



# NWMC Transportation Newsletter

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## Dates to Remember

- December 10**      **NWMC Transportation Committee - 8:30 a.m.**  
NWMC Offices—*please note this is the second Thursday of the month*
- December 15**      **NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee - 10:30 a.m.**  
NWMC Offices
- December 16**      **North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee - 8:30 a.m.**  
*Skokie Village Hall*

## Congress Passes Multi-Year Highway Bill

On Thursday, December 3, the U.S. House and Senate voted to approve a \$305 billion, five-year surface transportation bill with just a day to spare before funding was set to expire on December 4. The bill, known as the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, is funded through the federal motor fuel tax and approximately \$70 billion in offsets from other areas of the federal budget. The bill does not increase the 18.4 cents per-gallon federal motor fuel tax, which was last increased in 1993.

Negotiations have been ongoing for weeks to reconcile the differences between a six-year bill passed by the Senate this summer and a similar six-year bill passed by the House in November.

A key point of contention in the talks was that both of those bills authorized funding for six years but only guaranteed funding for three. The FAST Act, in

contrast, authorizes funding for all five years. If signed, the FAST Act will be the first federal surface transportation bill since 2005 to provide more than two years of funding. Since then, surface transportation funding has been authorized through a series of short-term patches.

Under the new bill, road and transit funding will remain relatively stable with 5% and 8% increases respectively over MAP-21 levels. The bill reauthorizes the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and will increase the percentage of STP funding distributed to local governments. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) was also renewed.

IDOT estimates that over five years, the bill will bring in \$7.5 billion for Illinois highways, an average increase of \$134

million annually. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) meanwhile, estimates that Illinois transit agencies will see an 11% boost in annual federal funding.

The bill sets aside \$199 million to help railroads comply with the federally mandated Positive Train Control (PTC) program. It also calls for enhanced safety measures for railroad tank cars. Those tank cars carrying crude oil or ethanol will be required to be built with a thermal 'blanket' to protect from heat or flames in the event of a derailment.

The White House has indicated that President Obama will sign the bill.





## State Transportation Funding Update

On Wednesday, the Illinois House of Representatives approved Senate Bill 2039 (Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie) by a vote of 107-1-1. The legislation was amended to contain the same provisions from House Bill 4305 (Rep. Marty Moylan), including disbursements of Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) funding. The Senate is scheduled to be back in session on Monday, December 7 and the bill appears to have bipartisan support and the endorsement of Governor Rauner.

There has been no timetable announced for the release of the funds, but municipalities will again be able to count on MFT funding for upcoming road construction projects and snow removal costs.

The NWMC offers a most sincere thank

you to Representative Moylan for all of his hard work on restoring local revenues and to all of the NWMC State Representatives who voted with the interests of their local governments.

In related news, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reached an agreement last month to restore federal funding to CMAP and keep their offices open. Until a state budget is passed, FHWA will make direct payments to CMAP so that the organization can maintain its current operations, while IDOT will retain their regular oversight responsibilities.



## Illinois 53/120 Land Use Committee Approves Report

The Land Use Committee of the Illinois Route 53/120 extension met on November 12 in *Libertyville* and voted 15-5 to approve a Land Use Strategy Report for the corridor. This meeting was needed due to questions raised about conformity with the Open Meetings Act at the original meeting on November 5.

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 Haw-

thorn 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. The public comments were split between citizens and groups against the report or the project in general and those that touted the economic and transportation benefits of the project.

The report will now 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. The report is available by visiting <http://www.lakecorridorplan.org/>.

## NWMC Transportation Committee News

The NWMC Transportation Committee did not meet in November. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 10 at 8:30 a.m. at NWMC offices. CMAP staff will discuss the development of the next comprehensive long range plan. The goal of the presentation is to touch base with local officials and give them an overview of the next plan process and how to become involved.

In other committee-related action, on November 18, the NWMC Board approved a letter recommended by the committee reaffirming the organization's support for the proposed Illinois Route 53 Extension and the Route 120 Bypass in Lake County. The letter was sent to Illinois Tollway Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom in anticipation of the Tollway's consideration of an Environmental Impact Statement on the project.

## North Shore Council Update

The North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee will meet on Wednesday, December 16 at 8:30 a.m. at the *Skokie Village Hall*. Please note that this is the third Wednesday of the month. Any change requests or items to add to the agenda should be sent to Planning Liaison Brian Pigeon by Tuesday, December 8.



## FHWA Rule Change to Increase Local Design Control

In a move that will allow greater flexibility for local communities, the Federal Highway Administration has proposed streamlining its roadway design process. The proposed rule change would remove 11 of the current 13 controlling design criteria for roads with speeds of less than 50 mph. For roads on the National Highway System (NHS) with speeds of 50 mph or less, engineers will now need to consider just two criteria; design speed and structural capacity. This change recognizes that many of the existing criteria have little relation to urban roads and are more applicable to rural roads, freeways and large arterials.

Currently, if a community wishes to install a bike lane, line a street with trees

or add a curve to a road, it must receive an exemption from the FHWA. The streamlined process provides municipalities with greater flexibility to design roads that are more appropriate for their setting as well as streets that safely accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users.

A detailed description of the rule changes may be found here. The NWMC Executive Committee has approved a letter from the conference supporting the proposed changes. Comments on the proposed changes will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. on Monday, December 7. The proposed rule changes can be viewed at: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/pressroom/fhwa1566.cfm>

### 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.

### Bike/Ped Committee December Preview

The NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee did not meet in November. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 15 at 10:30 a.m. at NWMC offices. The agenda will feature staff from the *City of Evanston* and their consultants discussing planned bicycling improvements in the Sheridan Road corridor as well as Executive Director Ed Barsotti of Ride Illinois (formerly League of Illinois Bicyclists) who will discuss their re-branding as well as local, state and federal bicycling topics.



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