

STEERING COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

May 24, 2023, 9:00 a.m.

433 West Van Buren Street, Suite 450, Chicago, IL 60607

1.0 Welcome, call to order, roll call, approval of minutes

CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

(Members Dan Cronin, Mark Denzler, Derek Douglas, Darlene Hightower, Rob Karr, Jack Lavin, Juan Carlos Linares, Tom Livingston, and Karen Tamley attended the meeting virtually)

Present: MarySue Barrett, Randy Blankenhorn, Deborah Carroll, Kevin Considine, Dan Cronin, Mark Denzler, Derek Douglas, Julie Hamos, Darlene Hightower, Rob Karr, Jack Lavin, Juan Carlos Linares, Tom Livingston, Justin Marlowe, David Narefsky, Jorge Perez, Doug Pryor, Bob Reiter, Roberto Requejo, Amy Rynell, Stephen Schlickman, Karen Tamley, Jen Walling, Sarah Wetmore

Absent: Carole Brown, Derek Douglas, Jacky Grimshaw, David Leopold

CMAP Staff: Sema Abulhab, Erin Aleman, Bill Barnes, John Carpenter, Daniel Comeaux, Gilton Cross, Stephen Di Benedetto, Elizabeth Ginsberg, Kasia Hart, Tricia Hyland, Aimee Lee, Amy McEwan, Martin Menninger, Nikolas Mertin, Julie Reschke, Elizabeth Scott, Leo Torres, Jennie Vana, Blanca Vela-Schneider, Laura Wilkison, and Alonzo Zamarron

(in person/online): Steven Brown, Kevin Brubaker, Christopher Canning, M Castle, Lynnette Ciavarella, Jack Cruikshank, Karen Darch, John Donovan, Ashton Drake, Jesse Elam, Brandon Geber, Dimitre Guenov, Neil James, Kendra Johnson, Pam Jones, Tom Kotarac, David Kralik, Jill Leary, Jen McNeil Dhadwal, Nikolas Merten, John Noak, Charlotte Obodzinski, Kevin O'Malley, Philip Plotch, Rob Puentes, Dany Robles, Stephanie Sarabia, Jeff Schielke, Garrett Shrode, Linda Soto, Doug Sullivan, David Tomzik, Michael Vanderhoof, and Audrey Wennink

Erin Aleman welcomed the committee members and conducted roll call. A motion to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2023 PART Steering Committee meeting was made with all members in favor.

Erin Aleman briefed the steering committee of legislative progress at the Illinois General Assembly related to PART, including an extension to the farebox recovery ratio waiver, requiring the service boards to report system performance metrics, a requirement for the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to study the feasibility of providing year-round free or reduced fares to different groups for an equitable fare structure, and a requirement for certain employers to provide pre-tax transportation benefits to employees.

Aleman noted the involvement of steering committee member Roberto Requejo as co-chair of Mayor Brandon Johnson's transportation subcommittee, alongside Kirk Dillard, chairman of the RTA Board of Directors, and spoke to the need of providing critical input to the Johnson administration's transportation platform particularly as it relates to transit.

Aleman highlighted the wide array of stakeholders CMAP is engaging with as part of this process, with Jane Grover providing details of recent public engagement opportunities, including results from a public opinion survey and focus groups with a variety of regional stakeholders.

2.0 How to Pay for It

Elizabeth Scott reviewed the three sales tax options under consideration: raising the sales tax rate, expanding the sales tax base to include services, or a hybrid approach between the two. Scott also provided the committee an overview of the increasing cost of paratransit service and its primary funding sources along with peer approaches to paratransit funding. Lastly, Scott reviewed a set of roadway-generated revenues that CMAP is considering for transit funding in the short-, medium-, and long-term time frame.

Committee members discussed peer approaches to sales tax base expansions, potential cost efficiencies that the region's paratransit service could pursue, including Medicaid reimbursements, and how other agencies are filling in the paratransit funding gap. Members highlighted the political challenges of raising or expanding the sales tax; discussing the need to present sales tax recommendations with peer state approaches as a potential messaging tool to address some of these challenges.

The committee also discussed land use reforms near transit as a mechanism for new operational revenues, though it is unlikely to raise enough in the short-term, identifying cost efficiencies the system could pursue with the request for new funding, and reviewing the \$730 million budget gap figure.

3.0 System We Want

Daniel Comeaux provided a high-level overview of the package of recommendations coming out of the *System We Want* discussion groups, with a deeper dive into the challenges and opportunities within fare integration and affordability, safety, security and cleanliness, and adapting service to post-pandemic travel patterns.

The committee members highlighted that integrating fares is a significant component of the package of recommendations, discussed the effects of investing in better transit service like increased ridership, and requested that CMAP staff explore the costs of a transit ambassador program to increase staff presence and reduce security concerns on the system.

Committee members noted the need to talk to employers, particularly suburban ones, and address reverse commute and suburb-to-suburb travel for which existing transit service is sparse. On fares, the committee highlighted the high cost of paratransit fares for many riders who rely on a fixed income and the need to support fare policy changes that increase equity and access, while continuing to provide transit a stable revenue source.

The committee members also discussed the positive impacts that the package of system improvement recommendations have on the *How to Pay For It* revenue and budget gap assessments and the need to work on land use incentives, particularly around Metra, by encouraging employers to locate in transit-supportive areas. Committee members noted that transit-supportive land use plays into the success of regional rail.

Committee members also suggested that messaging around climate resiliency and economic growth become a focus of these recommendations given their connection to transit infrastructure, service, and funding as well as jobs, economic development, and the federal money available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act.

4.0 How to Implement It

Aimee Lee reviewed the framework that is driving the governance recommendations, the different system functions that governance structures impact, and the wide spectrum to which those functions can be assigned to (from fully centralized to fully independent).

Lee reminded the committee members that governance reforms must address the [problem statements](#) co-created by the *How to Implement It* group all while achieving the goals from *System We Want* and maximizing investments from *How to Pay For It*. Lee presented the spectrum of governance options CMAP is looking at, including: Keeping the structure the same, but revising funding allocations; Stronger regional agency with existing service boards; Unifying the existing RTA and service boards into a consolidated regional agency with subdivisions for operating units.

Steering committee members requested that CMAP staff begin to tease out the tradeoffs of each governance proposal, including the implications for *System We Want* recommendations, clarity on potential cost savings of a restructure, and analyzing reforms through the lens of the transit rider. Members also noted that governance reforms are inextricably linked to seeking new funding to address the budget gap and make system improvements.

5.0 Public comment

Two members of the public provided comments.

Kevin Brubaker, Environmental Law and Policy Center, echoed earlier comments on highlighting the nexus between climate change and transit. Brubaker noted that the conversation around improving transit should happen simultaneously with CMAP's climate work and that achieving the region's climate goals will not happen unless there is a thriving transit network.

Linda Soto, Pace Board of Directors, highlighted progress that the service boards and the RTA have made to improve regional coordination in recent years. Soto noted that infrastructure needs and Rebuild Illinois served in uniting the agencies to work together and lobby for more funding, along with smarter purchasing and planning. On climate, Soto noted that Pace is working to shift to electric buses, with CTA and Metra also having their own plans and efforts underway to move the region towards more sustainable transit. Lastly, Soto noted that while the region would benefit from changes to governance rules and management practices, the pandemic obscured recent progress on cooperative efforts between the agencies.

6.0 Adjournment

Erin Aleman provided closing statements and next steps in the PART project. The next PART Steering Committee meeting takes place on July 19, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.