

Task Force Unveils Bold, New Vision for Transit

Innovative Ideas to Improve Performance, Finance, Governance, Ethics

CHICAGO – Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider today announced that the Northeastern Illinois Public Transit Task Force has finished its final report, setting the course for creating a world-class regional mass transit system through a series of recommendations that will improve performance and increase ridership while maximizing existing resources. The task force, which convened last summer, included 15 members representing some of the region's top leaders from business, academia, law, government and community organizations.

"While we have put many months into developing this final report, the real work is just beginning. I am confident that we have asked the tough questions and made solid and realistic recommendations that truly will benefit the public," said Schneider, a task force co-chair. "I am hopeful this report will serve as a guide to decision makers seeking to build a transit system that not only best serves public, but is the envy around the world."

"This substantive final report reflects the hard work of this distinguished and diverse group. By coming together, we have developed a set of strong, bold recommendations that puts us on a path to much-needed reform," said George Ranney, the other task force co-chair. "It is clear that business as usual is no longer acceptable for the Northeastern Illinois public transit system and, most important, its customers. Our economy depends on making the changes that give the region and the state the world-class system they deserve."

Over the last seven months, the task force met 11 times, with working groups, focused on system performance, finance and governance and ethics, meeting another eight times. Led by a top guiding principle of putting the customer first, the task force developed a core set of recommendations intent on charting a bold new future for public transit in Northeastern Illinois.

The recommendations, which would streamline system operations, take advantage of existing resources and enhance transparency to build a system that serves the future needs of the region, include:

System Performance

- Create and implement a plan to improve regional mobility and increase transit ridership throughout the region.
- Align existing transportation, housing, economic development and financing resources at the state, regional, and municipal levels so that transit goals are integrated with land use and development.
- Create regional performance measures that assess progress toward implementing the plan and achieving its goals.
- Prioritize universal accessibility.
- Enable new public and private transit service.

Finance

- Implement a regional financial planning process that supports the guiding principles and, in the most efficient manner possible, creates a framework for allocating operating and capital funds on a consistent and sustainable basis.
- Develop a public outreach program in order to advocate for increased investment in transit.
- Identify a new funding framework for transit operations that supports the guiding principles, and in the most effective manner possible, generates adequate resources to meet the investment needs of the system on a consistent and sustainable basis.

- Revise the Capital Funding Allocation to maintain a safe and reliable system while allowing for appropriate service improvements that are aligned with regional transit goals and performance measures.
- Eliminate financial disincentives to expanding service.
- To mitigate limited public resources for funding, eliminate barriers to entry for the private sector.
- Establish performance-based management practices across the system.
- Seek new revenues.

Governance

- Create an Integrated Transit Governance System for Northeastern Illinois.

Ethics

- Enhance the board appointment process to include an independent panel to help select candidates.
- Institute background checks of potential board members and simplify the removal process for existing board members.
- Eliminate salaries for members of the transit boards.
- Certify that hiring, termination or promotion decisions are not being made based on political considerations.
- Ethics training for board members.
- Apply the Illinois Lobbyist Registration Act to the transit agencies.
- Expand the role of the Office of Executive Inspector General

The task's force final report and recommendations will be forwarded to the General Assembly for its consideration and possible legislation.

The final report will be posted later this afternoon at <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/transportation-management/committees/neil-taskforce/index>