

## THE BURNHAM BLOG

[Vision & Theme](#)

[About the Logo](#)

[Centennial Committee and Staff](#)

[Sponsors](#)

[Newsroom](#)

[News Coverage](#)

[Press Releases](#)

[E-News & Social Media](#)

[The Burnham Blog](#)

[Get Involved](#)

[Contact Us](#)

### Inventing the future...in a small group

By Patrick T. Reardon on Fri., 08/12/2009 –8:45 am.

#### *First of two*

On a stormy Thursday evening, John Bettridge sits in a meeting hall in the Tinley Park village government complex --- and plans the future of the Chicago region.

“I came here tonight because I love this area,” Bettridge tells me. “I was born and raised and have lived all my life in Cook County, and I am interested in how it will turn out 30 years from now.”

Bettridge, an electrician who was originally from Midlothian and now lives in Tinley Park, is among a group of 13 men and one woman who have gathered for an “Invent the Future” workshop, sponsored by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

All summer, CMAP has been holding these workshops throughout Chicago and the suburbs to explain and gather data for its GO TO 2040 comprehensive plan. They provide an opportunity for people like John Bettridge to throw in their two-cents worth.

In other words, to have a say in how the region will turn out 30 years from now.

#### First regional plan

The [GO TO 2040](#) document, set to be finalized in the fall of 2010, will be the first for the metropolitan region to cover, in an integrated manner, such major issues as transportation, land use and the environment. The plan,



## THE BURNHAM BLOG

Urban planning touches every part of your day to day life. Join the conversation that is shaping the region for the next 100 years.

→ [Register](#) or [Login](#) to comment

### SUBSCRIBE VIA RSS



Use our RSS feed to track new blog posts.

## ABOUT THIS BLOG

This blog is about history, planning and the future. It's rooted in the recognition that we live in a world that is created by plans – and by the failure to make plans. [\[MORE\]](#)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[Patrick T. Reardon](#) is a Chicagoan, born and bred. He has been writing about the city, its region and planning issues, mainly in the Chicago Tribune, for nearly 40 years. [\[MORE\]](#)

as its name suggests, will cover the next 30 years, a period in which the population of the region is expected to increase by 2.8 million.

The agency has scheduled nearly 60 [workshops](#), and more than a dozen --- including some in Evanston, Palos Hills, Grayslake, Montgomery and Berkeley --- remain to be held before the beginning of September when the program ends.



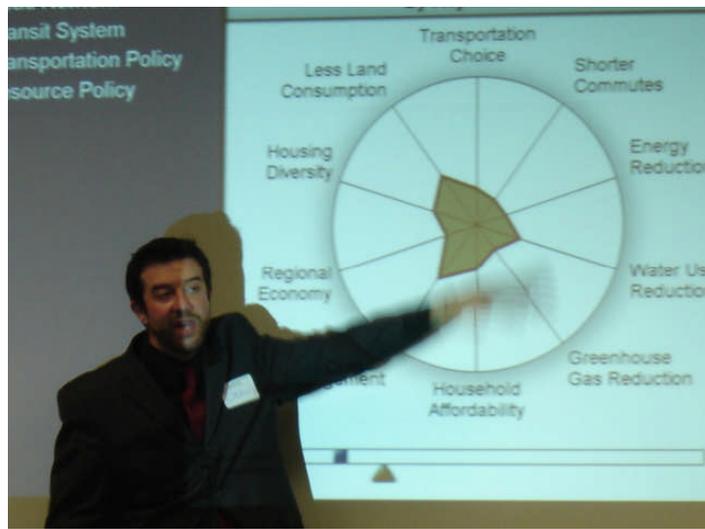
In addition, CMAP has [a page at its website](#) where individuals can record their own preferences and ideas for the future.

Attendance at the meetings has ranged from a handful of people to more than 50. On this night, the group is small but high-powered. Most of those who sit at the tables are present or former officials, including the only woman present, Rita Walker, the chair of Tinley Park's Long Range Planning Commission.

Another is Herbert T. Schumann, a former Cook County Board member and former member of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), the agency that was replaced by CMAP.

NIPC was able to plan, but had no power to implement those plans. CMAP, by contrast, has clout under state law to make things happen --- the power to determine which transportation projects will receive federal funds. CMAP officials have said that those projects that foster the goals of the GO TO 2040 plan will be ranked higher than those that don't.

CMAP planner Andrew Williams-Clark starts our meeting by outlining the process for creating GO TO 2040.



The first step --- which also involved extensive public comment --- was the creation of a regional vision last year. The result was a 28-page booklet, “Regional Vision for Metropolitan Chicago” which identified nine themes the plan must address: quality of life, natural environment, social systems, economy, infrastructure, governance, sustainability, equity and innovation.

Now, within the context of those themes, CMAP is presenting a wide array of possible scenarios and asking for feedback. “We want to leave here knowing what people in this area think,” says Williams-Clark. “At the end of the day, it’s not CMAP’s plan --- it’s yours.”

### “Not walk-friendly”

This night’s group is spread over four tables, and Williams-Clark asks each table to come up with ideas for improving the region.

I’m sitting at the same table as Bettridge and Ed Converse, a real estate broker from Tinley Park. In contrast to the rest of the room, none of us has a public post of any sort.

Converse says any future plan should include a provision to make sure that land is available for religious uses. In his real estate work, he says, he’s seen that some municipalities aren’t as open to religious institutions as they are to new commercial developments.

Bettridge wonders why there’s no bus to take his kids on short trips around Tinley Park --- to the pool, say, or downtown. “Here in Tinley,” he says, “it’s not walk-friendly. If you had a shuttle, they could have three buses around the town all day.”

He also says that it makes no sense to build new major highways without at least leaving room down the median for a future rapid transit line.

Williams-Clark discusses and records each of these ideas, as well as those from the other three tables.

### “Trying to show trade-offs”

Then, he goes through various alternatives in the plan --- “We’re really just trying to show trade-offs” --- and each of us votes, using an electronic keypad, for the ones we prefer. Instantaneously, these votes are tabulated by a CMAP laptop and projected onto a screen, and we learn the results of our group vote.

With a majority vote, we opt for:

--- moderately compact growth, more dense than at present.

--- a focus on doing infill development in already established areas, rather than building on farmland along the region’s edge.

--- a significant increase in the public transit system.

--- a change in transportation policy to focus more on alternative transportation options, such as public transit, bikes and walking, and less on driving.

--- a significant increase in the management and protection of natural resources, such as water and air.

But, in the area of roads, we don’t have a majority --- 43 percent are for a moderate increase in the number of roads, 36 percent for maintaining the present road system, and 21 percent for a large increase in roads.

Like every other group that has or will take part in a workshop, the data from our meeting will be fed into a CMAP computer and used in determining the final outlines of the plan.

If we are at all representative of the other groups, the final CMAP plan could drastically change the way development occurs in the region in the future.

And the question of new roads? Well, that could be a bitterly contested issue.

*(Next: You invent the future. Yeah, you!)*