

# Outreach Tools and Methods

## Introduction

The sustained success of GO TO 2040 has been due in large part to local partners' commitment to implementation. CMAP touched over 35,000 individuals during the three years it took to develop the 2040 plan. The methods and tools used to engage individuals were diverse. This white paper will explore the lessons learned from the public engagement process for GO TO 2040, and identify how CMAP can build off past successes to engage residents and stakeholders in the development of the next long-range comprehensive plan.

CMAP is required by law to create a [Public Participation Plan](#). CMAP's public participation plan follows the U.S. Department of Transportation's guidelines for effective public involvement: provide for an open exchange of information and ideas between the public and transportation decision makers. CMAP seeks to develop a proactive public participation process in northeastern Illinois that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing and implementing regional plans and capital programs.

## GO TO 2040 Lessons Learned

Central to the public engagement process for GO TO 2040 was the variety of ways in which people could participate. Residents of the region participated at public meetings, online, through social media, kiosks, and more. Offering stakeholders a number of ways to engage with CMAP allowed individuals to participate in ways that best met their needs. The tools available throughout the process ranged from simple to advanced, and everything in between. However, it wasn't simply the diversity of tools employed; CMAP was deliberate about offering options with varied time commitments.

Successful engagement also meant that CMAP engaged the diversity of the region, paying special attention to reaching disadvantaged communities. By planning in advance to reach disadvantaged populations, staff was able to course correct to reach stakeholders that better reflected the diversity of the region.

The most complex and expensive tool employed was MetroQuest (MQ). The MQ tool was developed to help participants explore alternative scenarios. It visually conveyed the physical impacts of alternative policy choices. MQ was made available at workshops, online, and at kiosks across the region. The workshop format was a strength of this process. MQ was flexible enough to give in various lengths to accommodate different stakeholder groups and meeting lengths.



CMAP employed a number of tools over the three years it took to develop GO TO 2040. These tools ranged from simple paper surveys and promotional posters, to small grants to community based organizations, to the most intensive period of outreach where MQ was deployed at 57 public meetings across the region. The methods of engagement varied by the stage of the planning process and also by stakeholder type; it is suggested that a similar approach be taken on the next long range plan.

The rest of this section will provide an overview of the challenges, successes, and opportunities for conducting outreach for the next long range plan.

### **Challenges**

- **Long-range planning timeframe.** It can be challenging to get people excited about the importance of long-range planning.
- **Complexity of public tools.** Some of the weaknesses the team identified were that while MQ was a great tool to support staff in explaining different ideas it was still very complex. For other participants the tool was not complex enough. Finding common ground among participants really happened in the conversations that occurred after everyone had been given a baseline of information.
- **Time of year.** Another challenge to consider is the time of year engagement is scheduled. Each season has its challenges. Summer is inevitably a difficult time to reach people because of vacations and other competing activities; fall is back to school time; and winter in the Chicago area is unpredictable at best.
- **Number of local governments.** With over 280 municipalities and 77 Chicago community areas, scheduling meetings that don't conflict with other activities is a challenge.

### **Successes**

- **Partnerships.** One of the great opportunities of this public engagement process was the fact that 2009 was the centennial of Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago. By working with the Burnham Centennial civic organization there were many new opportunities for us to reach out to new groups. Social media afforded CMAP the ability to connect with previously untapped networks of bloggers and social media influencers.
- **Multiple ways to participate.** Many ways to participate, online, in-person, kiosks
- **Familiarizing people with CMAP as well as GO TO 2040.** CMAP was still a relatively unknown organization to the public, and promoting the long-range plan also gave CMAP the opportunity to introduce the agency and its value to more residents and stakeholders across the region.

### **Opportunities**

- **Leveraging work done to-date.** To improve future public engagement efforts, CMAP will begin planning to engage key partners and stakeholders early. Staff should engage LTA communities where we've established strong relationships, FUND 2040 supporters, CCT's On The Table campaign partners, etc.



- **Continued partnerships.** Workshops that had strong partners with a well-connected membership base had better attendance.
- **CMAP Citizens' Advisory Committee.** The CAC could have an active role in soliciting input from local residents.
- **New partnerships.** Other celebrations in 2015 – 2018. [Illinois Bicentennial](#)

## Successful regional efforts

A number of CMAP's peers have conducted regional planning efforts with public engagement components. This section will describe some of the highlights in public participation that may be worth replicating.

- [Atlanta Regional Commission](#)
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- Houston-Galveston Area Council
- Mid-America Regional Council (Kansas City area)
- [Metropolitan Area Planning Council](#)
- Metropolitan Council (Twin Cities area)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (SF Bay area)
- North Central Texas Council of Governments (Dallas area)
- North Jersey Transportation Planning Agency
- Portland Metro
- [San Diego Association of Governments](#)
- [Southern California Association of Governments](#)

## Next plan outreach

Deepening the work of GO TO 2040, broadening the base of supporters, CMAP will not be starting from scratch.

CMAP touched over 35,000 individuals throughout the public engagement efforts for GO TO 2040. At the time there was no stated goal for individual outreach. For the next long-range plan, staff suggests setting a target of reaching one-percent of the region's 8.5 million residents, or 85,000 people. To accomplish this goal a variety of outreach tools and methods will need to be employed. This effort will include everything from media coverage to face-to-face interactions.

### Audience

A preliminary outline of stakeholders to engage. This will be fleshed out with details on who, methods of engagement, and when each should be engaged.

- Business community: Illinois Chamber, Chicagoland Chamber, World Business Chicago, local chambers
- CMAP Board, MPO, and committee structure
- Civic leaders and community groups



- Partners: MPC, CNT, Openlands, Chicago Wilderness, Urban Land Institute, etc.
- Federal and State partners: EPA, DOT, HUD, IDHA, IDOT, FHWA, FTA
- Local elected officials. Including Councils of Mayors / Councils of Governments, county, and municipal leaders from the seven county CMAP region – Cook, DuPage Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Will
- Planners: County and municipal planners, private sector planners, American Planning Association
- Special interest groups: Landmarks Illinois, Congress for the New Urbanism
- Traditionally underrepresented groups in planning: Low-income, minority, senior, and disabled populations (Urban League)
- Youth: Future Leaders in Planning (FLIP)

### **Translation**

It will be important to plan for the highest-growing minority population in the region – Latinos. There will be a need to translate materials into Spanish – anticipated webpages describing the process and activities, engagement tools, interim deliverables, and final plan summary.

### **Proposed process overview**

The details of each tool and activity will need further fleshing out, however, at this time staff would like to put forth the following conceptual ideas for consideration.

#### ***2015 – 2016: Building partnerships***

The goal for outreach in the early stages will be to help broaden the base of supporters for the planning process, while continuing to engage existing partners. Engagement for GO TO 2040 began with visioning. Visioning was an essential step in the development of the plan. It afforded CMAP the opportunity to engage both existing and new stakeholders. Being a new agency, GO TO 2040 was the first major project CMAP would undertake.

The next regional plan will build off of GOTO 2040. Staff does not believe it is necessary to start this planning process from scratch. The vision statements previously developed are very much still relevant and meaningful today. CMAP will confirm with the board and committees that the vision for northeastern Illinois still holds true, and continue to promote the existing vision as the baseline for moving forward in this planning process.

To accomplish the goal of broadening CMAP’s base of supporters, CMAP will:

- Work to cultivate new and stronger relationships with partners and elected officials;
- Define specific roles and activities for the CAC and CMAP committees; and
- Develop key targets and the methods needed to engage various stakeholders.

To bring attention to some of the key issues the next long range plan may address, staff may want to consider forums that will help engage the public broadly on planning relevant planning concepts. One way of accomplishing this could be to host a regional debate series on key



planning issues. CMAP would engage multiple partners and the media in an effort to broaden the reach of conversations on topics relevant to the next plan.

- Suggested forum topics include:
  - affordable housing
  - equity
  - resilience
  - public private partnerships
- Proposed partners:
  - American Institute of Architects (AIA)
  - American Planning Association (APA)
  - Chicago Community Trust (CCT)
  - Chicago Public Media / WBEZ
  - Crain's Chicago Business
  - Illinois Humanities Council (IHC)
  - Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC)
  - Major cultural institutions (ex. Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum)

To garner support on more technical topics, CMAP will engage the working committees and may consider hosting a series of expert focus groups to determine which strategies are most relevant to local stakeholders.

### ***2017: Regional scale engagement activities***

The primary activity in early 2017 will be to deploy region-wide public engagement [tool](#) and activities. Possibly focused on areas of investment or budgeting vs. alternative land use scenarios (al a 2040). However, this will be further shaped by the development of the various topics and potential strategies that are being developed.

### ***2018: Launch the next plan***

The conclusion of the planning effort will include a public event to celebrate the accomplishments of everyone involved in the process. The lead up to this will also include activities that engage key stakeholders in the review of the draft plan document.

- Open house activities. Just like in 2010 and 2014 for the plan update, there will likely be an open house format to engagement during a public comment period in the spring/summer, leading into October adoption.
- Prepare for October launch.
- Joint CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee meeting to approve the next plan, along with media ops and a large-scale public event.
- Hold launch event



## Media and communications

This section will be coordinated further with the communications team. Potential strategies will include:

- Editorial boards
- News media (print, web, radio)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram)
- Blogosphere
- CMAP created content
  - video
  - plan website/webpage

## Setting goals and measuring success

GO TO 2040's success has been reflected upon [annually](#) since its completion. It is critical that CMAP reach both a geographic representation and the racial and ethnic diversity of the region. CMAP has predicated its local technical assistance program on targeting engagement towards individuals that are traditionally underrepresented in the planning process. While this is easier to do at the community-scale, with a well-defined public engagement process it is achievable at the regional scale.

Staff will work to creating buy-in throughout the efforts, so that residents and stakeholders are taking ownership of long-range planning in their region. It is necessary to engage both new individuals (those who haven't participated before), as well as those who are returning to participate again.

In addition to the broad numeric targets listed below, staff will set targets for the number of organizations, businesses, institutions, government that we reach out to.

### Outreach targets

To reach one-percent of the region's population over the three year process – or 85,000 people.

- 60% in media hits (51,000)
- 30% in online survey or web tools (25,500)
- 10% in person (8,500)

## Next Steps

Develop work plan items for activities to begin in FY 16.

- Quarterly regional debates/forums
- Further explore tools for late FY 16, early FY 17

