

Chicago Tribune

Public input sought on transportation priorities



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Jose M. Osorio, Chicago Tribune

Cook County is creating a transportation plan over the next 18 months, setting priorities for projects from roads to bike paths.

By Jon Hilkevitch, Tribune reporter
5:19 pm, February 25, 2014

Cook County residents and business owners are being asked to weigh in on setting transportation priorities for future projects – from roads to bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways – and to tell officials about existing strengths and weaknesses involved in navigating the county-maintained network.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle announced a long-range strategy on Tuesday aimed at developing stronger links between transportation, economic growth and regional planning.

A transportation plan will be created over the next 18 months and serve as the blueprint to spur more economic growth and improve the quality of life for county residents over the next 25 years, Preckwinkle said.

County residents and business owners can offer their input online at www.connectingcookcounty.org by clicking on the “Take Our Survey” link.

Preckwinkle also formed two committees consisting of business leaders, officials from civic groups and

local governments as well as transportation experts to help guide the process.

The move follows an expansion of the county highway department's focus in 2012 from primarily road maintenance to include regional planning and competing more effectively for federal funding.

The Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways is responsible for maintaining about 1,500 lane miles, more than 130 bridges and about 350 traffic signals in the county.

But the department's size and scope are overshadowed by the transportation-planning responsibilities of the Chicago Department of Transportation and the Illinois Department of Transportation. IDOT Secretary Ann Schneider and CDOT Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld were among the transportation professionals named by Preckwinkle to Cook County's transportation program committee.

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