



COOK ♦ DUPAGE ♦ KANE ♦ LAKE ♦ MCHENRY ♦ WILL

August 7, 2023

Ms. Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
433 West Van Buren, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

Re: PART and Collar County Positions

Dear Director Aleman:

Thank you for your continuing efforts on behalf of the region regarding mobility recovery. We appreciate the number of one-on-one discussions you have had with counties throughout the region and we recognize that your obligation to the Illinois General Assembly (ILGA) is quickly approaching. In the spirit of cooperation, the counties offer the attached document that reflects common positions regarding the principles of Governance (how to implement it), Finance (how to pay for it) and System Services (what we want).

As representatives of over 5.5 million residents, the counties feel that it is absolutely imperative that our shared opinions on mobility recovery are included and reflected in the recommendations presented to the ILGA. Our respective positions on Finance and Governance are laid out clearly. We agree that the “fiscal cliff” as reported by CMAP and RTA is profound and will require long-term solutions. However, it is our belief that new or expanded financial mechanisms must be accompanied by enhancements to county services and mobility. Counties are generally opposed to re-purposing roadway funding to transit without a direct connection between the roadway and transit service. Diversion of motor fuel taxes to transit is not favored as road agencies are facing a similar fiscal cliff due to the erosion of motor fuel taxes with the emphasis on the electrification of vehicles. There is a shared belief that solving the fiscal cliff through revenues alone is not the way forward. The region must seriously consider operational savings that reduce short- and long-term burdens on transit agencies and reduces the focus on increasing revenues.

As to governance, the counties understand that CMAP is investigating a variety of structures. Suburban counties strongly believe that other models involving the counties must be considered in order for the counties to be fully invested in the governance of transit in the years ahead. It is incumbent upon the ultimate oversight agency to incorporate suburban stakeholders in strategic operating and capital decisions in the coming years.

The counties represented in this letter look forward to working with CMAP over the next few months, detailing our ideas, and helping craft a report to the general assembly that is truly representative of opinions held throughout the region.

Sincerely,



Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Board President



Deborah A. Conroy
Chair, DuPage County Board



Corinne M. Pierog
Chair, Kane County Board



Sandy Hart
Chair, Lake County Board



Michael Buehler
Chairman, McHenry County Board



Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant
Will County Executive

enclosure

Background

In response to COVID and its effects on mobility in the region, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has undertaken a multi-year effort under the Mobility Recovery Initiative. At the same time, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) developed a strategic plan (*Transit is the Answer*) that promoted a new vision for transit in the region – one that attempts to develop new systems, evolve services, and create a valued, competitive, and safe environment for people.

During COVID, federal support was received in three separate instances to sustain the operations of the service boards (CTA, Metra, Pace, RTA). The money received was instrumental in offsetting revenue losses stemming from the precipitous decline in ridership. With 50 to 90% lost in farebox revenue across the service boards, many routes would have been discontinued without the federal funding. Federal funding is scheduled to be exhausted by the end of 2025. However, ridership is not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels for some years after, meaning that the service boards will have a significant funding gap to simply maintain the system as it is. This gap has been called the *fiscal cliff* and has been estimated to be nearly \$730 million in 2026. This gap is projected to widen in future years. Through the work of CMAP and the RTA, the region has come to recognize that transit is on the precipice of making some very difficult choices.

In the decade preceding the pandemic, the combined annual operating budgets of the service boards was approximately **\$2.2-\$2.8B**. 2023 Expenses are expected to be in the **\$3.58B** range and, by 2026, the combined operating budgets are projected to increase to nearly **\$3.9B** or almost **40%** more than pre-pandemic levels.

Based on input from Pace and Metra, their share of the projected \$730M fiscal cliff is approximately **\$110M (including paratransit) and \$200M**, respectively, or about **42%** in FY 2026. Specific data for each service board for FY 2027 and beyond has not been shared and it is not apparent whether this split between the service boards remains constant or increases. It would be helpful if this information could be shared.

In addition to the forecast transit fiscal cliff, there is a projected fiscal cliff for highway funding as the primary fund source for surface transportation, motor fuel taxes, is expected to continue to erode at an accelerated rate due to fleet and personal vehicle conversions to alternative fuels, notably EV. The issue facing our region and state is broader than how we fund any single mode. We must look at how we fund transportation to ensure a sustainable and reliable revenue stream.

CMAP and the region have been tasked by the Illinois General Assembly to provide a report related to public transit in northeast Illinois. The report will be informed by the recommendations that flow out of three Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) subcommittees. The subcommittees are addressing aspirational goals related to the system the region wants, how to pay for the existing and future systems and the governance of that system. CMAP is also conducting one on one interviews with regional stakeholders including the counties. A draft of the ILGA required report is anticipated to be released at a special call joint MPO Policy Committee and Executive Board meeting on **September 13**. Then a final vote by the MPO Policy Committee will occur at the annual joint meeting with the Executive Board on **October 11** ahead of the the January 1, 2024 deadline.

There will be few opportunities for the counties to contribute ideas and needs prior to the Draft being produced. The recommendations that follow represent a consensus opinion on county positions relative to the main regional talking points.

Proposition #1. Governance

The PART “How to Implement” subcommittee is evaluating a spectrum of governance models. It is clear from recent CMAP presentations that the governance system that exists today will not be considered moving forward. Nor will a system that disaggregates the service boards with no regional oversight. New ideas that have been floated: 1) A stronger regional coordinating agency with centralized fare policy, financial stewardship and capital funding authority, 2) Stronger agency with additional authority to plan, program and implement state of good repair and expansion projects, and centralize planning functions; 3) A strong regional entity that integrates all service boards as subcommittees under the entity’s Board, and 4) A strong unified agency with no service board identity under the agency. It is unclear how county and suburban interests would be represented in a stronger regional entity, but centralized decision-making has often favored City interests over others.

Statement 1. Investigate governance models that align with the mobility needs of county suburban counties.

The region must consider additional governance structures that meet the needs of the 5.7 million people living in the suburbs and account for post-pandemic travel patterns. The counties suggest a model that consolidates service boards and allocates more control to county elected officials. The creation of a regional coordinator and operator focused on paratransit, call and ride, ride share, on demand and non-fixed route services should be considered. Because of the vast differences in funding, operating and capital needs, service, and market niches, the region must consider the case for stronger suburban transit governance models with representatives comprised of county stakeholders.

Statement 2. Improved communication, coordination and planning between highway and transit agencies is essential.

Reform should include integrating counties, local experts and transportation agencies such as IDOT and ISTHA in the development of transit projects, programs, and route adjustments. This reform should manifest itself as a permanent working group that would meet annually or semi-annually to consider recissions, route changes, schedule changes, services, equity, local supportive infrastructure, property acquisitions, coordinated investment, etc.

Proposition #2: Financing

The PART "How to Pay for It" subcommittee is considering many existing and proposed funding sources with the intent to address the estimated \$730M "fiscal cliff" that is expected to manifest itself in 2026 after federal transit operation support abates. What is not discussed is the widening gap in operating funds in years beyond 2026. Historical analysis shows average annual revenue increasing at a rate of 1.5% per year while expenses are increasing at a rate of almost 2.25% per year. Increases in costs during the pandemic and post-pandemic inflationary period are at least double the rate of the previous decade.

Statement 1. New financial mechanisms must be accompanied by operational saving options.

PART discussions have been built around the notion of the need to transform transit service paired with a list of financial options that focus on increasing costs to our residents. With a system that has a current annual operating cost of nearly \$3.5 billion, 40% greater than pre-pandemic levels and growing, we owe it to the region and our residents to understand what forces are driving this significant increase and to consider options that reduce operating costs and increase cost efficiencies while considering short- and long-term financing fixes.

Statement 2. Benefits to Counties Commensurate with Financial Contributions

Many of our collar county citizens contribute to the RTA Sales Tax fund without having access to or use of transit services. While it is noted that transit is a public good and functions to elevate economic conditions throughout the region, the counties expect commensurate services to be offered for the benefit of suburban citizens.

Statement 3. Safeguard existing funding and amend use of TRF.

Counties are opposed to diverting existing state and local motor fuel tax funds and RTA Sales Tax funds. These funds, which will face a fiscal cliff in a decade or less due to vehicle electrification, are being used by highway agencies to make roads safer and improve non-motorized accommodations such as bike paths and sidewalks, and to provide transit improvements such as first-last mile connections, bus stops, and paratransit services. Use of revenues from tolls, managed lanes, or HOT systems on Expressways/Tollways where transit is **also** a mobility option should be prioritized. Transit was allocated 20% of the Transportation Renewal Fund (TRF) as part of the Rebuild Illinois Capital Program. Counties recommend that legislation be amended to allow service boards to utilize this fund in the short term for operations in addition to capital needs.

Statement 4. Sustainable fund sources for all modes are critical to a strong, resilient, transportation system.

Any funding mechanisms being considered for transit operations need to be sustainable and indexed where feasible. Motor fuel taxes that are essential for both the highway and transit systems are predicted to substantially diminish over time and should not be considered a sustainable fund source, long term. While there has been a prioritized focus on transit funding, given the predicted erosion of motor fuel taxes, we encourage a broader discussion and recommendation of how we should fund transportation, in general, regardless of mode, going forward.

Proposition 3. Services

The Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) subcommittee for “The System We Want” is considering some of the following: improved service delivery (vehicles and frequency), fare systems, fare levels and affordability, transit accessibility for disabled and seniors, safety and security, regional rail model, demand responsive services and land use/development.

Statement 1. Request access to transit beyond traditional fixed route bus and commuter rail.

Access means implementation of transit systems that are responsive to suburban daily needs including inter-county services, services to Justice40 communities, OnDemand services, development of options to extend the reach of Metra and Pace fixed routes, and consolidation and integration of Dial-A-Ride and Township sponsored services under a general suburban mobility authority. This vision includes amending inefficient route systems and schedules that have been in place for decades and repurposing existing services to meet new demands.

Statement 2. Integrate ride share services.

The counties urge the coordination of the county rideshare services across borders, reconciliation and alignment of fare structures and program policies, and the development of ticketless, seamless, transfers between the rideshare services and Pace and Metra transit systems. Under this umbrella, the counties believe that extension of TNC subsidy programs to non-paratransit trips will complement formal services.

Statement 3. Strongly support efforts to integrate and modernize the existing fare systems.

The region needs to be building a fare system that is accessible to all public modes of travel. The system should be easy to use, include a process that allows end-to-end fare payment across modes, allows transfers, and incorporates regional equity initiatives through discounted fares. The region should strongly consider discounted costs for multi-mode travel and cross-mode subsidy when people must use TNCs to complete their journey.



CITY OF CHICAGO

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

September 22, 2023

Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
433 W. Van Buren St., Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

Re: Draft Plan of Action for Regional Transit for Northeastern Illinois

Dear Executive Director Aleman,

Thank you for your team's leadership in assembling the Draft Plan of Action for Regional Transit for Northeastern Illinois. The draft plan presents a vision that highlights qualities of "the transit system the region wants." It then explains that significant additional revenue will be necessary to achieve this system. Finally, it offers proposals for governance changes to the region's transit service providers to implement the system the region wants. As we work together to envision a more comprehensive and coordinated regional public transportation system, we must ensure that vision equitably centers the needs of the region's current and future transit users.

The most significant policy proposal in the Draft Plan of Action relates to governance of the region's transit service providers. Both options proposed in the draft report recommend a more consolidated regional transit agency with increased centralization of decision-making over funding allocation and service planning. How a more consolidated and centralized structure will or will not result in decision making that better serves the people and places in our region who can and do use transit the most will depend on how transit priorities are established and in turn what transit services are delivered for the region's transit riders.

As the draft report notes, public operating funds for CTA, Metra, and Pace are currently derived from a variety of regional sales taxes and then allocated by a statutory formula to each agency. These formulas provide a way to budget predictably and transparently for all three service boards and their riders. Similarly, if the region uses an alternative model for distributing transit funding, it will also need to ensure it provides predictability and transparency. We will achieve the "the system we want" by focusing these conversations on the needs of the transit users including exploring the following:

- how will regional transit priorities be set,
- how will funding be allocated to serve the travel needs of current and prospective transit riders, and
- how will metrics establish equitable service for people and places in the region that are most reliant on transit or that are best positioned to achieve the mobility and opportunity benefits that can come from improved transit service.

CTA serves an overwhelming majority of regional transit rides, and most of those rides are in the City of Chicago. There are certainly opportunities to improve the current funding formulas, and as we do so we must ensure that changes result in improvements that directly benefit the people in our region who can and do use transit the most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Carney".

Thomas Carney
Acting Commissioner, CDOT



September 22, 2023

Ms. Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
433 West Van Buren, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

Re: Plan of Action for Regional Transit

Dear Director Aleman:

CTA appreciates the work that CMAP staff has conducted in response to being tasked by the Illinois General Assembly with developing recommendations regarding our region's public transit system. We are at a critical moment for transit in the region's history, and CMAP's efforts to engage stakeholders for input provided important forums to highlight the pivotal choices facing our region.

While the current circumstances are unprecedented, the narrative taking shape in both the report and associated discussions are haunted by a history of inequity. There is one singular issue above all else that is at the root of our region's transit challenges: a decades-long lack of sufficient funding. To attribute the region's challenges to anything other than a funding shortage is to perpetuate a narrative that will – at best – serve as a distraction to the funding crisis we face, and – at worst – deepen the disparities of opportunity and access plaguing our region by claiming that it is governance and management issues that are the premier drivers of our challenges.

To that end, CTA applauds CMAP for presenting funding levels that begin to capture the level of operating funding needs of the region. This is an important step in shifting understanding regarding the actual operating financial need of the transit agencies, and it demonstrates how efficient and creative CTA has been in continuing to function in a deeply underfunded environment. This, however, is just the first step to remedying this longstanding inequity. True solutions lay in the correction of a discriminatory distribution formula. While the report acknowledges the formula needs to be corrected, the work of getting to that solution still lays ahead. And significantly, the report is also silent on both the racially informed history of how the current formula came to be, and how that disparity has negatively impacted Black and Latino residents over the past decades.

The CTA system has historically faced serious structural financial challenges that were caused by a regime that institutionally underfunded the system. That systemic ill was put in place by the Illinois General Assembly 40 years ago as part of a legislative deal to bail out the region's transit system. This debate occurred under the backdrop of a downstate and collar county controlled state legislature, Chicago's first African American Mayor Harold Washington and the City's "Council Wars." The resulting legislative agreement came with strings attached that were in

place to ensure CTA's and the Mayor's influence was always controlled ultimately by other entities. As part of the deal, the Legislature replaced the RTA Board with a new, suburban-controlled fiscal regulatory board with veto power over the budgets of the Service Boards. The deal also came with an unjust and uniquely restrictive farebox recovery requirement that meant that the RTA system must recover 50 percent of what it spends from the farebox to access the state operating funding it needs to survive.

The 1983 plan also established a new operating funding formula that divided sales tax revenues between CTA and the Service Boards that was based on geographic boundaries and retail sales, not ridership, service levels and other performance-based criteria. As a result, CTA currently provides more than 80 percent of all transit trips in the six-county RTA region, but only receives 49 percent of regional public transportation funding. Prior to the 1983 legislation, CTA received more than 70 percent of available transit funding.

We know that this compounding lack of operating funding support has had a disparate impact on CTA riders, the majority of which identify as an ethnic or racial minority, as CTA is challenged in providing the level or quality of service these riders deserve, ultimately impacting their access to jobs, education, and other opportunities. This legacy funding structure of the region's transit system has led to decades of inequitable outcomes for black and brown people in terms of access to employment opportunities and the number of jobs reachable within a 45-minute commute.

And forty years since the 1983 legislation, I fear we are doomed to repeat the same inequitable policies. The combination of ignoring the injustices of the current distribution formula while focusing instead on alleged governance issues as the primary aspect needing correction has created a report and public dialogue that harkens back to periods in our region and nation's history that we all would like to think we have progressed past. Each and every one of the recommendations for improvements – in service coordination, fare policy, and the rider experience – are all rooted in a lack of financial support for transit. It would be a grave mistake to spend the coming months and years focused on restructuring our region's systems; this is a near impossible task to practically accomplish given the complexities of our service delivery. And given the lack of awareness of our racially informed history thus far in this process, there is great concern that such a governance solution would produce an even further pronouncement of inequity in our region.

Rarely has there been such an opportunity to correct historical inequities than the one CMAP and the Illinois General Assembly have at this juncture. The future economic potential of Chicago and region rides on these decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dorval R. Carter, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dorval R. Carter, Jr.
President, Chicago Transit Authority

CC: John Roberson

From: Frank Beal
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2023 10:26:24 AM
To: Erin Aleman
Subject: Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART)

Erin:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the PART report.

I think the CMAP staff, and the Steering Committee, have done a fantastic job of addressing an extremely important and complicated issue. You have effectively made the case that the transit system needs more money and a redesign of its structure and powers of implementation. The two issues must be addressed simultaneously. Addressing one without the other would be a mistake.

My only comment is that the section on implementation falls short of offering a clear path forward.

Implementation is far more than organizational charts. In order to achieve the very laudable recommendations of the system we want, the powers, jurisdiction, duties, policies, AND governing structures of the service boards need to be amended. It is not simply a choice between two simple organization charts.

The implementation section of the PART report essentially defaults to the organization charts. Option #1, by definition, will require a careful review and amendment of all of the enabling legislation for the service boards as well as the RTA.

Option #2 appears almost, but not quite, like business as usual, with a slightly strengthened RTA. The evidence you have provided, which is further described in the ENO report, indicates that past efforts to "strengthen " the RTA have not worked or have been ignored. Further, the RTA has powers that have never been fully used. Forty years ago, the RTA was designed to be an administrative agency, with virtually no authority to shape the policies, resources, or operations of the service boards. It is not clear that your option #2 would significantly change that reality.

Therefore, I would recommend that you delete Option #2 before it is forwarded to the General Assembly. If that is not feasible at this late date, I would ask that you at least be clearer as to how a strengthened RTA will in fact work to achieve the system we want.

Frank Beal

To: Erin Aleman, Executive Director, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
From: Stefan Schaffer, CMAP Board Member
Date: September 22, 2023
Re: CMAP Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART)

To Director Aleman –

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to enhance the CMAP Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) draft report, released on September 6th, 2023.

We face unprecedented challenges to ensure the long-term solvency of our region’s transit system. Ridership has decreased in recent years due to unforeseen events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant rise in work-from-home arrangements. Federal funding has helped fill the gap; however, this has served as a short-term fix that will end in the coming years. As you are aware, we must address the looming “fiscal cliff” of over \$730 million annually.

While the fiscal cliff and other financial issues are top of mind – including diminishing revenue sources, an over-reliance on farebox dollars, and insufficient funds to address the capital needs of the system – we must also confront other longstanding issues as part of any reforms.

Our region’s transit system must **address enduring inequities**, so that all Chicagoland residents are able to pursue economic and recreational opportunity, regardless of their race, income level, disability status, or where they live.

Our region’s transit system must **eliminate the politics of decades past**, which have contributed to our current moment of crisis. This means re-examining statutory funding formulas, the farebox recovery ratio requirement, and transit service boards, and whether they are adequately serving our region’s transportation needs.

Our region’s transit system must **tackle the existential crises of our time** – like the climate and affordability crises – and center these in its design. We must support climate-friendly and affordable forms of transportation like rail, bus, and bike and be cognizant of our ongoing investment in transportation modes that are costly and exacerbate the warming of our planet.

Bold action is needed in this moment, and we cannot fall back on the status quo.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Stefan Schaffer

Topic	Comment
Revenue	Given the growing nature of the budget shortfall this region’s transit system (\$730 million in 2026 and over \$1 billion in 2030), I support pursuing the transformational investment option (\$1.5 billion in new public revenue to support transit operations and at least \$400 million annually in capital investments) to ensure the region’s system is well-positioned for long-term sustainability.
Capital Needs	It would be helpful for the report to speak with greater precision about the capital investment needs of the system. Perhaps there is an opportunity to expand upon the challenges that would be addressed by the \$400 million in annual dollars, so that this figure does not get lost as part of any reform package at the State level that would also seek to simultaneously close the budget gap.
Durable Sources of Revenue	It would be helpful for the report to identify other potential durable sources of funding to help diversify the funding mix within this revenue category. Currently, the expansion of the state sales tax base to include additional services currently represents \$315 million of the necessary \$540 million, which could pose a high risk in the success of any reforms should this not be palatable at the state level. While this recommendation language can remain the same, clarity around alternatives would be appreciated.
Climate-Friendly Revenue Options	For revenue options more greatly aligned with the region’s climate goals , such as road usage charges (RUCs), tolling, and cordon pricing, the report does not appear to emphasize the climate benefits of these approaches. I would encourage adding more language to this effect to help bolster the importance of shifting to these types of over time in alignment with previously stated regional climate goals.
Equity and Climate Metrics	On page 6, I would strongly suggest incorporating equity and climate metrics as part of the “baseline principles for reform” section (and other relevant sections of the report, as needed). These could either be named explicitly on their own or called out as a potential subset of “updated performance metrics”. This will help add a level of specificity to what we mean by “performance” and avoid an overly prioritizing “efficiency” at the expense of critical equity and climate goals and outcomes, a topic that was covered in discussion at our September Board meeting.
Funding Formula	I strongly support the shift away from fixed, statutory funding formulas as outlined on page 6 of the report. This structural shift will help mitigate the risks posed by unforeseen events (such as a global pandemic) and allow decision makers to be more nimble in their approach. Currently the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) provides over 80 percent of the transit rides in the region, while only receiving 49 percent of the distribution formulas. In the near-term, this figure should be increased as part of any update, while preserving a baseline floor for Metra and Pace to ensure successful operations.
Farebox Recovery Ratio	I strongly support lowering the current farebox recovery ratio requirement of 50 percent . As the report states on page 97, “the mandated 50 percent fare recovery ratio has become increasingly challenging for the service boards to achieve in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and its ongoing effects.” As offered on page 101, this figure should not be locked into State statute and should be flexible over time, at the discretion of the regional entity. These structural shifts will help mitigate the risks posed by unforeseen events and allow decision makers to be more nimble in their approach.

<p>Governance – Pensions, Labor negotiations, and debt in Option 1</p>	<p>It is not fully clear at this time what the effects of merging pensions, labor negotiations, and debt under an integrated regional agency would entail, as stated on page 106. I would caveat how these are currently presented as distinct “Regional corporate functions” on page 103, drawing attention to the need for “additional analysis and key stakeholder engagement” as mentioned on page 106 to ensure there aren’t significant potential unintended consequences of an integrated approach (e.g., unintentionally diminishing the bargaining power of employees under current arrangements). Perhaps an asterisk could be added next to “Pensions” and “Labor negotiations” on page 103 to encourage the reader to refer to this language on page 106.</p>
<p>Governance – Option 1</p>	<p>I would encourage making a clear recommendation to explore how to go about establishing thoughtful representation within a consolidated regional entity’s board and agency leadership. This should draw heavily upon existing indicators that would help “right size” the approach (e.g., current size of transit agencies, proportion of rides provided by transit agency, ridership by geography, etc.).</p>
<p>Governance – Option 2</p>	<p>I would encourage making a clear recommendation to explore how to best enhance representation on Service Boards under this option to afford the opportunity for greater regional coordination and alignment in approach.</p>



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
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TONI PRECKWINKLE
PRESIDENT

September 22, 2023

Ms. Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
433 West Van Buren, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

Re: Cook County PART Comment Letter

Dear Director Aleman:

I am grateful for the work you and your staff have put into the Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) report. It develops thoughtful responses to the fiscal crisis the transit system in the Chicago area faces following the COVID-19 pandemic. Cook County strongly supports many of the recommendations, as they align closely with the goals of the County's own transit plan, which calls for increasing ridership, making the system more seamless and focusing on the needs of the most transit-reliant communities. While the report presents a compelling case for additional funding, I believe the report must take a stronger stance as it relates to transit board structure and governance.

I applaud the report's recommendation to expand reduced fare programs to include riders with low incomes. Adopting such discounts would make the region's transit fares more equitable and would mitigate some of the negative effects caused by future fare increases. This is a key next step to operationalize transit equity across our region and build upon the success of our Fair Transit South Cook pilot.

I also support the PART report's focus on improving bus speed and reliability. We strongly support the bus priority planning, building staff capacity at roadway agencies, and revising state design manuals and performance measures as needed.

Fare integration remains a top priority for Cook County. The report showcases how critical this initiative is and highlights the progress transit agencies have already made. We need to keep the momentum for integration moving forward.

But to do all this, more public funding is needed for public transit. If we want transit to better meet the needs of our residents and support access to a robust workforce for our businesses, we need to pay for it. I support the bold \$1.5 billion funding package outlined in the report, although I know that it will not be easy to accomplish. Sustainable funding sources for all transportation modes are critical to a strong, resilient transportation system. While the report rightly focuses on transit funding, given the predicted erosion of motor fuel taxes as electric vehicle sales increase, we encourage a continuing discussion of how to fund transportation more generally.

However, new transit funding cannot come without reform. The basic structure by which transit funding is distributed has not changed in 40 years while mobility needs have changed dramatically across the region since then. I agree that, as the PART report calls for, more of the operating funding should be allocated through a regional discretionary process, based on appropriate criteria that can respond to changing needs.

I also believe that the report needs to be clearer about governance reform. At present, the transit system has 47 board members across four boards, appointed by 21 elected officials. This does not promote accountability or clarity of vision.

Of the options to restructure the boards as presented in the report, I favor the integrated regional transit agency option (option 1). This bold approach holds the maximum potential for transparency and efficiency as well as responsiveness to local needs.

The report also includes an option to strengthen a re-envisioned RTA (option 2) which I believe requires much more detail to gain a better sense of its potential benefits.

Lastly, your criteria for board membership should reflect what the report is trying to achieve. The criteria should reflect the fact that any type of transit service has benefits for the whole region. The major appointing authorities should each be represented on any transit board. Each of the options will require a full rewriting of the current legislation, and this should be clearly identified.

CMAP has risen to the task set before it and has prepared a strong report on a difficult issue. I look forward to working with you and with the General Assembly on next steps.

Sincerely,



Toni Preckwinkle
President



**DUPAGE
COUNTY**

DEBORAH A. CONROY
County Board Chair

630-407-6060
chair@dupageco.org

September 21, 2023

Ms. Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
433 West Van Buren, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

Re: DuPage County comments on Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART)
Draft Report

Dear Director Aleman:

Thank you for affording the region the opportunity to comment on the Draft PART report. DuPage County respects the tremendous effort you and your staff have exerted this year to produce this document. Moreover, your outreach and update effort throughout the development of the report has been significant and very well received.

DuPage County staff and I have reviewed the Draft Report. I would like to enumerate, briefly, some of the principles the County feels strongly about. With respect to governance, DuPage County remains supportive of a stronger RTA with separate executive service boards. DuPage County also believes in a greater role for paratransit and rideshare services, and for regional roadway agencies, in the overall context of governance. Furthermore, the County believes that because of the service aspirations of the plan and the financial lift that is being asked of the whole region, greater suburban representation on the RTA Board must be considered.

As to Finance, the County remains squarely behind the principle that financing the system we want shall continue to be substantially supported by users of the system. We are also supportive of fare equity and managing the impact of fares on seniors, students and paratransit users.

Finally, DuPage County supports the re-imagining of suburban transit, ancillary services and transit infrastructure that increases access to mobility options across the region, especially the suburbs that disproportionately lack availability to existing transit services. We are firmly supportive of efforts to integrate fares and



**DUPAGE
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DEBORAH A. CONROY
County Board Chair

630-407-6060
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administrative functions that make it easier for users to schedule whole trips, pay on one platform and acquire transfers on inter-modal inter-regional journeys.

As we have stated, DuPage County stands ready to work with the General Assembly, CMAP and the service boards to create a greater and re-imagined system for the whole region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deborah A. Conroy".

Deborah A. Conroy
Chair, DuPage County Board

From: Carolyn Schofield
Date: September 22, 2023 at 3:27:44 PM CDT
To: Erin Aleman
Cc: Laura Wilkison
Subject: Re: Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART)

Erin and Laura-

First, thank you for all of your time and efforts on PART. I know it is a huge undertaking. I wanted to summarize my comments on the PART even though I believe I have already brought all of them to your attention.

- I have concern that the order of which we should be viewing things may be reprioritized by the General Assembly (and others). We need to keep focus on The System We Want, How do we pay for it, and then How to Implement it. In that order.
- It should be stressed that far more work needs to be done to understand the impact and determine the scenario choices.
- The governance piece is similar to consolidation. There has been a great deal work on consolidation at the State level and local level. When I headed a task force the biggest issue with consolidation is that all of the entities are starting at different points. This case is no difference. Each service board has different contracts (Services and union), liabilities, assets, funding, etc. In order to fully consolidate them there should be some equity achieved first. Some of the recommendation being made are based on the ideal scenario as if we were starting from scratch. However, we are not at the foundational stage. We cannot figure out what is best for the future of transit without fully considering the past. The CTA is a concern. From what I understand the funding formula does not align, their debts and liabilities are greater than other boards. These should be equalized first if they are going to be all brought under one over arching board. For these reasons I do not think that is the best solution for this situation *jus my two cents).
- One comment made by a board member was “efficiency does not equate to equity” but I think we can achieve both or at least close to it. Hopefully you can guide the legislators into the decisions needed to achieve this.

Again, thank you for all of your work on this.

Have a great weekend-
Carolyn Schofield



September 22, 2023

Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
433 W Van Buren Avenue, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

RE: Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) Response

Dear Ms. Aleman:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on CMAP's Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART), which developed comprehensive and visionary recommendations to address transit funding, operation, and governance issues in our region. The plan is an impressive document that outlines our current challenges and suggest ways to overcome them, and should provide Springfield with the guidance it needs to transform public transportation in our region. We applaud you for thinking big, being bold, and not being afraid to emphasize that greater funding is needed to do the job right.

We do, however, believe that the current draft does not adequately address some of our concerns. We will outline those below.

The Plan addresses the crisis that prompted this effort – the looming fiscal cliff that is expected in 2026 as federal COVID relief funding runs out before ridership, and therefore fare revenue, returns to pre-COVID levels. It also identifies the operating and capital costs of implementing other changes that will create the system we want. But we would like to see a greater recognition of the fact that our current capital funding streams have long been inadequate to meet our state of good repair needs. Maintaining our infrastructure is an important precursor to more exciting systemic changes. While the report considers some capital funding, that funding is limited and will not address our state of good repair backlog of critical infrastructure projects (cars, locomotives, bridges, stations, tracks, signals, etc.). A world-class transit system requires real investment.

Metra is pleased that CMAP supports Metra's vision to become a regional rail service provider as a key element of PART. As we work toward that vision, we need to ensure that both capital and operating funding are available to bring this vision to fruition. Metra views regional rail as an evolution from commuter rail, with service transitioning on different rail lines based on customer demand, operational feasibility, rolling stock availability, and fiscal resources. Solving the near-term operating funding gap is essential to fulfilling this vision, but it is only one step in the process.

As PART makes recommendations regarding changes in transit governance, there should not be an inference that the current fiscal cliff is a result of the RTA governance structure. The RTA governance structure has served the region for more than forty years and has facilitated consensus-building around key issues and regional representation. The region should continue to focus on opportunities to increase coordination on service delivery, fare policy, capital investment, and many other issues.

It's important to note that there are many complicated issues that will need to be addressed if transit governance is further consolidated, including the following differences among the service boards:

- Different pension systems, retiree health insurance benefits, and pension obligations

- Different debt obligations and different plans to address those debt obligations
- Different employee benefit systems, including participation in Railroad Retirement vs. Social Security
- Different agreements with freight railroads and other entities
- Different commitments to regional projects like the CREATE Program

The efficiencies that are sought through governance reform need to be compared against the challenges of addressing these and other differences and the financial implications that they involve, to avoid any unintended consequences of consolidation. The response to address the fiscal cliff should focus on a more sustainable and equitable system and increasing public funding for transit operations. While finding funding solutions are challenging and complex, they pale in comparison to the challenges and complexity of the governance issues, and as such any changes to transit governance will require more time to be fully vetted, explored, and agreed upon. Pursuing changes to transit governance could risk finding a timely solution to the region's transit funding needs.

Metra has previously provided comments on the published policy white papers, and we appreciate CMAP's consideration of our feedback to date. In addition to those comments and the overall feedback provided here, we have attached more specific comments. We have also included five specific questions that our Board of Directors posed at its Sept. 20 meeting.

Metra is committed to working with CMAP, the Illinois General Assembly, CTA, Pace, and RTA as well as all the other impacted governments, agencies, and officials to help identify the best solutions to our current transit fiscal crisis. We applaud these initial efforts and hope that they can build a framework for a consensus solution to allow us to deliver the world-class transit system that our region demands and deserves.

Sincerely,



Jim Derwinski
CEO/Executive Director

Attached: Specific Comments on Draft PART Report
Questions Regarding Consolidated Transit Governance Raised by the Metra Board on 9/20/2023

- p.1 The report should begin with a public- and legislature-friendly executive summary that lays out the recommendations. This document is very detailed and contains lots of useful technical information. However, it can be difficult to find the key recommendations for service, funding, and governance in the report.
- p.12 The report mentions that the \$2.6 billion in state bonds cannot resolve the region's annual operating shortfall. The funds obtained from those bonds were used for capital projects to bring selected pieces of infrastructure to a state of good repair, but the funding fell far short of meeting the system's state of good repair needs. There has been a chronic underfunding of regional transit infrastructure, which these bonds only began to address. This significant gap in capital funding needed to cover state of good repair needs is not sufficiently addressed in the PART plan.
- p.31 There have been questions about where the \$200M from fare increases and operating efficiencies will come from or how it would be generated. We would like to see more details illustrating the revenue projections that add up to near \$200M and the assumptions behind this estimate.
- p.35 The fare integration discussion is interesting, but do all the details belong here? It has the potential to dilute other key findings. Note that the process to develop integrated fares will be challenging, complicated and expensive – potentially undermining some of the revenue projections.

Aligning fare structures for similar trips does not take into account differing operational costs. For example, by the nature of the type of vehicle, heavy rail is much more expensive to operate than rapid transit or a bus route. How does aligning fare structures impact fare box recovery and/or any state funding Metra would receive? Is this considered in the \$200M assumed to be provided by fare increases and operating efficiencies?

- p.47 Regional rail: This revision reflects a better understanding of the regional rail service model compared to the whitepaper, including the benefits and challenges. However, some challenges are still not fully represented: Metra does not have a vast commuter rail network. We have a dense concentration of railroad tracks in Chicago, most of which are owned by freight railroads. The amount of infrastructure to facilitate regional rail is significant, but it may need considerable capital improvements that would have to be determined, based on the service level. At this time, Metra has not estimated capital costs. All 11 of Metra's rail lines have some level of shared infrastructure. This is a complex operating environment, and we cannot simply add trains to meet regional rail service standards. There are also likely labor agreement issues that will need to be considered. Note that Metra has no plans to fully electrify its diesel-operated rail lines and instead plans to pursue zero-emission locomotives and trainsets to achieve similar benefits at a fraction of the cost.
- p.49 Metra already has more stations than any other rail operator in North America. While more stations can provide additional access to the network, more stations can have a downside by slowing service, which can make it more challenging to attract riders to the system. Infill station opportunities are very limited and there should be a focus, instead, on TOD and infill development near connecting transit routes.

None of the recommendations address the problem of getting slots from freight railroads to be able to run more trains, which is one of the biggest obstacles to develop regional rail service.

- p.55 Accessible routes to transit stops are important to provide sufficient access and potentially decrease demand on paratransit special services. However, sidewalk and roadway infrastructure on these accessible routes have literally hundreds of jurisdictions in the region. They are outside the purview of the transit boards. Supporting CMAP's efforts for municipalities to develop ADA transition plans and advocating funding sources for their implementation seems like a next logical step to achieve this.
- p.70 The underpinnings for the assumption that fare increases and operational efficiencies can raise \$200 million annual are unclear. Significant fare increases would greatly add to the challenges of recovering ridership lost during the pandemic.
- p.83 It is advisable to complete equity analysis of the impacts of these the proposed new taxes and fees on lower income populations. Although we understand that there will be impacts of new taxes/fees to all populations, the options selected should consider the impact to economically at-risk populations.
- p.94 Achieving consensus on governance reform is likely to be significantly more challenging than revenue reform. Consider a parallel path approach to achieving success so that changes to governance and funding could proceed independently from one another.

Questions Regarding Consolidated Transit Governance Raised by the Metra Board on 9/20/2023

1. How long did it take MTA to convert their agencies and were there any lessons learned from the conversion we can avoid?
2. Who will control land redevelopment? Many planners want the transit development to be focused in downtown areas. How would that impact areas outside of downtown Chicago and into the city neighborhoods and suburbs who also want to develop their areas around Metra stations?
3. The RTA pension for RTA, PACE and Metra employees is separate from the CTA's pension and if the state or counties want to attract other employees, they also have different pensions, funding and retiree health insurance benefits. Moreover, Metra is part of the Railroad Retirement Board and not part of social security. With the super entity option, how will everyone's pension and railroad benefits be impacted and how can we prevent our employees from leaving to join another railroad to meet their 30-year pension goal?
4. CRD has purchase of service agreements with various railroads: NIRC, BNSF Railway, Union Pacific Railroad, and the Northern Indiana Commuter District. Will the superagency be handling these agreements?
5. The CREATE program has been a successful effort between private railroads and public agencies like Metra involving joint capital improvement projects. Will the regional agency be taking over similar capital-intensive railroad agreements involving the largest railroads in the country?



Melinda J. Metzger
Executive Director

September 22, 2023

Ms. Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
433 West Van Buren Street, Suite 450
Chicago, Illinois 60607

Dear Ms. Aleman and the PART Steering Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer input on the draft Plan of Action for Regional Transit report and to comment on CMAP's recommendations. I recognize the time and effort that went into crafting these documents and appreciate the CMAP team's diligence. Allow me to first offer some general input on PART and then on the report itself.

- First, all three service boards are efficient, well run, and compare favorably to our peers in other major US metropolitan areas. Data presented by CMAP over the course of this year (as well as the chart on page 68 of the report) prove that there aren't major performance problems to be solved by a reform effort.
- Second, the cause of the RTA system's "fiscal cliff" is the COVID-19 pandemic, not mismanagement or a lack of interagency coordination. In fact, nearly every transit system in America is facing a similar challenge in regaining lapsed riders and the ongoing reduction in fare revenue.
- Third, Pace recognizes the need to adapt our services to meet the changing transportation needs of a region emerging from the pandemic, and we have already implemented a long list of service innovations that better serve our customers while ensuring we continue to be a good steward of taxpayer resources.

Pace is a proven innovator as well as a model of fiscal stability. For decades, we've taken bold and innovative actions to diversify Pace's family of services beyond our fixed bus routes—such as our longstanding vanpool program, bus-on-shoulder service, Pulse rapid transit lines, On Demand services, and dial-a-ride partnerships with many different units of government. More recently, we have recognized the shift in post-pandemic commuting patterns and are already addressing those rider needs through our VanGo, Pace Connect, and transportation network company (TNC) options. Pace has unique challenges because of the geographically and economically diverse nature of the large region we serve, but we are already rising to that challenge with recent successes.

On the topic of governance reform, a few points are worth noting:

- The structure created by 1983 RTA act allows suburban policymakers control over suburban transit service and suburban tax dollars. The current Pace Board structure offers accountability to suburban policymakers and the disability community, through the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, and reflects geographic diversity.

- Our current structure is already the result of consolidation of multiple suburban operators into what became Pace in 1984. It is also true that other US metropolitan areas have many more transit agencies than Chicagoland does. Our transit governance is already streamlined by comparison to many of our peers. More importantly, one size does not fit all. What works in New York or Europe may not be appropriate for northeastern Illinois.
- Coordination of transit service, procurement, marketing, and construction projects—where and when it makes sense—is already happening. Furthermore, taxpayers get value from the synergy between the variety of service types within Pace’s operation, including traditional fixed route bus services, express services, vanpool, On Demand, dial-a-ride, and ADA Paratransit.

While Pace never shies away from being bold, now is the time to engage in a thoughtful and ongoing dialogue with all affected parties—Service Board leadership, lawmakers, and others—on how to secure adequate funding for our transit system and the effects any governance change would have on transit operations in all parts of the diverse northeastern Illinois region.

The governance reform option which creates a single mega-agency raises grave concerns when it comes to efficiencies, cost savings, and the future of suburban transit. How would transit funding be allocated? How would capital planning respond to suburban needs? Would our suburban communities see less representation and resources? How much money, if any, is a consolidation projected to save? The PART report does not document any purported savings and doesn’t fully recognize the immense undertaking required to operate one of the largest and most diverse transit systems in the country.

We know the creation of one large mega-agency would come with its own unique set of challenges. Combining all three Service Boards into one also has its less obvious costs. There are contractual labor issues and disparate federal regulations, as well. We need to stay focused on the immediate crisis—the fiscal cliff—and support a regional transit system that is gaining back riders, collaborating on new ways to deliver public transportation, and responding to its customers. A new governance structure at this time would add a layer of uncertainty to an already precarious situation and only serve to delay the forthcoming improvements to the system.

The recently published draft PART report was a major undertaking which explored many different subjects, some of which Pace leadership have called attention to over many years. The authors acknowledge on page 106 that “additional analysis is needed” on the governance recommendations. While I understand your legislatively-mandated deadline, we believe this process was rushed, and undertaken without enough input from the experts who operate our systems on a daily basis. It was also clear from the joint meeting on September 13 that there is no consensus from the voting members on this topic. We are troubled that the CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committees vote in a few weeks on a report that will have significant consequences on how public transit in our region is funded and operated despite the authors’ admission of the uncertainty surrounding the effect the proposed governance changes would have.

Pace welcomes financial solutions that can address the immediate fiscal crisis and put northeastern Illinois’ transit agencies in a stronger position to continue to innovate, collaborate, and build the world-class transit system our region deserves. Well before the pandemic began, Pace recognized residents’ desires for a responsive, multimodal transit system that could get them where they need to go at all hours of the day in our region. For decades, we’ve taken bold and innovative actions to provide transit riders affordable and accessible options, whether they’re headed to the office at 9am or returning home

from working the third shift. We've worked together with Metra and the CTA to provide holistic options for our transit riders, from our VanGo vans stationed at Metra and CTA parking lots to jointly developed capital investments in our shared transit hubs like the Harvey Transportation Center.

We know our riders, and we know they want equitable and affordable transit options. In collaboration with Cook County and Metra, Pace is a proud partner in *Fair Transit South Cook*, a successful pilot program that reduced fares, enhanced Pace bus service, and integrated fares with Metra's Rock Island and Electric lines. We worked with CTA to recently deliver integrated unlimited ride passes, including a lower-cost monthly pass. The shared Ventra fare system, now a decade old, is a national model for interagency fare coordination. Our region is incredibly diverse, and Pace and our sister agencies have evolved to continue serving those needs within our limited budget.

Through decades of work providing transportation to our region's people with disabilities, we have continually improved service to that community and enhanced the technologies that enhance their user experience. We've worked with DuPage, Lake, Kane, McHenry and Will County leadership to enhance demand-response transportation access for seniors and people with disabilities. Within the past few years, Pace's TripCheck tools provide information about every paratransit trip at riders' fingertips. Our partnership with the Transit app sets Pace up as a "mobility as a service" provider and has already enabled several of our demand-response services in the app's trip plan results. Additional technological advances benefiting ADA Paratransit riders are forthcoming and any changes to the region's transit systems should not negatively impact that progress.

The state and federal governments have placed their trust in Pace's leadership in recent years through major capital investments which benefit suburban bus and paratransit riders. Pace is underway with many important projects in all parts of northeastern Illinois, creating good paying jobs as we improve the riding experience and job access for those who rely on transit. Our ongoing improvements to passenger facilities, garages, and rapid transit lines and our conversion of ten facilities and more than 700 buses to become a zero-emission fleet are being successfully deployed, and those positive developments should not be stalled by governance changes that offer an uncertain future.

The pandemic has intensified challenges, but Pace is responding through partnerships and innovation. Combined with our fellow Service Boards, we operate one of the most efficient and largest regional systems in the country in a region with diverse land use and population. We compare favorably to our peers on performance measures, even as our region gets less funding per capita than most other major metropolitan areas. Pace needs financial solutions that can continue our momentum, not hinder it. Pace has made considerable progress in recent years and will continue doing so in 2024 and beyond.

As our region's transit systems approach the fiscal cliff, new funding is the most important item for the PART report to address and for the Illinois General Assembly to solve. Regarding the future funding needed to support our regional public transit system, we are pleased that CMAP recognizes that funding beyond the \$730 million annual gap is warranted to fill that gap but also expand service beyond today's status quo. To reiterate, suburban commuters—who now represent two-thirds of the region's population—are clamoring for more service, not less, and Pace stands ready to provide the innovative transportation solutions that meet the suburbs' post-pandemic needs. But, we need the funding to be able to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this PART report. We look forward to finding a legislative solution that provides adequate funding for transit options throughout this large and diverse region we all serve.

Sincerely,



Melinda Metzger
Executive Director



Memorandum

175 W Jackson Blvd
Suite 1550
Chicago, IL 60604
312 913 3200
rtachicago.org

To: CMAP
From: RTA
Date: 9/22/23

RTA Comments on Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART)

Thank you to the PART steering committee and CMAP staff for your months of hard work developing the PART report. We appreciate your continued dialogue with RTA and the transit operators. The latest draft reflects much of the feedback we shared throughout the process, including the need to fully address the projected \$730 million budget gap, and the need for the state to fully fund existing programs like ADA paratransit service and free and reduced fares.

Public transit plays a critical role in advancing regional economic, climate and equity goals. Our transit system is an economic differentiator for the region – linking talent to opportunities and spurring growth. Amidst a climate crisis, transit currently provides more than one million rides per day while contributing less than two percent of the region's transportation emissions. The transit system is a critical tool for the region to address a legacy of racism and segregation that has left people of color, people experiencing low incomes, and people with disabilities with limited access to critical services and opportunities. Decisions about transit funding are decisions about equity and about the future of the region's economy and climate.

This is why the region's comprehensive plan – ON TO 2050 – features commitments to doubling transit ridership from 2018 levels, reducing transportation emissions, and growing the portion of non-single occupancy vehicle trips. We cannot achieve progress on shared regional goals without a fully funded, reliable, and accessible transit system. With sustainable funding, we can work together to build the truly world-class transit system that the people of the Chicago region deserve.

Following are additional points of feedback as the final report is considered:

- **Chronic Underfunding:** The problem statement in the executive summary should be revised to address the historic underfunding of the transit system, which predates the pandemic. The issues and challenges the transit system is experiencing today are fundamentally tied to how it is funded. The funding structure developed in 1983 has never provided enough funding to fully support regional transit operations, limiting

opportunities for regional coordination because resources are so tight. Subsequent reforms never dealt with this fundamental issue. Now, the pandemic has further exposed this problem and we have an opportunity to advocate for legislators to correct these mistakes and develop a truly sustainable and equitable funding structure. This must be our focus as we work with elected leaders to address the projected fiscal cliff over the next two years.

- **State of Good Repair Need:** In addition to the operating shortfalls, the executive summary should more clearly acknowledge the system's outstanding state of good repair needs to rebuild and upgrade existing infrastructure. Rebuild Illinois and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law have made a big impact, but we need more sustainable capital funding to improve speed and reliability across the current system. This must be addressed as we work to close the operating budget gap and consider expansion projects.
- **Reforming Land Use and Street Design:** The legislative actions recommended in the report largely look at the transit system in isolation and miss the connections between transit ridership, land use, and street design. State leaders can enact major policy change linked to climate goals that would reform how we design our communities and our streets that would help grow ridership and improve quality of life. These policies are outside of the control of transit agencies and require leadership from roadway agencies, municipalities, counties, and state leaders. Without significant progress in these areas, the state would be limiting the impact of the transit system and putting a ceiling on how much we can continue to grow and improve.
- **Menu of Revenue Options:** The report should present and analyze various revenue options as a menu rather than assembling them into specific funding packages. It's important to avoid eliminating revenue options or putting too much emphasis on a specific package at this stage given political uncertainty and the lack of clear regional consensus. Instead, we can present the range of options and analysis to legislators for them to weigh. In addition, we are concerned about including an estimated \$200 million annually from fare increases and cost savings in all packages. Reasonable and timely increases in fares can help close the gap but increases of the magnitude needed to raise close to \$200 million could inhibit ridership growth and exacerbate current funding challenges. Cost savings should continue to be pursued but their potential yield is limited given the operators are highly efficient as compared to their peers, as the report highlights.
- **Ongoing Collaboration:** The funding and governance sections of the report should address how stable funding could lead to greater coordination and collaboration across agencies, independent of structural reform. The pandemic initiated an unprecedented number of shared initiatives among the region's transit agencies. The COVID relief funding coupled with a lifting of the farebox revenue requirements provided

temporary relief from fare revenue pressures and opened the door to significant progress on fare integration, fare affordability, service coordination, and joint capital projects. A sustainable funding structure that's less reliant on fare revenue and more stable would lead to much greater progress.

- **Governance Reform:** In addition to the structural reform options, the governance recommendations should include ways legislators could incentivize greater coordination and progress on regional goals under the current structure. The RTA and transit operators are eager to work with regional and state partners to pursue reforms and efficiencies that will strengthen the current approach to service delivery, fare policy, capital investment, and many other issues. We encourage lawmakers to consider changes that will challenge the current structure and incentivize collaboration and progress on regional goals while balancing the diverse interests of the entire RTA service area. But these discussions should happen in the context of understanding the revenue and resources the system will have available. We cannot distract or delay attention from difficult conversations about how to secure the funding needed to sustain the system for the long-term. We believe providing certainty on future operating funding for the system can enable broader discussion of governance changes.
- **Impact of Governance Changes:** The governance recommendations should be strengthened with more analysis of how the structural reform options would change how transit service is delivered to a diverse ridership base. Improvements to regional service coordination are needed but we cannot underestimate the complexity of running a transit system in a region as large and diverse as Chicago. Each of the Service Boards has different bases of riders and vast differences in how they are managed and how they deliver service. Local perspectives are critical to fully understanding community needs and how transit can help address them. We must be thoughtful and deliberate in how we approach governance reform to limit unintended consequences and ensure riders ultimately benefit.

Throughout the PART process the RTA and transit operators have continued to advance capital projects and operations improvements needed to build a safer, faster, and more reliable regional transit system. This includes upgrading and adapting service to meet post-pandemic travel demand, integrating fares, and investing in new safety and security initiatives. None of what we envision for the future of the transit system is possible without more public funding for transit operations and capital infrastructure. We invite everyone to work with us in Springfield, Washington, D.C., and across the Chicago region to help support and advance our shared vision for the future of the transit system.



WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS

JENNIFER BERTINO-TARRANT
WILL COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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September 22, 2023

Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
433 West Van Buren, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

RE: Will County Comments on Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) Draft Report

Dear Director Aleman,

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the region regarding mobility recovery. I appreciate the continued outreach and opportunities to provide comments on the draft PART report.

I would like to reiterate that Will County supports improvements to the transit system that benefit residents within the entire region. Will County remains supportive of a strengthened RTA while also working towards integration of services throughout the system.

However, as it pertains to transit governance, we believe that local control and the ability to provide feedback within the governance structure must be considered. We must ensure that advocacy can effectively continue for those who reside in areas with limited service, specifically our less dense areas of population. Continued conversations regarding governance can allow for the improvements we all desire, while also ensuring adequate representation.

Additionally, the financial recommendations to fund an improved system are outside the jurisdiction of CMAP. The funding proposals require legislative actions that cannot be guaranteed to pass. It is problematic to base must-needed improvements to the system on theoretical funding.

Will County is ready to work towards improvements within our transportation system to ensure all residents have the access that they deserve and need.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant
Will County Executive



September 21, 2023

Dear Ms. Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
433 West Van Buren, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

RE: Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART)

Director Aleman:

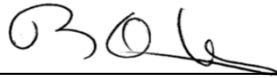
Thank you for the commitment to share the CMAP work product which will culminate in the Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART). We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns and look forward to working together on this important topic. We offer the following observations on behalf of our collective members:

- Municipalities, as stakeholders, must have a direct voice in any redesign or reconfiguration of transit in the region. CMAP calls for “more regional perspectives on the regional governing board(s).” We believe regional goals can be achieved by incorporating local perspectives and finding consensus. Suburban transit needs are different than those of the city and in many cases are currently unmet. Moreover, mayors and former mayors, past and present, have contributed significantly through their service on the service boards. Regional mayoral representation on service boards is valuable and must continue in the future.
- Funding is a significant issue facing transit in the region. Most recently, CMAP has acknowledged that the Transformational strategy, which funds transit well beyond the fiscal cliff, has become the preferred alternative. A significant majority of the sales taxes used to fund transit come from incorporated areas. It should also be noted that many of the new revenue sources proposed by CMAP in the Transformational strategy also seem to come from municipal residents. Future investment in transit needs to reflect those contributions. The region should work collectively for state and federal funding sufficient to address transit needs and address inequities and deficiencies in levels of service in the entire region. The region deserves to know what specific outcomes will be derived from the extraction of additional taxes from its residents.
- In addition to the revenue generated from municipalities, acknowledgment must also be made of the contributions to transit infrastructure made by municipalities. These investments have been made both in concert with the service boards and as stand-alone endeavors. The “system we want” must be established in collaboration with municipalities to ensure continued financial and governmental support of transit services.

- Decisions regarding zoning, land use, and development must remain with local authorities. Regional transit agencies, current and future, need to respect the principles of local control as it pertains to zoning, land use, and development.

We appreciate the significant investment of time that has gone into the development of PART. We look forward to a process following its release that is inclusive of the region's communities and their needs.

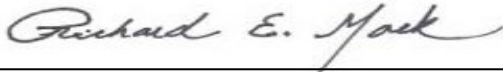
Sincerely,



President Brian Cecola, Village of Barrington Hills
Chairman, Barrington Area Council of Governments



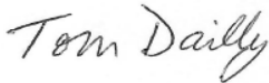
Mayor Phil Suess, City of Wheaton
President, DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference




President Richard E. Mack, Village of Ringwood
McHenry County Council of Government



President Stephan Pickett, Village of Sleepy Hollow
Metro West Council of Government



Mayor Tom Dailly, Village of Schaumburg
Northwest Municipal Conference



President Ronald Gardiner, Village of Glenwood
South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association



Mayor Joseph Roudez, Village of University Park
Will County Government League



RESOLUTION 23-02

A RESOLUTION REGARDING THE IMPACT OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR REGIONAL TRANSIT (PART) ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

WHEREAS, the Barrington Area Council of Governments has a long history of fostering regional collaboration and represents six villages and one township in the Barrington Area across Cook, Kane, Lake, and McHenry Counties; and

WHEREAS, transit agencies in northeastern Illinois are facing an estimated \$730 million operating budget shortfall beginning in 2026, due to changes in travel behavior following the COVID-19 pandemic and the expiration of emergency federal assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois General Assembly tasked the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with developing legislative recommendations on the region's transit system; and

WHEREAS, CMAP has released a draft Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) report, which contains recommendations in three subject areas – the system we want, how to pay for it, and how to implement it; and

WHEREAS, the Barrington Area Council of Governments has reviewed the draft PART report and offers the following comments to CMAP.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Barrington Area Council of Governments hereby:

1. Supports all efforts to strengthen the region's transit system in meeting the needs of users while also using the system to improve mobility and maintain economic competitiveness; and
2. Supports the PART report's vision of *The Transit System the Region Wants*, especially as to *strengthening demand-responsive transit service with improved coordination and integration*; and
3. Cautions that all decisions regarding zoning, land use, and development must remain with local authorities, underscoring the importance of the state and regional transit agencies, current and future, respecting the principles of local control as it pertains to zoning, land use, and development; and
4. Does not support the integration of the RTA and the service boards into one regional transit

entity in the interest of transparency and accountability as each service's mission is distinct and its financial position including debt, pension, and labor obligations is different; and

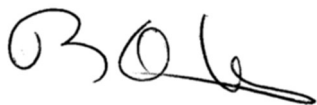
5. Recommends that RTA be given greater ability to coordinate service efficiencies; and
6. Recommends that any governance changes considered by the Illinois General Assembly respond to the unique nature of transit needs, which for suburban areas consists mainly of Metra rail service and demand responsive service, such as the PACE/Dial-A-Ride program; and
7. Insists that any changes made to regional board appointments either maintain or expand representation of suburban communities to ensure they have a meaningful role in regional transit decision-making; and
8. Encourages CMAP to recommend that any changes to the regional transit system considered by the Illinois General Assembly be based on the most current and accurate ridership data available to fully evaluate the state of transit.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to CMAP to make them aware of the desires and opinions of the Barrington Area Council of Governments.

This resolution is passed the 26th day of September 2023, by the Executive Board of BACOG:

Karen Darch, President, Village of Barrington
Brian D. Cecola, President, Village of Barrington Hills
D. Robert Alberding, Supervisor, Barrington Township
Greg Rusteberg, President, Village of Deer Park
Kevin C. Richardson, President, Village of Lake Barrington
Paula McCombie, President, Village of South Barrington
Andy Hay, President, Village of Tower Lakes

For the Executive Board:



Brian D. Cecola, Chairman
BACOG Executive Board



Mary L. Tarpey, Secretary
ATTEST



McHenry County Council of Governments

Executive Committee

President Rick Mack
Village of Ringwood
MCCG President

Mayor Mark Kownick
Village of Cary
MCCG Vice-President

Mayor Haig Haleblan
City of Crystal Lake
MCCG Treasurer

President Toni Wardanian
Village of Richmond
MCCG Secretary

Supervisor Gary Barla
McHenry Township
Chair of the
Finance Committee

President Debby Sosine
Village of Algonquin
Chair of the
Legislative Committee

President Ray Bogdanowski
Village of Lake in the Hills
Chair of the
Transportation Committee

Chairman Mike Buchler
McHenry County Board
Ex-Officio Member

September 27, 2023

Erin Aleman, Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
433 West Van Buren Street, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

Dear Executive Director Aleman,

Enclosed is resolution R23-001 in regards to the Plan of Action for Regional Transit approved by the McHenry County Council of Governments Executive Committee on September 27, 2023.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Chalen Daigle
Executive Director
McHenry County Council of Governments

Chalen Daigle
Executive Director
620 Dakota Street
Suite 251
Crystal Lake, IL 60012
815-788-4390 (p)
847-767-0440 (c)
cdaigle@mchenrycountycog.org
www.mchenrycountycog.org

MCHENRY COUNTY COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS

RESOLUTION NUMBER: R23-001
APPROVED DATE: September 27, 2023

**A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE OPINION OF THE MCHENRY COUNTY COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR REGIONAL
TRANSIT (PART)**

WHEREAS, the McHenry County Council of Governments is a Council of Governments that fosters intergovernmental collaboration and represents a total of twenty-eight local governments in McHenry County; and

WHEREAS, transit agencies in northeastern Illinois are facing an estimated \$730 million operating budget shortfall beginning in 2026 due to changes in travel behavior following the COVID-19 pandemic and the expiration of emergency federal assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois General Assembly tasked the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with developing legislative recommendations on the region's transit system; and

WHEREAS, CMAP has released a draft Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) report, which contains recommendations in three subject areas – the system we want, how to pay for it, and how to implement it; and

WHEREAS, the McHenry County Council of Governments has thoroughly reviewed the draft PART report and offers the following comments to CMAP.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Governments hereby supports all efforts to strengthen the region's transit system and understands that transit is crucial in addressing the region's goals of improving mobility, maintaining economic competitiveness, combating climate change, and building a more equitable region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Governments supports the PART report's vision of *The Transit System The Region Wants*, especially the recommendations of *supporting Metra's transformation into a regional rail provider and strengthening non-ADA demand-responsive transit service with improved coordination, integration, and governance*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that while the McHenry County Council of Governments understands a combination of new tax revenues, fare increases and service cuts will be necessary to maintain the region's transit system and make targeted improvements in the future, our members insist that any new revenue generated from residents of McHenry County be directed to service improvements in areas of McHenry County currently underserved (or unserved) by transit; and

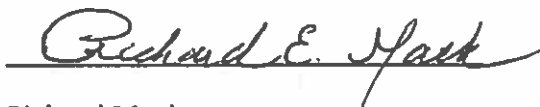
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Governments does not support the integration of the RTA and the service boards into one regional transit entity. Instead, the Council suggests that the final report only include one governance recommendation – *Strengthening a re-envisioned RTA to coordinate transit across the service boards*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Governments would like the Illinois General Assembly to consider governance changes that respond to the unique nature of transit in McHenry County, consisting mainly of non-ADA demand responsive service provided by the County's MCRide program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Governments also insists that any changes made to regional board appointments not dilute the voices of suburban residents who today feel underrepresented in regional transit decision-making; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to CMAP to make them aware of the desires and opinions of the McHenry County Council of Governments.

APPROVED this 27th day of September in Crystal Lake, Illinois.



Richard Mack
President, McHenry County Council of
Governments and
Village President, Village of Ringwood

MCHENRY COUNTY COUNCIL OF MAYORS

RESOLUTION NUMBER: R23-002

APPROVED DATE: September 22, 2023

**A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE OPINION OF THE MCHENRY COUNTY COUNCIL OF MAYORS
REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR REGIONAL TRANSIT (PART)**

WHEREAS, the McHenry County Council of Mayors are duly elected local officials as defined in the Federal Highway Acts of 1970, 1973, and 1976, the Surface Transportation Assistance Acts of 1978, 1982, 1987, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century of 1998, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users of 2005, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century of 2012 and Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, and represent a total of twenty-nine local governments in McHenry County, being twenty-eight municipalities and the County of McHenry; and

WHEREAS, transit agencies in northeastern Illinois are facing an estimated \$730 million operating budget shortfall beginning in 2026 due to changes in travel behavior following the COVID-19 pandemic and the expiration of emergency federal assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois General Assembly tasked the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with developing legislative recommendations on the region's transit system; and

WHEREAS, CMAP has released a draft Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) report, which contains recommendations in three subject areas – the system we want, how to pay for it, and how to implement it; and

WHEREAS, the McHenry County Council of Mayors has thoroughly reviewed the draft PART report and offers the following comments to CMAP.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Mayors hereby supports all efforts to strengthen the region's transit system and understands that transit is crucial in addressing the region's goals of improving mobility, maintaining economic competitiveness, combating climate change, and building a more equitable region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Mayors supports the PART report's vision of *The Transit System The Region Wants*, especially the recommendations of *supporting Metra's transformation into a regional rail provider and strengthening non-ADA demand-responsive transit service with improved coordination, integration, and governance*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that while the McHenry County Council of Mayors understands a combination of new tax revenues, fare increases and service cuts will be necessary to maintain the region's transit system and make targeted improvements in the future, our members insist that any new revenue generated from residents of McHenry County be directed to service improvements in areas of McHenry County currently underserved (or unserved) by transit; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Mayors does not support the integration of the RTA and the service boards into one regional transit entity. Instead, the Council suggests that the final report only include one governance recommendation – *Strengthening a re-envisioned RTA to coordinate transit across the service boards*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Mayors would like the Illinois General Assembly to consider governance changes that respond to the unique nature of transit in McHenry County, consisting mainly of non-ADA demand responsive service provided by the County's MCRide program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the McHenry County Council of Mayors also insists that any changes made to regional board appointments not dilute the voices of suburban residents who today feel underrepresented in regional transit decision-making; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to CMAP to make them aware of the desires and opinions of the McHenry County Council of Mayors.

APPROVED this 22nd day of September in Harvard, Illinois.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard E. Mack". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Richard Mack
Chair, McHenry County Council of Mayors
and
Village President, Village of Ringwood



September 21, 2023

Ms. Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
433 West Van Buren, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

Re: Plan of Action for Regional Transit Draft Report

Director Aleman,

On behalf of the member communities of the WCGL we submit the following comments on the PART Draft Report. These comments are in addition to those submitted jointly by the regions council of governments.

Governance: Throughout this process WCGL communities have been concerned about changes to the governance structure of the regions transit agencies that could negatively impact our region. While not agreeing that now is necessarily the time for such an overhaul, of the two options presented we would support an enhanced RTA with the service boards remaining independent. Additionally, we believe that is critical that appointing authority to the RTA and service boards remain a local decision.

Revenue: There is no denying that our region is facing difficult decisions as a result of the pending fiscal cliff. No region wants to see a world class transit system cutting services because of financial difficulties. The draft report highlights numerous options for revenue enhancements to avoid these cuts, however, it is our view that these options are not all politically viable.

Consolidation Costs: Our members are concerned that the draft report does not reflect costs associated with consolidation of the transit agencies. There are differing pay scales across all of the transit agencies. As an example it is our understanding that just bringing Pace drivers in line with CTA drivers would add \$30 million in extra costs a year. Our region is also concerned that there is no clear plan for how pension obligations would be handled. Our region does not want to take on pension obligations we did not incur.

In closing we want to compliment the staff at CMAP for their work on putting this report together in such a short amount of time. This is a complicated matter and we look forward to working with all our regional partners as this issue now moves to the legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hugh O'Hara", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Hugh O'Hara
Executive Director

Beecher Bolingbrook Braidwood Channahon Coal City Crest Hill Diamond Elwood Frankfort
Homer Glen Joliet Lemont Lockport Manhattan Minooka Mokena Monee Morris
Naperville New Lenox Orland Park Oswego Peotone Plainfield Rockdale Romeoville
Shorewood Symerton University Park Wilmington Woodridge
County of Grundy County of Will