


I-80, I-55 improvements among priorities for Chicago agency

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Improvements to I-80 were deemed critical in a regional transportation proposal by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

The agency's "On to 2050" Transportation Plan also placed the proposed Illiana toll road on the back burner. The updated plan calls for \$72.7 billion in regionally significant projects—\$18.7 billion for new capacity, \$50.3 billion for reconstruction and \$3.7 billion for operating costs—including improvements to the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway, additional lanes on I-80, and new lanes and reconstruction of I-55 south from I-80 to Coal City.

Nearly 1/4 of the highways in the six-county region are in "unacceptable condition" and 9.4% of bridges are structurally deficient, while 21.7% of rail cars and 8.4% of buses have exceeded their useful life, the plan stated.

In Will County, one of the biggest changes from CMAP's 2040 plan to its updated 2050 draft was moving the proposed Illiana toll road off the fiscally constrained to the non-constrained list. Illiana was proposed to connect I-55 in Wilmington with I-65 in Indiana. It was noted that improvements to I-80 and I-55 would address the need for the Illiana to alleviate truck traffic on rural roads and fix infrastructure in disrepair.

On To 2050 also addressed the need for additional revenues and tolling, relieving congestion from growing truck traffic, collaboration on new freight developments, and improvements to public transit in the six-county area. The plan recommends that the Illinois Department of Transportation implement tolls on existing expressways after they are reconstructed to help pay for the projects. It also said the state should increase its 19-cent motor fuel tax by 15 cents, and the federal government should up its 18.4-cent gas tax per gallon.

Source: Chicago Tribune