



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Agenda Item No. 9.0

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MEMORANDUM

To: CMAP Board

From: CMAP Staff

Date: November 2, 2011

Re: Moving Forward with GO TO 2040: Policy Direction Discussion

Last month the Board and the Policy Committee discussed some strategic questions and provided policy direction related to transportation. This month, staff is requesting that the Board address CMAP's efforts in water resources.

The Water 2050 regional plan features over 50 recommendations aimed at CMAP for implementation and GO TO 2040 focuses recommendations at managing and conserving water resources. The near term focus should be on identifying and pursuing clear priorities within this area and securing sustainable funding for these activities.

For some perspective, we commit approximately seven staff to water related activities and the funding is a combination of sources including funding from the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). The IEPA funding is based on a two-year contract that expires at the end of this calendar year. The two major issues to frame this discussion are whether we are focusing our resources appropriately and what the source of funding should be for these activities.

The Board should consider the following questions as they discuss the next steps on the following issues:

- Should this be a near-term priority for implementation?
- How should this be strategically implemented?
- What is the anticipated progress in a year and five years?

Water Supply Planning

In terms of water supply, after establishing a leadership role during the past five years in regional water supply planning, CMAP has a vested interest in ensuring that regional activity remains coordinated, collaborative, and productive. *Water 2050* features over 240 recommendations with 50 recommendations aimed at CMAP for implementation. CMAP will

work to implement plan recommendations while supporting several counties and public water suppliers in their efforts to implement the plan.

In general, our work can be categorized by the following: education, policy and research, and technical assistance. With any given project or program, we need to decide where to concentrate our efforts within those categories. For example, in water supply, we can spend staff time raising awareness of the plan's recommendations (education); we could conduct research on full-cost pricing (policy and research); or we could work in a targeted geography to develop and implement a conservation plan (technical assistance). These examples are not exhaustive, but given our finite resources, the Board should discuss where we should focus our attention.

Watershed Planning

There are 171 watersheds¹ within our region and approximately 55 of these are presently covered with an EPA-compliant watershed plan, covering approximately a third of the region. Some of these plans have been developed by CMAP, others by partners such as the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission. The value of a watershed plan is to mitigate water quality impairments, protect unimpaired waterbodies, address related resource needs, and provide the vehicle necessary for federal Clean Water Act funds to flow into local governments for water resource protection. IEPA is in favor of CMAP continuing to do this planning work, and GO TO 2040 recommends that more watershed plans should be developed in the region. However, there are a number of issues the Board should consider regarding CMAP's role in watershed planning.

Even with work by partner organizations, it will be many years before the region is completely covered by watershed plans. In terms of value, similar to all plans, the real value is the level of buy-in that the local communities and stakeholders engage in developing and implementing these plans and in the recent past, the commitment has varied. Also, notably, these plans place particular focus on identifying capital improvements that help improve water quality impairments, however the available public funding for these is highly competitive and limited. Rather than work to complete more plans, CMAP could focus its technical assistance resources on implementation of the completed plans by working to add policy support, through ordinance creation or review, or provide more focused planning work within the completed watershed planning area. If it develops additional plans, CMAP could make sure that they are chosen strategically to pilot new approaches, to handle special issues, or focus on the most important resources. Finally, staff could identify other methods to work towards achieving higher water quality throughout the region. In particular, CMAP could capitalize on its unique role in the region to convene partners on a regular basis to assess progress in watershed planning and identify needs for improvement.

¹ At the 12-digit hydrologic unit code level.

Facility Planning Area (FPA) Review Process

Facilities Planning Area (FPA) is defined as "a centralized sewer service area to be considered for possible wastewater treatment facilities within a 20-year planning period." CMAP is the designated water quality planning agency for the seven-county region, with responsibility for reviewing wastewater permits and facility plans to ensure consistency with the federal approved [Illinois Water Quality Management Plan](#) . CMAP's Wastewater Committee conducts reviews of requested changes to the plan's current water-treatment boundaries and makes recommendations to the IEPA, which maintains decision-making authority for amendments to the plan.

Historically, IEPA has had a policy of denying State construction permits for domestic wastewater collection sewers that cross an FPA boundary and would require an FPA boundary amendment prior to issuance of such a permit. In this past year, this policy was legally challenged and the agency decided to no longer deny permits based solely on the project's inconsistency with a FPA boundary. Therefore, CMAP no longer reviews FPA boundary changes, but still reviews wastewater treatment plant expansions or new plant construction. The IEPA position renders FPA boundaries moot and could potentially negate a planning tool that has had utility to date. To put the problem in context, CMAP reviewed 88 FPA amendment applications since February 2005 that involved an FPA boundary change request. Seven of the 88 applications featured an FPA boundary dispute that was resolved by the CMAP review process.

Prior to this policy change from the IEPA, there had been an ongoing dialog whether or not the FPA review process needed reform for various reasons. The Board should consider whether staff should pursue changes to this review process with the IEPA related to the boundary policy change, more wholesale changes to the process, or if we should continue with the process as it exists today. GO TO 2040 recommends aligning CMAP's programming activities so that they help implement the plan. If more wholesale changes are recommended, it is worth considering how the FPA process could be altered to become a mechanism by which CMAP can identify and offer support to wastewater infrastructure investments that help implement the plan.

The Board's input on these issues and other thoughts about CMAP's priorities in water resources as they relate to implementing GO TO 2040 and Water 2050 will be helpful to help guide staff and ensure we appropriately deploy resources.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

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