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From new CTA and Metra stations to a new Loop transportation hub for commuters to hop on a train, bike, bus or in a cab, there are big plans for Chicago to modernize the way people move about the city, and those projects are part of greater whole.

Some plans will pop up as soon as next year, including bus rapid transit along Washington in the Loop, which calls for two car lanes, a dedicated bus lane, a raised bus island and a bike lane.

Bike and pedestrian projects, enhancing existing infrastructure and pushing for public transportation are just a few key goals for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, a regional planning agency created in 2005 by the state of Illinois. The agency developed GO TO 2040, a transportation financial plan that details how much funding is expected for all transportation investments between now and 2040. The projects are evaluated to make sure they meet regional needs.

The agency isn't just a cheerleader for the billions of dollars to be spent on future projects. CMAP can vote against projects that don't fit its plan. And a "no" vote could stop a project from getting millions in funding.

Randy Blankenhorn, executive director of CMAP, says there is a common goal of trying to work with what's already in the city's transportation plan: "We have a large system in place, and we always need to worry about it because it's hard to re-modernize — how to make better connections. That's what our rail and highway projects are trying to do — improve upon what we already have."

Those projects include a new Circle Interchange, a massive project where three interstates meet and that will transform the way drivers come into the Loop.

Besides enhancing what exists, the city has big plans for bike and pedestrian projects, including the expansion of the Divvy bike-sharing program, something Blankenhorn says shows how transportation goals in the city have shifted.

"We're looking at how we can move people, not necessarily with cars," he said. "I think that's a different view than what has happened in the past."

Besides expressways and bike lanes, there's also a push for public transportation as a face of future mobility in Chicago.

"We talk about public transportation as being a first choice, not a last option," Blankenhorn said.

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