Aurora will get $8.6 million in federal grant money toward changes at the Aurora Transportation Center that include a pedestrian bridge over the Fox River.

The bridge is perhaps the most noticeable part of the project that includes relocating the bus pulse point and using that space as a new entrance to the Two Brothers Roundhouse, more parking, and relocating some street signals and intersections on North Broadway.

The Board of Directors for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, or CMAP, along with the Metropolitan Planning Organization's policy committee, this week approved the money for the Aurora project as part of 60 projects throughout the Chicago area totaling $301.8 million.

CMAP is in charge of allocating funds available through the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, called CMAQ, and the Transportation Alternatives Program, called TAP.

According to a CMAP news release, the projects include improved "transit, roads, bicycle and pedestrian facilities" during the next five years. The projects all got the agency's blessing because they support the goals of the Go To 2040 comprehensive regional plan, that include "reducing congestion, improving air quality and enhancing non-motorized transportation."

The projects, which are competitive, come from CMAQ's 2016-2020 funding plan, and TAP's 2015-2017 programs.

Aurora officials were optimistic they would get the money to put toward the overall plan for changes to the Transportation Center and surrounding area, estimated between $14 million and
$16 million.

The city already has a $2 million grant from the Kane County Forest Preserve District it can put toward the project.

CMAP had given Aurora’s project a high ranking – lower only than grant requests from Pace, the suburban bus system, and the Chicago Transit Authority.

The major points of the Aurora project include:

• Moving the bus pulse point from its spot along North Broadway to one on the east side of the Transportation Center, next to the tracks where suburban trains let people off.

• Taking the stop light at the entrance to the bus pulse point, which also has access to the Roundhouse and the hotel next door, and relocating it just north to the entrance of the Transportation Center. That also would become an entrance to the Two Brothers Roundhouse, using the space where the pulse point is. The current entrance would stay without a signal, as a three-quarter intersection – allowing right in and right out, but also allowing cars traveling south to still turn there.

• Building a pedestrian and bike bridge over the Fox River that would connect with the back portion of RiverEdge Park, and with parking on the west side of the river. The bridge would allow west side parking for both RiverEdge customers and travelers using the Transportation Center.

It also would allow for more multi-modal use, city official said, because it would connect with the bike trails. The plan would add a total of 90 parking spaces overall.

Even with the CMAQ grant, there is about a $4 million gap in funding, and officials have said they would be aggressive in pursuing more grant money to fund the rest of the project.

Other notable projects included in CMAP’s approval vote this week include: $125 million for the Chicago Transit Authority’s Red-Purple modernization; $29.5 million for ramps at Interstate 294 and North Avenue, part of a related Elgin-O’Hare project; $19.7 million to improve Pace transit along the Interstate 90 corridor; $10 million toward Pace bus-on-shoulder operations on the Edens Expressway; and $1.4 million for extension of the Longmeadow Parkway Bike Path in Kane County.

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