Q & A

Costs and Benefits

1. **Have the costs of supporting systems (connectors, smart corridors, etc.) been estimated?**
   Smart Corridors = no
   Connectors and Circulator/distribution systems, combined = $160 million for operating (annually); $110 million for capital
   Strategic highway improvements = $653 million

2. **Do the annual operating costs estimates [shown in the gray box on the recommendations handout] include operating and maintenance costs of the highway proposals?**
   No. The figures reflect the annual operating costs only of the proposed major transit services.

3. **Has revenue that could be raised through pricing strategies on proposed toll lanes been factored into the capital costs?**
   No. Specific pricing strategies, anticipated revenue generation, and the potential use of any generated revenue would warrant significant detailed consideration and discussion beyond this corridor planning process. The Technical Committee notes that this potential benefit may exist, but it has not been factored in as a reduction to capital cost at this point.

4. **Was cost taken into account by the Technical Committee?**
   Yes... to an extent (see also next two questions). Goal 7 is to maximize cost effectiveness. The Technical Committee evaluated the total cost of an option relative to its overall effectiveness in achieving the other goals and objectives.

5. **Is there an upper limit of cost, or “available funding” assumption that we can/should take into account?**
   That’s a tough one. Most major projects require special federal funding through federal earmarks and/or compete nationally in federal discretionary programs.

   But here’s one good benchmark to consider - CMAP anticipates that approximately $9.4 billion would be available for new, major capital transportation proposals in the entire metro area between 2006 and 2030. Sounds small? A total of $64.9 billion is anticipated to be available across all categories, but the vast majority (85.5%) of forecasted funds is allocated to maintenance and reconstruction of existing facilities, arterial, bus, pedestrian and freight projects, and near term major projects that are already fully funded. The financial forecast was established for the region’s current, federally approved Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan (CMAP, 2030 RTP Update, Oct. 2006, p.7,).
6. **Do we know the fiscal impacts of the system options?**
   No. Fiscal analysis has not been undertaken of the full range of projects considered in this phase; only unit-cost based construction and annual operating costs have been developed.

7. **Among the Main Line’s three I-290 Corridor Alternatives, the Blue Line extension costs much more than the other two alternatives. Is it similar to the others in terms of cost-effectiveness?**
   No. The Main Line system was found to be less cost effective with the Blue Line extension, than with either of the other two I-290 alternatives. However, Cost Effectiveness was only one of seven goals evaluated. The Blue Line extension alternative notably improved the system results in terms of Goal 4: Maximize Community and Corridor Benefits; it was evaluated to be less disruptive to the communities, and it would offer longer hours and more frequent service to Oak Brook, based on current CTA service. The result was a similar – just slightly lower - overall score relative to the other two I-290 Corridor alternatives.

8. **Who would be the primary users of a CTA Blue Line/Forest Park extension to or in DuPage County, suburban or Chicago residents?**
   We anticipate that the primary users would be Chicago residents (reverse commuters); suburban west Cook residents would be the secondary and smaller of the two markets.

9. **Do we know or can we determine the relative time savings of the I-290 corridor investment options?** (see next)
   **Have we compared the travel time between any two points among the three systems?**
   No. Time savings will be determined in the next study phase in conjunction with computer modeling. Time savings are very sensitive to detailed service and operational assumptions.

10. **Do we know the impacts of the proposed system recommendations on the existing system?**
    No. Impacts on the existing system will be determined in the next study phase in conjunction with computer modeling.

**Phasing**

11. **Is it possible that one mode, such as BRT, could be transitioned to LRT or other rail fixed guideway later?**
    Yes. BRT stations can be designed so that they will later accommodate LRT. This is the approach being followed in the York region of Ontario and other places.

12. **What lifespan do the investments have?**
    BRT, rail and highway facilities are presumed to all have 50 year lifespans before requiring major reconstruction. BRT vehicles have a lifespan of approximately 12 years, and trains 30 years.
Definitions/Clarifications

13. What are Smart Corridors?
Key arterial roadways where traffic management strategies and intersection improvements can be applied to enhance travel flow and benefit of all users. Examples of Smart Corridor improvements are: signal timing and coordination, physical intersection improvements, real time travel information, incident management and diversion, time of day or permanent access control, and transit vehicle priority.

14. What’s BRT?
BRT stands for Bus Rapid Transit. It’s basically a modern, rubber-tired transit service designed and operated like rail transit. BRT vehicles can operate on or off a guideway or other exclusive right-of-way, giving them greater operating flexibility than fixed rail transit.

15. What is ART versus BRT?
Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) is a less capital intensive investment than BRT because exclusive lanes are only provided on a strategic basis – such as at intersections. The service can be provided with a standard bus, or with a higher end vehicle. Bus shelters are usually higher end, including features such as next bus information, but not to the extent of BRT stations which may be climate controlled and include park and ride lots. The level of investment is lower in ART than BRT, but so are anticipated speeds and reliability.

16. What is the primary base of employment at the Loyola/Maywood Employment Center?
Loyola University Medical Center and Hines VA Hospital just south of the Eisenhower, and the Cook Co. Circuit Court, 4th District just to the north.

Projects and Strategies

17. Have these been considered against other regional priorities?
No. That would take place during CMAP’s next Regional Transportation Plan development process.

18. In Concentric System recommendations, was a Blue Line extension to the Inner Circumferential considered [rather than Maywood/Loyola and Oak Brook]
Yes, early on. Unfortunately, a change in mode forces all users to transfer – even just to proceed in the same direction. To minimize transfers (and the number of people effected by them), mode changes were planned at employment centers.

19. Are tolled HOV lanes proposed on I-290, or just I-88 and I-355?
Yes. In the concentric system recommendation all HOV lanes are recommended as HOT (Tolled HOV lanes).
20. Have public private partnership (PPP) opportunities and pricing strategies been explored for HOT lanes?
No, not yet. Partnerships and pricing strategies would warrant significant detailed consideration and discussion beyond this corridor planning process.

21. Has anyone considered the use of waterways, such as the I&M Canal, for passenger transportation?
No. While the primary waterway in the Cook DuPage Corridor (Des Plaines River) is not suited to this, perhaps its an idea for the RTP.

22. What is in the recommended Metra Upgrades?
The key element is an assumption of a full, additional rail track and crossovers to allow zoned and express service in the presence of local service, and continued full scale traditional-oriented service operations.

23. Could we use the Metra lines without major capital investment?
Yes. Operational changes and strategic (limited) physical investments to increase service for reverse and intersuburban commuters could be explored. This would cost less and take less time, but would also result in significantly less benefit than what was examined in the current Radial Reliant recommendation. Also, it may require some service tradeoffs with traditional commuter service.

24. Have the travel markets [blue arrows] been prioritized?
Yes, to an extent. The reverse (Market #2) and intersuburban travel markets (Markets #3-9) are the priorities of this study (i.e., the traditional commute Market #1 is not a priority). But the reverse and intersuburban travel markets have not been further prioritized, among them.

25. Who REALLY makes the funding decisions for these major investments, and do we have the ability to allocate the dollars to the projects we select through this process?
Legislators and federal agencies working with state and local officials REALLY make the decision for what and when to secure/provide funding, typically every 6 years in conjunction with the federal transportation bill. The Cook DuPage Corridor study and the Regional Transportation Plan are key to ensure consensus around well-thought out and effective major capital projects for which to pursue funding at that federal level.

26. How well are the corridor communities aware of the Cook DuPage Corridor planning process?
Most communities have participated in the study process in one way or another, but the upcoming public outreach will be a good opportunity to gauge their current level of awareness.

Q & A from Policy Committee member briefings
February 6, 2008
27. What are the next steps and what will be the involvement of the Policy Committee?
Public Meetings will be held in March so that the public can have a chance to comment on the committee’s decision. The Citizen Advisory Committee and the Technical Committee will be apprised of all public comment received. If warranted, the Policy Committee will be convened in May for potential reconsideration. This June, the RTA will initiate the next, more detailed study phase – the systems alternatives analysis. The Policy Committee will continue to be relied upon to guide that effort. A detailed action plan of the next steps will be included in the final report.

28. How well do the options address existing and future travel patterns (linked origins and destinations) to the major employment centers?
Very well, but then again, they were also specifically designed to do so.

29. Is the Western Bypass under study by IDOT included among the recommendations?
No. The recommended projects were packaged specifically to address the corridor travel markets and problem statement. The Western Bypass is a project of regional and national significance that is moving forward outside of the Corridor process.

Answers provided by Michelle Ryan.