



**Regional
Transportation
Authority**

For immediate release

DATE: August 20, 2009

CONTACT: Diane Palmer, Director of Communications, RTA
Office: 312-913-3282 Cell: 312-907-6902

RTA RELEASES LIST OF 19 PROPOSED TRANSIT PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE REGION

Public comment sought before RTA Board adoption in October

Chicago – The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) presented to its Board of Directors today a list of 19 planning, operating, and capital projects through its funding programs. RTA is proposing to allocate over \$11 million in federal, local and RTA funds to support innovative projects that will increase transit usage, provide multi-modal connections, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local transit, improve access to jobs, and help increase mobility for our region’s seniors, people with disabilities and the general public. The RTA is soliciting public comments regarding the recommended projects from August 20 through September 30.

The public is encouraged to learn more about these proposed projects by visiting the RTA Funding Programs Comment website at www.rtachicago.com/fundingprogramscomments or by attending public hearings that will be held during the month of August. Comments regarding the programs and individual projects can be made through the website, public hearings, or through the RTA telephone comment line at 312-913-3143.

“Through these programs the RTA is providing leadership by funding locally based projects that will help reduce congestion and improve our air quality,” said Leanne Redden, Senior Deputy Executive Director of Planning and Regional Programs. “These projects will help improve transportation choices throughout the region.”

Communities, counties, transportation providers, and private non-profit organizations were invited to apply for grants through three funding programs: Community Planning, Subregional Planning and Job Access Reverse Commute/New Freedom (JARC/NF). Out of the 32 proposals submitted, 19 are being recommended in the preliminary programs of projects based on their ability to address legislative mandates and support the updated Moving Beyond Congestion strategic plan. Additionally, all selected projects require the sponsor to contribute to the total project cost.

--- More ---

“The projects supported by the funding programs allow communities and transportation providers to work together to implement projects that will improve mobility and access,” stated Steve Schlickman, RTA Executive Director. “Additionally, the comment period provides the public an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding projects the RTA is recommending.”

Public comments will be taken into consideration when the Programs of Projects are presented to the RTA Board of Directors for approval on October 15. The RTA Board will then consider approving the funding necessary to support the programs as part of the 2010 budget on December 17.

SUBMITTING A PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments may be mailed, faxed, e-mailed or delivered until 4:00 p.m. on Friday, September 30, 2009. Please send your comments to the following:

Mail or drop off comments:

ATTN: Funding Programs Public Comment
The Regional Transportation Authority
175 W Jackson Blvd – Ste. 1550
Chicago, IL 60604

E-mail: FundingProgramsComments@RTAChicago.org

Phone: 312-913-3143

On the web: www.rtachicago.com/fundingprogramscomments

###

About the RTA: The RTA provides financial oversight, funding and regional planning for the three public transit operations in Northeastern Illinois: The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus and train, Metra commuter rail and Pace suburban bus and paratransit. For more information, visit www.rtachicago.com and www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org.



Regional Transportation Authority

RTA RELEASES LIST OF 19 PROPOSED TRANSIT PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE REGION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The following projects were included in the preliminary programs of projects presented at the August 20 Board meeting:

Planning Programs

Community Planning Program

Formerly known as the Regional Technical Assistance Program (RTAP), the Community Planning program provides funding for local planning projects that focus on transit-oriented development, local transit improvements and coordinated paratransit systems. The program is available to municipalities only.

City of Chicago

63rd Street Corridor Transit-Oriented Development Study: This project will create a transit-oriented development (TOD) plan for the 63rd Street Corridor in Chicago's Washington Park Neighborhood between St. Lawrence Avenue on the East and Stewart Avenue on the West. Planning for TOD along the corridor can help maximize the existing transit investments within the neighborhood including CTA bus routes and rail services. The plan will serve as a guide to enhance development, increase transit ridership, and expand housing and economic development opportunities in the neighborhood.

Village of Clarendon Hills

Train Station Redevelopment Phase I Implementation: This project will create an implementation plan for advancing the redevelopment of Clarendon Hills' Metra Station area. The Village completed a transit-oriented development plan for its Metra station area in 2006. This project will advance the plan by developing a detailed implementation plan for the train station and the adjacent properties, focusing on land acquisition and development costs of three specific sites and an analysis of parking and transportation issues around the station.

City of Geneva

Downtown/Station Area Master Plan: This project will create a transit-oriented development plan for an approximate ½ mile radius of the existing Metra station within the City. The plan will focus on the expansion of retail development, increasing housing diversity, mixed-use development, assessing the need for parking expansion and improving access to and around the station. This project will also aid in determining how to re-assign commuter parking areas that will be lost due to a track expansion by Metra.

Village of Lombard

Downtown Plan: This project will create a transit-oriented development plan for an approximate ½ mile radius of the existing Metra station within the Village. The plan will focus on improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and access, improving access to transit facilities and expanding residential, commercial and mixed-use development near the station. The study will also include access considerations associated with the proposed circulator route in the Village partially funded by the RTA's Innovation, Coordination and Enhancement (ICE) program last year.

Village of Skokie

Skokie-Dempster Station Area Plan: This project will create a transit-oriented development plan for an approximate ½ mile radius of the future relocated and elevated Skokie-Dempster Station on the CTA Yellow Line. The CTA is currently conducting an Alternatives Analysis to extend the Yellow Line from the current terminus at Skokie-Dempster to Old Orchard Road. If the line is extended, the existing Skokie-Dempster Station will be elevated near its current location. The new elevation presents an opportunity to improve circulation around the station where the at-grade tracks and station currently act as a physical barrier that limits development.

Village of South Elgin

Transit Improvement Plan: This project will create a transit improvement study for the Village of South Elgin. The goal is to identify transit needs and opportunities within the Village in response to recent population growth and development. The project will identify potential improvements to the existing Pace Route #801 as well as provide recommendations for potential community-based transit service.

Subregional Planning Program

The Subregional Planning program provides funding for regional planning projects including corridor studies, countywide transit improvements, and other regional transit initiatives. The program is available to units of local government and the RTA Service Boards: The Chicago Transit Authority, Metra and Pace.

City of Chicago

South Lakefront Corridor Transit Study: This project will study a range of transit service options in the South Lakefront Corridor, an area that extends from the Stevenson Expressway on the north to 95th Street on the south and from the Dan Ryan Expressway and Cottage Grove on the west to Lake Michigan on the east. The City will undertake this work as a first step in identifying alternatives that would improve public transportation services for better access to jobs and other activities, and would lead to enhanced economic vitality and quality of life for the communities served. The overall goal of the study is to recommend one or two candidate projects with the high net benefits for a more rigorous evaluation that would take place within the federal New Starts process.

Village of Hanover Park

County Farm Road/Gary Avenue Circulator Planning Study: This transportation feasibility study will investigate the need for a bus route along County Farm Road, between Lake Street on the north and the DuPage County Government Center on the south, with a connection to the Stratford Mall, all in DuPage County. The proposed route is an element of DuPage County's long range transit plan and would provide access to the Hanover Park Metra Station, the DuPage County Government Center, and multiple businesses and places of employment along the corridor. The Village of Hanover Park will be the lead agency and coordinate with the Villages of Roselle, Carol Stream, Bloomingdale, Winfield and Wheaton.

Pace

Milwaukee Avenue Rapid Transit Planning Study: This planning study will focus on the characteristics of a potential Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) corridor along Milwaukee Avenue from the Jefferson Park Transit Center in the City of Chicago to Golf Mill Mall in the Village of Niles.

Pace

Dempster Street Rapid Transit Planning Study: This planning study will focus on the characteristics of a potential Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) corridor along Dempster Street from the Davis Street station in the City of Evanston East-West to the Kiss-n-fly at O'Hare Airport and from Lee Street and Mannheim Road in a north-south direction, traversing six communities: Evanston, Skokie, Morton Grove, Niles, Park Ridge and Des Plaines.

OPERATING/CAPITAL PROGRAMS

Job Access Reverse Commute / New Freedom (JARC/NF) Program

JARC/NF targets operating and capital projects that enhance mobility for older adults, individuals with low incomes and persons with disabilities, and it addresses reverse commute markets and access to jobs in the region.

Unity Community Development Corporation

Unity Ride to Work Project: This project will provide reverse commute van transportation primarily to low-income individuals residing in the eastern and southern portions of the City of Joliet and Joliet Township. The individuals will be provided transportation to regional employers for employment related activities when transit is not a viable option. Utilizing up to five vans provided through the Pace Not-for-Profit Shuttle Vehicle Program, service will be available to cover three shifts daily at area employers. Transportation will also be made available for job training and interviews at prospective employers.

Safer Foundation

Ride to Work Program: This project will provide reverse commute employment transportation for low-income persons that are prior offenders and are residing in Cook County. The daily service, to be operated by a private contractor, will cover three employment shifts. Individuals will be transported to and from five designated pick-up points in the City of Chicago to employers located in the suburbs. The designated pick-up points may all be accessed through the CTA.

DuPage County

Transportation to Work Program: The DuPage County Transportation to Work Program operates as one service element under the Ride DuPage program providing 24/7 transportation for persons with developmental disabilities who are unable to drive a car. The program affords participants increased employment opportunities by providing them access to jobs outside of their own town and beyond traditional work hours. Approximately 32,000 trips were provided through this program in 2008.

Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce

Bus Service to O'Hare Cargo Facilities: Transportation service will be made available to low-income employees of air cargo employers located in the east and south cargo areas of O'Hare airport. A private transportation provider, under contract to the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, will provide service from the CTA Blue Line to and from designated stops within the cargo areas. Approximately 15,000 employees work in O'Hare's air cargo areas.

City of Naperville

Community Based Transportation to Work: This project is an element of the Ride DuPage Program that enables seniors and persons with disabilities greater opportunity to travel to and from work. The program affords participants increased employment opportunities by providing them access to jobs outside of their own town and beyond traditional work hours. Approximately 16,500 trips were provided through this program in 2008. The seven partnering organizations include City of Naperville, Naperville Township, Lisle Township, Naperville Park District, Village of Glen Ellyn, city of Wheaton, and Milton Township.

Association for Individual Development (AID)

Ride-in-Kane Phase 3 & 4: The Ride in Kane program is in its second year of operation. This program coordinates paratransit services in Kane County into a centralized system that optimizes transportation resources for older adults, persons with disabilities and low-income individuals. Currently there are 18 private, non-profit organizations and local units of government participating in the program.

Pace

Phase II Regional Call Center Project: This is the second phase of the call center project that originally received funding from the FFY 2007 New Freedom Program. Eligible low-income individuals, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities will be able to access multiple transportation programs through the call center. The call center will take reservations for demand response service and assign trips to the appropriate provider.

Washington Township (Will County)

Operation to Enhance Disabled, Senior and Regular Transportation in Rural Communities: This project will provide funding for the continuation of the township sponsored demand responsive service for disabled residents and senior citizens. In the FFY 2008 program funding was awarded that allows for service to expand to five days a week from two days a week. The expansion to five-day service is expected to be initiated in August 2009. The current two day a week service provides approximately 1,450 trips/year.

Pace

Concrete Waiting Areas at Bus Stops: Pace will construct up to 150 concrete pads and ancillary connections to accessible paths at Pace bus stops throughout their service area. The pads would be located against a raised curb to facilitate “level boarding” from the pad to the bus’s bottom stop or provide a landing area for a wheelchair lift.