

September 21, 2022

Cook County Board of Commissioners
69 West Washington Street
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Agenda Item #22-5295: PROPOSED ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – WHEEL TAX ELIMINATION

Dear Board of Commissioners,

As the comprehensive regional planning organization for northeastern Illinois, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is committed to building a more equitable and inclusive region. The principles of our ON TO 2050 regional plan — inclusive growth, prioritized investment, and resilience — guide our efforts to advance equity and opportunity across our seven counties and 284 communities.

Our region's transportation system – and its transit system in particular – is facing significant funding challenges, including a looming operational deficit. The conditions of our system will continue to decline without additional revenues, and the region must pursue new, enhanced sources that modernize and improve our existing funding structure. However, these strategies come with tradeoffs for the affordability to households and businesses, as well as the cost of administration. ON TO 2050 is clear that these revenue sources must be implemented carefully to avoid undue burdens on residents with low income. ON TO 2050 also encourages measures that streamline and improve government functions to increase the benefits residents receive for public revenues.

In 2020, CMAP and a team of partner organizations and stakeholders released [Improving equity in transportation fees, fines, and fares](#). The report found that many existing transportation fees, fines, and fares disproportionately impact residents with low income and residents of color in northeastern Illinois.

For households with low income, it can be challenging to meet basic expenses, including transportation costs. The high overall cost of owning and operating a vehicle makes driving the most expensive mode of travel. Yet many households with low income and residents of color in unincorporated Cook County lack access to transit options that connect them to jobs within a reasonable travel time. Consumer expenditure data show that households with low income spend nearly three times more of their income on transportation costs, on average, than those with high income.



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For these reasons, CMAP supports action to reduce the financial burden of transportation revenues on underserved and disadvantaged residents in Cook County. These steps must be balanced with the need to avoid reducing investments in the transportation system and to improve lower-cost mobility options, including transit, bicycle and pedestrian options, and shared mobility like vanpooling. We look forward to working with the County to identify ways to better utilize equitable user fees to ensure the sustainability of our regional transit system.

Sincerely,
CMAP Staff