



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Transportation to “boost our state’s economic performance”**

*Chicago Metropolis 2020 calls for cutting private costs and improving public spending*

CHICAGO – Business-backed Chicago Metropolis 2020 today released “Building Our Economy: Transportation for a New Illinois,” which proposes a new perspective on transportation – to see it not as an end in itself but as a means to produce long-term employment and economic expansion.

The statewide report offers dozens of recommendations to accelerate growth and job creation by making smarter public transportation investments and by reducing the private sector’s \$100-billion annual costs of transportation.

Illinois families and businesses spend \$100 billion a year on personal and freight transportation. Reducing these private costs could free up billions to meet family needs and make Illinois businesses healthier, says the nonprofit public-policy organization’s report.

“The Illinois economy from Rockford to East St. Louis has changed fundamentally in the last several decades,” Metropolis chairman Donald G. Lubin states in the report’s introduction, “If we fail to make transportation decisions that respond to those changes, our competitiveness will continue to erode.”

Metropolis president and CEO George A. Ranney said, “Our transportation investments and policies have to support the new economy of Illinois. We literally can’t afford to stick with old habits that may have served us well in an earlier time. We can grow our economy if we invest wisely.”

Illinois’ once predominantly agricultural economy is now dominated by a dozen metropolitan economies like the Quad Cities and Champaign-Urbana that produce 93 percent of Illinois’ gross state product and 90 percent of its household income.

This statewide network of urban economies is led by the Chicago region which connects the state to the global economy. Tourism and business travel will grow, the report forecasts, and freight volumes will likely double within 20 years – even as fuel costs are expected to climb steadily. The report describes why and how Illinois must build its transportation system around these economic realities.

“Building Our Economy” begins by examining the changing Illinois economy, and then details how improvements in transportation policies and practices can help Illinois thrive. But, it says, public attention is now mainly focused on the \$12 billion in public transportation spending by “an unmanageable 2,859 units of government.”

“Transportation for a New Illinois” was conceived, researched and written by the staff of Chicago Metropolis 2020, under the direction and principal authorship of its executive director Frank H. Beal and its vice president James C. LaBelle, and calls on state and local governments to act decisively and strategically in dozens of specific ways.

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It proposes actions to:

- Cut government costs by consolidating into county governments the responsibility for building and maintaining roads and bridges in 1,403 townships.
- Create an Illinois Freight Authority to plan, fund and coordinate freight system improvements, in order to maintain our status as North America's freight capital.
- Redesign and increase investment in metropolitan Chicago's transit system.
- Expand transit in Peoria, Bloomington-Normal, Decatur, and Illinois' other metropolitan areas.
- Double the gas tax and reserve a portion of the new revenue for transit.
- Ensure that rural residents have access to on-demand transit options to access health care, education, and employment opportunities in neighboring urban areas.
- Expand the use of tolling and variable pricing to better manage traffic and pay for needed improvements.
- Create a convenient, reliable passenger rail system to connect the state's metropolitan areas.
- Stimulate investment in freight centers throughout the state, including the development of intermodal cargo port facilities in southern Illinois.

The Chicago Metropolis 2020 statewide transportation project was supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust.

The entire report, and executive summary and its technical index can be viewed and downloaded on September 12 at [www.chicagometropolis2020.org](http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org).

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### **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 investments in the Chicago region and its people.