



MEMORANDUM

To: MPO Policy Committee

From: CMAP Staff

Date: June 4, 2015

Re: Early considerations for the next long-range plan

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is embarking on development of its next comprehensive regional plan, which is due in 2018. It is expected that in developing the new plan, the policies of GO TO 2040 will be used as a launching point to advance into more specific recommendations. Communication and collaboration throughout the plan development process will help to assure a successful outcome. In particular, discussions on key transportation planning issues are beginning early in the process with the Transportation Committee (TC) while the larger schedule and deliverables for the comprehensive plan are being developed with the CMAP Board and working committees. This memo recaps some of the discussion with TC.

- **Committee engagement process.** A high priority for staff is engagement with MPO members to understand their needs and respond appropriately. A proposed approach is to hold periodic forums after TC meetings on specific issues which members and others can choose to attend based on their interests and expertise. Where discussions could benefit from specialized expertise, members will be asked to identify subject matter experts at their agencies or groups they represent to attend and give feedback at these forums. Some of the transportation-related working groups (such as the Regional Transportation Operations Coalition) would also be engaged for technical review.
- **Financial plan.** The GO TO 2040 financial plan assumes flexibility in funding. This has some attractive aspects – in particular, it enables discussion of trade-offs across programs – as well as some challenges. TC members have asked CMAP to invite an outside perspective on financial planning from other MPOs; staff is investigating holding a seminar in spring. Staff also expects to conduct research and present information to help determine how to proceed in the upcoming plan. Members and staff may also provide research into cost estimates and additional or “reasonably expected” revenues for consideration in the next plan.

- **Performance targets.** MAP-21 requires MPOs to use a **performance-based approach to transportation decision-making and development of plans**. Additional measures and targets will likely be needed in the next long-range plan. One important consideration is how to link the achievement of the targets back to the strategies and financial outlays in the plan. Staff estimates that CMAP will need to begin developing its targets in mid-2016.
- **Regionally significant project definition.** Currently, the region considers new interstate capacity and “comparable” new capacity on the transit system to be regionally significant projects, termed “major capital projects” in the plan. Only these projects are specifically itemized in the fiscal constraint demonstration. The MPO certification review in 2014 suggested that CMAP reconsider the definition of regionally significant project and base it on project “impact” rather than “scope.” During the GO TO 2040 update process, TC members also mentioned the potential importance of capturing arterial expansion needs and Bus Rapid Transit/Arterial Rapid Transit, among other project types. Staff will work with members to develop options on defining regionally significant projects to try to address these issues and meet other stakeholder needs. An initial discussion is scheduled for July 2015 at TC.
- **Project evaluation: documenting and addressing needs on the system.** Given that more observed data on transportation system performance is available than previously, evaluating needs on the system and the degree to which proposed projects address these needs is a possibility. RTOC has seen a very early version of work that staff has done to use observed performance data to identify needs. After further technical review by RTOC and other stakeholders, the Transportation Committee would be engaged in this discussion.
- **Project evaluation: role of benefit-cost analysis.** Formal benefit-cost analysis has not been part of the capital project evaluation process to date. Staff hopes to explore with the TC and other working committees the conceptual issues associated with benefit-cost analysis as well as the pros and cons of using this technique and present a recommendation in spring 2016.
- **Strategy papers.** Similar to the original GO TO 2040 process, white papers will be developed to provide background on planning issues and to investigate potential plan recommendations. The TC has explored a draft list of four topics for the first year of the planning process – (1) highway operations, (2) transit modernization, (3) asset management, and (4) system funding concepts – and staff expects to collaborate with relevant member agencies to produce discussion drafts in the upcoming year.

Over the next few months, more information about the overall comprehensive planning process will be made available. Staff expects to update the Policy Committee on the planning process at each of its upcoming meetings, in particular discussions with the Transportation Committee on major issues related to planning approach.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

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