

## Sun-Times: Preckwinkle seeks long-term transportation plan

By Tina Sfondeles

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle on Tuesday announced the development of a long-term transportation plan that will include input gained from an online survey and public kiosks sprinkled throughout the county.

“For too long, Cook County sat back while decisions impacting our residents were made by others,” said Preckwinkle about the need for a comprehensive transportation plan, which was last developed in the 1940s. “We can no longer continue to make one-off transportation investments. We need a coherent strategy.”

The \$1.1 million “Connecting Cook County” plan, to be developed over the next 18 months, will look at transportation from several perspectives, including cars, public transportation, pedestrian access, bikeways and trucking corridors, Preckwinkle said.

“Our plan will be based on the premise that we must use our transportation resources to support economic growth and create communities that are desirable places to live and work,” Preckwinkle said.

Part of the plan includes input from an advisory committee made of business leaders, and a 15-member program committee, including CTA President Forrest Claypool, Chicago Department of Transportation Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld and Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Ann Schneider.

But public input also is a crucial part of the plan. For nine months, beginning Tuesday, Cook County residents can fill out an online survey, or visit rotating kiosks, which will be available in six locations beginning Wednesday.

The survey at [www.connectingcookcounty.org](http://www.connectingcookcounty.org) first asks users to prioritize eight issues, including economic vitality, healthy neighborhoods, transportation choices and affordable communities. Once that is selected, users can narrow in on a Cook County map, and write comments on either the issues’ strengths or weaknesses. That section includes both transportation improvements — where roadway, transit, bike or pedestrian paths should be improved — and employment opportunities, listing areas in which employment opportunities might be hard to reach due to lack of transportation options. Users can add contact information and receive updates on the plan. And users also can see what others have listed as transportation problems.

“You can compare what your type of priority matches up with others using the system,” said John Yonan, superintendent of the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways. “That is pretty important information for us to capture, and in speaking with members of our advisory group, we’re really surprised by some of the results we’ve already received.”

Cook County has contracted URS, a research, planning and engineering services firm to produce the plan for \$1.1 million. The Cook County Transportation and Highway staff secured \$280,000 from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning for plan analysis and development, and \$820,000 from the Cook County Motor Fuel Tax funds.

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