



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

Transportation Investment Criteria: A Model

Transportation • Issue Brief Extra

Five Key Criteria For Evaluating Transportation Projects

MPC has a long history of taking positions on policies that promote sensible growth goals. In 2000, MPC's Regional Development and Transportation committees jointly developed Transportation Investment Criteria to address a wide range of concerns — from accessibility and mobility to land use to economic development and environmental impacts that should be assessed during the planning stage of a project.

The Transportation Investment Criteria have been provided to Chicago Area Transportation Study and to the region's transportation agencies. MPC urges them to use these principles to evaluate regionally significant projects and to consider a project's alternatives based on information provided by transportation agencies, community representatives, advocates, and municipal leaders.

Transportation Investment Criteria

To promote transportation development that meets community needs while also addressing broader sensible growth goals in the Chicago area, regionally significant transportation investment should meet most all of the following criteria:

Accessibility and Mobility

An underlying goal of all transportation investment should be to improve access and mobility for users. In order to achieve this goal, the following should be

considered in assessing the feasibility of a transportation investment.

A project should be:

- efficiently and conveniently connected to existing transportation services and networks;
- part of an area-wide comprehensive transportation plan;
- multi-modal, supporting choices and linkages among auto, public transit, air, rail, water, and truck, to the maximum extent possible;
- planned to incorporate transportation demand management strategies and technological

advances such as intelligent transportation systems;

- prioritized if it maintains the existing system over new facilities; and
- considered in the context of existing and future land uses.

Planning, Community and Land Use

Large-scale transportation investments have the ability to transform communities. Transportation infrastructure should be designed and built so that both development and public infrastructure are viable, sustainable, and enhance a

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For More Information...

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broader set of land use objectives that address type and density of development. Better coordination between transportation and land use planning agencies can improve connectivity of modes and promote community development.

Proposed investments should:

- be compatible and coordinate with comprehensive county and municipal land use plans, as well as state and federal programs and plans;
- be designed to foster clustered, contiguous, mixed use, human scale development to reduce the growth of congestion on the region's road network, while increasing the viability of transit options;
- address regional equity goals based on resource distribution, both in benefits and costs;
- conform with agreements between adjacent municipalities and counties regarding the development to take place in the surrounding area;
- identify how the transportation investment fits into the larger regional transportation network, relative to transportation demands in the region in terms of travel markets served, the quality of the transportation service and the provision of peak peri-

- od capacity; and
- identify the impacts (such as financial, natural resources and community) if a transportation investment is not made.

Environment

Transportation investments effect key environmental assets. The Chicago metropolitan region was rated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a severe non-attainment region for air quality. This threatens the region's potential for continued economic growth and federal funding and its ability to protect residents' quality of life. At the same time, natural resources such as prairie remnants, wetlands, woodlands, and other unique environmental features are irreplaceable.

Better coordination between transportation and land use planning agencies can improve connectivity of modes and promote community development.

Project evaluations should consider:

- an analysis of project impacts on air quality,

- noise, energy consumption, land, and natural resources; and
- an analysis of the project's benefits as compared to its environmental costs.

Transportation investments can foster economic development and thereby opportunities for underserved areas and the region as a whole.

Balanced Economic Development

Transportation investments can foster economic development and thereby opportunities for underserved areas and the region as a whole. Project evaluation should include:

- a summary of the potential economic benefits for low- and moderate-income households; and
- an understanding of how the project improves access to jobs, the movement of goods, the location of businesses and manufacturers, and other economic development opportunities.

Financial Resources

Transportation investments are costly while financial resources are limited. To

ensure the best decision from a financial viewpoint, the transportation project proposal should include:

- an estimated total project cost;
- identified funding sources;
- analysis of the life-cycle maintenance and operational costs;
- analysis of the impact on the availability of resources for other regional transportation needs;
- estimate of the impact on the need for other transportation investments; and
- a cost-benefit analysis of alternatives with recognition of the relative impacts among competing priorities.