



**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** STP Project Selection Committee

**From:** CMAP Staff

**Date:** July 9, 2024

**Subject:** Bus Speed Improvement Projects

**Action Requested:** Discussion

At the April 11, 2024 STP Project Selection Committee, staff led discussion of potential revisions to Shared Fund evaluation criteria. Staff noted that bus speed improvement has been the least funded project type, primarily because these projects have been funded through CMAQ programs. Staff asked the committee for feedback on eliminating the bus speed improvement type or modifying the category to make it more attractive.

Feedback from the committee included comments that:

- Transit funding is currently under discussion with the IL General Assembly;
- Leaving the current criteria for this cycle could allow for revisions to better reflect future transit landscape; and
- There is a lack of projects that are ready right now, but there are many under development.

Recent planning for buses has placed an emphasis on speed. The recently completed Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) highlights the importance of buses for residents with low incomes and those from communities of color. PART notes that bus speeds have fallen over the past 20 years, and a key recommendation is to “enable faster and more reliable bus service.” CTA also recently released their Better Streets for Buses plan and launched a Bus Vision project. In addition to the Pulse network, Pace is undertaking their ReVision Network Restructuring Project. Staff agree with the committee comments that removing the bus speed category would not be in line with planning activities of the region.

There are, however, modifications to the evaluation criteria that can be made, including the availability of new data sources. Sources such as Replica could give additional insight into bus ridership. Another tool that the RTA recently acquired, Remix, can quantify access impacts of transit changes for CMAP and the service boards. Replica was seen as adding additional complexity, without bringing significant new insight. Remix is promising, but it will take some time and support from the transit agencies to identify if it can be used for the Shared Fund.

With the significant planning underway, staff recommends that the bus speed improvement category be retained as is, for this funding cycle, but that the overall project type and methodology should be assessed again in future cycles.