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Addressing O'Hare Area Truck Traffic

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By ANNE LUNDE Journal & Topics Reporter

As part of the next phase of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) "On to 2050" plans for metro transportation plans, one set of committees will be focusing on how to relieve truck congestion on roads surrounding O'Hare International Airport.

The study area includes Bellwood, Bensenville, Des Plaines, Elk Grove Village, Franklin Park, Itasca, Melrose Park, Northlake, Schiller Park and Wood Dale.

Communities adjacent to these suburbs are welcome to submit comments.

CMAP planners tend to work several decades in advance to analyze transportation problems and things that might solve them, especially related to arterial streets, tollways and limited access roads, or commuter transit.

In this case, with progress happening in the long-postponed extension of the eastern end of the Elgin O'Hare Expressway, and western access promised into O'Hare soon during the O'Hare Modernization Program, some of the truck traffic to the airport and industrial areas may be facing different routing opportunities.

Discussions are just starting for the O'Hare Subregion Truck Routing Plan.

The first OSTRP Policy Committee met Aug. 31 at CMAP's offices in Chicago. The policy committee includes representatives from municipalities, counties and other affected agencies, including the Northwest Municipal Conference.

Cambridge Systematics, Sam Schwartz Consulting and CMAP staff will lead planning discussions to identify ways to improve the flow of truck traffic and reduce the negative effects of that traffic on communities around O'Hare.

A separate Technical Committee will work with trucking industry representatives to discuss logistical issues.

Brian Pigeon, who represented the Northwest Municipal Conference at the Aug. 31 meeting, said the policy committee is where municipal comments will be heard.

The first gathering focused on key origin points, destinations, freight corridors, areas with noise concerns, geometric challenges, regulatory and operational issues, and general areas of concern.

The policy group plans about a year of discussions. A fall meeting will focus on existing conditions; a winter 2017 meeting on what is desired for the future; and a spring 2017 discussion of needed action.

The O'Hare Subregion, primarily around the airport, with a northward extension along the Tri-State corridor, is one of six freight land use clusters in the six-county metro region. It is identified as the Greater O'Hare regional cluster.

Others are the Chicago Core with Midway Airport, South Cook, North Chicagoland, Fox River Valley and Will County.

CMAP reports that, between the six, they contain 71% of the industrial land and 82% of freight-related building areas.

CMAP staff reports on a website map that trucking bottlenecks on regional highways "roughly align" with these areas.

In the map's O'Hare area these include traffic between the Kennedy Expressway and the Jane Addams Tollway (I-90); the Addams from Arlington Heights Road to 53; Elmhurst Road (83) south of the airport through Elk Grove Village and past Bensenville; and Oakton Street from Des Plaines to Mount Prospect.

Another cluster of truck bottlenecks is wedged between the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) on the south and Mannheim Road and the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) on the west, up to the southern end of O'Hare.



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