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 *Dates to Remember*

- December 15** **North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee—8:30 a.m.**
Skokie Village Hall, 5127 Oakton Street

- January 18** **NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee —10:00 a.m.**
NWMC Offices

- January 27** **NWMC Transportation Committee—9:00 a.m.**
NWMC Offices

 *2010 NWMC Bicycle Plan Recommended for Approval*

In November, both the NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian and Transportation Committees approved the proposed 2010 NWMC Bicycle Plan. Developed in conjunction with the Active Transportation Alliance (ATA), the plan recommends regional bicycle corridors, prioritizes the recommended corridors into three tiers and outlines implementation strategies. Additionally, the plan contains general recommendations for policies and practices that encourage bicycling in and

between Conference members. Please visit the [NWMC website](#) to download the plan and access additional information. The proposed plan will be forwarded to the NWMC Board for consideration at its December 8 meeting. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee further discussed outreach opportunities for publicizing the plan, such as presenting the plan to village boards, city councils, bicycle task forces and park districts. In addition, the Committee discussed

funding opportunities through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and the Cook County Model Communities Grant. The Committee will meet again on January 18 to further consider outreach and implementation strategies for the plan.

 *Transportation Committee Discusses Transit Use*

In addition to consideration of the NWMC Bike Plan, Andy Plummer of the RTA presented the Transportation Committee with the latest system-wide transit ridership information, detailing how the region's transit riders use the system. The committee discussed opportunities for increasing the suburb to suburb commute market with strategies including easier transfers between lines

and providers as well as projects including the STAR Line. Rick Mack of Metra briefed the committee on the UP-North Bridge project (see article on page 2). Metra will undergo a strategic planning process beginning in January and the Conference has been encouraged to provide feedback to Metra on its priority projects. The NWMC Transportation Committee will be on call for a possible

meeting in December, with the next regularly scheduled meeting set for January 27 at the NWMC offices.



Metra Meets with Local Officials to Discuss UP-North Bridge Replacement

Metra officials met with municipal representatives and state senators Susan Garrett, Jeffery Schoenberg and Terry Link on November 8 in *Highland Park* to discuss the delayed bridge replacement project on Metra's Union Pacific North line. Metra's Acting Executive Director William Tupper described the new plan which allows Metra to run a full schedule throughout the project. Metra staff also explained obstacles to triple tracking the line south of Evanston, including \$100-110 million in track upgrades, plus the need for improved signaling, additional crossovers and increased train

yard capacity.

The municipal representatives and senators stressed to Metra the need for greater communications for this project and all other construction and planning projects. On November 18, Rick Mack of Metra briefed the NWMC Transportation Committee on the UP-North Bridge project.



News from the Councils of Mayors

Northwest Council of Mayors

The Northwest Council of Mayors is accepting applications for new projects. Visit the [Northwest Council of Mayors website](#) to download the application, which are due to Mike Walczak by Friday, January 14. The next Northwest Council of Mayors Technical Committee will take place January 28 at 8:30 a.m. at the *Arlington Heights Village Hall*.

Northwest Council communities had two projects on the November letting: *Schaumburg's* Springinguth Road reconstruction (STP funds) and *Des Plaines'* bike network improvements (CMAQ funds).

Five projects from the Council area are expected to be let in January: intersection improvements at Golf Road and New Wilke Road in *Rolling Meadows* (STP and state funds), at Busse Road (Illinois 83) and Greenleaf Avenue and Busse Road and Pratt Boulevard in *Elk Grove Village* (STP funds), and bike path projects on Irving Park Road and Higgins Road in *Schaumburg* (CMAQ funds).

North Shore Council of Mayors

The North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee is scheduled to meet on December 15 at the *Skokie Village Hall*. The committee will review the status of Surface Transportation Program (STP) projects programmed in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2011, which began on October 1, 2010. The North Shore Council has programmed \$5.1 million towards seven projects. The only construction project programmed in FFY 2011 is the Skokie Blvd. at Old Orchard Road intersection improvement project in the *Village of Skokie*.

DuPage County Council of Mayors

In November, the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference selected 24 new projects sponsored by 14 municipalities and DuPage County to receive a total of over \$20 million in federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds. The new projects have been incorporated into the DuPage County Council of Mayors FY 2011 - 2016 program, which totals nearly \$57 million in federal funds. For more information on the new projects, contact Kama Dobbs (kdobbs@dmmc-cog.org).

SAFETEA-LU Headed for another Extension

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which is the federal surface transportation authorization, expired on September 30, 2009; however, Congress appears headed towards another extension. Congress and the President have already extended SAFETEA-LU five times. The latest extension is set to expire at the end of the year. Little visible progress has occurred in moving the Congress towards a long-term surface transportation authorization in the last two years. Crowded out by other national issues, Congress has spent little time considering a new surface transportation authorization. All these factors point to another extension of SAFETEA-LU before the end of December. Reports and preference among legislators has varied regarding the length of the extension, but it is likely to range between six to twelve months.

Currently, the federal government is spending more money on surface transportation than it takes in through its motor fuel tax. As a result, Congress and the President have approved multiple transfers from the General Fund to the Highway Trust Fund. The bi-partisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform (deficit commission) recommended an increase in the federal motor fuel tax, while transportation experts agree that the nation needs to increase transportation investment; however, there appears to be little political support in Congress or the Obama Administration for raising this tax, which has remained constant since 1993.

Further complicating the prospects of a long-term surface transportation authorization is the election turnover in Congress. With Democrats holding narrow control of the Senate and Republicans set to control the House of Representatives, the [Transport Politic](#) has proclaimed, "there is little chance that this group of legislators will be able to pass a multi-year transportation bill either in 2011 or 2012."



CMAQ Call for Projects Delayed, Project Selection Options Being Discussed

The CMAQ Project Selection Committee at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has delayed issuing a call for new projects as its members work with CMAP staff to review current project selection procedures. As a result of the recent adoption of the Go To 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan, the Committee and CMAP staff want to ensure the CMAQ program implements the goals of the 2040 Plan, in addition to the federal requirements to fund projects which reduce congestion and improve air quality.

Among the options being discussed is a modified call for projects, wherein the Project Selection Committee would rely on input from CMAP Committees to identify components of local and regional plans that would make good CMAQ projects. An approach such as

this could benefit bike projects in the NWMC area due to the recent NWMC Bike Plan update. However, NWMC and other COG staff and other implementing agencies are strongly encouraging the Committee to keep open the option for municipalities to apply individually for projects as well.

Another strategy being discussed is using a five year program, rather than the existing one or two year program, to allow for more complex projects to be implemented successfully. This approach is similar to what is done by the Councils with Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds.

Overall, new projects will likely be scored on Go To 2040-based indicators in addition to air quality measures used in the past. CMAP staff is working to identify which indicators would be ap-

propriate for CMAQ projects and to ensure they are all quantifiable.

The CMAQ Project Selection Committee will next meet on December 14. NWMC staff will make sure that its members are aware of all new developments and is ready to assist communities in assembling successful applications for this important funding source.



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