



MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Committee

From: CMAP Staff

Date: 04/19/2024

Subject: I-290 Eisenhower Expressway/Blue Line Forest Park Branch (I-290/Blue Line) corridor

Action Requested: Information

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) are working together to create a unified vision for the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway/Blue Line Forest Park Branch (I-290/Blue Line) corridor. This partnership aims to accelerate work to improve the current operation, ongoing maintenance, and long-term investment in the multimodal transportation facilities along the corridor.

Existing conditions and challenges

The I-290/Blue Line corridor is a critical corridor that enables the mobility of residents throughout the region and supports economic activity through the movement of goods. Despite the importance of the corridor, the highway and transit facilities are deteriorating and leading to traffic safety concerns, significant congestion, flooding risks, and pedestrian and transit accessibility issues. Given these challenges, both IDOT and CTA have active and near-term projects to improve existing conditions. IDOT's projects include addressing roadway conditions and improving drainage systems, while CTA is completing trackwork upgrades and improving train station accessibility. However, due to the length and multimodal nature of the corridor, coordinating and financing near-term improvements continues to be a challenge.

Joint Statement of Understanding

The complexities and challenges along the corridor prompted this new partnership between the CTA, IDOT, and CMAP, which was formalized through a Joint Statement of Understanding (JSOU) signed in December 2023. The JSOU outlines the importance of creating and implementing a unified vision for work along the corridor, in addition to identifying principles that address infrastructure deficiencies, improve mobility, and enhance safety and accessibility, among others. To help develop and implement the vision, the JSOU created a governance structure for the stakeholders.

Corridor development office

The JSOU also includes a commitment to jointly fund a corridor development office (CDO). CMAP is leading the procurement process, and representatives from CTA, IDOT, and CMAP will serve as evaluators. The CDO will provide critical strategic support to advance progress along the corridor. Responsibilities for the CDO include long-term corridor program visioning, coordinating and sequencing projects, developing funding plans, supporting coordination with federal partners, tracking progress, and strategic communications and messaging.

USDOT local technical assistance workshop

CMAP hosted a local technical assistance workshop facilitated by the USDOT's Build America Bureau to continue to build momentum and address barriers to progress along the corridor. Attendees included the core project partners (CTA, IDOT, CMAP), local partners (Regional Transportation Authority, Chicago Department of Transportation, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways), and federal partners (Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration), among others. The workshop discussed the need to align federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes, opportunities to advance long-term visioning for the corridor, and alternative financing strategies. The workshop concluded with an executive briefing that shared recent milestones and takeaways from the workshop with key stakeholders and elected officials.