



Major Elements of the Draft Snapshot Report on Sustainability

May 29, 2007

The Snapshot Report on sustainability will focus on conceptualizing sustainability and developing potential applications to CMAP’s planning and programming activities. Preliminary research suggests that there are common elements that appear repeatedly in discussions of sustainability: seeking to achieve economic, environmental, and social or equity goals simultaneously; a concern for future generations; achieving social well being or meeting needs; and maintaining a non-decreasing level of social and environmental goods. These should be core concepts in the CMAP application, but some clarification is needed to determine whether adoption of these as guiding precepts would be significantly new or different from the goals and techniques of the *2040 Regional Framework Plan*, *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*, or “good planning” in general.

In operationalizing sustainability, the concept is being broken down for clarity of presentation into dimensions and elements, as shown in the list below. Some of the elements overlap dimensions, but they seem to capture the range of issues related to sustainability. It is proposed that these elements be considered within each of the CMAP program areas to develop potential strategies for addressing them. Research is being conducted to identify strategies other MPOs and regional councils are using to meet sustainability goals, and a synopsis of the findings will be presented in the Snapshot Report.

Dimension	Elements
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational equity • Conditions expected beyond 2040 planning horizon
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Externalities imposed outside Chicago region • Regional benefits and regional costs • Global economic integration and local economies
Risk/irreversibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic changes in future conditions • Natural resource limitations (resource use and waste assimilation)
Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability of governance structures to respond adequately to future threats
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between natural and social systems
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic accounting of economic goods • Distributional equity

It is also possible to identify a number of cross-cutting issues whose relevance to sustainability is immediately apparent. In dealing with issues under risk and irreversibility, CMAP must clearly address the possibility and magnitude of climate change, most likely using the common rubric of *adaptation* and *mitigation* strategies. For the former, analysis would focus on ways of limiting damage from climate change (e.g., improved coping mechanisms for drought and flooding); the latter concentrates on ways of slowing or reducing climate change (e.g., reducing carbon emissions). Secondly, resource consumption and renewability must be addressed, most importantly dependence on fossil fuels. Thirdly, the capacity

of local government structures, and the mobilization of communities and citizens, to respond to future threats is a question of preparation in the face of uncertainty. The Snapshot Report will investigate education and training strategies for assisting local government units in their response to potential future threats. The Snapshot Report is expected to recommend that the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) address these three issues directly.

Finally, one element of conceptualizing sustainability is determining how to measure it. To that end, the Snapshot Report is to develop a list of potential indicators for tracking progress toward sustainability goals and, for the RCP, measuring the sustainability of alternative scenarios.