



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Tracey B. Fleming
312-332-8131 phone

**BUSINESS LEADERS URGE RTA REFORM
AND TAX HIKES TO PAY FOR WORLD CLASS MASS TRANSIT**

CHICAGO – Arguing that mass transit reform and funding must be a high priority for General Assembly action this month, business and civic leaders in the Chicago region on Tuesday, proposed a series of administrative reforms and tax increases that would provide the revenue needed to avert a growing fiscal crisis at the Regional Transportation Authority and give commuters an expanded, efficient world-class transportation system.

“The legislative agenda in Springfield is crowded and contentious, and some lawmakers are reluctant to add mass transit to the list of problems that require a solution,” said George A. Ranney, Jr., President and CEO of Chicago Metropolis 2020. “But ignoring the looming fiscal crisis would guarantee reduced mass transit options and more crowded highways.

“That toxic concoction of limited and less reliable mass transit and more highway gridlock would do great damage our region’s economy at the very time the state of Illinois is relying on a strong Chicago region to provide the funding for education reform, expanded health care coverage and dozens of other worthwhile causes competing for attention,” Ranney said.

“Business leaders in this region recognize the importance of high quality mass transit,” Ranney said. “We know its cost, and we support passage of increased taxes in conjunction with reforms in the way our transit system is managed.”

A position paper prepared by Chicago Metropolis 2020 suggested amending reform legislation (House Bill 1841) in three areas:

1. The RTA, which now has very limited powers, should be given the responsibility and authority to create a regional transit system. The three service boards (CTA, Metra, and Pace) should retain their authority to operate their parts of the system but within a context established by the RTA.

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2. The legislation should provide the \$400 million in added annual operating expenses and \$2 billion for capital improvements called for in the RTA's strategic plan. The business-based group said the money should come from the beneficiaries of transit investments – drivers on roads now choked by congestion and riders on trains and buses – and the tax burden should be shared fairly and the funds distributed fairly. The new revenues should come from a combination of sources, which could include a gas tax in the RTA region, an increase in the RTA sales tax, a broadened RTA sales tax to include all consumer services, a new tax on businesses with off-street parking and other possible changes in the fare structure.
3. Membership on the governing boards of the RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace should be changed to better reflect the regional base of each board and to improve communication and coordination among the boards.

Chicago Metropolis 2020 is a nonprofit civic organization created in 1999 by The Commercial Club of Chicago to promote long-term planning, better regional cooperation, and smart investment in the Chicago region and its people.

The mass transit reform and funding recommendations are included in a letter sent to Governor Blagojevich and all members of the General Assembly. The letter was signed by the leadership of Chicago Metropolis 2020 and The Commercial Club of Chicago, **Donald G. Lubin**, Partner, Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal, and Chairman of Chicago Metropolis 2020; **Andrew J. McKenna**, Chairman, McDonald's Corporation, and Founding Chairman of Chicago Metropolis 2020, **George A. Ranney, Jr.**, President & CEO, Chicago Metropolis 2020; **Lester Crown**, Chairman, Henry Crown and Company, and Chairman of The Commercial Club of Chicago; and **R. Eden Martin**, President, Civic Committee of The Commercial Club of Chicago.

Other members of the Executive Council of Chicago Metropolis 2020 signing the letter included **Anthony K. Anderson**, Vice Chair and Midwest Area Managing Partner, Ernst & Young; **MarySue Barrett**, President, Metropolitan Planning Council; **Frank H. Beal**, Executive Director, Chicago

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Metropolis 2020; **Rev. Dr. Byron Brazier**, Church Administrator and Assistant Pastor, Apostolic Church of God; **Ronald E. Daly**, Director, SUPERVALU, INC. and Director, U.S. Cellular; **W. James Farrell**, Retired Chairman & CEO, Illinois Tool Works, Inc.; **Brother James Gaffney**, FSC, President, Lewis University; **Elmer W. Johnson**, Partner, Jenner & Block LLP; **John W. Madigan**, Retired Chairman & CEO, Tribune Company; **John W. McCarter**; President & CEO, The Field Museum; **John F. Sandner**, Special Policy Advisor & Retired Chairman, Chicago Mercantile Exchange; **Jeffery D. Schielke**, Mayor, City of Batavia; **Paul L. Snyder**, Midwest Area Managing Partner-Audit, KPMG; **James P. Stirling**, Senior Vice President, UBS; **Richard L. Thomas**, Retired Chairman, First Chicago NBD Corporation; **Don A. Turner**, President Emeritus, Chicago Federation of Labor; and **Corinne G. Wood**, former Illinois Lieutenant Governor.

The letter and position paper are available at www.chicagometropolis2020.org.

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