



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TRUCK AND RAIL FREIGHT ON COLLISION COURSE WITH COMMUTER  
TRAFFIC JAMS**

***Chicago Metropolis 2020 Proposes Way to Avoid Congestion and Job Losses***

A near doubling of freight moving through the Chicago region threatens to overwhelm area roads and railways within the next 25 years, but action and creative planning now can ease that congestion and help the region retain the jobs and economic benefits of a healthy freight system.

***The Metropolis Freight Plan: Delivering the Goods*** is the first study in many decades that examines the connection between land use and the movement of goods by rail and truck and how it impacts economic development of the region. The plan outlines the steps needed to prevent a meltdown into freight gridlock and to secure the economic benefits of growing freight traffic. The plan was unveiled today by Chicago Metropolis 2020, a business-based civic organization.

The Chicago Metropolis 2020 recommendations include:

- Use barrier-free tolling technology (similar to I-PASS on state tollways) to create a system of user fees and variable pricing on the region's most congested highways. Variable pricing would provide an economic incentive for truckers and other drivers to use those highways in non-peak periods and reduce rush hour congestion.
- Designate and protect freight centers in the suburbs to ensure that public and private industrial development investments are targeted to those corridors that can most efficiently support new industrial development and minimize freight trips.
- To relieve traffic congestion, the region should maximize the ability of rail to carry more freight. Land should be preserved now for future rail corridors and intermodal terminals where freight can be transferred efficiently from rail to trucks and moved quickly to customers.
- Eliminate gaps in the region's state-designated truck route network. By directing at least \$3 billion of the region's projected \$63 billion in highway spending over the next 25 years to improve and expand more arterial streets, we can reduce delays and prevent unnecessary travel by the widest and heaviest trucks carrying freight to businesses.
- Create county planning organizations, governed by equal partnerships of county and municipal officials, authorized to develop, fund and coordinate implementation of countywide freight plans within each suburban county and designate an efficient system of truck routes.

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“Freight transportation literally put Chicago on the map, and it helps drive our region’s economy today,” said George A. Ranney, Jr., President and CEO of Chicago Metropolis 2020. “If we are to ensure that the region will continue to enjoy the thousands of jobs and other benefits of a healthy freight system in the future, we must act now with new investment and coordinated regional planning.”

A key recommendation is the completion of the \$1.5 billion CREATE rail infrastructure improvement program, a 10-year agreement among the region’s leading railroads, the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois to eliminate rail bottlenecks by upgrading antiquated track and signals and modernizing intersections.

“Success of CREATE is a critical component of any solution, but CREATE will only succeed if government and private industry uphold their ends of the bargain and the federal government recognizes the importance of investing in these improvements,” said Frank Beal, Executive Director of Chicago Metropolis 2020. “If they do, other recommendations in the report can build on CREATE’s foundation and maintain this region’s position as freight capital of North America.”

Another key recommendation of *Delivering the Goods* is the creation of a Regional Policy Board to prepare and implement a comprehensive regional freight plan that integrates rail, road and other types of transportation with economic development and land use plans. There is currently no regional agency with the scope or authority to plan and implement needed freight system improvements. The new Regional Policy Board would absorb the functions of the region’s agencies now responsible for development and transportation planning, respectively, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and the Chicago Area Transportation Study. It would work in consultation with state, county, municipal, freight industry, business and civic leaders to coordinate regionally significant freight transportation decisions.

“Without drastic changes in the way we plan and invest to handle freight movements, truck traffic alone will consume at least half and perhaps as much as two-thirds of all highway capacity we plan to add in the region over the next two decades,” said Jim LaBelle, Deputy Director of Chicago Metropolis 2020. “By acting now, we can avoid crippling gridlock and accommodate growth in freight traffic while reducing travel times for commuters and trucks.”

“The Chicago region already faces the challenge of absorbing nearly two million new residents and a million more cars by 2030,” said Ranney. “Today, our region is the third most congested metropolitan area in the nation. Without coordinated planning for freight, as well as for housing, development and employment, congestion will worsen.”

The region plans to spend \$63 billion on transportation projects over the next quarter century, but runs the danger of perpetuating and compounding the uncoordinated and even conflicting policies that have seen six counties, 272 municipalities and seven planning and transportation agencies give rise to a regional trucking system whose gaps and circuitry foster inefficiency.

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“The actions we are recommending in just the trucking sector alone will result in annual savings of \$5 billion to businesses, an increase of \$7 billion in annual production locally, and the creation of 23,000 new jobs,” said Ranney. “We need to take action now to win those benefits and avoid the alternative, crippling gridlock and jobs lost to other regions of the country.”

The railroad and trucking industries annually carry freight valued at almost \$1 trillion to, from or through the Chicago region, and the industries employ 87,000 local residents whose annual compensation tops \$3.5 billion. Freight traffic already strains the 24,000 miles of roadways and the 2,800 miles of railroad that crisscross the region. As freight volumes in the United States nearly double by the year 2030, even greater demand will be placed on Chicago’s highways and railways.

The complete text of *Delivering the Goods* and a more detailed technical report are available at the Chicago Metropolis 2020 web site ([www.chicagometropolis2020.org](http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org)).

#### **About Chicago Metropolis 2020**

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.

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On the Web: <http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org>

# MEDIA CONTACTS

## THE METROPOLIS FREIGHT PLAN: DELIVERING THE GOODS

Published in December 2004, *The Metropolis Freight Plan: Delivering the Goods* is the product of a lengthy examination of the movement of freight through the Chicago region by rail and truck. The project included consultation with experts in freight systems, technical analysis using the most modern tools available, a review of freight plans from around the world and interviews with a variety of leaders from industry, government and civic organizations.

Journalists seeking comment or additional explanation of the findings and recommendations may wish to contact some or all of the following individuals,

### **Frank H. Beal**

Executive Director  
Chicago Metropolis 2020  
312-332-8188

Before joining Chicago Metropolis 2020 in 1999, Beal was President of Ryerson International Inc., an operating unit of the former Inland Steel Industries. He worked in many other capacities at Inland Steel for two decades, including president and CEO of Ryerson/West. Prior to joining Inland Steel, he served as director of the Illinois Department of Energy and Natural Resources under Governor James R. Thompson, and, as the state's first deputy director of the Institute for Environmental Quality under Governor Richard Ogilvie.

### **Jim LaBelle**

Deputy Director  
Chicago Metropolis 2020  
312-332-8156

LaBelle leads policy development in the areas of freight, land use, growth, and transportation. He has served as executive director of Business Leaders for Transportation, a regional coalition led by Chicago Metropolis 2020, the Metropolitan Planning Council and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce. Prior to joining Chicago Metropolis 2020, LaBelle was an elected member of the Lake County Board for 20 years, including three terms as chair. He was also president of the Lake County Forest Preserve District.

### **Don Schaefer**

Executive Director  
Mid-West Truckers Association  
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The Mid-West Truckers Association represents and services over 2,700 members in 15 states. Mid-West Truckers Association members are trucking companies and companies that operate trucks as part of their business.

**Paul Nowicki**

Assistant Vice President  
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway  
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The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation (BNSF), through its subsidiary The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, operates one of the largest railroad networks in North America, with 33,000 route miles covering 28 states and two Canadian provinces. This network covers the western two-thirds of the United States, stretching from major Pacific Northwest and Southern California ports to the Midwest, Southeast and Southwest, and from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada. The railway moves more intermodal traffic than any other rail system in the world. The company employs about 38,000 people.

**Joseph C. Szabo**

Illinois State Director  
United Transportation Union  
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Szabo is a fifth-generation railroader whose ancestors worked for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; Wabash and Illinois Central Railroads. He began his career with the Illinois Central in 1976, where he worked as a yard switchman, road trainman and commuter passenger conductor. Parallel with his union work, for more than 20 years Szabo was active in local government in the Chicago suburb of Riverdale, eventually serving as mayor. He serves on the Executive Council of Chicago Metropolis 2020 and is a member of the Business Leaders for Transportation. The United Transportation Union (UTU) is a broad-based, transportation labor union representing about 125,000 active and retired railroad, bus and mass transit workers in the United States and Canada. The UTU is the largest railroad operating union in North America, with more than 600 locals.