

2030 Regional Transportation Plan

Prepared by Chicago Area Transportation Study
for Northeastern Illinois

Regional Planning Organization for Northeastern Illinois

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THE PLANNING PROCESS

DECISION MAKERS

Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) is designated by the governor of Illinois, in agreement with the regional local elected officials, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for northeastern Illinois.

The CATS Policy Committee consists of representatives from the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, the six counties, the more than 270 suburban municipalities and key providers and operators of public transportation. A listing of Policy Committee members is included on the back page of this summary.

The CATS Policy Committee carries out its responsibilities through the support of the Work Program Committee (members listed on back page), which coordinates the activities of numerous committees, subcommittees and task forces reporting to it. The Policy Committee also works closely with the City of Chicago and the Council of Mayors Executive Committee, which consists of two mayoral representatives from each of 11 regional councils.

During late 2000, CATS, the Northeastern Illinois Transportation Authority and the Illinois Department of Transportation agreed on the broad objectives and responsibilities associated with long-range land use and transportation planning for northeastern Illinois.

Key Planning Themes are identified:

- Regional Transportation Authority
- Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission
- Illinois State Toll Highway Authority
- Chicago
- Department of Transportation
- Counties
- Council of Mayors
- Class I Railroads
- Private Transit Providers

PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Participants in Shared Path 2030 included elected officials, regional and local planning agencies, civic and advocacy organizations, transportation professionals, and providers and residents of the region.

Shared Path 2030 benefited greatly from direct involvement by elected officials. Members of the Illinois General Assembly, as well as elected county and municipal officials, provided valued input and leadership.

Perhaps most of all, Shared Path 2030 benefited from the direct involvement of many residents of the region. Making long-range transportation planning interesting and relevant to someone who simply wants to "get there" is a challenge. As shown in the timeline below, area citizens participated in many ways throughout Shared Path 2030. In addition to two sets of well-publicized community meetings, Shared Path 2030 included focused outreach among community leaders in minority and low-income neighborhoods, an expanded presence on the World Wide Web, and a direct telephone hotline.

Production of two widely aired videos describing the transportation planning process and the RTP recommendations resulted in several hundred residents taking the time to register their opinions regarding the region's transportation future. Each comment received was made available to all Shared Path 2030 participants.

INTENT, SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

The intent of the RTP is to promote efficient travel behavior and accommodate it. It is also the intent of the RTP to promote an efficient urban economy and sustain it.

The RTP's timeframe is "long range", making changes at a regional level many years from being about, which is why this plan projects out to the year 2030. The RTP is updated every 5-6 years to ensure that the understanding and interpretation of regional needs, problems and available solutions are current and correct.

The RTP is principally concerned with "regular daily travel" the plan assesses the demands placed on transportation systems by the workers and businesses that sustain our region's economic health, while at the same time assessing the need to preserve and improve the community and environmental conditions that contribute to our region's quality of life.

The RTP is constrained by available financial resources and air quality requirements. Federal transportation planning rules require that the RTP demonstrate consistency between proposed transportation investments and projected transportation revenues, and Federal air quality regulations require that the RTP conform with state air quality goals.

2030 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Timeline of the planning process:

- 2001: Shared Path 2030 planning process begins
- 2002: Key planning themes are identified
- 2002: Long-range goals and objectives are drafted
- 2002: Transportation proposals are received from throughout the region
- 2002: Draft goals and transportation scenarios are presented to public at community meetings around the region
- 2002: Future regional scenarios are evaluated
- 2003: 2030 RTP recommendations are presented to public at advisory and advisory meetings
- 2003: Financial and air quality constraints are air quality tested
- 2003: CATS open house, NIPCC public hearings, NIPCC advisory committee meetings, and NIPCC advisory committee report
- 2004: Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, Regional Transportation Authority and CATS Final Report
- 2004: US Department of Transportation approves transportation improvement program and air quality conformity determination
- 2004: 2030 RTP Update begins
- 2006: 2030 Update completed

IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AND SETTING GOALS

Shared Path 2030 employed a broad-based approach to determine the RTP's official set of goals. Basic urban planning themes were composed from a combination of technical evaluation, policy research and participant dialogue. Examining these early during Shared Path 2030 provided a context within which meaningful regional transportation goals could be stated.

Regional Transportation Challenges

A range of identified challenges was examined in depth through intensive workshops with topic experts, agency and organization representatives, CATS task force members and interested citizens. The following transportation planning "problem statements" emerged during 12 months of these investigations:

- Mobility and accessibility:** Regional transportation policies, systems and projects affect mobility and accessibility.
- Commercial goods movement:** Efficient movement of goods requires strategic transportation improvements, as well as more thorough incorporation of freight issues into the comprehensive transportation planning process.
- Land use and transportation relationships:** The transportation system can be used to promote efficient land use.
- Community planning:** Regional transportation policy affects the success of community planning efforts. Coordinated community planning can support achieving regional goals.
- Social equity:** Communities that are traditionally under-served and under-represented need special consideration in regional transportation decisions.
- Natural environment:** Transportation decisions should promote the quality of the natural environment.
- Transportation management and operations:** Technological advances can improve traveler information and facility operations. Regional transportation policy should consider the opportunities provided by management and operations planning.
- Public health and safety:** Regional transportation policy should address public health and safety concerns.

EVALUATING FUTURE REGIONAL SCENARIOS

To help develop plan recommendations, Shared Path 2030 formulated four future regional scenarios by which to consider the effects of proposed transportation solutions. Specific evaluation measures played a variety of roles in the plan development process, but primarily they were intended to improve understanding of how the transportation system works and illustrate the relative contributions of the various transportation proposals in achieving the plan's goals and objectives. The four scenarios were examined not to "pick a single approach," but to compare existing evaluation measures and adopt principles from each scenario. The four scenarios are described below.

- (1) Service-intensive:** Capital-intensive transportation strategies that improve user benefits under existing management, operations and capacity conditions. These strategies have the added benefit of allowing quick adjustments to service in response to changes in the needs or composition of users. Examples of these kinds of strategies include transit-oriented development, ITS (Intelligent Transportation System) communications, transit and intermodal coordination, bus and rail service upgrades, bicycle accommodations, walkable interchanges and electronic fare and toll payment.
- (2) System-intensive:** Low-capital-intensive strategies in which limited capital improvements and operation change to the existing system are introduced. System improvements for any mode are typically made in response to the need to make strategic changes in facility operations or in response to changes in technology or demand patterns. Examples of these kinds of strategies include neighborhood streets, ITS management, freight rail management, shared-use arterial design, new bus lines and transit stations, bike and sidewalk networks, new expressway interchanges and high-occupancy-vehicle lanes.
- (3) System additions:** Capital-intensive strategies in which capacity additions are made to existing major highways and rail facilities. These may result in net new capacity in an existing capacity reconfigured for another function. System additions are made in response to capacity deficiencies that result from established growth patterns or changing demand patterns. Examples include context-sensitive community, environmental and management and operations strategies, as well as new arterials, bus rapid transit, rail transit extensions and expressway lane additions.
- (4) System expansion:** Capital-intensive strategies in which significant new segments to the region's major highway and passenger rail system are introduced with the intent of accommodating or managing forecasted growth. These proposals fundamentally change the way travelers use the transportation system, and they have the potential to induce significant land use changes. Because of their large scale, these proposals are subject to elaborate financial design, engineering and environmental reviews. Examples include new regional boulevards, expressway, tollways, commuter rail and rapid transit facilities.

The evaluation of these scenarios showed that, in general, non-capital-intensive approaches improve mobility and accessibility by improving the performance of the existing system in established parts of the region. Capital-intensive approaches also improve system performance, particularly by reducing traffic congestion and providing new transit choices in developing areas. In all cases, context-sensitive community, environmental and management and operations strategies can be used to improve travel choices and community quality.

MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

Regional strategies were most intensively evaluated in the service-intensive and system-intensive scenario evaluations. These strategies provide general policy guidance in two areas: community and environmental strategies, and management and operation strategies.

Community and environmental strategies
Community strategies recommend offering a variety of transportation choices to communities, making transportation improvements that support existing and planned land use, encouraging compact land development, and planning and designing improvements that are sensitive to community context. Environmental strategies focus on ways in which transportation facilities can enhance environmental and environmental strategies. These include "Safe Routes to School," safety for seniors and persons with disabilities and shared-use design and pedestrian safety. The RTP also makes strategy recommendations related to rail, highway and intermodal freight, as well as congestion management and transit service coordination.

Management and operation strategies
Management and operation strategies consist of integrating and coordinating transportation facilities and services to improve transportation system performance. The RTP gives guidance on maintenance and reconstruction of major highways and rail transit, with special emphasis on highway auxiliary lanes and interchanges, interfaces with local communities during road improvement projects, track/signal and rail yard improvements, grade separations and maximizing use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) for both highway and transit improvements. The need for transportation system safety is recognized, and the RTP outlines a range of recommendations related to the safety and security of the system for both motorized and non-motorized users. These include "Safe Routes to School," safety for seniors and persons with disabilities and shared-use design and pedestrian safety. The RTP also makes strategy recommendations related to rail, highway and intermodal freight, as well as congestion management and transit service coordination.

Transit
The RTP recommends these strategic improvements to the region's transit system:

- Traffic signal priority strategies for bus transit vehicles regionwide.
- Additional service on existing bus and rail routes, particularly off-peak and reverse commute.
- Additional transfer capacity and improved coordination at high-demand connection points.
- Additional park-and-ride facilities to encourage increased transit use.
- New bus and paratransit service to currently underserved areas.
- Bus routes with limited stops that run longer distances.
- Community extensions that allow an alternative to short auto trips.
- Short rail extensions and additional sidings to support existing rail operating efficiency.
- Expanded regional network of local, feeder and express buses.

Bicycle and Pedestrian
The RTP recommends strategic improvements to shared-use facilities that foster "positive accommodation" of pedestrian and bicycle design in all transportation projects and services. This includes pursuing improvements that support bicycle and pedestrian access to transit and providing bicycle and pedestrian travel information and promotion as part of freight management and operation strategies applied to the entire transportation system. The RTP also acknowledges NIPCC's Regional Greenways Plan, and the comprehensive regional bicycle and pedestrian planning process, Sales and Spokes, which includes a regional inventory of county and local plans and strategies. The RTP anticipates that Sales and Spokes will provide additional strategic guidance in support of routine accommodation, shared use and dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Freight
By providing multimodal transportation options to more industrial and commercial businesses, the economic benefits to the region from its position as the nation's freight transportation hub can be realized. The following strategies may be achieved through the provision of new capital assets along with the modernization and improved utilization of existing assets:

- Coordinate freight rail operations with commuter rail service and infrastructure projects.
- Reduce rail highway grade crossing conflicts by providing grade separation and at-grade safety improvements.
- Mitigate negative community effects caused by train horns and blocked crossings.
- Establish highway system truck priorities during highway maintenance, reconstruction and expansion projects or to address freight congestion regionwide.
- Correct severe bottlenecks that impede freight mobility and cause inefficient routing.
- Provide continued improvement of "intermodal connector" facilities.
- Provide "freight-friendly" installations, such as truck-only electronic toll collection, pre-authorized and scheduled information/communication systems and truck storage lanes that improve safety.

2030 REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

2030 Forecasted Growth in Households and Employment

Household and Employment Growth by County:

- McHenry County: 174% Households, 135% Employment
- Lake County: 160% Households, 131% Employment
- Kane County: 177% Households, 164% Employment
- DePue County: 111% Households, 128% Employment
- City of Chicago: 114% Households, 116% Employment
- Kendall County (partial): 114% Households, 116% Employment
- Will County: 114% Households, 116% Employment
- Cook County: 114% Households, 116% Employment
- Environmental Sensitivity: 168% Employment

Legend: 2030 Household and Employment (per square mile)

- < 250
- 250 - 2500
- 2501 - 7000
- 7001 - 15000
- > 15000

Legend: Environmental Sensitivity

- Environmentally Sensitive Area
- Higher Sensitivity
- Lower Sensitivity