

3.4 Summary of Formal Consultation Meetings

Following is a summary of issues discussed at the Tier 2 consultation team meetings since April of 1998:

April 24, 1998

Representatives from the following agencies participated in this meeting: IEPA, USEPA, IDOT, CATS, RTA, CDOT, and Metra.

This consultation meeting focused on the issue of moving non-exempt, conformed projects forward across analysis years. USEPA stressed the need to be able to certify that the prior conformity analysis was still valid with the projects being moved forward into an earlier Action scenario. The issue of possible long-term, negative effects of projects was discussed. It was pointed out that since the project is not new, and has been conformed, its long-term effects have been accounted for in later Action scenarios. The difference between this situation and that addressed by the third set of amendments to the conformity regulations (subsequently not implemented) was noted. The third set of conformity amendments would have allowed the addition of an entirely new project, justified by an off-network analysis. This situation involved a project included in the conformity analysis, simply not the correct Action scenario. No resolution of this issue was achieved at this meeting.

May 13, 1998

Representatives from USEPA, IEPA, IDOT, RTA and CATS attended this consultation meeting.

The unresolved issue of advancing projects across analysis years was discussed first. USEPA again emphasized that even though the projects were included in the currently conformed and approved TIP and their long-term impacts accounted for, the region must demonstrate that the conformity determination is still valid. There followed a detailed description of the improved traffic conditions that would result from implementing the projects. Changes in delay and average speeds for all affected movements were presented along with the estimated reduction in emissions. The consultation team concluded that the projects could be implemented and the conformity determination would remain valid.

September 1, 1998

The following agencies were represented at this consultation meeting: FTA, IDOT, FHWA, NIPC, USEPA, IEPA, RTA, and CATS.

Issues regarding the conformity analysis of the update to the 2020 RTP and the FY 2001-2006 TIP were discussed at this meeting. The definition of a "20 year horizon" for the plan was the primary agenda item. No conclusion was reached at this meeting. There is a concern that if the regulations require that the plan must maintain at least a 20 year horizon throughout the life of the plan then the plan update would lapse January 1, 2001.

Staff interpretation is that the 20 year horizon requirement must be met at the time the plan is adopted by the Policy Committee.

Another conformity issue discussed was the proposed timeline and how it matched up with SIP revisions that will be developed within the next few years. The consultation group attempted to coordinate the schedules to minimize the need for additional conformity analyses.

March 4, 1999

The following agencies were represented at this consultation meeting: FTA, IDOT, FHWA, NIPC, USEPA, IEPA, RTA, Metra, Pace, Burlington Northern – Santa Fe Railroad and CATS.

The consultation group first discussed the I-290 reconstruction project in the Hillside area. The scope of the work was detailed for the group to determine if any conformity non-exempt activities were included. The group also discussed the possible removal of ramps on the Kennedy Expressway in the downtown Chicago area.

The twenty year horizon issue was again discussed by the consultation group. Federal DOT representatives stated that even though there is no direct guidance regarding the 20-year horizon issue, they strongly encouraged CATS to use at least 2023 for the plan update. The major problem with just extending the horizon by three years is the quality of the forecasts that will be generated and the diversion of resources within NIPC away from developing the current effort to develop 2030 forecasts. Considering the above issues and recognizing that the 2000 Census would not be out in time to incorporate its new information the consensus of the consultation group was to maintain the horizon year at 2020 for the plan update.

The final item discussed was again the timing of SIP revisions particularly the timing and content of the attainment demonstration budgets.

April 28, 1999

The following agencies were represented at this consultation meeting: FHWA, IDOT, USEPA, IEPA, RTA, and CATS.

The first item discussed by the consultation group was the implication of the March 2, 1999 court ruling settling a lawsuit brought by the Environmental Defense Fund against the USEPA. The representative from USEPA explained that the ruling required USEPA to do the following: 1) publish a finding of adequacy in the Federal Register for those areas that have made conformity determinations using submitted budgets where no adverse public comments have been received; 2) by May 31, 1999 issue interim final rules finding SIPs adequate that do have adverse comments, but EPA believes to be adequate; 3) ask areas where SIPs cannot be found to be adequate to pass other budget tests; and, 4) issue a Federal Register notice for those submitted SIPs already found adequate. Other changes will be implemented regarding the publication of notice of a

SIP submittal, timing of a public comment period, and the time within which a finding will be issued.

Regarding the conformity analysis for the update to the 2020 RTP and the FY 2001-2006 TIP, the consultation group agreed to the analysis years required. The analysis years will be 2007, 2015 and 2020. It was noted that IEPA's NOx SIP budget will be required to be submitted by September 30, 1999, with an adequacy ruling to be out within 30 days. The region would then have 18 months to demonstrate conformity to these budgets. If the conformity analysis for the Plan update / FY 2001-2006 TIP meets those budgets, that would satisfy the requirement.

January 21, 2000

The following agencies were represented at this consultation meeting: FHWA, FTA, IDOT, IEPA, USEPA, RTA, and CATS.

The representative from IEPA presented the 2007 emission budgets contained in the report: *Draft 2007 Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets for the Chicago Ozone Non-attainment Area*. It was explained that the Attainment Plan budgets were developed using a methodology consistent with the 1996 15 Percent ROP and 1999 9 Percent ROP budgets. Controls identified include the federal motor vehicle control program, the national low-emissions vehicle program, the use of reformulated fuels, and implementation of an enhanced vehicle inspection and maintenance program.

Other issues discussed by the consultation group included the timelines for upcoming SIPs, the treatment of Phase I engineering projects not in the RTP, and the review process for the 2020 RTP update / FY 2001-2006 TIP.

May 26, 2000

The following agencies were represented at this consultation meeting: FHWA, FTA, IDOT, IEPA, USEPA, RTA, and CATS.

The consultation team discussed several items at this meeting including the use of Mobile 6 for the air quality conformity analysis, 8-hour non-attainment boundaries, planning assumptions, Tier 2 controls, the status of NOx in Illinois, and the draft planning regulations. The discussion on these items was primarily informational without the need to reach any final decisions, other than the agreement to review the update of the 2020 RTP, the FY 2001-2006 TIP and the accompanying conformity analysis as it becomes available. This will increase the probability of the review process being completed with minimal delay.

USEPA brought up the issue of the use of HPMS in the context of the latest planning assumptions. CATS staff explained the advantages of using published IDOT VMT data as the standard for comparison to model results. Several discussions since the conformity regulations were issued concluded that HPMS is not the most appropriate source for VMT data in this region. HPMS data for the urban areas in northeastern Illinois does not coincide with the non-attainment of planning boundaries, leaving certain areas not

properly represented. IDOT VMT statistics are derived from all available traffic data for the region, thereby eliminating any “hole” in the region. HPMS data is included in the VMT estimates since those sections are included in IDOT’s highway inventory. Additionally, CATS receives Transportation System Center traffic data for all covered expressways that is used to prepare the expressway VMT estimate for HPMS. The data sources for HPMS and IDOT VMT estimates are consistent, but the published IDOT VMT value is directly comparable to the CATS model area, while HPMS is not. Finally, it was pointed out the use of HPMS of other VMT data should not be considered under the heading of latest planning assumptions, since this is actual measured data and not an input assumption.