

CALL FOR PROJECTS

Additional
Information
and FAQ



CMAP



Project category descriptions

PLANNING PROJECTS

Transit-oriented development (TOD) plans

TOD plans are based on the basic tenets of transit-oriented development; mixed land uses, higher residential densities, and pedestrian-friendly environments. These plans produce recommendations for an appropriate mix of land uses and transportation improvements to support increased transit ridership within a ¼- to ½- mile radius of a rail station, major bus station, or along a major bus corridor. They also address urban design elements, including streetscape improvements, and recommend multi-modal mobility improvements to and within the station area. Emphasis should also be placed on an equitable planning process, encouraging improved or increased access to both housing and jobs near transit, the identification of the health benefits of implementing TOD plan recommendations, and an in-depth understanding of the parking utilization in the study area. If your community has an existing TOD plan, but it is more than ten years old or out of touch with current market realities or best planning practices, the RTA will work with you to update the plan with a focus on updating the market assessment, development program and implementation strategies. More information on TOD is found on the [RTA's Transit-Oriented Development Page](#). Examples include completed TOD plans for [Bartlett](#) and [Libertyville](#).

Transportation plans (including downtown, neighborhood, subarea and corridor planning)

This project type is intended to help develop pipelines of potential projects for future competitive grant applications.

Downtown, Neighborhood and Subarea Transportation Plans

These transportation plans characterizes transportation system deficiencies in an area the size of a neighborhood, business district, or other focus area, develops goals for improvement, and proposes specific projects to address the goals. Projects could include packages of safety countermeasures, state of good repair enhancements, bicycle and pedestrian upgrades, improvements to freight movement, and a number of operations improvements such as intersection reconfigurations, addition of turn lanes or through lanes, arterial access management, etc. Transit-specific plans identify ways to improve access to existing transit bus routes and rail stations for residents and commuters in a targeted neighborhood or station area. Existing modes being used to access transit services are examined which lead to the development of recommendations for improvement. Possible improvements include pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signal heads, bus shelters, bus pads, and station amenities such

as benches, wayfinding signage, etc. Other recommendations could include the implementation of additional modes to further advance connectivity, particularly in suburban settings, to transit stops and stations, such as offering bike share, carpool, car share, and discounted ride share programs to the residents. The plan will include an implementation strategy that prioritizes and suggests phasing for the recommendations. The [Aurora Station Boulevard Transit Plan Update](#) and the [La Grange Stone Avenue Station Access Improvement Plan](#) are good examples of completed neighborhood access to transit plans.

Corridor Plans

Transit-specific corridor plans develop recommendations for transit-served corridors to enhance local mobility, further advance transit-supportive land use and development guidelines along the corridor or study area. These plans can identify ways to improve multi-modal access to existing or planned transit routes and facilities and identify opportunities to enhance transit-related infrastructure. Possible improvements investigated include amenities such as sidewalks, bus shelters, bus pads, and multimodal transit centers, as well as roadway improvements to reduce traffic congestion and improve the speed and reliability of bus service. Transit-focused plans can also identify options to solve the "last-mile problem" for reverse commuters by recommending improved connections among the transit services used by reverse commuters, such as Pace Vanpools or community transit services, and identifying increased roles that employers can take to improve transit opportunities within the study area. Projects will be assessed for feasibility and engineering, including cost estimation, conducted at the concept level. Plans will include recommendations on project funding approaches and priorities and will also typically include land use, zoning, and development components to spur economic development within the study area. Planning for vulnerable populations, identifying innovative ways to include economically disconnected residents, and/or studying areas that have experienced disinvestment is highly encouraged. The RTA encourages Transit Corridor Plans to be multi-jurisdictional and have a study area that crosses through two or more adjoining municipalities. The Harlem Avenue Corridor Plan (<http://harlemcorridor.com/>) and 95th Street Corridor Plan (<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs/ta/oak-lawn>) are good examples of completed transit corridor plans.

Bicycle and pedestrian-focused transportation plans

These plans address non-motorized and transit-based transportation needs, often with the goal of improving and increasing transit access and use of transportation alternatives. Beginning with an inventory of existing resources and conditions, the planning process engages local stakeholders in conversations that lead to the identification of problem or conflict locations, the development of feasible solutions, and a plan for implementing the identified solutions. Topics can include route planning and infrastructure, intersections, stations and transfer points,

signage and signalization, streetscapes and furnishings, and access for people with disabilities. Examples include the [Arlington Heights Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#), [Wheeling Active Transportation Plan](#), and the [University of Illinois at Chicago Multimodal Transportation Plan](#).

Comprehensive and economic development plans

Comprehensive plans establish a long-term vision for a community and provide a policy framework intended to help the community achieve that vision and community goals. Typically an 18-24 month process, comprehensive planning involves the public and community stakeholders (business owners, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, staff, etc.) in conversations about challenges, opportunities, priorities, and aspirations for the future of the community. Economic development planning may also include the investigation of economic and workforce development strategies, policies, and best practices that foster sustainable growth. Early stages of the planning process involve an inventory and assessment of the community's existing conditions including population, housing, economic development, transportation, land use, and natural resources. This examination may include other topics relevant to individual communities such as stormwater management, health, historic preservation, natural resources or agricultural preservation, or community character. Subsequent stages involve developing and discussing planning scenarios, preparing future land use plans and maps, and establishing effective policies and implementation strategies for moving forward. Communities with specific stormwater management challenges and an interest in integrating green infrastructure and land use based solutions within the comprehensive plan are also encouraged to apply. In addition, communities facing near-term development pressure who wish to preserve significant natural resources or agricultural lands and/or coordinate water supply are encouraged to apply. CMAP-funded comprehensive plans include [Brookfield](#), [Franklin Park](#), and [North Chicago](#), and examples of Economic Development plans can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Downtown, neighborhood, or subarea land use plans

These plans typically address specific area or topical needs or challenges rather than the all-inclusive approach used for comprehensive plans. These types of plans may focus on economic development and revitalization, flooding, capital improvement prioritization, housing, retail, industry, or a combination of these topics for a discrete area of a community. While the planning process for these smaller-scale plans is similar to that for comprehensive plans, they result in more specific recommendations and implementation strategies for the particular topics and areas of interest. Sample plans include the [Aurora Downtown Master Plan](#), [Riverside Central Business District Plan](#), and the [Chinatown Community Vision Plan](#).

Site-specific plans

These plans would address a specific, locally controlled site in a community rather than a subarea or corridor. This effort is meant to help communities identify the type of land use most appropriate for a single redevelopment site based on previous planning work, local zoning regulations, and existing market data and analysis. A site-specific plan will

result in a basic understanding of what type of use is most appropriate on the site, where development should be located on the site, and how to estimate potential development costs. This type of plan is appropriate for communities interested in redeveloping a municipally-owned site, in which case the plan may include developing an RFP/RFQ for the subject site.

Sustainability, climate action, or climate resilience plans

Sustainability plans serve to identify and forward the environmental goals and resilience strategies of a community. Such plans can address a wide range of potential topics depending on a community's specific interests and issues, including land use and development, transportation, energy, water resources, waste management, greenhouse gas emissions, municipal operations, and others. The planning process is similar to that of a comprehensive plan, with a detailed existing conditions analysis and thorough public participation process, followed by the development of recommendations. Implementation of a sustainability plan is of particular importance, since making progress in reversing current environmental trends is essential to long-term sustainability. Setting quantitative targets is a way to ensure that implementation strategies are effective and that the community is held accountable for making progress toward its sustainability goals. Climate action or resilience plans, on the other hand, are focused on climate mitigation as well as preparing a community for potential challenges due to climate change, such as more frequent and intense storm events, droughts, and extreme temperatures. Such plans in the region are likely to focus on stormwater management and flooding challenges as well as specific strategies related to land use, transportation, waste, and other areas that might be employed to reduce emissions. Sample plans include sustainability plans in [Park Forest](#) and [Niles](#).

Planning priorities reports

Communities with limited planning experience, few or no professional planning staff, or several competing planning priorities may not be certain what type of planning project they should pursue. In this case, CMAP recommends starting with a planning priorities report to help identify the community's needs and priorities. Planning priorities reports involve interviews with local stakeholders, review of past planning work, analysis of local data, and recommendations for subsequent planning work. Communities that know they have planning needs but are not certain exactly how to solve them are good candidates for planning priorities reports. Examples include recent plans in [Hampshire](#) and [Richmond](#).

Parking management and pricing plans

Priced parking has many benefits in areas with significant demand for parking, and is included in ON TO 2050's transportation revenue recommendations. Implementation will depend on municipal efforts to pursue the recommendation, such as plans that assess pricing of publicly owned parking spaces on streets, municipal parking lots and garages to provide revenue for local transportation improvements and facilitate land to be transitioned to revenue-generating uses. More information on innovative parking strategies can be found the [Village of Hinsdale](#)

[Innovative Parking Management Plan](#) and the [Berwyn Depot District Parking Management Plan](#).

Planning assessments or studies on special topics

CMAP encourages applicants to propose other innovative projects that would help implement ON TO 2050 at the local level. Examples of relevant past projects include: economic or workforce development (such as the [Franklin Park industrial areas](#) plan and studies of shared services (such as the [Lower Fox River Partnering Initiative](#)). CMAP encourages applications that focus on planning efforts that advance the region's [Economically Disconnected Areas](#), and those that integrate transportation, land use, and quality of life issues. Also eligible are targeted assessments, which would look at one or more specific topics within an existing plan. Links to various types of specialized projects are available on the [LTA home page](#) of CMAP's website. Potential sponsors of these types are encouraged to contact CMAP to discuss their idea before submitting an application to determine eligibility. Some other examples of these types of special topics include:

Water-related plans

Communities seeking to plan for water resources, including for issues such as stormwater management and urban flooding, improved water quality, water demand, and other planning related activities, may be eligible for CMAP's LTA assistance. Stormwater management and urban flooding plans can utilize CMAP's regional flood susceptibility index to help prioritize green infrastructure and land use based solutions. Communities seeking to implement water conservation strategies and/or incorporate future water demand and supply considerations in decision-making are also encouraged to apply. For plans focused on water quality, plans within watersheds that have Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved watershed-based plans are preferred; however, assistance will not be restricted to these communities. Watershed-focused organizations may apply with demonstrated support from the community or communities where the plan will occur. Proposals for watershed implementation and water quality focused plans will be reviewed jointly by Illinois EPA and CMAP staff. Examples of this type of plan include [Evanston's Water Conservation and Efficiency Plan](#) and the [Midlothian 147th Street Corridor Plan](#).

Housing plans

CMAP has developed housing plans for municipalities around the region to help address their most pressing housing issues, create a balanced mix of housing types, serve the needs of current and future residents and workers, and enhance the livability of participating communities. Examples of previous plans include the [Affordable Housing Strategy for Impact DuPage](#) and plans created through the [Homes for a Changing Region](#) partnership with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) and Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC). That partnership is now working with the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) on a shorter high-impact housing

technical assistance offering that works with local leaders to identify the most pressing local housing problems, brings in topical experts to discuss those challenges with local leaders, and then produces an action plan that recommends specific steps to address those identified issues. Municipalities, community groups, and counties interested in housing planning are encouraged to apply for this new iteration of our housing work.

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

Zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and unified development ordinances

Clearly-defined development regulations are a key implementation step to forward the vision established by local plans and policies. They also minimize uncertainty for applicants by streamlining administrative requirements and development review processes while promoting the community's goals for design, form, and character. CMAP and/or the RTA will work with local government staff to create development standards and review processes that make investment in the community more attractive to potential developers, business owners, and residents seeking to improve their property. The project team will assess the current regulations and existing conditions in each chosen community and deliver a revised zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, unified development ordinance (UDO), or other appropriate document. Zoning updates can be completed for an entire municipality, sub-area, for a specific TOD area, or for a specific section of the ordinance. Please see the RTA's [TOD and Zoning Report](#) for more information, and sample TOD zoning code updates in Brookfield and Winthrop Harbor. Examples of community-wide zoning updates funded by CMAP include [Richton Park](#) and [Berwyn](#).

Developer discussion panels

Developers bring a realistic outlook to the future of the real estate market. Facilitating discussions early in the redevelopment of a parcel will allow the community and potential developers to outline needs, goals and incentives while working together to utilize land to its highest and best use. For municipalities that have adopted long-range land use plans or have participated in a corridor plan with identified opportunity sites, but have had difficulty connecting with the development community, assistance will be provided to solicit guidance and advice from development experts through a half-day discussion panel. This panel discusses the development climate and potential strategies to prepare for and attract development in a specific subarea, corridor, or particular site. Multiple bordering municipalities along a corridor that has been studied may apply jointly for a discussion panel. Additionally, if a community owns and controls a development-ready parcel of property, RTA and/or CMAP staff can assist with the preparation of an RFP. Examples of summary reports from previous developer discussion panels are available for [Des Plaines](#), [River Grove](#), [Richmond](#), and [Aurora](#).

Special funding districts

In order to transform the ideas from their TOD plan into reality, municipalities often establish economic development funding districts. This usually includes creating a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, Special Service Area (SSA), or Business Improvement District (BID) within the plan's study area. These tools are a great way to help finance the implementation of completed plans including transit infrastructure investment. The RTA will help municipalities with planning for these districts/areas in their community with the type of district that best implements the recommendations of their plan. Consultant tasks will include assisting the municipality with proposing an ordinance to enact the district and with completing the public process required for ordinance adoption.

Training

To achieve the goals set forth in ON TO 2050, the region must take deliberate, focused action to improve the capacity of all municipal governments to lead by building the expertise, networks, and capabilities of communities across the region. CMAP conducts trainings for a variety of audiences including plan commissioners, zoning board members, elected/appointed officials, staff, and other decision makers. These trainings can help individuals understand their responsibilities related to planning as well as their role in shaping the overall region's future. Training can include topics such as development and facilitation of improved performance in zoning and subdivision regulations, plan implementation, conservation design, sustainability, GIS and other software programs, using research and analysis resources, and others. Communities are invited to submit applications for trainings on planning topics relevant to their local context for consideration in this call for projects.

Innovative implementation projects

Implementation projects are the focus of the Community Planning program and an increasing emphasis of the LTA program. While the primary types of implementation projects are outlined in this section, the RTA and CMAP recognize that applicants may have different implementation needs that will help move an adopted plan forward. The RTA and CMAP are open to taking on new, innovative implementation projects through this program that can improve land use and transportation. If you have an idea for an implementation project that is not listed here, please contact the RTA or CMAP to discuss before submitting an application.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

What sources fund this program?

Funding for this program comes from a combination of federal, state, local, and philanthropic funds from the RTA and CMAP.

Is a local contribution required?

Local contribution depends on the type and size of the project proposed. CMAP and the RTA will provide contribution rate information to applicants upon request, and applicants will be advised of the estimated local contribution amount prior to project selection. Please contact the RTA or CMAP with any questions.

What types of projects have the RTA and CMAP funded in the past?

CMAP has funded comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, unified development ordinances, housing policy studies, corridor plans, neighborhood/subarea plans, sustainability plans, municipal staff and elected official training, stormwater management plans, water conservation studies, and many other specialized plans. A full list of previously funded CMAP plans is available at <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/Ita/>.

The RTA has funded TOD Plans, transit improvement plans, corridor studies, TOD zoning code updates, developer discussion panels, and transit access improvement studies. A full list of previously funded RTA plans is found at <http://www.rtams.org/rtams/planningProgram.jsp?id=1>.

Can I submit more than one idea?

You may submit more than one project proposal. Please submit a separate application for each project idea proposed.

What projects are NOT eligible?

Project phases such as land acquisition, engineering, or capital investment are not eligible through either program. Eligible projects must focus on planning and small-scale implementation activities.

Can I request money to cover staff time at my organization?

These programs do not offer funds for staff time. Any financial commitment from CMAP or the RTA is dedicated to hiring external contractors/consultants or providing RTA or CMAP staff assistance.

If I applied to either the RTA or CMAP in past years and was not selected, can I apply this year?

Yes, you are eligible to apply again. Only those projects that meet evaluation criteria and focus are prioritized. Feel free to reach out to the RTA or CMAP to discuss how you could improve your application this year.

If I have received assistance in past years, can I apply again?

Yes. CMAP and the RTA encourage applicants to submit applications that seek to implement existing plans, particularly if CMAP or the RTA assisted with preparing previous plans. You may also submit applications for completely separate projects as well. However, please make sure that your application does not duplicate work done recently – it will not be eligible.

How competitive is the application process?

Very competitive. CMAP and the RTA have limited resources for these programs, and not all applications will be selected. Historically, the RTA and CMAP have selected less than 40% of applications received.

How are applications evaluated?

Applications are evaluated based on criteria derived by the RTA and CMAP. The RTA will evaluate and select transit-related applications for the Community Planning program, while CMAP will evaluate and select applications for the LTA program. Criteria are described in the main text of this document.

How are CTA, Metra, and Pace involved in transit-related projects?

Each transit agency potentially impacted by the study is invited to participate. CMAP and RTA may collaborate on projects as well.

Who manages the project if selected?

The local sponsor is responsible for overall project management. CMAP or RTA staff assist with project development and management. Staffing and agency responsibilities will be determined and clarified in an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) prior to project commencement. Administrative and invoicing responsibilities vary depending on the assigned funding agency (CMAP or RTA) and procurement method selected.

Who determines which agency manages the selected project?

Projects with a direct public transit focus are typically managed by the RTA. Others are typically managed or staffed by CMAP. You do not need to specify at the time of submitting the application whether you think your project is a better fit for the RTA or for CMAP – this will be determined during the application review.

How do CMAP and the RTA decide which projects are staff-led, and which projects are consultant-led?

During the application review and evaluation process, staff will contact applicants to gain a better understanding of their project and determine what type of assistance is most appropriate. After selection, the agencies confirm with the applicant whether the project will be accomplished through assigning RTA or CMAP staff time, conducting a consultant selection process led by CMAP or RTA, or other options.

What are the next steps for project selection once the application is submitted?

RTA and CMAP staff will begin a review of the applications immediately following the receipt of all submittals. While staff make the final selections, feedback is solicited from the RTA Service Boards (CTA, Pace and Metra) and other external agencies as appropriate. During this time, staff will also contact applicants to ask questions as necessary. The applications are qualitatively reviewed by the set of criteria listed in the application. Applicants will be notified by RTA or CMAP with the decision. Subsequent steps for projects selected for funding will depend on which agency funds the selected project. A detailed timeline is included in the program guide.

What is the anticipated timeframe to begin selected projects?

A detailed timeline is included in the program guide.

Who do I contact if I still have questions?

Please contact Michael Horsting (horstingm@rtachicago.org) or Tony Manno (tmanno@cmap.illinois.gov) for any questions.

What if I am not sure what type of project my community needs?

Please describe the issue you are trying to solve to the best of your ability. We will work with you to determine what planning product best meets your community's needs. Please see the description for the Planning Priorities Reports if you are unsure which planning project is most appropriate and you need assistance prioritizing potential projects.

My project is a special topic which does not directly relate to transit or transportation. What is the likelihood of being selected?

Resource availability varies and may change from year to year. CMAP continually applies for non-transportation funding sources to supplement our transportation sources. CMAP encourages applicants to propose innovative projects that would help implement ON TO 2050 at the local level, as those projects may fit within existing funding sources or help us to identify and seek out new sources.

I am a nongovernmental organization and would like to submit an application. You require support from the relevant local government – can you explain what that means?

Please note that nongovernmental applicants are only considered for inclusion in CMAP's LTA program. The RTA does not partner with nongovernmental groups or agencies – if you are specifically interested in RTA funding, please work with a relevant local government to have them submit an application with you or on your behalf.

CMAP works nongovernmental applicants, but only with the explicit support of any local government affected by the project. If you are a nongovernmental group proposing a project in a suburban municipality, please provide a letter of support for your application from the municipality. If your project affects more than one municipality, please provide letters from each of them.

If your project is in the City of Chicago, we require a letter of support from any Alderman whose ward is affected by the project.

How is local contribution calculated?

More information on local financial contributions is available at www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs/lta/call-for-projects or by contacting Tony Manno (tmano@cmap.illinois.gov or 312.386.8606).

Will applicants need to have the local contribution in-hand at the time of the application?

No – CMAP and the RTA expect applicants to have the local contribution available at the time the project begins. The funding agencies are flexible with project start dates, and can work around local budget cycles. CMAP will invoice for local contribution payments prior to the project kick-off; the RTA will invoice for local contribution payments once a project is completed.

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is our region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners are developing ON TO 2050, a new comprehensive regional 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.

RTA Administrative Offices

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The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is the unit of local government charged with financial oversight, funding, and regional transit planning for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, and Pace bus and Pace's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Service. The RTA system serves two million riders each weekday with 145 CTA rail stations, 240 Metra commuter rail stations, 350 bus routes, with a combined 7,200 transit route miles throughout Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties of northeastern Illinois.