

# STEERING COMMITTEE FINAL MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

September 6, 2023, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

CMAP's offices, 433 West Van Buren Street, Suite 450, Chicago, IL 60607

## 1.0 Welcome, call to order, roll call, approval of minutes

CMAP Executive Director and Chair Erin Aleman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

(Members Carole Brown, Dan Cronin, Mark Denzler, Derek Douglas, and Sarah Wetmore attended the meeting virtually, having met the requirements for virtual attendance)

**Members present:** MarySue Barrett, Randy Blankenhorn, Carole Brown, Deborah Carroll, Kevin Considine, Dan Cronin, Derek Douglas, Jacky Grimshaw, Julie Hamos, Darlene Hightower, Rob Karr, Jack Lavin, David Leopold, Juan Carlos Linares, Tom Livingston, Justin Marlowe, David Narefsky, Jorge Perez, Doug Pryor, Bob Reiter, Roberto Requejo, Amy Rynell, Stephen Schlickman, Karen Tamley, Jen Walling, Sarah Wetmore

**Members absent:** None.

**Attendees (in person/online):** Nick Blumberg, Kevin Brubaker, Kevin Bueso, Lynnette Ciavarella, Shane Cullen, Michelle Curran, Eric Czarnota, Karen Darch, Kristi DeLaurentis, John Donovan, Ashton Drake, Drew Duffin, Jesse Elam, Jeremy Fine, Jackie Forbes, Mark Fowler, Sam Greene, Ben Heigl, Scott Hennings, Neil James, Pam Jones, Peter Kersten, Mike Klemens, David Kralik, Rick Kwasneski, Brian Larson, Jill Leary, Erik Llewellyn, Hannah Martin, Bill McLeod, Melinda Metzger, Melissa Meyer, Megan Miller, Rob Nash, John Noak, William O'Connell, Kevin O'Malley, Matt Pasquini, Robert Puentes, Phillip Plotch, Molly Poppe, Scott Presslak, Leslie Rauer, Leanne Redden, Ryan Ruehle, Erin Smith, Gordon Smith, Garrett Shrode, Linda Soto, Doug Sullivan, Sonali Tandon, Daniel Thomas, David Tomzik, Michael Vanderhoof, Terry Wendt, Kyle Whitehead, Carter Wilhite, Skylar Woodhouse, Paula Worthington

Chair Erin Aleman welcomed the committee members and called the roll. A motion to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2023, PART Steering Committee meeting was moved by Randy Blankenhorn, seconded by Deborah Carroll. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Aleman gave introductory remarks and reminded the committee members of the charge from the Illinois General Assembly for CMAP to *be bold* in identifying recommendations to address the fiscal cliff and improve regional transit's long-term financial viability and sustainability. Chair Aleman noted that, ultimately, transit is about people. It provides mobility for riders and non-riders alike. It also drives the regional economy and is a key driver to meeting the region's climate goals. Likewise, Chair Aleman highlighted that transit is inherently a vehicle for equitable outcomes – connecting people to jobs, education, healthcare, and other opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Steering Committee did not formally approve these minutes because the committee dissolved upon adjourning on September 6, 2023, at 10:51 am.

Chair Aleman closed introductory remarks by noting that the region's long-range comprehensive plan, *ON TO 2050*, identifies that regional success relies on transit and that CMAP, as the author of the [draft PART report](#), believes that the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action.

## **2.0 Overview of draft recommendations**

Daniel Comeaux, CMAP Senior Policy Analyst, provided an overview of the draft *System We Want* recommendations, including a focus on better transit service, providing integrated and affordable fares, enabling faster and reliable bus service, bolstering public confidence, building back a ridership base through regional rail and transit-supportive land use, and investing in a universally accessible system.

Elizabeth Scott, CMAP Policy Principal, provided historical context of transit funding in northeastern Illinois and gave an overview of the draft *How to Pay for It* recommendations. Scott reviewed the successes and remaining challenges that resulted from the 2008 funding reforms, noted that the service boards are efficient relative to national peers, reviewed baseline principles for funding solutions that CMAP considered, and provided an overview of the proposed funding packages which advance the *System We Want* recommendations. Scott also provided an overview of the increasing cost of paratransit and the need for greater state funding support for this essential service, as well as greater state support for the regional transit system overall. Lastly, Scott reviewed revenue sources for capital investments that are necessary to support and facilitate the implementation of the *System We Want* recommendations.

Aimee Lee, CMAP Deputy for Transportation, provided an overview of baseline principles for governance reforms that CMAP established in the PART process. These principles recognize that reforms should be pursued to solve structural challenges of transit governance like funding allocation, coordination of transit service, fares, and capital planning, the farebox recovery ratio and goal-based performance metrics, and regional board appointments. Lee then provided an overview of the two governance reform options that CMAP recommends: (1) integrate the service boards into one regional agency, or (2) strengthen the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and maintain the service boards. Lee detailed the various transit functions that each governance reform would affect and how it would change from the existing structure. Lee also noted that the centralization of certain functions such as fare policy, funding allocation, and regional service planning – regardless of structure – address the baseline principles outlined earlier.

## **3.0 Steering committee discussion**

As to funding, committee members remarked that, while the focus of the PART report is on operational funding, the recommendations should make clear that the funding solutions proposed do not address the system's state-of-good-repair capital maintenance backlog. Members noted the administrative, legal, and political challenges of implementing congestion pricing and dedicating tollway revenues to transit which may affect the feasibility of this revenue source both in the short and long terms. Committee members inquired about the growth of the funding gap beyond 2026 and whether the proposed revenue solutions would address that gap.

Members remarked that pension costs are included in the estimated 2026 budget gap and perhaps should be considered separately for the General Assembly to address alongside any new revenues. Members also noted that additional consideration should be given to the public health impact, both physical and mental, of an auto-dominated transportation system, and how the proposed PART recommendations can work to address the impact on historically marginalized residents. Committee members also expressed the need to evaluate the equity impacts of the report, particularly regarding the proposed revenue solutions. Lastly, members noted the challenges with dedicating motor fuel tax

revenues to transit given that they are already a diminishing revenue source that strain the finances of the overall transportation system.

As to governance reforms, committee members highlighted the need to maintain suburban voices and representation on transit governance boards, regardless of structure. Members noted that both options, as presented, cannot accomplish the same goals outlined in the report and should clearly distinguish the benefits and challenges with each approach for legislators to consider. Committee members highlighted the challenges with an integrated regional agency, particularly regarding pensions and labor agreements. Members also noted the need to include paratransit within the governance discussions as it becomes a growing part of the overall regional transit network and the need to include employer representation within the overall governance framework. Members expressed the need to build public awareness of the PART report, especially given the substantive changes it proposes. Members also noted the importance of connecting the proposed governance reforms with the *System We Want* recommendations, and how the reforms can help achieve and implement those recommendations.

There was clarification requested of the Steering Committee's role to approve versus guide and adopt the recommendations.

Lastly, committee members commended CMAP staff and leadership for their work on drafting the report and expressed appreciation for their participation in the PART Steering Committee.

#### **4.0 Public comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **5.0 Adjournment**

Laura Wilkison outlined the next steps in the PART project, including a discussion of the recommendations by the CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee on September 13, 2023, and a vote on whether to adopt the report by the CMAP's governing bodies on October 11, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:51 a.m.