

REGIONAL ECONOMY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES - FINAL

Monday, November 21, 2022

9:00 AM

Please join from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

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Meeting ID: 858 0312 7013; Passcode: 032581

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1.0 Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Tucker called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., and reminded the members that the meeting was being live-streamed, and asked Liaison Austen Edwards to call the roll.

Present: Bob Tucker, Kim Porter, Adam Ballard, Caitlin Ritter, Joan Fox, Jonathan Furr, Kendra Freeman, Kevin Kramer, Kristi DeLaurentiis, Michael Meyers, Olatunji Oboi Reed, Peter Creticos, Shannon McGhee, and Josh Potter

Absent: Darnell Shields, Dionne Baux, Jennifer Tammen, Marisa Lewis, Tiffany McDowell, and Veronica Gonzalez

Ex-Officio: Michael Horsting, and Tara Orbon

Staff Present: Austen Edwards, Dominick Argumedo, Alex Ensign, Elizabeth Scott, Jonathan Burch, Rukaya Abdullah, Asha Barnes

2.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

2.01 Requests for agenda changes

[22-447](#)

No changes to the agenda were proposed.

The agenda item was discussed.

2.02 Executive Director's announcements

[22-540](#)

CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman began her announcements speaking about CMAP's Strategic Direction. The Strategic Direction's aim is to focus the Agency's work to advance the ON TO 2050 overall goals in a shorter window, the next 3-5 years. The Strategic Direction is in conjunction with the new structure for the Regional Economic, Climate, and Transportation committees so that they align with CMAP's core areas of focus: regional economy, climate, and transportation. She reminded the Committee that they play a vital role in advising and shaping the policies that advance the objectives in the ON TO 2050 plan. She then spoke briefly on agenda items to follow. She stated that the dialogue following each issue with the committee can and should help CMAP think about the key issues and the role CMAP should have addressing these challenges. She concluded by noting the 2023 regional excellence awards program and that it is open for nominations. Second year to offer this program. The deadline is December 16th, 2022.

The agenda item was presented.

3.0 Approval of Minutes

3.01 Minutes from September 26, 2022 meeting

[22-561](#)

Attachments: [MeetingMinutes14-Nov-2022](#)

A motion was made by Tara Orbon, seconded by Joan Fox, that the agenda item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Bob Tucker, Kim Porter, Adam Ballard, Jonathan Furr, Kendra Freeman, Kevin Kramer, Kristi DeLaurentiis, Michael Meyers, Olatunji Oboi Reed, Peter Creticos, Shannon McGhee, and Josh Potter

Absent: Darnell Shields, Dionne Baux, Jennifer Tammen, Marisa Lewis, Tiffany McDowell, and Veronica Gonzalez

Abstain: Caitlin Ritter, and Joan Fox

Ex-Officio: Michael Horsting, and Tara Orbon

4.0 New Business

4.01 2023 CMAP Regional Economy Committee meeting schedule

[22-534](#)

Attachments: [Memo: 2023 Committee Meeting Schedule](#)

A motion was made by Kevin Kramer, seconded by Kristi DeLaurentiis, that the agenda item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Bob Tucker, Kim Porter, Adam Ballard, Caitlin Ritter, Joan Fox, Jonathan Furr, Kendra Freeman, Kevin Kramer, Kristi DeLaurentiis, Michael Meyers, Olatunji Oboi Reed, Peter Creticos, Shannon McGhee, and Josh Potter

Absent: Darnell Shields, Dionne Baux, Jennifer Tammen, Marisa Lewis, Tiffany McDowell, and Veronica Gonzalez

Ex-Officio: Michael Horsting, and Tara Orbon

4.02 CMAP's proposed strategic direction

[22-536](#)

Alex Ensign, CMAP Staff, spoke about progress made in crafting the Strategic Direction. Over the past 7 months work has gone to refine and update Strategic Direction to focus on three focus areas of transportation, economy, and climate. The Strategic Direction draft is currently undergoing executive review. She reviewed steps taken in crafting this draft such as engaging CMAP committees and holding 10 workshops across the agency. The goal is that by January 2023 the Strategic Direction plan can be used to guide the work of staff, hold the agency accountable, and track CMAP's progress. It is the desire to work such that in quarter 2 of 2023 CMAP staff can share baseline data of CMAP's work per the Strategic Direction and then report to the committee in a quarterly cadence.

She continued that alongside work to refine pieces of Strategic Direction; staff has been developing clear program areas for CMAP's work to fall into. CMAP has promoted and assigned program leads to four areas: Air Quality and Water Resources, Safe and Complete Streets, Transit and Financial Planning, and MPO Active Project Management. She further noted that CMAP is developing program areas to align more closely with the Strategic Direction and staff will be developing program charters for such areas in quarter 1 of 2023. These will further assist CMAP to plan out the work over the next 3-5 years.

Ensign further discussed the Economy Focus area and shared an updated set of approach and outcomes pertaining to housing. She asked for the committee thoughts and input on draft assumptions and indicators on generating greater diversity housing leading to greater economic opportunity. One of the assumptions to be considered and updated is thinking of housing as an economic asset rather than a need. Other assumptions are that greater housing diversity leads to greater affordability and that location close to economic opportunity would guarantee gainful employment. For indicators, staff, with engagement from committee, noted the rate of housing burden, lower number of people experiencing homelessness, property tax by acre, proximity to transit as examples. In asking the committee for feedback, staff is looking for indicators to tie to described outcomes and incorporate what CMAP can control and influence. Unlike ONTO 2050 indicators that may focus on decades change, Strategic Direction indicators should be on a much shorter scale to enable seeing change such as quarterly or perhaps twice a year.

Member Adam Ballard raised a point that when talking about “accessibility” it may confuse the issue between access to opportunity and physical access in relation to people with disabilities. He suggested this may need a little bit more wordsmithing. Staff appreciated the member’s comment and noted that several pathways have been created that are directly related to CMAP ADA work that explicitly call out for housing to be physically accessible for municipalities. Ballard noted that the ADA does not address housing and the need to talk about fair housing design standards. Staff agreed and appreciated the point.

Member Kevin Kramer asked for a clarifications: is housing burden a quantifiable measure, and property tax per acre is that supposed to go up or down? He also noted that the first assumption sounded like CMAP will be driving all interest in housing rather than assisting. Ensign responded rate of housing burden that is quantifiable-by percentage of monthly income being used on housing as an example. Member Myers also noted he viewed some of the indicators as CMAP having more influence over housing that simply driving transportation to influence indicators. He also asked if the work could include more discussion on diversity of transportation options. Ensign appreciated the comment and noted the team is aware and working toward that as an intersection with the transportation focus that calls out need for greater transportation options.

Member Fox asked for clarification about the assumption that housing is an economic asset versus just shelter as a need. Ensign responded that CMAP is thinking as an economic asset in part to counter pushback against affordable housing. Some communities think affordable housing is a burden compared to studies that show generates economic benefits for communities.

Member Creticos noted housing is a need is different than saying housing is a right and asked where CMAP stands on that spectrum. Ensign said it was a good inquiry that it is not something that has been talked about in the Strategic Direction. Executive Director Aleman noted the conversation has not happened at the CMAP Board level nor incorporated into the ON TO 2050 update. Some of these policies discussions staff will look to committee members to raise to the Board for their consideration, as this committee is a committee of the Board. Member Creticos said he would welcome that discussion.

Member Fox asked about physical access to economic opportunity and what that includes. Ensign

responded economic opportunity is meant to be broader than access to jobs and to include other aspects such as schools, and housing.

Member Horsting asked about programming and “Money programmed by CMAP to support TOD”. Ensign responded CMAP programming work moves federal money through the region, at the moment CMAP is analyzing how our programming can support that, perhaps a new indicator. Liaison Edwards noted that the latest federal legislation (IIJA) allows CMAP greater flexibility to work with housing which will be discussed later.

The agenda item was discussed.

4.03 Mobility recovery update and development of the transit system report

[22-539](#)

Attachments: [Memo: Mobility Recovery and upcoming transit funding report](#)

CMAP Staff Member Elizabeth Scott presented on two projects. The first was the Mobility Recovery and plan of action of regional transit. The Mobility Recovery project started in July of 2020 to figure out medium term challenges caused by COVID-19 and what do we need to do as a region to stay on track for prescribed goals. Work done on this project uses best practice examinations from comparable communities, engagement with stakeholders about their perspectives, research on effects on employment, housing and transportation, scenario planning, and creating strategies. She then provided an overview of data gained. Their research noted that Pre-Covid, telework estimate by 2030 was 6-8%, where now it is projected at 13-23% on any given workday. Also, the majority of workers in this area work in industries that do not allow for remote work by their nature. From analysis done, strategies for recommendations resulted in three main areas: Invest in a stronger and more financially secure transit system, enable expanded travel by safe, active modes; and balance the transition to e-commerce and an electric freight system. The main report will come out within the next few weeks. For the first strategic area, recommendations may include items such as an integrated fare system, for the second area it may include policy and infrastructure investments to create the desired system, and for the third main area focus on economic justice for freight e-commerce.

Scott then provided an overview of the Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART). The law requires CMAP, in consultation with the RTA, to develop legislative recommendations in support of the transit system (Public Act 102-1028). She noted by the RTA’s estimates the region will need to raise $\frac{3}{4}$ of a billion dollars every year to support the operating shortfall for the region’s transit system, and that is just to have the area get to the system of 2019 in the absence of federal aid. This is the major challenge now for a stable transit system for the future, and naturally related to the economy. The legislation requires CMAP to examine the long-term financial viability of a comprehensive and coordinated transit system that moves people safely and securely, cleanly, and efficiently, and supports and fosters efficient land use. She further noted, that in the development of these strategies the overall team must be fully incorporating and considering racial equity, climate change, and economic needs, and the work done by the RTA and others. Some of the recommendations may come in regulatory changes to what is called the recovery ratio, which states the region’s transit system has to recover 50% of its revenue from fares. Staff already through analysis believes that will need to change as an example. Staff would also like feedback on ideas such as changing the sales tax either in the region or in the state. It has been a long term CMAP policy recommendation to expand the narrow sales tax base compared to other states such as services. She then reviewed the timeline

which looks to complete a recommendation report submitted to the legislature January 1, 2024. The CMAP Board and MPO must approve the content of the report before sending to the legislature. She noted that the PART team will be back at each Regional Economy committee meeting throughout the year.

Member Kristi DeLaurentiis asked Scott to explain more about report to the legislature, what is the end result of the report? Scott said the goal is to bring a set of recommendations that address elements defined in the public act and that are implementable, some items will be identifiable for additional study-but overall the recommendations will be action oriented. She noted the importance of the work as additional federal aid runs out in 2025, so we are facing this revenue challenge in 2026.

Member Peter Creticos commented regarding the fairbox recovery ratio. He noted it was established in the 80's, and that its history was punitive in part-toward the CTA, and we have never left that. He is unsure how you break out of it, as historically it is no longer relevant. As for the sales tax, he noted the structural differences of where and who pays what, part of the challenge is showing the services are needed across the region and benefits everyone to pay their fair share.

Member Kendra Freeman commented in the chat. She noted outside of the report, what role will CMAP play in collective advocacy to push toward action? Scott noted a lot of organizations in the region that are rallying around this cause, and noted the RTA is about to come out with their strategic plan which in part advocacy, along with the team working other stakeholders.

Scott then asked of the committee members two discussion questions: What are the best economic/business case reason to invest in quality transit in Northeastrn Illinois and Will alternative work arrangements like telework continue to significantly evolve?

Member Ballard stated we need to counter the argument that the pandemic permanently set in motion that transit will continue to decline.

Member Caitlin Ritter spoke on the importance of continual commute options and eventually the office market will need to be denser. She noted differences between utilization rate and vacancy rate, right now our region is at a 50% utilization rate compared to pre covid, vacancy rates may change as there are more leases as more organizations lease less space. Also, the same amount of people may be coming downtown but not all at once. She further noted a huge difference between Wednesday and Friday. She believes we need to invest in transit first to draw people to use transit to get use up to make it viable. Scott asked if she thought the loop will be full of offices smaller in size or will there be a need to change uses. Member Ritter responded any conversion to residential should be done but we should not put all our eggs in one basket.

Member Kevin Kramer said he agreed with Members Ballard and Member Ritter. For the first question posed-believes it absolutely connects. Also, he believes memory of place facilitates memories whether it is tourism or to see events downtown. He said the qualitative side that pulls on heart strings also shows why you invest in transit infrastructure.

Member Kristi DeLaurentiis spoke on the equity component as there are large areas that currently do not have access to transit which limits economic opportunity. She wanted to make sure equity is

elevated in the conversation to address investment strategies.

Member Fox spoke on how historically transit has done well from a suburban view to get people into the city, but we have always had challenges alternate to that. She noted it is hard to get from point a to point b in the suburbs-one has to go in city to get out, always been an issue for those in the suburbs to get to jobs. It's a challenge as more people are experiencing a need than just trying to get into and out of the city.

Scott noted that in the comments it was mentioned that our region needs more than a hub and spoke transportation method where we need more multi-modal methods of transit. Scott further noted that while portions of the public desire light rail in the suburbs, the bus provides greater flexibility at less cost-but there does exist a need to communicate that to the public.

The agenda item was discussed.

4.04 Regional housing coordination

[22-541](#)

CMAP Staff Jonathan Burch, Rukayah Abdullah, and Asha Barnes spoke on Regional Housing Coordination and facilitated the discussion. Burch outlined that the presentation would focus on Housing and IJJA, a regional housing overview, 2022 municipal survey, before the group discussion.

Burch provided an overview of the IJJA that allows and requires MPO's to do such as more coordination between housing organizations especially housing funders. The bill allows MPO's to integrate housing into the metropolitan transportation planning process, and provides an option to develop a housing coordination plan. He provided an overview of the work CMAP had done in housing including data research, technical assistance programs, policy updates and collaborations with necessary stakeholders and partnerships.

Rukaya Abdullah then provided data points pertaining to Chicago's regional population, and noted increasing senior population and increasing racial diversity. She also noted the current housing stock is meeting the population's needs, ½ renters and ¼ are housing burdened.

Asha Barnes provided an overview of the 2022 CMAP Municipal Survey including questions asked and general responses. She provided an over of Cohorts used by CMAP to base on capacity and needs.

Burch then opened it up to the committee for discussion. The first question was what is the most pressing housing issue in our region?

Member Kristi DeLaurentiis stated property taxes is a burden for property owners to stay in their home in the southwest suburbs in which she works. She stated the tax rate is also contributing to the abandonment rate. She would also like tracking information of abandonment by housing type.

Member Kevin Kramer noted the difference needs per region, for his community taxes are not a burden but lack of diversity of housing for newer home searchers. The area needs smaller homes for downsizing and Gen Z entering the market.

Burch then asked if housing in our region is a barrier to economic development?

Member Ritter said from a national perspective local housing is not a barrier, from a national perspective the area has affordable housing compared to comparable national communities, not that it could not be improved, but not a barrier. She also adds that our region's size and housing is an opportunity for economic development.

Member Kim Porter asked what kind of economic development are we looking for? For example, higher income downtown retail for more affluent communities, or affordable housing which for some reason does not generate such corresponding development. We do not often see to economic development go into certain communities chasing certain residential development.

Burch then asked what does it mean for the region if we lack affordable housing options near essential services?

Member Reed stated there is a significant impact on the level of economic freedom that black and brown people and low to moderate income people achieve when not near services. He does feel housing is a barrier for black and brown people and low to moderate income people in the area.

Member Kramer states that lack of affordable housing near services means lower economic growth, like 3-4 generations slower growth.

Member Reed commented on the study his org did *Mobility Justice in Chicago* for one question 75% of respondents said transportation was a barrier to getting and keeping a job.

Member DeLaurentiis noted past public policy work, some done by CMAP, that noted the spatial mismatch between job centers and housing.

The agenda item was discussed.

5.0 Committee Member Updates

Some committee members provided updates on various projects.

Member DeLaurentiis provided an update on the legislative initiative known as the Southland Reactivation Act, that was signed into law this past summer. A property tax incentive initiative for six townships in Cook County.

Member Kramer touched on an office building that is repurposing one office space into multi tenants serving a variety of needs.

Member McGhee talked an RFP on Friday about the catalyzing initiative focused on equitable access to entrepreneurship.

The Chairperson wanted to let Committee know that Liaison Austen Edwards would be leaving that position but remaining with CMAP. He noted his incredible dedication, professionalism, and effort. He then noted that Elizabeth Ginsberg would be the new committee liaison to work with current co-liaison Dominick Argumedo.

Tara Orbon noted Cook County is working to reconstruct Central Road which is near the project Member Kramer shared. She also noted the County's Invest in Cook program.

6.0 Other Business

Member Kramer spoke about the 2050 forecast of populations. He had a concern that showed neighboring in his mind similar communities, show different directions of a forecast. Some communities are forecast to go up in population, others down. Liaison Edwards said CMAP would make note of that.

7.0 Public Comment

This is an opportunity for comments from members of the audience. The amount of time available to speak will be at the chair's discretion. It should be noted that the public comment period will immediately follow the last item on the agenda.

No public comment was offered or submitted.

8.0 Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 26, 2023.

The next meeting of the Regional Economic Committee will be January 26, 2023

9.0 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 11:01 AM.