Summary of Public Comment Forms
March 2008

1.0 Public Comment Form

A public comment form was developed and distributed at the five public meetings held March 10-18, 2008 and was also made available on the project website, www.cookdupagecorridor.com, during the public comment period.

The comment form allowed the opportunity for the general public to respond to a series of questions on the proposed transportation system and recommended projects:

1. What do you think of the proposed transportation system, overall?
2. What do you think of the major project included in the proposed system?
   a. Elgin-O’Hare Expressway East Extension to O’Hare
   b. DuPage J Line BRT (Bus Rapid Transit)
   c. Mid-City BRT (Bus Rapid Transit)
   d. I-355 BRT (Bus Rapid Transit)
   e. Inner Circumferential Rail Line
   f. I-290 HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) Lanes
   g. I-290 BRT (Bus Rapid Transit)
   h. Blue Line Extension

3. Other comments?

The public comment form responses provided a qualitative framework (rather than quantitative or scientific) for considering the public’s general level of support, opposition, or specific concerns regarding the proposed transportation system and recommended projects. The forms generated rich and detailed information that enhanced RTA’s understanding of the context in which the next phase of the study will unfold.

2.0 Frequently Expressed Comments

Over 550 individual public comments were submitted and reviewed. The remainder of this section presents, for each question, a summary and representative quotes of the most frequently expressed comments in rank order.

Transportation System Overall (88 out of 550 comments)

Most of the comments indicated general public support for the overall proposed transportation system. Citizens believe there is a need to develop a comprehensive set of improvements that produce a choice of transportation alternatives and long-term mobility solutions and reduce congestion.
“Fantastic if full implementation could be financed.”
“This is a good idea and an investment into needed infrastructure.”
“Most of the projects seemed thought-out and coordinated.”
“Great – eco-friendly, will help to relieve traffic and provides transportation to those who don’t drive.”
“Some good proposals, but they must be prioritized by need and effectiveness.”
“Overall plan is sound and well meaning.”
“...A most welcome and ambitious project.”
“...provides a number of options to reduce congestion.”

The next most frequent comment was in strong support of the public transit components of the plan. Citizens stated several reasons in support of transit investments including significant regional mobility, economic and environmental benefits; to address historic underinvestment in transit; and increases options for low income residents. While they support the public transit options, a few citizens indicated that Mid-City should be the highest priority and a rail option; while others expressed desire for the Blue Line to extend further west beyond the recommended terminus.

In terms of specific projects, some citizens strongly opposed the overall plan due to the road expansion represented in the I-290 options. Concerns ranged from the additional environmental and community impacts on Oak Park to the need for long-term public transit solutions. In general, the public sentiment was that the I-290 road expansion would lead to increased automobile use and traffic congestion and demand management and public transit were far more viable options.

Citizens supported the Blue Line Extension over roadway options because it has more capacity than HOV lanes, has fewer community impacts, and has the potential to spur economic development.

**Blue Line Extension (71 out of 550 comments)**

Approximately three-fourths of the comments on the Blue Line Extension were in strong support of the project. Several citizens identified this project as the best idea and highest priority for the Cook DuPage Corridor Study. Others expressed a desire for the Blue Line to extend further west beyond Yorktown and Oak Brook into Lisle and Aurora. Those in favor of the Blue Line promoted the many benefits of the Blue Line Extension such as providing additional public transportation choices, access to employment, access to shopping, contributing to improved air quality, and serving multiple travel markets as identified in the Cook DuPage Corridor Study.

A smaller number of comments were in opposition to the Blue Line Extension for a number reasons – high cost and questionable viability due to the low density in the suburbs. Citizens offered alternatives such as implementation of BRT and enhancement/restoration of existing transit services for CTA and Metra.
I-290 HOV Lanes (57 out of 550 comments)

Over 80% of the comments on the I-290 HOV Lanes were opposed to the project. The greatest concerns were the project cost, the impacts to the adjacent communities and land uses, and the short length of the HOV lanes. Recommended alternatives to the project included an emphasis on public transit options presented in the Cook DuPage Corridor Study and potentially converting an existing traffic lane into a combined Bus/HOV lane.

> “HOV lanes historically are lightly traveled, and only increase, not decrease, traffic density across total lanes.”
> “Bad idea, lived in California – doesn’t work there, won’t work here...don’t want to entice more cars to the expressway.”
> “...devastating to neighborhoods.”
> “...short length (4.3 miles or even 10 miles) could not be effectively used as HOV lanes.”
> “It is a costly solution (construction, environmental impacts, environmental justice, disruption of communities) that will not provide the benefits commensurate with its costs.”

A much smaller percentage of comments were in favor of the I-290 HOV Lanes. For the most part, supporters felt any improvement to I-290 was needed because of the severe traffic congestion. They also believed the project could be implemented in conjunction with BRT and funded through tolls or increased taxes.

Inner Circumferential Rail Line (52 out of 550 comments)

About nine out of ten comments for the Inner Circumferential Rail Line were in support of the project. Increased connectivity between O’Hare and Midway airports, increased transit connectivity between Metra and CTA, improved job access, increased north-south connectivity and mobility, substantial Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunity, and cost effective are among the major reasons for supporting the project. Some supporters identified the Inner Circumferential Line as a high project priority.

> “Absolutely yes...the need to go from suburb-to-suburb without having to first go downtown would be a major plus for our system.”
> “...should be a high priority for implementation.”
> “Provides convenient transit access to the airports for residents of Bellwood, Westchester, Broadview, Brookfield, La Grange Park, Forest Park, Berwyn, Cicero and Oak Park.”
> “...will provide economic opportunities to the villages along this corridor.”

The remaining comments identified Mid-City BRT as a higher priority than the Inner Circumferential Rail Line.
**Mid-City BRT (50 out of 550 comments)**

Over two-thirds of the comments for the Mid-City BRT support the project and believe it should be the highest priority for implementation. Many supporters preferred a light/heavy rail option along the route instead of BRT. Increased airport connectivity, increased access to jobs for low income and environmental justice communities, and increased transit connectivity between various CTA lines are the most significant reasons for supporting this project.

“...strongly support the Mid-City Transitway (MCT)...because it would provide a convenient link between O'Hare and Midway.”

“...Mid-City Transitway is an essential part of improving public transit in our region and also to moving toward transit equity in our city. I believe it should be the highest priority project, not only for this study area but for the CTA and RTA as a whole...”

“Mid-City highest priority because...it has potential to help relieve poverty by extending rapid transit to a number of low-income, working poor communities of color that are currently poorly served by the existing transit network.”

“...why has the Mid-City Transitway been proposed as a BRT rather than a new light rail or heavy rail line.”

Most of the remaining comments opposed the Mid-City Transitway because it is perceived as costly, nonviable, and inconvenient.

**I-290 BRT (42 out of 550 comments)**

Over half of these comments on I-290 BRT were in support of the project because it was perceived as a more cost effective option over the Blue Line Extension and would have fewer community impacts than widening I-290. While there is support for the project, citizens would prefer the I-290 option as high speed rail.

The remaining comments opposed the I-290 project because it is a duplication of service with the Blue Line Extension. In addition, there is strong opposition to road widening for BRT, and again resources should be allocated to high speed rail options.

**Elgin-O’Hare Expressway East Extension to O’Hare (39 out of 550 comments)**

Nearly half of the comments support the Elgin-O’Hare Expressway Extension to O’Hare. Reasons stated include improved airport connectivity, access to employment, and relieves traffic congestion on I-290 and I-90.

“This is long overdue...allows for a route to O’Hare from the west that is more direct.”

“Excellent proposal that would reduce traffic on local and arterial streets in the area.”

An equal number of comments opposed the Elgin O-Hare Expressway extension. For the most part, opposers felt that public transit such as BRT and rail freight corridors were better and more convenient solutions than road expansion. Road expansion was viewed as non-sustainable, costly, and harmful to the environment.

Most of the remaining comments were indifferent or expressed no opinion on this project.
I-355 BRT (38 out of 550 comments)

Over three-fourths of the comments on the I-355 BRT were in support of the project. Bus rapid transit in this corridor was viewed as a good, viable solution that was a useful step in the right direction. Supporters indicated the need to explore a number of issues such as where this project fit in relation to other project priorities, the benefit of perhaps combining the project with the DuPage J Line BRT, and implementing the project as a high speed rail option.

Most of the remaining comments were in opposition of the I-355 BRT primarily because of concerns that a bus solution was not energy efficient, would be underutilized. Also, a rail solution was preferred more than a bus project.

DuPage J Line BRT (36 out of 550 comments)

Nearly three-quarters of the comments on the DuPage J Line BRT were in support of the project. Increased connectivity between several major employment centers, increased connectivity to O’Hare airport, and increased connectivity to proposed transit services were the principal reasons for supporting the project. While some supporters acknowledged the J Line as improvement over existing transit services, they viewed the solution as an initial or interim step toward eventual high speed rail service.

"Sounds like a great idea!"
"Fantastic, provides flexible routing to O’Hare and makes additional use of major investment in expressway infrastructure that is currently underutilized."
"...J Line BRT provides important west-east and north-south service..."
"Buses are a fine transitional strategy, but a rail based system of corridors is the logical future end."

The few remaining comments were opposed to or had no opinion about the DuPage J Line BRT option.

Other Comments

Other general comments and issues raised most frequently were related to support for public transit options (over roadway components), support for the Blue Line Extension, and support for the Inner Circumferential Rail Line.

These comments were followed by opposition to the I-290 widening.

The next area of concern was related to the environmental and community impacts represented by the overall plan and project components.

Environmental justice concerns and increasing meaningful opportunities for public participation before final study decisions are made were also mentioned.