

Cook County launches long-term transportation-infrastructure plan

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Ridership, freight service, parity, infrastructure upgrades and funding have emerged as Cook County's top five priorities in maintaining and improving standards for its long-term transportation-system agenda revealed with the publication of the *Connecting Cook County* guidebook, unveiled this week at a Cook County Board meeting.

With Cook County being the nation's second-largest county by population, sustaining Chicago's leadership as a freight hub is vital to its future, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said.

"Our transportation system is one of our region's most important assets – key not only to our economic prosperity, but to the well-being of our residents," Preckwinkle said. "It's clear that Cook County must be a leader in this arena. *Connecting Cook County* is our guidebook to promote strategic partnerships and investments that strengthen our economy and lead to more livable communities."

The Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (DOTH) last initiated a transportation plan of this magnitude when the region's highways were first laid out in 1940. The new plan challenges the county to take an increased role in transportation policy -- from roads, bridges and pedestrian paths to public transportation and commercial byways -- and stresses collaboration among diverse government sectors to achieve long-term success.

Preckwinkle has appointed an advisory committee consisting of business stakeholders and representatives from civic and economic factions, as well as a program committee of transportation industry specialists.

Cook County Commissioner Deborah Sims, chairwoman of the jurisdiction's Roads and Bridges Committee, said the plan serves to correct imbalances in transportation resources, aligning with the plan's goal of equal accessibility.

"Recent investments by the county have already made a difference in retaining companies, growing the number of local jobs and making communities better places to live," Sims said. "I look forward to continuing this trend in the years to come."