



NEWS RELEASE

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Mass Transit Committee Approves Creation of Regional Planning Board

*HB 3121 merges CATS, NIPC to integrate transportation and
Land-use planning in Chicago region*

The House Mass Transit Committee today passed legislation to create a new Regional Planning Board to address the growing problem of congestion in the region that threatens economic growth and the quality of life for area residents.

The legislation would merge the functions of the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, a move long sought by the region's business community. The bill, introduced by Representatives Suzanne Bassi (R-Palatine) and Julie Hamos (D-Evanston) moved forward with strong bi-partisan support.

Currently, CATS handles transportation planning and NIPC is responsible for land-use planning for the region. The separation of these activities has inhibited the comprehensive, long term planning required to reverse the Chicago area's growing congestion problem. Studies show that freight, rail, and automobile congestion could cost the region millions in economic activity and thousands of jobs if not corrected.

Chicago Metropolis 2020, an arm of the Commercial Club of Chicago, worked closely with the region's public officials to craft the measure. The bill is an amendment to HB 3121.

"We applaud the cooperation of all the parties involved in this important step toward truly integrated planning for the Chicago area. Sound planning, and a rational development of our infrastructure, is essential for the region's economic future," said George Ranney, president of Chicago Metropolis 2020. "This bill is a key step in the right direction."

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The bill calls for the new Board to make recommendations relating to the current governance structure and the roles of the current boards to complete the consolidation. " This is an important first step towards complete consolidation of planning for the region. There is more work to be done," said Ranney.

Ranney said the Regional Planning Board is an essential step as policymakers consider reforms in the region's mass transit funding and governance structure.

A synopsis of the bill is attached.

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***Proposed Regional Planning Act
House Bill 3121 (Amended)***

Purpose: “The General Assembly declares and determines that a streamlined, consolidated regional planning agency is necessary in order to plan for the most effective public and private investments in the northeastern Illinois region and to better integrate plans for land use and transportation. It is the intent of the General Assembly to consolidate, through an orderly transition, the functions of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) in order to address the development and transportation challenges of the northeastern Illinois region.”

Creation of the Regional Planning Board (RPB)

- HB 3121 establishes the **Regional Planning Board (RPB)** as a municipal corporation with 15 voting members appointed cooperatively by mayors and chief elected county officials throughout the seven county region that now includes Kendall County.
- Concurrence of 4/5 of the Board members in office is needed for any Board action.

The RPB is required to:

- Provide a policy framework under which all regional plans are developed.
- Coordinate regional transportation and land use planning.
- Develop a comprehensive plan that integrates land use and transportation, at intervals not exceeding every five years. Units of local government will continue to maintain control over land use and zoning decisions.
- Identify and provide coordinated advocacy of regional priorities and ensure that various plans related to those priorities are fully integrated
- Regularly prepare and adopt a transportation financial plan for the region that addresses adequacy of funding to meet identified needs and allocation of funds to regional priorities.
- Create a Citizens’ Advisory Committee and serve a single point of contact for public involvement.
- Hire an Executive Director to coordinate work of all staff.
- Merge CATS and NIPC staff and locate all staff within the same office.

Meeting Federal requirements

- The CATS Policy Committee, as the transportation planning committee of the RPB, continues as the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for meeting preparing the Regional Transportation Plan and meeting other federal transportation planning requirements.
- Processes previously established by CATS shall be continued as the means by which local elected officials program federal Surface Transportation Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds and address other regional transportation issues.

Transition period

- By September 2006, the RPB must submit to the General Assembly a funding and implementation strategy for an integrated land use and transportation planning process for the northeastern Illinois region. The strategy shall include a process for the orderly transition of the CATS Policy Committee to be a standing transportation planning body of the Board and NIPC to be a standing comprehensive planning body of the Board. It must include recommendations for legislation to complete the transition, with a complete description of recommended comprehensive planning functions of the RPB and an associated funding strategy.
- The transition period must end no later than 36 months after initial appointment of the RPB. During the transition period, the RPB is required to secure agreements with funding agencies to provide support for Board operations, and develop methods to handle operational and administrative matters relating to the transition.
- During the transition period, CATS and NIPC will retain current responsibilities and authority, subject to a 4/5 vote of the RPB to remand plans back with comments.
- By the end of the transition period, the RPB must fully accomplish all of the transition activities required under HB 3121.