

2025 - 2026

Federal and State Advocacy Agenda

Washington, D.C.

Springfield, IL



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning



Introduction

In 2025, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) will mark its 20th anniversary. Over these two decades, we have worked with our federal, state, and local partners to make northeastern Illinois a stronger, more resilient place to live.

As the federally designated metropolitan planning agency for northeastern Illinois and the state-mandated regional planning agency, we continue to serve the 7-county region and 284 municipalities by planning regionally and locally; influencing change; investing strategically; and collaborating and convening.

These last few years particularly have demonstrated how important and valuable our work is — a global pandemic and its compounding health, social, economic, quality of life and equity impacts; never-seen-before transit shifts; extreme economic impacts; a funding crisis facing our transit system; and unprecedented opportunity with funding from the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act.

Northeastern Illinois remains one of the world's greatest economic centers with a diverse workforce, vast multimodal transportation system, and abundant natural resources. Yet, the region faces challenges from the need to adequately fund transportation, a changing climate, and an increasingly competitive global economy with starker economic disparities.

CMAP's 2025-2026 Advocacy Agenda details policy positions and priorities that can help the region address challenges, seize opportunities, and continue to thrive.

CALL TO ACTION

CMAP's top legislative priority is securing a dedicated annual appropriation from the state to support a wider range of technical assistance offerings.

Investing in CMAP, investing in the region

Background

When the General Assembly created CMAP in 2005 through the Regional Planning Act, lawmakers envisioned CMAP as the comprehensive planning entity for the region, engaging in topics like transportation, land use, zoning, climate, water resources management, economic development, and more.

The issue

Despite this legislative mandate and demonstrated need throughout the region, **CMAP's funding has not been similarly comprehensive.** The vast majority of the agency's resources are limited to transportation planning which, while a significant need in the region, does not represent the totality of CMAP's mandate. CMAP must seek and rely on grants and philanthropic revenue sources for work that does not directly relate to transportation, such planning around climate resiliency and economic competitiveness. This makes it difficult to reliably and consistently provide this support. Without dedicated funding from the state for more comprehensive planning support, CMAP will continue to be limited in its offerings to the region.

The solution

CMAP's top legislative priority is securing a dedicated annual appropriation from the state to support a wider range of technical assistance offerings. With a modest investment in CMAP, the cities, villages, and counties of northeastern Illinois will benefit for years to come.





Transportation

Resources available under the federal **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)** have allowed the region to modernize its transportation infrastructure and advance solutions that address Illinois' most pressing mobility issues exacerbated by the pandemic. Consistent with our responsibilities as the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO), CMAP has worked with our federal and state partners to build consensus and identify **priority projects for IIJA funding** that can address the region's safety, emissions, and resilience challenges. This has allowed the region to make progress on some of the major capital priorities for the region and state, including the I-290/Blue Line modernization project.

The IIJA has provided tremendous funding opportunities to improve the mobility of all travelers while addressing challenges such as outdated and inaccessible street design, freight bottlenecks, air quality, and climate impacts that threaten the region's ability to grow inclusively by 2050 and beyond. Notably, through the Safe Streets and Roads for All award, CMAP has provided critical safety planning and implementation support so local jurisdictions can address the traffic safety crisis and protect the most vulnerable road users.

To continue to maximize the federal resources coming to the region, CMAP, like other MPOs, needs increased flexibility and improved access to federal funding. Additional steps can be taken at the state level to complement these new and significant funding opportunities from the IIJA and strengthen the region's position as surface transportation reauthorization discussions progress.

At the local level, the slow return to pre-pandemic ridership has exacerbated the challenges with the prolonged, chronic underfunding of northeastern Illinois' transit system. CMAP's **Plan of Action for Regional Transit** presents a series of options for the General Assembly to pursue to not only address the looming \$730 million operating budget deficit, but also to enable a more affordable, accessible, frequent, and coordinated regional transit system. In addition, the transit system is still plagued by capital underfunding to address the State of Good Repair needs.

The following lists the transportation policy positions and priorities that CMAP supports on both the federal and state levels.

CMAP supports **sustainably funding transportation**

FEDERAL ACTIONS

Provide consistent support for mass transit operations following the expiration of pandemic-era relief.

Increase funding for transit through the Highway Trust Fund and increase other transportation system user fees.

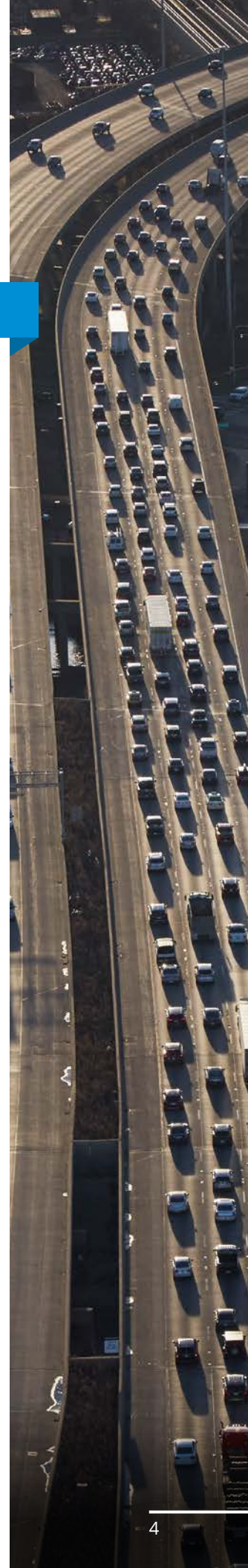
Revise federal requirements to eliminate the funding disparity between transit projects and highway projects. This could include increasing the federal share under the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Starts grant program from 60 to 80 percent (equal to highway projects).

Increase the federal motor fuel tax rate and index it to the rate of inflation each year.

Develop and implement innovative funding mechanisms, such as a national per-mile road usage charge and a federal freight transportation fee.

Require the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to develop a report that recommends ways to modernize highway funding formulas and better align them with state and MPO performance measurement goals.

Provide greater flexibility for states and regions to impose user fees by removing federal restrictions on tolling the interstate system and removing interstate system restrictions on commercial activity.





STATE ACTIONS

Enact sales tax reforms that increase state and local revenue available for transit operations. *Please see the recommendation in the Regional Economic Competitiveness section that details how such reforms can benefit other uses.*

Fully fund paratransit services and other state-mandated programs.

Fully fund any future discounted fare programs for low-income travelers.

Implement a feasibility study that examines replacing the state motor fuel tax with a road usage charge. A feasibility study should produce recommendations for the design and implementation of future pilot programs, address opportunities for innovation, and support state and regional policy goals around climate and equity.

Develop a comprehensive framework of transportation demand management requirements and incentives for employers to encourage commuting by transit. This could include the development of a commuter trip reduction program and incentive programs that encourage employers to support non-car travel options for their employees.

CMAP supports **innovations that streamline project delivery and facilitate regional transportation improvements**

The Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) offers numerous system improvements to the region's transit system that can be supported by state action and funds.

STATE ACTIONS

Require transit providers to develop a regional transit service framework to guide decisions on service improvements and related capital investments.

Fully integrate transit fares among the three service boards and complementary systems.

Require and fund the creation of a regional bus priority plan and establish an interagency structure accountable for its implementation.

Require and fund transit agencies to develop a comprehensive plan to prioritize transit accessibility investments

Further enable public-private partnerships for regional infrastructure, including providing resources for innovative financing, advancing design-build strategies, and promoting workforce equity.





CMAP supports **increased investment in safe and complete streets and policy changes that enable a safe system approach**

FEDERAL ACTIONS

Increase funding for states, counties, and cities to complete and implement Safe Streets and Roads for All safety action plans and implementation projects.

Expand MPO programming authority for funding available under the FHWA's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). HSIP provides federal aid to help significantly reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.

Through expanded HSIP programming authority, reflect the responsibilities of the FHWA's Safety Performance Management goals and establish a permanent 15-percent set aside for safety improvements that address vulnerable road users like bicyclists and pedestrians.

Facilitate a partnership between the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), state and local law enforcement, health departments, state DOTs, and MPOs to improve data collection methods for crash data.

Study and identify policies that target speed limit compliance among drivers of large and heavy fleet vehicles, such as intelligent speed assistance.

Identify dedicated resources that provide local governments with comprehensive support to remove barriers to accessibility in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions.

STATE ACTIONS

Modify the Illinois Motor Vehicle Code to permit reduced speed limits in urban and residential areas and provide further guidance to municipalities that wish to reduce municipal speed limits by ordinance.

Pilot new approaches to roadway design that reduce travel demand, encourage slower operating speeds, and support compliance with speed limits.

Improve existing design guidance and standards to support compliance with speed limits.

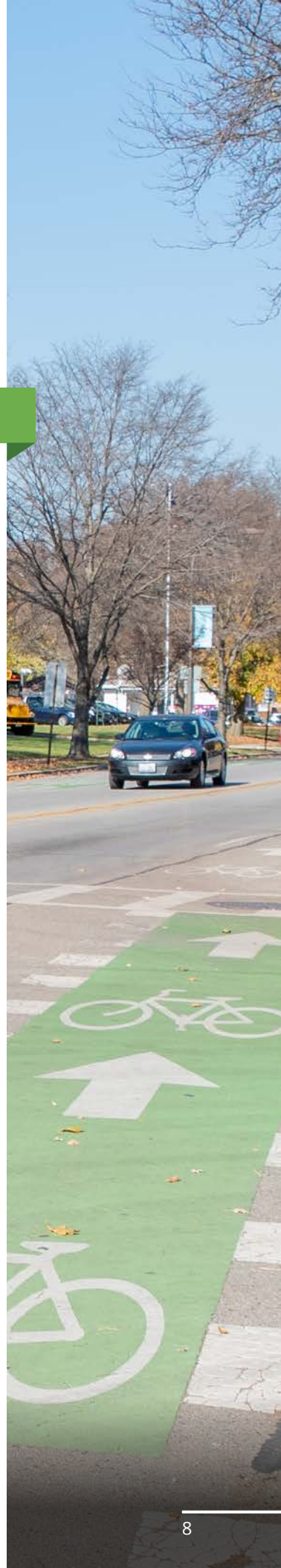
Authorize a pilot program for automated speed enforcement at high-crash locations that includes an equity-centered approach toward fines.

Update driver education curricula appropriately to explain the risks of speeding. Expand school-based education programs on traffic safety.

Authorize local jurisdictions to create a pilot program to test income-based fines, escalating fines, or other alternative traffic enforcement structures that consider a driver's ability to pay that may be below the statutory minimum.

Expand reporting requirements for traffic violation fines and ticketing outcomes to allow for data to provide a comprehensive equity analysis.

Identify dedicated funds that provide local governments with comprehensive support to remove barriers to accessibility and comply with ADA provisions.





Climate

The growing threat of climate change continues to test northeastern Illinois' resilience. Over the past decade, CMAP's 7-county region **reduced greenhouse gas emissions by a mere 9 percent**, or less than 1 percent a year, setting a pace that will fall short of ON TO 2050's goal to cut regional emissions by 80 percent by 2050. To prevent the most severe impacts of climate change, the region will need to reduce emissions by 5 percent every year through 2050. This is especially critical for the transportation sector — which comprises one of the largest sources of emissions in Illinois — increasing the need for policies that can mitigate congestion and protect communities from greater climate risks.

Progress has been made at the state and federal level. Illinois' Climate and Equitable Jobs Act puts the state on a path toward a 100 percent clean energy future by 2050 through investments in renewable energy and clean energy job creation. The state's Reimagining Electric Vehicles Act introduced new incentives to strengthen Illinois' competitiveness as a hub for electric vehicle manufacturing. Furthermore, the IJA and the Inflation Reduction Act commit an unprecedented level of investment toward emissions reductions, clean energy production, and resilience.

However, more work remains to be done. Climate change and extreme weather threaten the health, livelihood, and well-being of everyone, but they often exacerbate existing social and health inequities for our most vulnerable residents. Health inequity can be addressed through regional and local plans by prioritizing health equity outcomes. Municipal and regional planners can deepen the understanding of health impacts through data-driven decisions.

In addition, the climate action plans that the region and state are embarking on under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program will provide further insights on opportunities for climate action across all sectors for state and federal leaders. The following lists the climate policy positions and priorities that CMAP supports on both the federal and state levels.

CMAP supports **stronger policies that enhance resilience and reduce emissions and congestion**

FEDERAL ACTIONS

Allow MPOs to use the Resilience Improvement Plan established by the IJA to qualify for the 90 percent federal share, competitive PROTECT funds, and future federal resiliency dollars that may become available.

Provide ongoing resources to support the implementation of strategies identified in comprehensive climate action plans authorized by the Inflation Reduction Act.

Provide greater flexibility to use toll revenues to address strategic goals with multimodal transportation and carbon reductions. Greater flexibility could include providing more reliable, high-speed transit service to improve expressway corridors.

Adopt stronger emission standards for post-model-year 2026 to accelerate the transition of low- and zero-emissions fleets, particularly for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles.

Require the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide regular updates of its precipitation reports, including data and estimates that reflect future conditions to ensure planning and investment decisions can withstand the impacts of extreme weather events.

Recognize and reward state mitigation efforts in the grant scoring criteria for FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grants, such as higher floodplain management standards and enhanced state mitigation plans.

Create a uniform “Buy America” waiver process across USDOT agencies, including the FHWA and FTA, for projects that are proven to improve air quality substantially.





STATE ACTIONS

Establish state transportation emissions reduction goals that align with Illinois' carbon reduction strategy and comprehensive climate action plan.

Ensure timely spending of Climate Pollution Reduction Grant implementation funding that maximizes emissions reduction potential within the region and aligns with identified local and regional needs.

Provide funding for local governments to develop and implement climate action plans and resiliency plans.

CMAP supports **increased resources for integrated water resources management**

FEDERAL ACTIONS

Increase funding for regional eligibility and coordination for water, wastewater, and stormwater improvements and planning. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should leverage regional planning agencies to assist disadvantaged communities with accessing federal and state funds.

Provide stable, long-term funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to increase investments that maintain the health, recreational attractiveness, and economic benefits of Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes. This initiative accelerates efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes — the largest system of fresh surface water in the world.

STATE ACTIONS

Dedicate new and sustainable revenues to support state and regional water planning and enhanced coordination among the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois State Water Survey, Illinois Water Inventory Program, and regional partners.

Improve data sharing across agencies and partners to better support integrated water resources management.

Update the Water Use Act of 1983 to include sustainable management goals, improved well review, and water use reporting processes to better integrate decisions with groundwater science.

Promote equity in water infrastructure investments supported by the State Revolving Fund. This could include increasing capacity within low-income communities to promote access to loans.

Update statewide design standards to reflect green infrastructure techniques and precipitation trends.

Increase available funding for local jurisdictions to replace lead service lines. Expand opportunities for principal loan forgiveness for the highest need communities.



A photograph of construction workers in orange safety vests and yellow hard hats working on a train track. They are surrounded by gravel and concrete structures. In the background, there is a train station building and a sign that reads "DEPARTING PASSENGER TRAINS PLEASE REMAIN SEATED AT ALL TIMES UNTIL SIGNALS INDICATE IT IS SAFE TO GET UP".

Regional Economic Competitiveness

Over the past two years, the region achieved a tremendous milestone with the formation of the Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership (GCEP). The City of Chicago and the seven counties of northeastern Illinois laid a strong foundation for collaborative, inclusive economic development that leverages the region's assets while bringing new partners to the table. Federal and state leaders can support GCEP's success through policies and incentives that continue to drive business to the region while investing in more robust workforce development support.

Northeastern Illinois' reputation as the premier freight hub in North America establishes the sector's pivotal role in fostering an economically competitive region. Northeastern Illinois moves about \$3 trillion in goods each year by truck, rail, water, and air freight. The region is the intersection for commercial activity in the country — home to ten interstate highways, six of the nation's largest railroads, and one of the world's busiest cargo airports. Enabling safe and efficient freight mobility while reducing emissions from the sector will remain an important consideration for any future regional economic development strategy.

The **2020 Census figures**, meanwhile, showed northeastern Illinois adding population and becoming more diverse, while our workforce continued to age with the baby boomer generation entering retirement age and birth rates declining. The region's essential workers — who are disproportionately people of color — relied on transit to reach their jobs at all hours of the day during the height of the pandemic, even as the region's travel habits were shifting because of remote work. These trends emphasize the need for policies that ensure northeastern Illinois remains economically competitive in more inclusive and thriving ways.

CMAP's federal and state partners can help better prioritize strategic and sustainable development practices, strengthen housing coordination, encourage regional innovation and coordination, improve access to high quality jobs, and promote investment in communities that have felt the brunt of disinvestment for decades. Local governments will continue to play an essential role in our region's post-pandemic recovery, increasing the need for regional collaboration to foster a stronger and more resilient economy. The following lists the economic policy positions and priorities that CMAP supports on both the federal and state levels.

CMAP supports **stronger inclusive growth that reduces economic disparities**

FEDERAL ACTIONS

Amend the national highway goals in 23 U.S.C. § 150 to add a measure for how well the transportation system connects people to jobs and services.

Create a demonstration grant to provide reduced fares for low-income riders to help close transit equity gaps.

Ensure federal investments from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) are comprehensive and strategic through increased coordination with MPOs, especially in regions without an Economic Development District.

Continue American Rescue Plan Act EDA programs and funding levels that support regional economic development. This includes the Build Back Better Challenge, the Good Jobs Challenge, and the Economic Adjustment Assistance program.

Support place-based housing mobility solutions, including funding for efforts led by regions.

STATE ACTIONS

Provide resources to help regions and municipalities collaborate and prioritize projects eligible for federal economic development funding. Increase resources available for regional housing readiness planning and ongoing maintenance of data that informs housing decisions.

Streamline and improve accessibility of local and regional housing rehabilitation resources.





CMAP supports **increased opportunities for comprehensive planning and economic development**

FEDERAL ACTIONS

Require the FHWA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide MPOs with comprehensive technical assistance and support for the newly authorized regional housing coordination plan process. Ensure MPOs have maximum flexibility to fund the housing coordination process.

Provide targeted assistance and funding through programs like the Thriving Communities Initiative to build capacity. This includes support for Phase 1 Engineering, a major barrier that many disadvantaged communities face when planning local projects.

Create a joint office between USDOT, HUD, and the EDA to provide comprehensive support to regions with federal funding opportunities that address transportation, housing, and economic development.

STATE ACTIONS

Require a regular audit of all tax abatements, diversions, and credits used for economic development to assess their economic and fiscal impacts.

Grant research partners access to additional information about sales tax rebate agreements (including agreement text and amounts of rebated taxes) through data-use agreements that protect proprietary business data.

Institute tax increment financing (TIF) data reporting standards to allow planners and researchers to assess TIF expenditures, impacts, and the effectiveness of TIF across the region.

CMAP supports **improvements that help people and goods move efficiently**

FEDERAL ACTIONS

Continue investment in USDOT's Office of Multimodal Freight to ensure it can designate a National Multimodal Freight Network that informs future freight investments.

In the event of a railroad merger, require rail carriers to describe and disclose how existing and future passenger rail service would be impacted.

Prioritize grade crossing improvements that will address increased freight traffic and delays. These projects should be prioritized for programs that can mitigate the negative impact of freight activities, including the Federal Railroad Administration's Railroad Crossing Elimination Program.

Improve the data collection program for grade crossings to be regularly updated with quality public data that supports communities most impacted by freight movement.

CMAP supports **improvements to local and regional tax policy**

STATE ACTIONS

Modernize the sales tax to increase state and local funding for transportation, reduce economic inequities, and give municipalities more options to generate sufficient revenue from existing and desired development. This can include polices that broaden the state sales tax base to cover additional services.

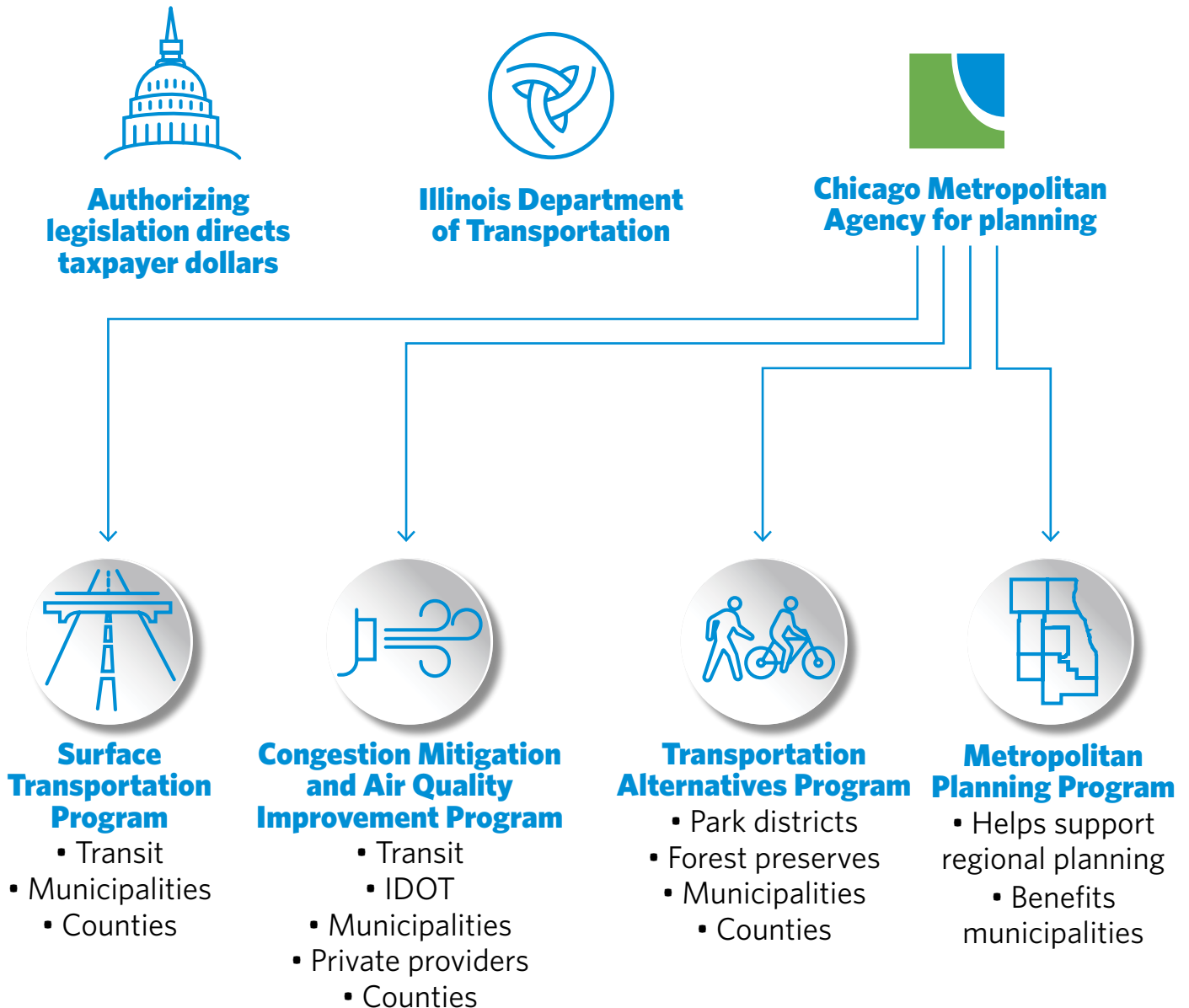
Increase state revenue allocation to local governments and reform state revenue disbursement criteria to reduce disparities across municipalities.

Allow non-home rule municipalities to impose appropriate user fees to provide services and better maintain infrastructure.



About CMAP

CMAP was created in 2005 by state statute (70 ILCS 1707). CMAP's Policy Committee is the federally designated MPO for the seven counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will, plus portions of DeKalb and Grundy. State and federal mandates require CMAP to conduct comprehensive regional planning, prioritize transportation investments, provide technical assistance for communities, and compile data resources that enhance decision making.



CMAP Board

City of Chicago appointments

Frank Beal, senior executive, Civic Consulting Alliance

Nina Idemudia, chief executive officer, Center for Neighborhood Technology

John Roberson, chief operating officer, City of Chicago

Joanna Ruiz, vice president, Wallin/Gomez Architects

Anne Sheahan, executive vice president of business affairs, HNTB Corporation

Cook County appointments

Gerald Bennett, mayor, Palos Hills (Southwest Cook)

Jada Curry, mayor, Village of Lynnwood (Suburban Cook)

Paul Hoefort, mayor, Village of Mount Prospect (Suburban Cook)

Richard Reinbold, president, Village of Richton Park (South Cook)

Matthew Walsh, former trustee, Indian Head Park (West Cook)

Collar county appointments

Matthew Brolley, president, Village of Montgomery (Kane/Kendall)

Gary Grasso, mayor, Village of Burr Ridge (DuPage)

John Noak, mayor, Village of Romeoville (Will)

Nancy Rotering, mayor, City of Highland Park (Lake)

Carolyn Schofield, member, McHenry County Board (McHenry)

Non-voting members

Abolfazl (Kouros) Mohammadian, PhD, professor and department head, Civil, Materials, and Environmental Engineering, University of Illinois at Chicago

Leanne Redden, executive director, Regional Transportation Authority (MPO Policy Committee)

Vacant (governor's appointee)

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