

May 15, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Illinois Route 53/120 Advisory Council. The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is grateful for the dedication of the Advisory Council co-chairs and commends them and the leadership of the Illinois Tollway for designing a thorough, open and participatory process to determine whether to continue planning for this new road through an environmentally sensitive and economically vital corridor.

Throughout these deliberations, MPC has conditioned its potential support for the construction of Illinois Route 53/120 on the presence of three factors. If any of these elements are compromised we would urge the Tollway to reconsider. With these elements secured, this region is poised to break the mold on coordinated land use and transportation, and on innovative finance.

1. **Illinois Route 53/120 was selected as one of five fiscally constrained major capital projects of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP's) GO TO 2040 comprehensive regional plan.** Following extensive public input, GO TO 2040's fiscally constrained major transportation capital projects – including Route 53/120 – were prioritized based on their consistency with the Preferred Regional Scenario (one of balanced growth), the results of individual evaluations, and information derived from project analyses. The five projects selected were those that yielded the highest rankings on measures such as economic growth, reduced congestion, shorter commutes, and improved job accessibility.
2. **A cutting edge context sensitive environmental design.** MPC commends the Advisory Council for remaining staunchly committed to an environmentally sensitive design. As a policy change organization dedicated to helping shape a more competitive *and* sustainable Chicago region, MPC actively promotes context-sensitive transportation planning. Rte. 53/120, envisioned as a four-lane, 45 mph parkway, could "blaze a new trail" by coordinating transportation investments with complementary land uses, stewardship of sensitive natural areas, and appropriately-sited mixed-use economic development. No doubt, this region has the resources, talent and expertise to make this roadway an exemplary, multimodal, limited-access thoroughfare that drives coordinated economic investment, instead of just hurtling people from one uncoordinated destination to another. Rather than build a sprawling highway that ignores and even diminishes local environmental assets and new interchanges that primarily support auto-centric big-box development, we have the opportunity to develop a winding parkway designed to enhance the natural environment and incorporate sensible features – such as interchanges that promote "town center," mixed-use developments, and long-term economic growth for local communities.
3. **A balanced financial plan that includes local sources.** The proposed plan to finance Illinois Route 53/120 takes an innovative approach, combining toll revenues with congestion pricing, local investments from value capture of nearby real estate, and projected savings from acceleration and refinement of cost escalation. The vision for Illinois

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Route 53/120 embraces the values of local residents and merits local investment because doing so will increase the value of property in Lake County. Value capture or value sharing financing mechanisms have been used successfully throughout the country to finance new or existing transportation infrastructure. It is sound policy precisely because it connects the benefit (and benefactors) of the investment with its cost. This fact, plus the reality of inadequate federal and state transportation funds, is among the reasons why MPC believes all major capital projects, including Route 53/120, must consider a broader menu of financing options, from congestion pricing to value capture. We note that none of these mechanisms have been authorized, nor have projection models been refined. And even with these innovative tools contributing to covering the cost, there remains a substantial gap that would necessitate a substantial Tollway contribution.

MPC's support is predicated on these three points. Should changes be made to CMAP's capital priorities or to the design or the financial plan for Illinois Route 53/120, MPC will reevaluate our position. We strongly urge the Advisory Council to not lower its design standards and continue to pursue an exemplary, environmentally sensitive project and keep local funding options on the table, including value capture financing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "MarySue Barrett". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

MarySue Barrett

President