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 *Introduction*

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Northwest Municipal Conference Transportation Newsletter! In order to better communicate transportation related developments and the transportation activities of the NWMC, we are pleased to present the first in a series of monthly newsletters. Each newsletter will contain reports from the NWMC Transportation Committee, Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee and the Northwest and North Shore Councils of Mayors. In addition, the newsletter will present noteworthy transportation news, developments and a calendar of events. Finally, the newsletter will highlight news and announcements from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and other state and regional transportation agencies. We look forward to hearing your feedback regarding the newsletter as we fine-tune the content and format.

- NWMC Transportation Division

 *Dates to Remember*

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|--------------------|---|
| <b>February 20</b> | <b>Deadline for submitting Full Circle Grant Applications to NWMC</b>                             |
| <b>February 26</b> | <b>NWMC Transportation Committee Meeting—9:00 a.m.</b><br>NWMC Offices                            |
| <b>March 18</b>    | <b>North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee Meeting—8:30 a.m.</b><br>Skokie Village Hall |
| <b>March 24</b>    | <b>NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee Meeting—10:00 a.m.</b><br>NWMC Offices                   |
| <b>March 26</b>    | <b>NWMC Transportation Committee Meeting—9:00 a.m.</b><br>NWMC Offices                            |

 *NWMC Transportation Committee Identifies Regional Priorities*

The NWMC Transportation Committee met Thursday, January 29, and held a lengthy discussion to identify the NWMC's top transportation priorities. The committee's goal was to identify unfunded projects in the NWMC region and use that list to inform state and federal legislators in anticipation of a state capital plan and new federal transportation bill. From a large list of almost one hundred projects, the committee selected Metra's STAR Line, the extension of

Illinois Route 53 into Lake County, extension of the CTA Yellow Line to Old Orchard and the widening and reconstruction of Palatine Road from I-294 to Route 53 as its highest priorities. Additionally, the Northwest Highway Bike Path project was selected to demonstrate the committee's commitment to non-motorized and environmentally friendly transportation. The complete list of projects considered demonstrates the far-reaching and multi-jurisdictional needs of the

transportation network. The priority projects selected and the remainder of the list were approved by the NWMC Executive Board on February 4, with a goal of formal adoption by the NWMC Board on February 11.

The Committee also heard an update on the federal stimulus package currently being negotiated in Congress (see article on page 3). In addition to this needed infrastructure funding,

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Transportation Committee Continued

(Continued from page 1)

the committee directed staff to draft a letter to the NWMC congressional delegation urging them to continue work on a new, multi-year federal transportation bill. Staff also reported that the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) Developments

of Regional Importance process is undergoing a substantial revision to incorporate more quantitative measures for determining a project's potential regional impact (see article below). CMAP will release a revised draft in February for comment by the region's stakeholders.

### On the February Transportation Agenda

The next Transportation Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 26. The committee will likely discuss the federal recovery package, comments on the latest draft DRI process, and the draft letter in support of a new federal transportation authorization.



## Draft DRI Process Undergoing Changes

On January 14, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Programming Coordinating Committee met to discuss the draft Developments of Regional Importance (DRI) process. CMAP staff presented the committee with the strengths and the weaknesses of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) proposal, which is a more quantitative analysis approach versus the initial CMAP draft DRI process, which is a more qualitative approach. Ultimately, the committee decided that the stakeholder comment favored a more quantitative approach

than the initial draft DRI process. Therefore, the committee instructed the CMAP staff to produce a new draft that incorporates the quantitative aspects of the ULI proposal. If the CMAP Programming Coordinating Committee approves the draft in February, then they will release the draft DRI document for a new round of stakeholder comment. The NWMC submitted comments on the initial draft DRI process and staff will continue to monitor the process and solicit feedback for the upcoming public comment period.



## CMAP Congestion Data Visualization

CMAP has posted interesting data and images describing congestion patterns on the region's freeways and tollways. The congestion scans and data were compiled through the Congestion Management Process. Based on the latest data (from 2007), the results show basic congestion, travel time, and travel time reliability information for Chicago-area expressways and tollways that have sufficient in-

strumentation to calculate average travel speed. Although the information posted on the website is of general interest, CMAP can make additional graphic information available on request for use by traffic operations staff and highway engineers. Please contact Tom Murtha, Chief Transportation Planner (312-386-8790 or [tmurtha@cmmap.illinois.gov](mailto:tmurtha@cmmap.illinois.gov)) for additional information.

Web link: <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/cmp/measurement.aspx>

## NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

On January 27, the NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee met and discussed the NWMC Bicycle Plan and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. Committee members presented their 2010 CMAQ bicycle and pedestrian applications. Northwest and North Shore Council communities submitted nearly 20 applications for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

In addition, Jan Hincapie from the Village of Lincolnwood presented two bicycle path projects. The village is currently attempting to railbank an abandoned Union Pacific Right-of-Way (ROW) for the creation of a multi-use path. Railbanking is a method by which railroad corridors that would otherwise be abandoned can be preserved for future rail use through interim conversion to a trail. Lincolnwood is under no obligation to acquire the ROW, but it allows for time to explore possible acquisition, partnership opportunities, and funding options. In addition, Ms. Hincapie discussed a proposed bicycle path within the ROW of Commonwealth Edison. The City of Chicago recently completed the Sauganash Trail, which runs from Bryn Mawr Ave. to Devon Ave., and Lincolnwood is now pursuing an extension of the trail from Devon Ave. to Jarvis Ave. Lincolnwood is planning to enter into a long-term lease with ComEd for the ROW.

The committee is scheduled to meet March 24 and will likely discuss updates to the NWMC Bicycle Plan and the development of the revised *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*.



## American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

On January 28, the United States House of Representatives passed the \$819 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The United States Senate is working on similar legislation with some significant differences in a number of provisions.

### The House Version

The House bill currently includes \$30 billion in funding for highways and bridges, with approximately another \$12 billion in transit funding. The proposed legislation requires that highway and bridge projects adhere to existing federal eligibility and administrative requirements. In order to be considered federally eligible, a project must be on a federal aid roadway facility, contain federally eligible work types, meet federal project development requirements, and be entered in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). With regard to projects being "shovel ready," the House bill was amended to change the deadline for obligating federal funds. The state must obligate 50% of funding within 90 days. If the state fails to obligate 50 percent of funding, then the remaining funds will be redistributed to other states. The second 50 percent of the funding must be spent by summer 2010. In addition, the House legislation stipulates that 45 percent of the highway and bridge funding will be allocated using the existing Surface Transportation Program (STP) formula. While the recovery package goes through the legislative process, NWMC staff is working to understand the implications for transportation spending. Under current STP allocation arrangements, the local Councils of Mayors are responsible for programming a portion of STP funding. To prepare for the potential distribution of recovery package funds, NWMC staff has solicited federally eligible projects

that can be obligated before summer 2010 from the Northwest and North Shore Council of Mayors.

### The Senate Version

As of Thursday, February 5, the Senate version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act had not yet passed. The Senate bill includes \$5.5 billion for competitive transportation grants. This competitive grant program would not be limited to highways and bridges, but includes transit New Starts and Small Starts, passenger and freight rail projects, and port infrastructure investments. Additionally, the legislation recommends just over \$27 billion in highway investments. The bill apportions the funds according to the formula authorized under current highway law for the Surface Transportation Program. Like the House bill, the Senate version splits the funding into two parts. 50 percent of the funds will be required to be obligated within 180 days while the other 50 percent will be required to be obligated within 1 year. The first 50 percent will be apportioned exclusively to states. Unlike the first 50 percent of the apportioned funding, 80 percent of the second half of the funding will be allocated to local jurisdictions in the states. This provision to allocate funding directly to local jurisdictions is significantly different than the House bill's funding distribution.

Congressional leaders have reported that they want to have a bill to the President by mid-February; however, as of Thursday, February 5, the Senate was still debating the provisions of the bill and looking for bipartisan support. Once the Senate acts, a Conference Committee will have to reconcile the differences between the House and the Senate bill. With significant differences between the transportation sections and other sections in the House and

Senate versions of the bill, it is difficult to predict how the final bill will emerge from the Conference Committee.

### CMAP Response

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is also preparing for the implementation of the recovery and reinvestment legislation. CMAP produced "Principles for Infrastructure Investment in a Federal Economic Recovery Package" and "CMAP's Potential Role in the Allocation of Funds for Northeastern Illinois in the Federal Economic Recovery Package." These two documents outline CMAP's preferences regarding the potential recovery package. CMAP wants the package to be timely and strategic, focused on metropolitan areas, comprehensive in scope, and partnered with real reform. CMAP asserts that Northeastern Illinois "should receive 75 percent of the federal funds to our state" because this region contains 75 percent of the economic activity. Regarding their role in the economic recovery package, CMAP believes that it should take a central leadership role in the selection of infrastructure projects because it "has the regional insights and staff capacity necessary to do the detailed study and evaluation so that selected projects achieve the desired near- and long-term outcomes." CMAP staff prepared some draft recommendations for criteria to consider (in addition to local Council of Mayors methodologies) when selecting projects. These criteria are meant to address the intent of the recovery act by considering issues such as job creation and long term value in projects. CMAP's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Committee, as the designated MPO for the region, has final programming authority and can impose criteria on the councils, counties, Chicago, and transit service boards for project selection. The MPO Policy committee ultimately approves projects for inclusion in the TIP.

NWMC staff will continue to follow developments related to the recovery package and prepare for implementation of the final legislation.

#### Recovery Package Links:

NARC Recovery Package Resources - <http://narc.org/news/218/292.html>

FHWA - <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/>

CMAP's Recovery Package Website - <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/blog.aspx?blogid=872>

## HSIP Call for Projects

The Illinois Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) outlines a mission to develop, implement, and manage an integrated multi-stakeholder process to improve the attributes of roads, users, and vehicles to reduce traffic-related deaths and life-altering injuries in Illinois. The Bureau of Safety Engineering is responsible for oversight and implementation of the CHSP. As part of this plan, IDOT is requesting candidate projects for the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) that will be initiated in FY 2010.

Highway Safety Improvement Program funds are provided to address severe injuries and fatalities on all public roads. Specific site or system-wide improvements that reduce severe crashes are eligible for funding. Funds may be used to address safety issues independently without completely reconstructing entire roadway segments or intersections to all of the latest policies and standards. If enabling legislation is passed and signed, IDOT anticipates funding for the local highway system of approximately \$8 million for the HSIP will be available in July 2009.

The federal funding level is a maximum of 90 percent of the total improvement cost for these projects with the local agency responsible for the ten percent matching funds. All phases of a safety improvement project are eligible for this program to include preliminary engineering, land acquisition, construction and construction engineering. The benefit/cost ratio calculation should include all phases for which HSIP funds are requested. The project should be ready to utilize funds in state fiscal year 2010, but multi-year requests will be considered. A proposed funding schedule including all phases of the project with anticipated funding year must be included with the appli-

cation. Any later phases of the project for which funds are requested that will not be ready until a following fiscal year should be clearly indicated on the application. This will allow the department to effectively program HSIP funds and maximize the selection of safety projects. If a project is selected for funding, the notification letter will indicate for which fiscal year each phase has been approved. Information regarding local matching funds or additional funds that will be used to fund each candidate should also be provided in the application. Detailed guidelines for the Highway Safety Improvement Program can be found in the Program Planning and Selection of HSIP Candidate Projects section of the IDOT HSIP policy (effective November 1, 2006). This document is not included with this letter. This online policy, along with all applicable appendices, describes the process and requirements for local HSIP candidates.

Local agencies are expected to cooperate with IDOT in evaluating the effectiveness of selected projects. It is anticipated that IDOT's Bureau of Safety Engineering and Division of Traffic Safety will conduct the detailed evaluation and reporting for selected HSIP projects to the Federal Highway Administration. The local agency should not assume significant cost for evaluation of the project. Proposed projects should be submitted to the IDOT District Bureau of Local Roads and Streets office no later than April 10, 2009. Local agencies will be notified of their selection by the department. Any questions regarding the benefit/cost methodology should be directed to Dave Piper at (217) 785-0720. Other program questions may be directed to Leigh Ann Lareau at (217) 785-5178 or Jim Allen at (217) 558-1793.

**Web link:** <http://www.dot.il.gov/illinoisCHSP/hsip.html>

### *News from the Northwest Council of Mayors*

- The Northwest Council of Mayors member municipalities submitted eighteen CMAQ applications for preliminary review.
- Starting February 9<sup>th</sup>, there will be a call for new projects for the Northwest Council's Surface Transportation Program (STP). This call will cover both new projects which can potentially receive federal recovery package funds (see article on page 3) as well as traditional STP projects. More details on project deadlines will be provided soon.

### *News from the North Shore Council of Mayors*

- The North Shore Council of Mayors member municipalities submitted ten CMAQ applications for preliminary review.
- Despite spending all of its federal fiscal year (FFY) 2009 funding allotment, the North Shore Council continues to aggressively pursue its Surface Transportation Program (STP) through advanced funding. The Skokie Boulevard and Golf Road intersection improvement secured advanced funding, but has been delayed to the June letting. The City of Evanston's Lake Street resurfacing project is also attempting to make the April letting.
- In addition, the North Shore Council is working to evaluate how the federal recovery package legislation will impact the Council (see article on page 3).

## CMAP Offers Full Circle Grant Assistance

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is requesting proposals from the region's Councils of Mayors and Councils of Governments in partnership with local municipalities for Full Circle community mapping and planning projects. Full Circle is a mapping and planning tool that enables communities to collect, evaluate, map, and disseminate parcel-by-parcel information such as land use, property values, building condi-

tion and business types in order to support local planning initiatives. The tool can be employed in various development projects and proposals, including neighborhood/corridor revitalization, downtown redevelopment, housing development, retail attraction/retention, transit-oriented development (TOD), environmental/green initiatives, workforce development, vacant properties inventory, community health and public safety projects, as well as assessing imbalances in the local economy.

CMAP expects to award \$100,000 in grant assistance, with no project award exceeding \$25,000. Municipalities must submit applications to the NWMC by Friday, February 20, 2009. NWMC staff will compile all the preliminary applications for review and work with the applicant(s) to

produce the final application(s). The NWMC will submit the final application(s) to CMAP before their March 13, 2009 deadline.

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