

CMAP's Principles for the State Capital Program

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) supports a new capital program for infrastructure investments for the State of Illinois and the Chicago region. The continued economic success of the Chicago region depends on our ability to maintain and expand the region's road, transit, and freight rail systems, but also commit funding to build and maintain water-treatment facilities, schools, open space, and other necessary infrastructure. Without new investment dollars, we risk losing our competitive advantage.

We ask the Governor and the General Assembly to act quickly on a new capital program for the State. We recommend that such a program embody the following features:

1. Make it Significant

The unmet needs for capital are substantial, and the opportunity to pass a capital bill is limited. Therefore, we should ensure that the program is large enough to meet forecasted needs. A limited program that meets very few of our capital needs will be detrimental to our state's long-term funding outlook.

2. Make it Comprehensive

Surface transportation in metropolitan Chicago is made up of complex, interrelated systems. These include our transit system, which is an essential component of the overall network. It includes the freight rail system, which is essential to maintaining the region's position as the freight capital of North America. And it includes maintenance and expansion of the road network. No part of the network can be neglected without affecting the whole. Additionally, other non-transportation infrastructure cannot be ignored. Improvements to our water and sewer systems, school buildings, recreational facilities, and open spaces are a basic ingredient to our competitive position. Ignoring these valuable assets would negatively impact our region's economic prosperity and the quality of life of our residents.

3. Make the Project Selection Process Transparent and Results-Driven

Capital projects must be selected based on regionally approved evaluation criteria that produce agreed-upon results. We can no longer afford to select projects that do not meet the region's basic needs to improve our transportation and other infrastructure systems in ways that strengthen our communities.

4. Support it With New Revenue

Any program should have an identifiable source of revenue to be used as a pay-as-you-go funding source as well as to pay off bonds. Increasing the State's debt burden by enacting a program without a revenue source is not a sustainable method of supporting our basic infrastructure.

5. Set-aside Funds for Planning

The expenditure of capital dollars for transportation must be done through careful planning so that we can determine the most cost-effective investments. The public deserves to know that their dollars are being spent wisely, effectively and according to a well-thought out plan. Illinois should adopt a funding approach to planning that is structured much like the federal system of setting aside funding out of new capital revenues for metropolitan planning across the state.