



MEMORANDUM

To: CMAP Transportation Committee

From: CMAP Staff

Date: August 4, 2017

Re: ON TO 2050: Public Health Strategy Paper

With support from the Chicago Community Trust, CMAP has partnered with the Adler University Institute on Social Inclusion to develop a strategy paper on Public Health to inform ON TO 2050. During the initial phase of this project, CMAP gained a better understanding of the public health landscape. This has involved a review of partners' health plans, an assessment of what peer MPOs are doing to address health impacts, and ongoing engagement with local partners, including a health resource group, CMAP's working committees, and other health equity stakeholders. CMAP, and its partner Adler, is now working with the health resource group to recommend health strategies to consider for ON TO 2050.

Staff will present an overview of the work scope and peer MPO assessment, along with a discussion on how the Transportation Committee can contribute to this effort.

Public Health at peer metropolitan planning organizations

As CMAP staff continue to investigate ways to best incorporate public health into regional planning efforts, a number of peer metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) have developed various strategies and goals that focus on the interactions between health and land use or transportation. Analysis of how these peer agencies incorporate public health concepts into their planning and policy efforts reveals a range of approaches and best practices for CMAP to draw upon for ON TO 2050.

In addressing concerns regarding public health, the majority of CMAP's peer agencies detail active transportation, access to open spaces and parks, environmental pollutants, and health education as opportunity areas to promote community health. Many peer organizations looked at public health from a broad lens, but certain organizations made targeted efforts to promote health among higher-risk segments of the population. For example, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) of the Boston region both make concerted efforts to address health disparities among lower-income individuals. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) pay special attention to address the health needs of older adults and people living with

disabilities. Ultimately, the chosen MPO approach is based on the organization’s unique authority and the local context. As shown below, CMAP categorizes these **approaches to public health at peer MPOs within a range from “Interested” to “Developing” to “Advanced.”**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Planning Agency's analysis of peer agencies

The “**interested**” category identifies regional organizations that make general connections to public health in their regional transportation plans or include health resources on their website.

- For example, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) mentions the health benefits of meeting EPA Clean Air Act emissions standards and walkable communities, but does not provide specific recommendations, goals, or strategies related to public health.
- Additionally, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) created a Health Data Snapshot to understand the geographic distribution of health outcomes. The Data Snapshot offers maps, data descriptions, a Health Disparities Index, and a Community Investment Index (CI2). The Health Disparities Index reviews the relationship of four health-related indicators—overweight/obesity, asthma, diabetes, and high blood pressure—to behaviors partially dictated by development patterns and access to transportation choices. The CI2 links planning and grantmaking allowing planners to target projects that will be most competitive for funding and have the greatest local-area impact. DVRPC also provides teacher resource guides and structured lessons to supplement public school curriculum with health education.
- Though efforts such as snapshots represent a significant effort to support public health, organizations in the “interested” category have yet to take steps to adopt specific principles or goals to improve public health in the region.

The “**developing**” category of regional planning agencies have integrated public health into a regional transportation plan or are in the process of doing so. These agencies also provide health-related information, resources, or toolkits.

- The Mid-American Regional Council (MARC) in the Kansas City metropolitan area includes public health as a specific goal in their plan, “Transportation Outlook 2040”, listing strategies including encouraging active transportation, promoting healthy community design, and attaining federal air quality and ozone standards, among

others¹. Selection criteria for regionally significant transportation projects that support “Transportation Outlook 2040” include five percentage points for promoting an increase in non-motorized travel and an additional five points for reducing precursor ozone emission levels. MARC also includes a “Healthy Living” page on their website, with information for individuals, communities, and employers in topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco use.

- Additionally, the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities region created a “2040 Transportation Policy Plan” that includes a “Healthy Environment” goal and details strategies to decrease congestion, citing the positive impacts on air quality and related health impacts including decreased asthma and heart disease². The “2040 Transportation Policy Plan” also covers water quality concerns, declaring the Mississippi River a public health hazard.

“Advanced” agencies are those with regional plans that make definitive connections between health and land use or transportation and identify how specific diseases can be impacted through policy changes in the built environment. These organizations have also institutionalized the integration of public health into plans and policy by designating staff to work on this topic area. Increasingly, advanced agencies are also beginning to pay specific attention to social determinants of health and how health inequities can be remediated by addressing these determinants.

- MAPC, the regional planning agency in Boston, uses factors such as violent crime, income, racial and ethnic segregation, unemployment, and others to create a comparative index. Moreover, MAPC has a Public Health department that focuses exclusively on integrating public health initiatives into all agency planning, project, and policy work, allowing the organization to provide detailed reports and presentations on public health, including one that directly links Complete Streets to healthier communities. Through this unique approach, MAPC is able to draft targeted approaches and recommendations that promote public health. MAPC’s website also features a data portal with roughly 50 charts and maps regarding public health in the region³.
- Additionally, the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization has incorporated a goal to “Help Local Communities Grow in a Healthy and Sustainable Way” in their transportation plan titled “Middle Tennessee Connected.”⁴ Strategies to achieve this goal center on forming policy, providing funding, and conducting research that support the improvement of health outcomes through active transportation.

To date, CMAP has incorporated public health into a number of agency initiatives. The GO TO 2040 regional plan addressed the topic from the lens of livable communities, partnering with the University of Illinois at Chicago’s School of Public Health and the Chicago Community Trust to generate a “[Health Report](#)” that included Indicators to watch and 12 recommendations

¹ Mid-American Regional Council, “Transportation Outlook 2040.” See: <http://www.to2040.org/>

² Metropolitan Council, “2040 Transportation Policy Plan”. See: [https://metro council.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Key-Transportation-Planning-Documents/Transportation-Policy-Plan/The-Adopted-2040-TTP-\(1\).aspx](https://metro council.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Key-Transportation-Planning-Documents/Transportation-Policy-Plan/The-Adopted-2040-TTP-(1).aspx)

³ Metropolitan Area Planning Council, “Public Health”. See: <http://www.mapc.org/public-health>

⁴ Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, “2040 Regional Transportation Plan”. See: http://www.nashvillempo.org/plans_programs/rtp/2040_rtp.aspx

pertaining to “Integrated Prevention/Health Promotion Strategy,” “Data for Integrated Planning and Monitoring,” and “Public Health Infrastructure”. Additionally, transportation programs like the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program consider emissions and air quality when selecting projects. CMAP has also addressed Public Health through its Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program. Examples of LTA projects that address public health include a [Health Impact Assessment](#) for a busy intersection in the Village of Carpentersville and the [Green Healthy Neighborhoods plan](#) that addresses repurposing vacant parcels in low-income neighborhoods of Chicago. Through these initiatives, CMAP can be reasonably classified as MPO between “**Interested**” and “**Developing**” in regards to Public Health.

Discussion Questions

We have shared examples of strategies MPOs have used to impact health. We would now like to take some time to get your feedback on these ideas, as well as learn how your agency is considering health impacts. Your feedback will help us determine what you think should be prioritized for including in the Health strategy paper.

1. Has public health emerged as a goal within your agency? How does your organization engage with public health?
2. What are some of the challenges to integrating health objectives into the plan(s) of your department?
3. How do we move forward with making the connection between public health and transportation?

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ACTION REQUIRED: Discussion

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