. Under federal law, MPOs already are required to measure and set targets for transportation safety as well as system condition and performance, but increased authority would allow them to better address those issues. CMAP and its partners have a track record of successfully distributing federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) dollars regionally through the Surface Transportation Program Shared Fund. Through this program, CMAP evaluates proposed projects based on regionally established performance criteria, including the degree to which they benefit low-income and minority populations.

### **CMAP supports:**

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Increasing the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) suballocation to urban areas and stronger requirements for MPO involvement in the programming of these funds.

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Expanding MPO programming authority for a portion of transit and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds, reflecting new responsibilities for transit asset management and achieving new Federal Highway Administration Safety Performance Management goals.

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Establishing a pilot program that gives project selection authority to large MPOs for a portion of various funding programs.



## **Reduce transportation emissions and adapt to climate change**

As the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, the transportation sector has many opportunities to contribute to reductions. Climate change already is causing stronger and more frequent weather events that create operational and safety problems throughout the transportation system. Reducing the share of trips made by single-occupancy vehicles and transitioning to electric vehicles would help lower emissions. Similarly, CMAP administers Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for the Chicago region. A number of CMAQ projects require Buy America waivers, which have not been issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) since early 2018. These projects would replace older, less-efficient engines and vehicles with cleaner burning alternatives.

### **CMAP supports:**

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Funding for MPOs to measure, establish targets for, and set goals around greenhouse gas emissions reductions from the transportation sector.

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Incentivizing non-single occupancy vehicle travel and improve services to provide these opportunities.

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Increasing funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and replacing public vehicle fleets with electric or other low-emission propulsion systems.

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Expanding eligibility and additional funding within the STBG program for projects that enable existing surface transportation assets to withstand weather events or natural disasters.

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Issuing of Buy America waivers by FHWA for vehicle replacements and engine retrofits that substantially improve air quality.

## **Harness the benefits of emerging technologies to improve mobility and safety**

The ways people travel are changing, enabled by new technology and mobility options like ride hailing and shared bikes, scooters, and cars. Transit systems can serve as the backbone for potential new mobility services, but regulations and funding may need to be adjusted to maximize benefits. Similarly, rapid developments in automated vehicle (AV) technology highlight the need for additional policy development at all levels of government.

Federal leadership is needed to ensure safety and require that relevant data is collected and made available. Automated safety enforcement continues to be an effective tool in reducing traffic fatalities and should be used more widely in a way that ensures transparency, accountability, privacy, and equity.

### **CMAP supports:**

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Making space for innovation in emerging technology and mobility services — with transit as the backbone — through funding, regulations, and pilot programs.

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Establishing processes to ensure transparent public access to AV safety data.

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Convening stakeholders — including MPOs — to develop AV technology standards that enable local and regional jurisdictions to conduct long-range infrastructure planning.

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Empowering local governments to enact AV policies consistent with land use and mobility goals.

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Repealing funding prohibitions for automated traffic safety enforcement in National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Section 402 funds and Highway Safety Improvement Program funds.

## Improve freight programs while addressing community impacts

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act established two highway and freight programs that have provided funds for nationally significant freight projects in northeastern Illinois, including the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project. Program funding, however, is largely confined to highway, road, and bridge projects, even though freight movement is often multimodal. A dedicated funding source that has a user-fee nexus to the freight system would make these programs more sustainable. Released in September 2020, the National Strategic Freight Plan provided overarching goals and objectives for the national freight system, but lacked a comprehensive needs assessment. National freight policy would benefit from a comprehensive analysis of our system's freight infrastructure investment needs and strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of freight on local communities.

### CMAP supports:

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Continuing and expanding formulaic and discretionary freight programs with reforms to eliminate caps on multimodal projects.

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Implementing a federal fee on the cost of all shipments, regardless of mode, with revenues disbursed to states based on their freight needs.

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Developing a comprehensive assessment of freight system needs with high quality data sets.

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Making eligibility explicit for projects that mitigate the negative impacts of freight, such as reducing particulate pollution and reducing motorist delay at highway-rail grade crossings, even through grade separations if necessary.

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Collecting nationwide, representative grade crossing blockage data by the Federal Railroad Administration from the railroad industry and other available sources.



# Address climate change and protect water and natural resources

Climate change already is significantly affecting the region with more frequent and severe storms, flooding, extreme temperatures, and drought. In northeastern Illinois, CMAP analysis has found that populations disconnected from economic progress are more likely to reside in flood-prone areas. Climate change impacts, specifically the projected increase in the frequency and severity of extreme storms will continue to reinforce inequities without substantial action to focus investments in areas experiencing these disproportionate impacts. ON TO 2050 recommends intensifying climate mitigation efforts and reducing greenhouse gases, while preparing the region for the severe environmental shocks and chronic stresses of climate change. The federal government also plays a key role by administering flood insurance programs, protecting the Great Lakes, supporting open space preservation, and providing funding for states and local governments to maintain water infrastructure.

## CMAP supports:

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Renewing the U.S. commitment to the Paris Agreement, expanding renewable energy and efficiency programs, exploring market mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and transitioning to renewable resources.

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Bolstering climate resilience by investing in a more flexible and decentralized electric grid through programs like the Smart Grid Investment Grant Program.

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Modernizing policies related to flooding, including making risk information available for property sales and reforming the National Flood Insurance Program to develop long-term solutions for properties that suffer repetitive losses or are at high risk of flooding.

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Increasing investments that maintain the health, recreational use, and economic benefits of Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes.

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Directing federal investment toward open space preservation.

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Expanding grant or low-interest loan funding through established programs that generate jobs by maintaining and upgrading water and wastewater infrastructure. Examples include the federal-state Clean Water State Revolving Fund partnership, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, Community Development Block Grants, and USDA Rural Water programs.



# Improve economic and workforce growth to advance equity

Metropolitan economies drive national productivity, knowledge creation, and innovation. To ensure the United States remains competitive post-COVID, federal policies and programs should be targeted to leverage these economic assets and address their challenges. The federal government should continue, through agencies like the Economic Development Administration (EDA), to support regional economies by providing increased funding for regional innovation and cluster-focused initiatives. The EDA should also consider ways to ensure federal investments are comprehensive and strategic through increased coordination with regional transportation planning processes and state, county, and local economic plans.

Metropolitan Chicago's diverse economy is the nation's third largest, but its growth lags behind peer regions. To compete globally, our region must bridge the gaps between adults seeking to build a career and employers looking to build their workforce. The federal government can strengthen and expand strategies that link employers, educators, and workforce development entities to support upward economic mobility.

## CMAP supports:

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Increasing funding for re-employment, skilling, and reskilling programs authorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that further the development, implementation, and expansion of career pathway programs.

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Ensuring federal investments are comprehensive and strategic through increased coordination with regional transportation planning processes and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS).

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Expanding federal funding and support for programs that have catalyzed collaborative programs in the Chicago region, including the Chicago Metro Metal Consortium, the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center, and MxD (Manufacturing x Digital).

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Ensuring U.S. Department of Education funding for Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems to help education and training providers make efficient, informed, data-driven decisions about the region's workforce needs.

# Promote housing options, target assistance to disinvested areas, and coordinate planning across disciplines

Federal housing rules often can discourage the development of multifamily housing and mixed-use facilities, but these housing options often provide more choice and promote compact development. More can also be done to target assistance to persistently disinvested areas while promoting more diverse, inclusive communities. The federal government can support livable communities by funding collaborative planning and grant programs — such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) former Sustainable Communities Initiative — to address the relationships among transportation, land use, and housing.

## CMAP supports:

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Changing federal regulations to facilitate development of multifamily and mixed-use projects.

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Establishing programs that fund comprehensive planning that link investment decisions across transportation, land use, and housing.

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Increasing funding for programs that put in motion sustainable and equitable growth in disinvested areas, such as the HOME program, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, and the Housing Trust Fund.

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Reinstating the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule that required states, counties, and cities to affirmatively further fair housing if they receive HUD funds.

# Facilitate data-driven and transparent investment decisions

Solving policy challenges and implementing performance-driven investment requires complete, accessible, and standardized data. Because federal agencies control large amounts of data and information, the U.S. government should make data transparency a requirement for recipients of federal funds. One of the most critical data resources is the U.S. Census Bureau, which informs the allocation of billions of federal dollars and provides social, demographic, and economic data that guides policy decisions at each level of government. The 2020 census count faced unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and inconsistent deadlines from the federal government. A full assessment of the 2020 census would ensure accurate federal funding allocations and guarantee that northeastern Illinois and other regions have been properly counted.

## CMAP supports:

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Assessing the methods used and data collected during the 2020 census to ensure accuracy, as well as updates to the Census Bureau's authorizing legislation requiring data quality measures to accompany the release of important data.

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Facilitating the open exchange and collection of data by federal agencies.

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Instituting policies that ensure the public sector can use data from private transportation providers to assess transportation system needs.

# About CMAP

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) was created in 2005 by state statute (70 ILCS 1707). CMAP's Policy Committee is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the seven counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will, plus portions of DeKalb and Grundy. State and federal mandates require CMAP to conduct comprehensive regional planning, prioritize transportation investments, provide technical assistance for communities, and compile data resources that enhance decision making. CMAP staff are guided by the agency's core values:

**Serve with passion.**  
**Pursue equity.**  
**Foster collaboration.**  
**Lead with excellence.**  
**Drive innovation.**

Implementation of ON TO 2050 is CMAP's main priority. CMAP is working to achieve regional goals in three primary ways: hands-on technical assistance to local governments, alignment of capital investments through performance-based decision making, and collaborative research and analysis.

## **Local Technical Assistance (LTA)**

CMAP has initiated over 220 LTA projects in partnership with counties, municipalities, and nongovernmental organizations that are planning for increased livability, sustainability, and economic vitality.

## **Performance-based programming.**

ON TO 2050 recommendations guide the allocation of federal transportation dollars in northeastern Illinois through the following programs that CMAP administers:

- \$475 million is programmed to be invested over four years (federal FY 2021-2024) as a part of the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program to enhance mobility and improve air quality throughout the region.
- \$196 million approved via the Surface Transportation Program-Shared Fund for federal FY 2020-2024, developed through coordination with subregional Councils of Mayors and the City of Chicago to address regional infrastructure priorities.
- \$25 million allocated as part of the Transportation Alternatives Program for federal FY 2021-23 to support alternative modes of transportation and help complete CMAP's Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.
- \$17 billion in total, accounted for in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which includes all federally funded and otherwise regionally significant projects for federal FY2021-2025.

## **Policy research and analysis.**

CMAP conducts extensive, data-driven research and analysis related to policy objectives in ON TO 2050, including diverse economic factors such as workforce, innovation, and state and local tax policies. CMAP helps to coordinate collaborative efforts to build partnerships involving educational institutions, government entities, and industries to strengthen our region's economy.

This document and other federal policy information can be found at [cmap.illinois.gov/updates/legislative](https://cmap.illinois.gov/updates/legislative).

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## CMAP Board

### City of Chicago Appointments

Rita Athas, senior advisor, World Business Chicago

Frank Beal, senior executive, Civic Consulting Alliance

Anne Sheahan, deputy mayor infrastructure and services, City of Chicago

Maurice Cox, commissioner, department of planning  
and development, City of Chicago

### Cook County Appointments

Gerald Bennett, mayor, Palos Hills (Southwest Cook), *Chair*

Karen Darch, village president, Village of Barrington (Northwest Cook)

Richard Reinbold, president, Village of Richton Park (South Cook)

Matthew Walsh, former trustee, Indian Head Park (West Cook)

Diane Williams, trustee, Village of Flossmoor, (Suburban Cook)

### Collar County Appointments

Matthew Brolley, president, Montgomery (Kane/Kendall)

James Healy, member, DuPage County Board (DuPage)

John Noak, mayor, Romeoville (Will)

Nancy Roterling, mayor, City of Highland Park (Lake)

Carolyn Schofield, member, McHenry County Board (McHenry)

### Non-voting Members

Kouros Mohammadian, PhD, professor and department head, Civil, Materials,  
and Environmental Engineering, University of Illinois at Chicago

Lianne Redden, executive director, Regional Transportation Authority  
(MPO Policy Committee)



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