

# More tolls, fees in suburban drivers' future?

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Expanding tolls, taxing miles driven rather than gas purchases, and charging regional fees on vehicle registration are among the ideas to fund roads and transit in the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's latest vision for the future.

Agency officials discussed transportation highlights of the "On To 2050" draft plan Monday. The document is intended to guide growth and development in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties in the coming decades.

The plan also prioritizes projects, an important step because those in the agency's top tier are then eligible for federal aid.

Extending Route 53 north into Lake County was included on a lower tier of projects, but that back burner could be temporary since CMAP revises its outlook every few years.

"We use well-developed facts to determine which are the most meritorious projects," CMAP Executive Director Joseph Szabo said. The [draft plan](#) will be available for public comment in June and voted on by the CMAP board in October.

The list of most significant projects, however, costs more than \$45 billion -- a sum out of the reach of transit agencies and the Illinois Department of Transportation.

To bridge the gap, CMAP is suggesting ideas such as tolling freeways to pay for new construction and improvements; instituting more service taxes, a sales tax in shipping freight, a regional vehicle registration fee or gas tax, charging for free parking in communities; and collecting taxes based on how many miles a person drives not per gallon of gas.

"There's no free ride," Szabo said regarding expanding tolling. "The best approach is for users of the system -- those that reap the benefits -- pay for the cost of maintaining and modernizing the system."

Here's a look at some projects rated highly by CMAP.

- Widening I-80 east of Route 30 and paying for it with some type of tolling.
- Widening I-55 from the Veterans Memorial Tollway in DuPage to the Dan Ryan Expressway. IDOT is leading this project and has proposed paying for it partly by tolling the new "express" lane.
- Rebuilding and re-engineering access to I-190 and O'Hare International Airport from local roads.

- Adding lanes to the Eisenhower Expressway in the Oak Park area to eliminate a bottleneck and using tolls to pay for it.
- Improving the loop-the-loop interchange with I-290 and the Tri-State Tollway.
- Updating tracks and signals on Metra's well-used BNSF line between Chicago and Aurora, which could lead to more express trains.

Like Route 53, the Illiana Expressway to connect I-65 in Indiana and I-55 was included on a lower tier of projects.