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# CMAP, RTA merger inches forward amid objections

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Terry Link

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By Mami Pyke

Legislation to merge the agency that oversees public transit in the metropolitan area with the organization responsible for regional planning jumped one hurdle this week despite opposition.

State Sen. Terry Link's bill to join the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning with the Regional Transportation Authority passed the Senate's executive committee Wednesday.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

The measure would replace the 16-member RTA board, whose members each receive a \$25,000 annual stipend, and the 15-member CMAP board, which is not compensated, with an unpaid 18-person board.

The new board members would be appointed as follows: five by the Chicago mayor, three by the Illinois governor, five by the Cook County chairman and one each by the chairmen of DuPage, Kane, Lake and McHenry counties and the Will County executive.

The changes "eliminate unnecessary and

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**Legislation in detail**

duplicative functions and provide the most cost-effective means to ensure that transit services are fast, well-planned, well-maintained, efficient, convenient, safe, and attractive," the bill states.

The goal is to double transit use in 25 years, Link said.

DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin, a former senator, criticized the proposal as failing to address funding inequalities.

"It's called the Transportation Modernization Act, but there's nothing modern about it; it's the same-old, same-old," Cronin said.

One of the problems facing the collar counties is that the Chicago Transit Authority gets the lion's share of discretionary sales tax funding from the RTA, shortchanging suburban transit, he said.

The geographic distribution of the new board would further consolidate power with Chicago and water down suburban clout, Cronin warned.

CMAP operates with 102 staff members and a \$15.7 million annual budget while the RTA has a \$33 million budget and 119 employees. The RTA oversees Metra, Pace and the Chicago Transit Authority.

The General Assembly is on a two-week recess, but Link said he expects a vote on his proposal this spring.

Meanwhile, some RTA officials voiced doubts the bill would go far in the Senate because of opposition from local mayors. "This bill does nothing for the region but distract from the real problem of financial needs," Chief of Staff Jordan Matyas said.