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Transportation Committee Eyes Troubling Impact of State Budget Crisis

On October 29, the NWMC Transportation Committee met and discussed the impact of the state's budget impasse on the region's transportation projects and functions. As reported in previous NWMC Director's Weekly Briefings and Legislative Updates, the state is withholding a significant amount of local pass through funds, including local Motor Fuel Taxes (MFT). A representative from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) told the committee that, while the agency is able to conditionally approve MFT resolutions and estimates, municipalities would be required to provide funding from another source and would be reimbursed if MFT funds are distributed again. See the article below for more details.

In positive federal news, a short-term transportation bill extension recently approved by Congress and signed by President Obama included an extension of the Positive Train Control implementation deadline until 2018. This will allow Metra and freight railroads to continue operating in the region. A Metra representative thanked NWMC for its support of the measure.

Finally, the committee recommended that the NWMC Board send a letter to the Illinois Tollway reaffirming the Conference's support for the Illinois Route 53/120 project. The Tollway Board will consider whether to proceed with an Environmental Impact Statement on the project at an upcoming meeting.

The next Transportation Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 10 at 8:30 a.m. at the NWMC offices.

Agreement on CMAP Funding Reached

Earlier this week, representatives from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) agreed on a process to restore federal funding to CMAP and keep their offices open. FHWA will be able to make direct payments to CMAP while IDOT will retain all their regular oversight responsibilities.

Due to the ongoing budget stalemate, IDOT said it did not have appropriation authority to distribute the federal funds which CMAP depends on for the majority of its operations. Without this agreement, CMAP would have run out of funding and been forced to close by the end of November; jeopardizing state and federal projects. CMAP had not been reimbursed since the beginning of July.



IDOT Outlines Local Guidance for 2016 Maintenance Program

In an October 19 Circular, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) confirmed that, despite the lack of a state budget for fiscal year 2016, local agencies should continue to submit their maintenance resolutions and estimates of maintenance costs. IDOT said it is able to con-

ditionally approve the resolutions and estimates; however, the totals should not exceed a local agency's current unobligated balance and anticipated Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) allotments based on an average MFT distribution from fiscal year 2015. IDOT noted that local funding must

be used to cover any costs above a local's current MFT balance. Finally, the letter cautions that MFT distributions may not resume for some time. Questions on the maintenance resolutions and estimates of cost should be directed to your IDOT Local Roads Engineer.



Dates to Remember

November 12 Elgin O'Hare Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Open House - 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Itasca Recreation Center, 350 E. Irving Park Road

November 17 NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee - 10:30 a.m.

NWMC Offices

December 3 CMAQ Initiation Meeting (See article page 3)

December 10 NWMC Transportation Committee - 8:30 a.m.

NWMC Offices

December 16 North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee - 8:30 a.m.

Skokie Village Hall



Route 53/120 Land Use Committee Approves Strategy Report

The Land Use Committee of the Illinois Route 53/120 extension met on November 5 in *Grayslake* and voted 15-5 to approve a Land Use Strategy Report for the corridor. The report recommends a framework for the corridor's ecological, transportation, land use development and future market forecasts. It also recommends best practices for development in the corridor and ways to link transportation and land use. Most municipalities voted in favor of the report, citing the traffic and economic development benefits of the proposed facility while also

touting the environmental protections which have been proposed. A number of conservation groups along with the Village of Hawthorn Woods voted against the report, commenting that it did not follow the recommendations set forth in the Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee's report from 2012. Most of the public comment at the meeting was also against the report or the project in general.

The report will be sent to the Illinois Tollway Board as they consider whether to undertake an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process on the proposed facility in 2016. Their decision will be based largely on this report and the report completed by the Route 53/120 Finance Committee outlining funding and financing options.

Due to questions raised about the meetings' conformity with the Open Meetings Act, a follow up meeting to formalize the vote will be scheduled for the week of November 9th. The report is available by visiting http://www.lakecorridorplan.org/.



North Shore Council Update

On October 14, at a joint meeting of the CMAP Board and the MPO Policy Committee, four new projects were approved for the North Shore Council of Mayors. Two of the projects will be funded through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program and two will be funded through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

Evanston received CMAQ funding for signal interconnect improvements along Green Bay Road. Skokie received CMAQ funds for improvements along the I-94 interchange at Old Orchard Road. Both projects are expected to ease congestion

in the region. Funds for the two approved TAP projects will be used to construct off-street, multi-use paths; one in *Glenview* along Milwaukee Avenue and Lake Avenue and one in *Skokie* along Old Orchard Road from Harms Road to Woods Drive.

The next meeting of the North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee will be Wednesday, December 16 at 8:30 a.m. at the *Skokie Village Hall*.

Northwest Council Update

The Northwest Council of Mayors Technical Committee will next meet in January. If your municipality received funding for a new project at the October Technical Committee meeting and you have not yet submitted a draft Project Program Information (PPI) form, please contact Mike Walczak to keep your project progressing and to ensure that the Council meets its goal of spending down its STP balance in Federal Fiscal Year 2016.



Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee Discusses New Coalitions and Planning Efforts

On October 27, the NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee met with representatives from the Active Transportation Alliance and Alta Planning + Design to discuss new technical assistance and planning efforts. The Active Transportation Alliance is leading the new Chicagoland Complete Streets Coalition, which is funded by the Cook County Partners in Community Health program. The coalition aims to assist six Cook County municipalities in developing active transportation plans and another eight municipalities (including the Village of Skokie) in adopting complete streets policies. The coalition's inaugural meeting was held earlier this month with the next meeting scheduled for January, 2016.

Joshua Sikich of Alta Planning + Design discussed the Elgin O'Hare Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which is funded through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program and sponsored by DuPage County and the county's Division of Transportation. The plan seeks to increase connectivity in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in ten municipalities surrounding the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway, including NWMC members Elk Grove Village, Hanover Park and Schaumburg. A public open house on the project will be held Thursday, November 12 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Itasca Recreation Center, 350 E. Irving Park Road. Comments may also be submitted online via a survey and interactive public input map by visiting www.eohbikepedplan.com.

The next meeting will be held on November 17 at 10:30 a.m. at NWMC offices.



The Elgin O'Hare Corridor Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Study Area, including NWMC members *Hanover Park, Schaumburg* and *Elk Grove Village*.

Complete Streets Coalition Discusses Goals

On October 15, transportation stakeholders from around the Chicago region met at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) offices in Chicago for the inaugural meeting of the Chicagoland Complete Streets Coalition. The coalition is facilitated by staff from the Active Transportation Alliance and funded by the Cook County Department of Public Health's Partnerships Improving Community Health program.

The committee discussed their desired goals for the coalition, state and federal funding opportunities and, possible future training events. *City of Des Plaines Senior Planner Scott Mangum* discussed the city's 2012 adoption of a complete streets policy. Going forward, the coalition will meet bimonthly and work to share information and best practices with communities, councils of government and community groups throughout the region

CMAQ Project Initiation Meeting

A mandatory CMAQ initiation meeting for agency staff of all new CMAQ funded projects will be held on Thursday, December 3, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at IDOT District One, 201 West C e n t e r C o u r t in Schaumburg.

For more information and to RSVP by Monday November 30 please visit: http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/mobility/strategic-investment/cmaq/initiation-meeting. If your agency is not represented by agency staff, the project will be considered for removal from the program.



RTA Access to Transit Workshop Highlights Suburban Transportation Planning

On October 20, regional transportation professionals gathered at the DePaul University's downtown campus for the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Access to Transit Workshop. The workshop, a partnership between the RTA and DePaul University's Chaddick Institute, brought together municipal and transit agency staff to discuss RTA sponsored planning initiatives that have improved access to the region's transit network.

RTA staff discussed the technical assistance and Access to Transit Funding available through the Community Planning Program, which was created in 1998 to provide planning and funding assistance to local governments. Metra staff detailed a variety of efforts to connect suburban job centers with train stations.

Hoffman Estates Director of Transportation and Engineering Michael Hankey and Pace staff described how the village, Pace and the Illinois Tollway worked together to redesign the I-90 interchange at Barrington Road to include access from the west, transit access and accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians. Representatives from Houseal Lavigne Associates described how the RTA funded Transit and Pedestrian Mobility Plan in Rolling Meadows helped the city and businesses along the Golf Road corridor work together to improve connections to existing transit service in the area and the multi-use trails at Busse Woods. Finally, Niles Village Planner Bruce Sylvester discussed how RTA planning grants helped the village improve the streetscape along Milwaukee Avenue and create a village bicycle and pedestrian plan.



IDOT To Offer Uniform Act Workshop

IDOT and the Federal Highway Administration will be hosting a workshop discussing the Federal-aid-right-of-way process and the fundamentals of complying with the Uniform Act, Federal Highway regulations and State laws. Topics will include project coordination, valuation and appraisals, negotiations and alternate acquisition processes. This workshop is intended for local government employees and consultants who work in the transportation decision making process and who acquire or manage real estate for federally funded transportation projects. This 1½ day workshop will be held in two locations in Illinois:

Illinois Tollway, 2700 Ogden Avenue Downers Grove

Day 1: November 16, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Day 2: November 17,8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Contact: Sheila Derka (847) 705-4291 or sheila.derka@illinois.gov

IDOT, 2300 S. Dirksen Springfield

Day 1: November 18, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Day 2: November 19, 8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Contact: Michael Elder, IDOT(217) 782-3982 or michael.elder@illinois.gov

Prioritizing Needs Along the Central Tri-State

The Central Tri-State Tollway Corridor Planning Council met on October 15 in Oak Brook and prioritized which issues to emphasize in the Council's report to the Tollway Board. Of the nine issues considered, improving congestion in the corridor was the most mentioned. Potential congestion relief options include: congestion pricing; improvements to major interchanges; new and improved transit accommodations; and, increased use of technology to improve traffic operations in the corridor. The other issues which also garnered support were: flooding and drainage improvements; increased access; economic development; noise impacts; freight needs; pedestrian and bicycle access through the corridor; and, corridor aesthetics.

The Tollway has currently only programmed enough funds to reconstruct the road, but would consider additional improvements which have substantial council support. The council also heard updates from its environmental working group, which has focused on stormwater management issues to date, and a summary of lessons learned from other similar planning efforts. These lessons include the need for increased engagement with municipalities and councils of government and working with other transportation agencies on related projects. The council's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10 in Justice. A draft report will be presented at this meeting.



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