

Cook
DuPage
Corridor



Options Feasibility Study

Planning Process and Technical
Documentation Summary



Regional Transportation Authority
September 2008

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Corridor

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I. Introduction

The Cook-DuPage Corridor study is a currently on-going, major investment study led by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in partnership with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The goal of the Cook DuPage Corridor study is to identify the most effective and desired transportation improvements for the reverse and intersuburban travel markets in one of the most heavily traveled subregions of the Chicago metropolitan area.

This document summarizes the planning process of the Cook DuPage Corridor “Options Feasibility” study. It is also a comprehensive resource of the technical, informational and decision-making study materials that were relied upon or resulted from the study process. The study materials, as well as a [glossary of terms \[A1\]](#) are assembled in the appendix in original form.

The nomenclature of an underscored term, followed by the letter “A” and a number in brackets, indicates the availability of associated project materials or further study details in the appendix. For example, “[glossary of terms \[A1\]](#)” indicates that material related to the glossary – in this case, the glossary itself – is available in Appendix 1 of this *Planning Process and Technical Documentation Summary*. This *Summary* document may also be available as a hypertext document or online, in which case the underscored term and referenced number can be activated for immediate access to the associated appendix item.

Study Description

The [Options Feasibility Study \[A2\]](#) is the second of three study phases comprising the overall RTA Cook DuPage Corridor Study.

- 1) Travel Market Analysis;
- 2) Options Feasibility Study; and
- 3) System Analysis.

The purpose of the Options Feasibility Study was to develop and evaluate a broad range of potential transportation improvements to serve major travel patterns and key mobility needs in the Cook DuPage Corridor. The goal of the Options Feasibility phase of study was to develop a shortlist of potential major capital investments to undergo future detailed development and evaluation. The three study phases are depicted in Figure 1 and are further described on the following page.

The Travel Market Analysis was the first phase of the overall Cook DuPage Corridor study. Completed in December 2005, the Travel Market Analysis was an intensive research effort to define corridor mobility issues and needs.

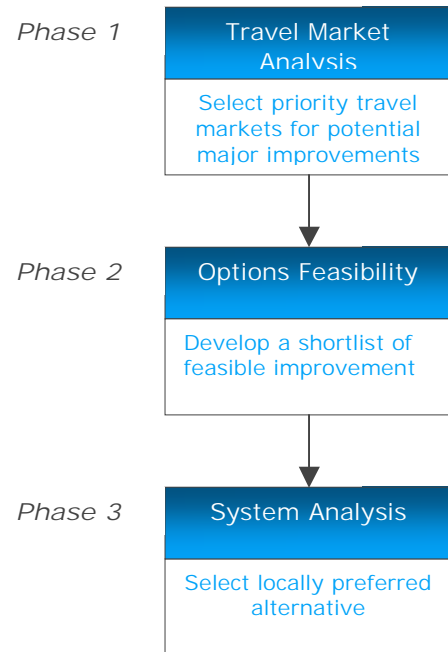
Two documents from the Travel Market Analysis study phase are available under separate cover:

- 1) the Cook DuPage Corridor *Existing and Future Conditions Report*, (RTA, Feb. 2005) and
- 2) the *Travel Market Analysis, Final Report* (RTA, Dec. 2005). The [Executive Summary \[A3\]](#) of the *Travel Market Analysis, Final Report* highlights the key findings from this initial study phase. The findings provided the technical foundation for the subsequent Options Feasibility Study.

During the Options Feasibility Study phase, over thirty potential highway and transit improvement projects were developed at the conceptual level. These potential long-range major investments were combined to form alternative transportation systems to potentially serve the complex reverse and intersuburban commute travel patterns impacting the Cook DuPage Corridor. A total of eleven options – each representing a unique combination of transportation investments - were evaluated against an extensive set of goals, objectives and performance measures that had been developed by committee participants and the RTA’s technical consultant team. The Options Feasibility Study concluded in May 2008 with the selection of a future transportation system of conceptual, major capital investments to undergo further refinement and careful evaluation in follow-on study, and a set of network enhancements to the existing transportation system for further prioritization and potential implementation. The resulting proposed Cook DuPage Corridor future transportation system and proposed network enhancements are the focus of the *Cook DuPage Corridor Action Plan*, available under separate cover.

The third phase of the overall Cook DuPage Corridor study is a System Analysis. This final study phase is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2008 and will examine the benefits and impacts of the major capital investments recommended by the Options Feasibility Study

Figure 1. Cook DuPage Corridor Study Phases



in the context the regional transportation system of northeastern Illinois. It will also prioritize and refine the proposed transportation improvements, and evaluate alignment and modal alternatives.

Study Area

The 300 square mile [Cook DuPage Corridor study area \[A4\]](#) includes most of DuPage County and the western portion of Cook County. The Cook DuPage Corridor boundaries were defined at the onset of the Travel Market Analysis study phase, and are as follows:

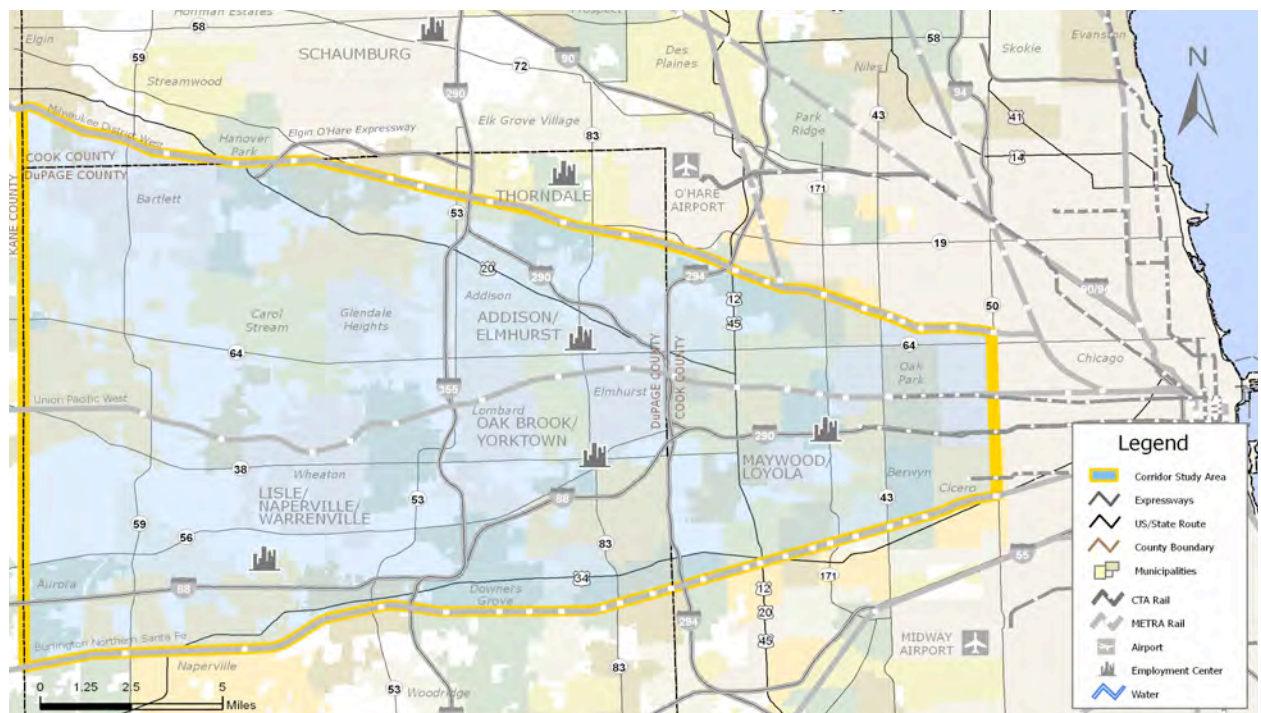
North: *Metra Milwaukee District West (MD-W) commuter rail line (approximately IL19/Irving Park Road)*

East: *IL50 Cicero Avenue*

South: *Metra Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) commuter rail line (approximately US34/Ogden Avenue)*

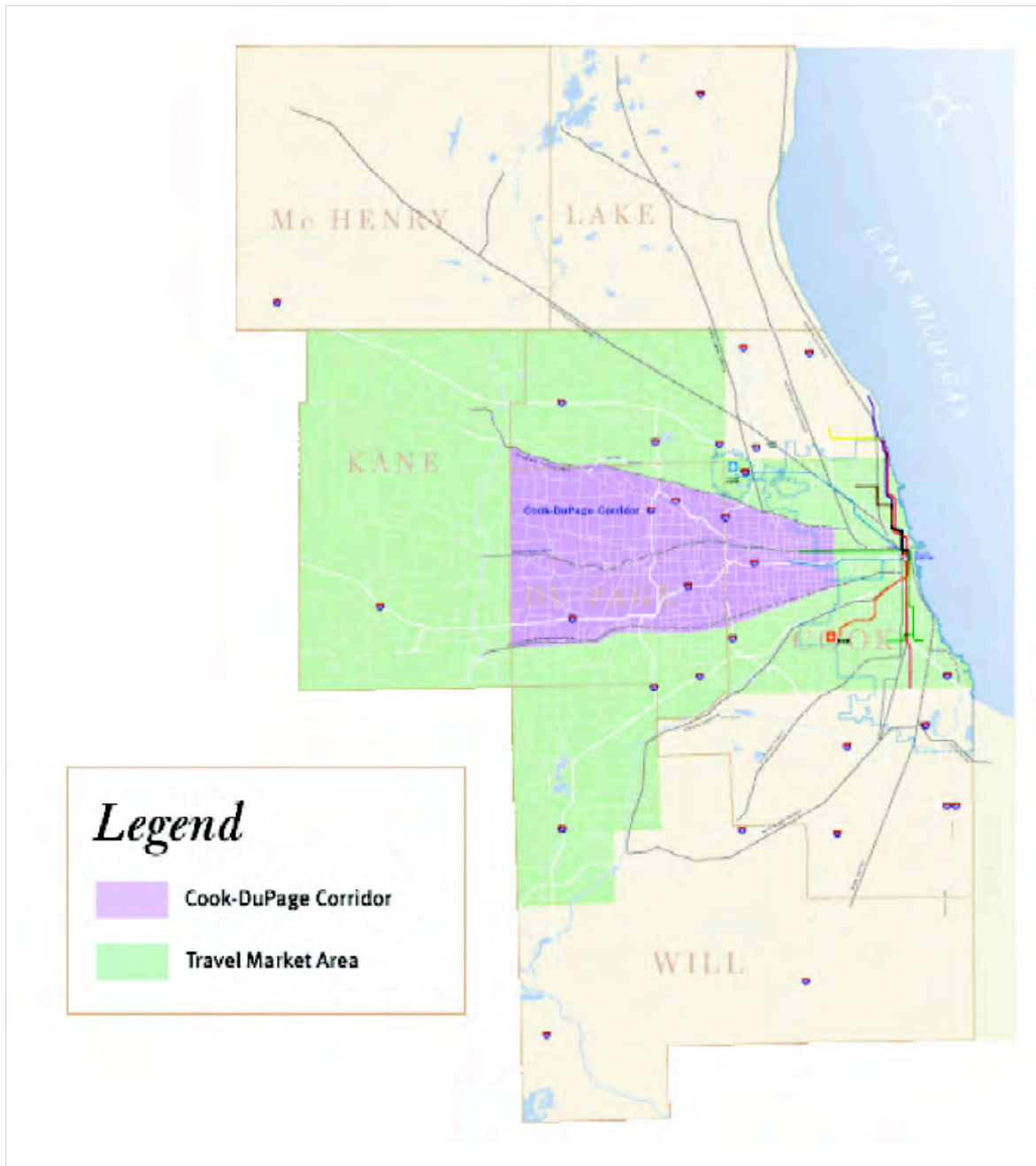
West: *Kane County and DuPage County line*

Figure 2. Cook DuPage Corridor Study Area



The Travel Market Analysis examined travel within the Cook DuPage Corridor, as well as major travel flows between the corridor and the surrounding area. The broader “travel market area” examined in the Travel Market Analysis study phase is shown in Figure 3. Major travel patterns between the Cook DuPage Corridor and the adjacent travel market area were also addressed in the follow-on Options Feasibility Study.

Figure 3. Cook DuPage Corridor Travel Market Area



Leadership

The Cook DuPage Corridor study is a long-range corridor planning effort led by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The Options Feasibility Study was a collaborative process among many agencies and governments impacted by the study area. Fifty committee participants actively guided the study materials and outcomes, including transportation and planning practitioners, civic and social organizations and elected officials. Regional cooperation and public participation is further described in Section 2 of this document.

Funding

Four separate consultant teams were contracted by the Regional Transportation Authority to provide specialized professional services associated with the following components of the Options Feasibility Study:

- o Technical Services;
- o Public Involvement and Communications;
- o Corridor Planning Standards; and
- o Action Plan and Planning Process Documentation

The RTA was the primary source of funding for the professional services associated with the Options Feasibility Study. As shown in Table 2, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) also provided a significant financial contribution to the program, with an overall funding share of 30%. In addition, IDOT contributed 62% of the cost of the preceding research study phase, the Cook DuPage Corridor Travel Market Analysis.

Table 1. Options Feasibility Study Funding

Study Component	Contract Amount	RTA Funding	RTA Share	IDOT Funding	IDOT Share
Technical Services	\$600,000	\$400,000	67%	\$200,000	33%
Public Involvement and Communications	\$300,000	\$146,789	49%	\$153,211	51%
Corridor Planning Standards	\$250,000	\$250,000	100%	\$0	0%
Action Plan and Process Doc.	\$18,000	\$18,000	100%	\$0	0%
Total	\$1,168,000	\$814,789	70%	\$353,211	30%

Overview of the Study Process

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) organized and staffed [three standing committees and one working group \[A5\]](#) to [provide coordinated and continuous guidance \[A6\]](#) throughout the Options Feasibility Study process: 1) Policy Committee; 2) Technical Committee; 3) Citizen Advisory Committee and 4) Planning Standards Working Group.

The Policy Committee and Technical Committee adopted a formal [problem statement \[A7\]](#) upon initiation of the Options Feasibility Study in January 2006. The Problem Statement provided important focus for the Options Feasibility work and was based on the findings of the Travel Market Analysis. The Problem Statement established the reverse and intersuburban commute patterns impacting the Cook DuPage Corridor as the primary focus of mobility improvements for the Options Feasibility Study.

The [Cook DuPage Corridor Public Involvement Plan \[A8\]](#) was one of the first work products of the Options Feasibility Study phase. The Dovetail Communications consultant team developed the Public Involvement Plan with the assistance of the Citizen Advisory Committee and RTA staff. The Public Involvement Plan identified anticipated outreach techniques and key stakeholders, and served as a monitoring tool for the effectiveness of public outreach throughout the study process.

A [Preliminary Purpose and Need for Mobility Improvements \[A9\]](#), a [set of Goals and Objectives \[A10\]](#), and [Anticipated Evaluation Measures \[A11\]](#) were developed by the Technical Committee and reviewed by the public, prior to the development of transportation improvement proposals. Public input was also obtained on generic transportation system designs (“[conceptual options \[A12\]](#)”) early in the planning process to generate insight on mobility preferences.

A [corridor planning standards component \[A13\]](#) was included in the Options Feasibility Study phase to ensure that local government values were specifically addressed in the corridor planning process. The resulting [Cook DuPage Corridor Planning Standards \[A14\]](#) and [associated evaluation criteria \[A15\]](#) are referenced in the formally approved Goals and Objectives, under Goal 4: “Increase Community and Corridor Benefits”, as Objective 4: “Maximize achievement of Corridor Planning Standards”.

Three system designs were developed as potential, alternative future transportation frameworks for improving corridor mobility with major capital investment: a Main Line System, a Concentric System and a Radial Reliant system. Within each of the three

system designs, three to five alternative combinations of potential major capital projects (“detailed options”) were developed for evaluation purposes. A total of eleven detailed options were developed. All of the options addressed the same problem statement, goals and objectives, travel patterns and major employment centers. The options differed in system design, mode and location of proposed investments, and overall magnitude of investment. The [System and Options Overview \[A16\]](#) document outlines the three systems and corresponding detailed options that were proposed for and subsequently underwent evaluation. The document also presents an extensive set of relatively less capital-intensive, network enhancements to the existing transportation system, including: smart corridors, connector bus services, employment center circulation/distribution services and strategic roadway improvements.

The eleven options were technically evaluated and ranked relative to one another, although not all of the anticipated evaluation measures could be applied in the Options Feasibility Study given the level of project detail. The resulting [evaluation scores \[A17\]](#) and [environmental considerations \[A18\]](#) were used by the Technical Committee to narrow the focus on the best performing options and to slightly improve (modify) the options, prior to consideration by elected officials.

Based on technical merit, the Technical Committee formulated [three System Recommendations \[A19\]](#) for the consideration of the Policy Committee - one for each of three overall system designs: a Main Line System Recommendation, a Concentric System Recommendation and a Radial Reliant System Recommendation. In addition to the system recommendations of major capital investments, the Technical Committee forwarded a set of [Supporting Recommendations \[A20\]](#) regarding network enhancements to the existing transportation system, major capital investments and policy issues.

With respect to System Recommendations, the Policy Committee made a preliminary decision to modify and pursue a proposed Main Line System for more detailed follow-on study. The Policy Committee also preliminarily approved [the Supporting Recommendations \[A20\]](#) as presented by the Technical Committee. The Policy Committee’s preliminary decisions were offered to the public for review and comment. In consideration of the public input received, the Policy Committee finalized their [System Recommendation \[A21\]](#) with no changes from the preliminary version and finalized their [Supporting Recommendations \[A22\]](#) with an additional Policy Issues strategy: to develop and apply access management policies.

The RTA developed the final decisions of the Policy Committee into an action plan. The *Cook DuPage Corridor Action Plan* presents the approved system, proposed projects, and supporting recommendations. It also presents specific timeframes and actions to clarify and guide the next steps.

This *Planning Process and Technical Documentation Summary* is a complementary document to the *Cook DuPage Corridor Action Plan*. It describes the planning process, technical materials and decisions made during the course of the Options Feasibility Study. Detailed study information and key materials reviewed by the Cook DuPage Corridor study committees and/or by the general public during the course of the Options Feasibility Study are assembled in the appendix.

This *Planning Process and Technical Documentation Summary* is one of four publications resulting from the Cook DuPage Corridor Options Feasibility Study. Each publication is unique in its substance and available from the RTA, upon request:

- *Cook DuPage Corridor Action Plan;*
- *Planning Process and Technical Documentation Summary;*
- *Public Involvement Program Summary Report;* and
- *Cook DuPage Corridor Profile.*

II. Regional Cooperation and Public Participation

Committee Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

Three committees and one working group were established for the Options Feasibility Study: Policy Committee, Technical Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee and Corridor Planning Standards Working Group. Committee structure, composition, [roles and responsibilities \[A5\]](#) were designed by the RTA to ensure transparency and accountability, as to ensure an inclusive, balanced perspective.

The RTA staff managed technical and communications work performed by consultants, and facilitated - but did not serve on - the study committees. Committee meetings and agenda items were coordinated through an [integrated committee schedule \[A6\]](#).

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee was the executive, decision-making group for the Options Feasibility Study. The committee was comprised of [eleven local elected officials \[A23\]](#), with the Cook and DuPage county portions of the corridor equally represented, plus the City of Chicago. Their responsibilities were to:

- 1) Provide input and formulate recommendations to the RTA at key decision points in the Study process, including decisions related to the following:
 - Problem Statement
 - Purpose and Need for corridor mobility improvements
 - Corridor Goals and Planning Standards
 - Recommendation of potential improvement options for feasibility consideration
 - Recommendation of specific alternatives for detailed analysis
- 2) Communicate the varied viewpoints and perspectives of colleagues from within each respective jurisdiction of appointment.
- 3) Provide leadership on behalf of local government through direct service on the Policy Committee, and engage professional staff in supporting roles.
- 4) Ensure balanced, representative subregional participation, and ensure coordination with local and other subregional planning activities.
- 5) Provide informed comment to media on behalf of all members of the Policy Committee and with the notification of RTA.

Technical Committee

The Technical Committee reported to the Policy Committee and was comprised of [twenty-four professionals \[A23\]](#) from municipal, county, regional, state and federal governments, operating entities and planning agencies. The responsibilities of the Technical Committee were to:

- 1) Provide high-level technical input and/or preliminary policy guidance to the RTA regarding key aspects of the Cook DuPage Corridor Study, including:
 - Purpose and Need for corridor mobility improvements
 - Goals and objectives of corridor mobility improvements
 - Development of evaluation criteria
 - Potential options for feasibility consideration
 - Preliminary evaluation results
 - Recommendation and refinement of specific alternatives for detailed analysis
- 2) Provide necessary agency and project data
- 3) Review work products and findings
- 4) Share perspective and develop consensus on recommendations
- 5) Ensure coordination with other regional transportation planning activities
- 6) Identify potential concerns and ways to resolve them

Citizen Advisory Committee

The Citizen Advisory Committee also reported directly to the Policy Committee and was comprised of [seventeen members \[A23\]](#) from civic, human service, business, tourism and professional organizations. Their responsibilities were to:

- 1) Provide citizen-perspective guidance to the Policy Committee and RTA on the following:
 - Public Involvement Plan
 - Goals and objectives
 - Written and other communications to citizens, and Corridor community organizations and businesses
 - Groups/populations that may need special public outreach
- 2) Monitor effectiveness of outreach strategies

- 3) Review and provide input on preliminary outreach strategies, materials & events
- 4) Promote public awareness of Cook-DuPage Corridor Study and encourage participation of others
- 5) Assist in dissemination of public materials and/or information, when possible
- 6) Identify potential needs or concerns and ways to resolve them

Corridor Planning Standards Working Group

One working group was established on a task-specific basis: the [Corridor Planning Standards Working Group \[A23\]](#). This working group was essentially comprised of but not limited to the local governments serving on the Technical Committee; participation was open to all Corridor communities. The responsibilities of the Corridor Planning Standards Working Group were to:

- 1) Lead development of corridor planning standards
- 2) Facilitate efforts to gather local data and develop community profiles
- 3) Identify commonalities and differences among local values and community goals
- 4) Promote local awareness of Cook-DuPage Corridor planning standards and encourage participation of others
- 5) Identify potential needs or concerns and ways to resolve them

Public Involvement

Along with extensive committee participation, the RTA carried out a public involvement program to engage and solicit input from the public at-large. The public involvement program is described in the Cook DuPage Corridor [Public Involvement Plan \(final version\) \[A8\]](#). The Citizen Advisory Committee helped the RTA develop this program, and monitored its effectiveness throughout the Options Feasibility Study process. The [Public Involvement Program Summary Report \[A24\]](#) reviews the execution of the Public Involvement Plan and evaluates the effectiveness of the strategies in achieving the key goals of the public involvement program. Public information materials and public comments related to the Options Feasibility Study have been assembled in study archive binders at the RTA offices.

Two public comment periods were held during the course of the Options Feasibility Study. The first public comment period was held early in the study process, in June 2006. The second public comment period was held toward the end of the Options Feasibility Study, in March 2008.

The purpose of the June 2006 public comment period was threefold:

- 1) To inform the public about the study and its purpose,
- 2) To obtain feedback on several draft and preliminary materials:
 - o [Draft Goals and Objectives \[A25\]](#)
 - o [Draft Purpose and Need for Mobility Improvements \[A26\]](#)
 - o [Evaluation Framework \[A27\]](#)
 - o [Anticipated Evaluation Measures \[A11\]](#)
 - o [Preliminary Public Involvement Plan \[A28\]](#)
- 3) To obtain early input on [general mobility concepts \[A12\]](#).

Three public meetings were held at geographically dispersed locations in the corridor during the 30-day public comment period. These meetings were conducted in Cicero, Downers Grove and Wheaton. A [slide presentation \[A29\]](#) and visual materials presented information about the study, and interactive display boards and a [comment form \[A30\]](#) facilitated input on the study items. [Comments from the comment forms \[31\]](#) and input submitted electronically or under separate cover were compiled by RTA staff and shared with the study committees. As a result, many of the items listed above as “draft” or “preliminary” were subsequently revised. These materials are further described and their final versions are referenced in Section III: Mobility Challenges and Opportunities of this document.

The second public comment period was held in March 2008, after evaluation had taken place and an indication of preliminary decisions could be offered to the public. The purpose of the March 2008 public comment period was to provide information on the study and pending decisions, and to facilitate public input on: (1) the [preliminary recommended transportation system \[A32\]](#) and the projects proposed within it, and (2) a set of [preliminary supporting recommendations \[A20\]](#) to advance further study of the major capital investments and implement enhancements to existing transportation networks. Many technical resource documents discussed in Section 5: Evaluation and

Section 6: Outcomes were made available to the public as background materials to facilitate meaningful comment on the preliminary recommendations.

Five public meetings were held at geographically dispersed locations in the corridor and downtown Chicago during the 30-day public comment period in March 2008. These meetings were conducted in downtown Chicago/Loop, Cicero, Oak Park, Lombard and Addison. A [slide presentation \[A33\]](#) presented background and current study information, with particular focus on the Policy Committee's preliminary recommendations. An open question-and-answer session was offered after the presentation. A [public comment form \[A34\]](#) and the Cook DuPage Corridor study website facilitated public input on the preliminary recommendations. [Comments from the comment forms \[35\]](#) and [a public comment period summary \[36\]](#) were prepared by RTA staff and reviewed by study committees. The preliminary supporting recommendations were subsequently revised based on public comment. The final recommended system and supporting recommendations are further described and final versions are referenced in Section VI: Outcomes.

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III. Mobility Challenges and Opportunities

Cook DuPage Corridor Travel Market Analysis Findings

Prior to the Options Feasibility Study phase, extensive research was undertaken through a Travel Market Analysis of the Cook DuPage Corridor study area. The travel market analysis described existing and future conditions in terms of demographics, geography and the transportation system. It identified [nine major commuter travel patterns \[A37\]](#) impacting the corridor and examined in great detail how well the transportation system serves or supports each of the patterns. The travel market analysis also identified [four key mobility issues \[A38\]](#) facing the Cook DuPage Corridor:

- o Access by transit to major employment centers in DuPage and West Cook;
- o Service quality of I-290;
- o Service quality of bus transit in terms of efficiency and convenience, especially for trips in Cook County requiring connecting CTA and Pace services; and
- o Service quality of arterials.

The travel market analysis offered synthesized, factual information and important context for the Options Feasibility phase. All committee members received a copy of the Travel Market Analysis Final Report with an [Executive Summary \[A3\]](#) at the onset of this study phase.

Problem Statement

At the beginning of the Options Feasibility Study, a [Problem Statement \[A7\]](#) was formally approved by both the Policy Committee and Technical Committee at an initial, combined meeting on January 26, 2006. The Problem Statement conveyed a primary focus on the intersuburban and reverse commute for the mobility solutions to be developed and evaluated in the Options Feasibility Study.

Preliminary Purpose and Need for Corridor Mobility Improvements

A [Preliminary Purpose and Need for Corridor Mobility Improvements \[A9\]](#) was developed to describe the Cook DuPage Corridor and the mobility needs to be addressed by travel market and by mode, with supporting facts. The document also establishes goals and objectives as the basis for determining reasonable options.

The preliminary purpose and need was developed expressly for the Options Feasibility Study; it is an early planning guidance document and is not intended to serve as a NEPA document for any particular project. In fact, there were no actions proposed at the point in the planning process during which it was written. However, preliminary purpose and need may be useful as background information for a project-specific NEPA document of future proposed actions.

Public comment was received on a [draft version of the purpose and need document \[A26\]](#) in June 2006, along with the draft goals and objectives. The Policy Committee subsequently made minor revisions and approved [the final version \[A9\]](#) in December 2006.

Goals and Objectives

Before solutions to the problem statement were developed, a consensus set of [goals and objectives \[A10\]](#) were developed. Through a special working session of the Technical Committee in March 2006, seven goals were developed to describe (generally) what all potentially feasible solutions should be designed to achieve. The committee also developed a total of 37 measurable objectives to further specify how each of the goals is to be achieved.

The Policy Committee reviewed and made minor revisions to the goals and objectives in May 2006, then released a [draft for public comment \[A25\]](#) in June 2006. Additional changes were subsequently made based on public comment. The Policy Committee formally approved the [final version \[A10\]](#) in December 2006.

Corridor Planning Standards

A [corridor planning standards \[A13\]](#) study component was undertaken in conjunction with the Options Feasibility Study. The RTA initiated the corridor planning standards component to bring local values, preferences and criteria into the early planning stages of long-range, major transportation investments.

Local community planning officials from a broad range of the Cook DuPage Corridor communities developed guiding principles for the corridor planning standards at a September 2006 workshop. The Planning Standards Working Group transformed the guiding principles into measurable planning standards during fall 2006, and the Policy Committee reviewed and finalized the Cook DuPage Corridor Planning Standards in

December 2006. The final [Cook DuPage Corridor Planning Standards \[A14\]](#) are also referenced in the overall Goals and Objectives, under Goal 4: “Increase Community and Corridor Benefits”, as Objective 4: “Maximize achievement of Corridor Planning Standards (supplemental criteria that reflect shared local values and preferences)”.

Following the Policy Committee’s approval of the final Cook DuPage Corridor Planning Standards, the Planning Standards Working Group developed potential [performance measures \[A15\]](#). However, many of the approved Cook DuPage Corridor Planning Standards relate to advanced project development and design stages; therefore, the Working Group identified a subset of the corridor planning standards to apply in the current Options Feasibility evaluation process, with respect to Goal 4 Objective 4.

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IV. Transportation Options

Options Development Process

To begin the options development process, public input regarding mobility preferences was obtained during the June 2006 public comment period. The Technical Committee and RTA staff/consultant team utilized public feedback regarding generic, “conceptual options” to understand the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each of five concepts. The conceptual options provided the foundation for the development of project specific, “detailed options”.

The detailed options were developed in successive meetings of the Technical Committee over several months, from July 2006 to November 2006. The initial version of the detailed options was developed by the RTA staff/consultant team, and was referred to as “Working Options”. Alphanumeric letters followed by conceptual option names identified these early, working options. Over time, and as the options were further developed by the committee and RTA team, the working options came to be called “Detailed Systems and Options.” The alpha reference and conceptual names were replaced with system titles and option numbers. This transition is further described in the sections that follow.

Conceptual Options

[Five “conceptual options” \[A12\]](#) - were developed for committee discussion and public input early in the Options development process:

1. Hub and Spoke
2. Multiple Hub and Spoke
3. Grid Network
4. Point-to-Point
5. New Use of Existing System

Each conceptual option represented a distinctly different approach to provide mobility for intersuburban and reverse commuters. While the conceptual options did not specify particular modes or alignments, each of the generic system designs had apparent advantages and limitations. Public feedback on advantages, disadvantages and preferences were used as the foundation for alternative system designs and to develop detailed system options.

Detailed System Options

The Technical Committee decided not to eliminate any of the five designs prior to developing detailed options, in light of the relatively small proportion of the overall Corridor population represented by the number of public comments received. Rather, the committee decided to combine the conceptual options to their greatest apparent advantage as the basis for detailed options, as a way to meaningfully utilize the feedback received.

The Technical Committee also offered the following general guidance at the onset of developing detailed options:

- All potentially feasible modes should be considered in the options development process;
- The options developed for evaluation should be manageable in number;
- Each option should be developed into as strong a candidate as possible;
- The development of multi-modal options were preferred;
- Presuming that multiple projects are required to address the full range of goals and objectives for mobility improvements, the evaluation criteria should be applied to the combination (collection) of projects rather than to individual projects within the collection; and
- Evaluation results could potentially be used to improve options.

To initiate the development of detailed options, the RTA staff/consultant team prepared [four “working options” \[A39\]](#) (Options A, B, C and D) for the Technical Committee’s discussion in late July/early August 2006. For discussion purposes, staff also developed the following basic information for each of the options:

- Description (“composite” map and narrative)
- Major capital investments (highway and transit)
- Variations (alternative or additional major capital investments to potentially consider)
- Transfer and access points

- Other investments (highway and transit) – commuter rail and bus connectors
- Smart arterial corridors (also referred to as ITS/TM&O improvements)
- Travel markets served

The working options maintained their base in the conceptual options, but each presented a specific combination of potential major capital investments to provide access to the six employment centers for the corridor's reverse and inter-suburban commute travel markets. The major capital investments included in the working options were drawn from the region's long-range transportation plan, and a few were developed specifically as part of this study process.

Option A – Grid Network + Hub

Option A combined the grid conceptual option and the hub-and-spoke conceptual option. It initially proposed the following major capital investments:

- DuPage J-Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Mid-City Transitway BRT
- Cermak Road BRT
- I-290 BRT
- I-290 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes
- Elgin – O'Hare Expressway east extension

Option A was revised through subsequent committee discussion and was later renamed the Main Line System.

Option B – Grid Network + Multiple Hub

Option B combined the grid concept with the multiple hub-and-spoke concept. It initially proposed the following major capital investments:

- I-355 BRT (Bolingbrook to Schaumburg)
- DuPage "J" Line BRT
- IL 83 BRT south to I-55
- I-290 BRT east to Harlem Ave.

- o I-290 reversible HOV (Lake Street to Austin)

Option B was revised through subsequent committee discussion and was later renamed the Concentric System.

Option C – Grid Network

Option C was developed as a grid concept. It initially proposed the following major capital investments:

- o STAR Line Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU)
- o IL 83 DMU
- o Inner Circumferential DMU
- o Mid-City Transitway DMU
- o UP-West Line premium intersuburban/reverse commute service
- o I-290 reversible HOV to Lake Street

Option C was revised through subsequent committee discussion and was later included as a Concentric System alternative to the previously described Option B.

Option D – New Use of Existing System

Option D was developed from a conceptual option of the same name to address corridor mobility needs with the existing transportation system, primarily through operational changes to all three Metra commuter rail lines in the corridor. Option D initially did not propose any major capital investments. Option D was revised through subsequent committee discussion and was later renamed the Radial Reliant System.

Simultaneous to the RTA developing the initial working options, [four special working sessions \[A40\]](#) were held to explore and clarify issues that were identified by the RTA and consultant team as needing considerable focused discussion. The working sessions involved the participation of local and agency experts with working knowledge of each of the follow four respective topics:

1. I-290 Corridor
2. Transportation Management and Operations (TM&O)
3. DuPage “J” Line Tail and West Termini
4. Circulation/Distribution Systems

Work session participants were primarily employees of the organization/agencies represented on the Technical Committee, although not necessarily the same individual. In addition, the Circulation/Distributions Systems discussion benefited from the participation of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation and the Center for Neighborhood Technology and their knowledge of bike and car-sharing programs, respectively.

During the fall of 2006, the working options were further developed and were renamed to reflect three potential transportation system designs for the Cook DuPage Corridor: a Main Line system, a Concentric System or a Radial Reliant system. Within each of the three systems, three to five alternative combinations of potential major capital investments (projects) were developed for evaluation. The alternative combinations of projects within each system were referred to as “system options”.

The specific combination of projects in each system option were intended to: 1) address the full set of approved goals and objectives; 2) enable the evaluation to discern differences among system options in terms of mode, location and/or magnitude of investment; and 3) provide informative evaluation results that subsequently could be used to improve one or more options in the same or another system.

A total of eleven system options were developed among the three systems, representing varying subsets of over thirty unique potential major capital investments:

Main Line System Options (Evaluated as Options 1-5)

The Main Line system proposed focusing future investment in a core, east-west corridor, with additional new elements at each end of the east-west corridor to collect and distribute travelers to the corridor major employment centers. The five options of the Main Line system were specifically designed to explore differences among alternative potential locations and modes to serve as this system’s core, east-west corridor. Therefore, the three projects not in the core corridor were held constant among all five options.

Main Line System Option 1

- I-290 BRT
- I-290 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes
- DuPage J-Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension
- Mid-City Transitway BRT

Main Line System Option 2

- Blue Line extension to Oak Brook
- DuPage J-Line BRT
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension
- Mid-City Transitway BRT

Main Line System Option 3

- Union Pacific Intersuburban Plus
- DuPage J-Line BRT
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension
- Mid-City Transitway BRT

Main Line System Option 4

- I-290 HOV Lanes
- I-290 BRT
- Blue Line extension to 1st Avenue
- DuPage J-Line BRT
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension
- Mid-City Transitway BRT

Main Line System Option 5

- Cermak Road BRT
- DuPage J-Line BRT
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension
- Mid-City Transitway BRT

Concentric System Options (Evaluated as Options 6-8)

The Concentric System focused future investment in new, concentric bands of north-south transportation improvements, in conjunction with a central east-west

mainline service to provide new mobility to the six major employment centers in the corridor. The proposed concentric system, combined with the existing rail and highway system, was envisioned to create a strong, high performance grid of transportation in the corridor. The three options of the Concentric System were designed to test varying system sizes, locations and modes for potential investment.

Concentric System Option 1

- Mid-City Transitway BRT
- 1st Avenue BRT
- IL 83 BRT
- I-355/I-290 BRT
- IL 59 BRT (I-88 to 95th Street)
- I-290 / I-88 BRT (Mid-City to IL 59)
- I-290 + Extension BRT
- I-88 High Occupancy Vehicle/Toll (HOT) Lanes
- I-290 + Extension HOV Lanes
- I-355/I-290 HOT
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension

Concentric System Option 2

- Mid-City Transitway BRT
- Inner Circumferential Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) Trains
- I-355/I-290 BRT
- I-355/I-290 HOT
- I-290 / I-88 BRT (1st Ave. to IL 59)
- Blue Line/Forest Park extension to 1st Avenue
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension

Concentric System Option 3

- Mid-City Transitway, as Automated Guideway Transit/Rapid Transit (AGT/RT)
- 1st Avenue AGT
- IL 83 AGT
- I-290 / I-88 AGT (1st Ave. to IL 59)
- Blue Line extension to 1st Avenue
- Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension

Radial Reliant System Options (Evaluated as Options 9-11)

The Radial Reliant system proposed new and significantly enhanced reliance on the three existing commuter rail lines to serve intersuburban and reverse commute travel in the Cook DuPage Corridor. Supplemental north-south transportation investments were included to ensure intersuburban travel patterns and connectivity with corridor employment centers were addressed. The magnitude of capital investment were successively decreased in Radial Reliant options, rather than substituted.

Radial Reliant System Option 1

- Metra Milwaukee District West (MD-W) Line commuter rail upgrade/new service
- Metra Union Pacific West (UP-W) Line commuter rail upgrade/new service
- Metra Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) commuter rail upgrade/new service
- Blue Line extension to 1st Avenue
- I-290 / I-88 BRT
- I-290 Eisenhower Expressway HOV + I-290 Extension reversible HOV (reverse commute orientation)
- I-88 HOT
- IL 83 BRT
- I-355/I-290 BRT
- I-355/I-290 HOT

Radial Reliant System Option 2

- Metra Milwaukee District West (MD-W) Line commuter rail upgrade/new service
- Metra Union Pacific West (UP-W) Line commuter rail upgrade/new service
- Metra Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) commuter rail upgrade/new service
- Blue Line extension to 1st Avenue
- I-290 reversible HOV (reverse commute orientation)
- IL 83 shoulder riding BRT
- I-355/I-290 shoulder riding BRT

Radial Reliant System Option 3

- No major capital investments proposed
- Express bus on selected expressways and arterial roadways

In addition, the Technical Committee more fully developed the following four categories of “other system improvements” to enhance overall corridor mobility:

- o smart corridors,
- o connector bus services,
- o employment center distribution/circulation services, and
- o strategic roadway improvements.

The above four categories of system improvements were considered relatively low capital investments and service enhancements worth pursuing whether or not the major capital investments ultimately proceeded and at the same time were supportive of all eleven system options proposed for evaluation.

In November 2006, the Technical Committee finalized a [“Systems and Options Overview” \[A16\]](#), which had formerly served as a working document. The Systems and Options Overview describes the three system designs, geographically depicts (maps) each of the eleven detailed options recommended by the Technical Committee for technical evaluation, and lists the specific combination of projects proposed within each option. It also depicts (maps) all of the recommended “other system improvements”, provides an indexed list of the strategic roadway investments, and lists the proposed universe of smart corridors and connector routes.

The chairman of the Technical Committee presented the Systems and Options Overview to the members of the Policy Committee at a meeting in December 2006. The Policy Committee reviewed and approved the detailed options for evaluation, as presented by the Technical Committee.

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V. Evaluation of Major Capital Projects

Evaluation Methodology

A [draft Evaluation Methodology Framework \[A27\]](#) and a set of [anticipated evaluation measures \[A11\]](#) were developed during the first few months of the Options Feasibility Study and made available for public comment in June 2006. These materials outlined the intended approach to evaluating detailed options against the approved [goals and objectives \[A10\]](#). The evaluation criteria were established prior to developing the detailed options that they were intended to evaluate, in order to minimize bias.

While the draft evaluation framework allowed for weight assignment among the goals, the Technical Committee decided that all seven goals should be weighed equally. The Technical Committee and Policy Committee both formally approved the evaluation methodology framework with the understanding that there would be no weighting among the goals, objectives or evaluation measures in the technical evaluation.

With the consent of the Technical Committee, no formal committee action was taken on the anticipated performance measures. This was to enable the RTA staff/consultant team to efficiently substitute performance measures during the technical evaluation process due to data unavailability or data integrity issues, or if an anticipated performance measure did not distinguish differences among the options. During the evaluation process, RTA staff [defined and tracked all evaluation measures \[A41\]](#) that could be and were actually applied, as well as technical approach employed and related data sources. Any variation from the originally anticipated measures was brought to the attention of the Technical Committee during the course of the evaluation process.

Physical, Operational, Service and Cost Assumptions

Following December 2006 Policy Committee approval of the eleven proposed options for evaluation, general physical alignments and associated infrastructure (e.g., highway access ramps or transit stations) were developed for each segment of the major capital projects in order to develop [project cost assumptions \[A42\]](#). Mode-specific, unit cost based assumptions were applied to project segments and associated facilities. A “soft cost” of 30% for engineering and a 25% “contingency cost” were then applied to the total of each project.

In January 2007, a special session on the proposed J Line BRT was held to discuss physical assumptions of this large project that was included in several of the options. While the project had been described conceptually in the *DuPage Area Transit Plan* (DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, Oct. 2002), the special session served to address physical assumptions for each segment of the J Line proposal, including potential alignment and stations.

[Operating assumptions \[A43\]](#) were developed for each system and option, as well as connectors and employment center distribution services. These assumptions defined and clarified the level of service associated with each major improvement and the proposed network enhancements. This information was used to develop the annual operating cost estimate for each system option.

The physical, operational, service and cost assumptions were used to estimate each option's total capital and operating costs, and to compare the overall cost of an option with its overall goal achievement (as a type of cost-effectiveness indicator) in the evaluation matrix. Technical Committee members from implementing agencies noted that the unit-cost based estimates developed in this Options Feasibility analysis are lower than current, more detailed cost estimates (in cases where more advanced work has been undertaken by lead agencies). However, the Technical Committee unanimously agreed that this would likely be the case for all projects and the most equitable approach to evaluation, given the varying status of refinement of projects included among the options.

Evaluation Results

The results of the technical evaluation of the eleven options were presented as [an evaluation matrix \[A17\]](#), distributed with an [index of the projects \[A44\]](#) in each option. For each option, a score was established for each of the seven goals. Scores among the options were [normalized and scaled relative to each other \[A45\]](#). Because the Technical Committee had previously determined to weigh the individual goals equally, the total score for each option was simply calculated by adding the score of each goal together.

The evaluation result for each option is presented on the first page of the [evaluation matrix \[A17\]](#). Each subsequent page of the evaluation matrix document presents one of seven goals, with its corresponding objectives and performance measures. Both the scores and the actual quantified measure (or qualitative assessment) are shown for each option, so that differences among the options within a single goal could be examined.

Not all of the performance measures could be used due to lack of project detail at the Options Feasibility stage of planning. As indicated in the Evaluation Methodology Section of this document, RTA staff [defined and tracked all evaluation measures \[A41\]](#) that could be and were actually applied, as well as technical approach employed and related data sources.

Of particular concern to the Technical Committee were measures related to “Goal 6: Reduce adverse environmental impacts”. While the number of wetlands, flood plains, natural habitats, historic properties, etc. were quantified within 100 feet of each assumed project’s centerline per the anticipated performance measures, and a total for each option could - for the most part - be tallied and scored, it was evident that the scores were very sensitive to the assumed alignment; this was a concern as only general alignments had been developed. Further, the actual impact on sensitive features was unknown and did not differentiate by mode, or existing field-conditions. The consensus of the Technical Committee was not to evaluate and “score” environmental factors at this point, but rather to undertake more detailed environmental analysis in conjunction with a smaller set of options in future study efforts and as part of the NEPA process.

To address the goal of reducing adverse environmental impacts, the RTA prepared a detailed narrative describing and quantifying potential [Environmental Considerations \[A18\]](#) for each of the detailed options. Also, the performance measures related to Goal 6 were quantified and presented in the [evaluation matrix \[A17\]](#) for information purposes, but the raw numbers for each option were not scaled relative to one another and did not play a role in the options score. The Environmental Considerations narrative enhanced the information presented in the matrix by identifying specific project segments contributing to the overall number of environmentally sensitive locations for each option.

RTA staff developed narrative [Draft Option Assessment Summaries \[A46\]](#) for the discussion and information of the Technical Committee. The Options Assessment Summaries (also referred to as “findings sheets”) described each option and identified specific goals and objectives in which an option performed notably well or notably poorly. Overall potential strengths, areas of concern, and potential approaches to address the concerns were further noted. [Note: The findings for the six highest ranked options were subsequently focused upon and revised through Technical Committee discussion – see following section].

The technical evaluation revealed that Concentric system Option 1 was the highest ranked option with a relative total score of 40. However, this option was also the largest and most expensive system option. Five options scored in the 28-29 range, four options scored in the 26-27 range, and Main Line Option 3 - with a relative score of 22 - was the lowest ranked option.

It was unanimously agreed by the Technical Committee to focus on the six highest ranked options for further consideration. The six highest ranked options (with scores over 28) are indicated by a "Round 2" notation on the [Detailed Options Index of Major Capital Projects \[A44\]](#) and were dispersed among the three systems evaluated:

- Main Line System: Options 1, 2 and 4
- Concentric System: Options 1 and 2
- Radial Reliant System: Option 1

The [Options Assessment Summaries for the six highest ranked options \[A47\]](#) were then modified by the Technical Committee in a special working session. In particular, the "strengths" and "areas of concern" for each of the options were carefully considered, revised and rank-ordered by the Technical Committee members.

VI. Decision Making Outcomes

Technical Committee Recommendations

The Technical Committee formulated two types of recommendations for the consideration of the Policy Committee: system recommendations and supporting recommendations. The [Technical Committee's System Recommendations \[A19\]](#) presented recommended combinations of major capital investments as alternative, potential systems for further study. The [Technical Committee's Supporting Recommendations \[A20\]](#) presented actionable strategies to advance smart corridors, connectors, distribution services, policy matters and major capital investments. The supporting recommendations were the same for and relevant to all three of the forwarded system recommendations.

System Recommendations (Major Capital Investments)

In working sessions on May 24 and May 31, 2007, the Technical Committee developed one "system recommendation" for each of the three systems for the further consideration of the Policy Committee. The Technical Committee based each recommendation on the highest ranked option in each system. The Technical Committee used the evaluation results, environmental considerations and option assessment summaries to make minor revisions to strengthen each primary option and address potential weaknesses.

Main Line System Recommendation

The Technical Committee's Main Line System recommendation focused mobility investment in a central main line corridor proximate to I-290. A bus rapid transit (BRT) line at each end of the Main Line corridor was additionally recommended for collection and distribution. In light of fairly similar evaluation results among Main Line options 1, 2 and 4, three different alternatives to serve as the I-290 main line corridor were recommended for further study. The Main Line system recommendation included the following proposed major capital investments:

- o DuPage J-Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- o Mid-City Transitway BRT
- o I-290 Main Line Corridor Alternatives:
 1. I-290 BRT and I-290 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes
 2. Blue Line Extension to Oak Brook
 3. I-290 BRT, HOV and Blue Line Extension to 1st Ave

- o Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension

Concentric System Recommendation

The Technical Committee’s Concentric System recommendation proposed six “concentric” north-south transportation corridors, supplemented by a major east-west corridor investment and the extension of the Elgin-O’Hare Expressway. This system recommendation reflected Concentric Option 1, with a few modifications. Three I-290/I-88 corridor alternatives were recommended for further testing in lieu of the I-290/I-88 BRT project evaluated. In the 1st Ave. Corridor, a less capital-intensive Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) replaced the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) evaluated. Finally, the Inner Circumferential Rail project that was evaluated with Concentric Option 2 was included in the recommendation. The Concentric system recommendation included the following proposed major capital investments:

- o IL 59 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- o I-355 BRT and I-355 High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes
- o IL 83 BRT
- o Inner Circumferential Rail Line
- o 1st Avenue Arterial Rapid Transit (ART)
- o Mid-City Transitway BRT
- o I-88 Express Bus and I-88 HOT Lanes (from IL 59 to I-355)
- o I-88/I-290 Main Line Corridor Alternatives:
 1. Blue Line Extension to Yorktown (Lombard)
 2. I-290/I-88 Express Bus and HOT Lanes
 3. Blue Line Extension to Yorktown AND I-290/I-88 Express Bus and HOT Lanes
- o Elgin – O’Hare Expressway east extension

Radial Reliant System Recommendation

The Technical Committee’s Radial Reliant system recommendation focused investment in the expansion and enhancement of existing radial rail and expressway systems. Two new, north-south capital investments were

recommended in the center of the corridor, as well as a short westward extension of the Blue Line to 1st Avenue (Maywood), to achieve connectivity to the corridor's identified major employment centers. This system recommendation reflected Radial Reliant option 1, as it was evaluated.

Supporting Recommendations

The Technical Committee also forwarded a set of [“Supporting Recommendations” \[A20\]](#) to the Policy Committee. The supporting recommendations were essentially strategies and actions to advance the “other improvements” (smart corridors, connectors, employment center distribution/circulation services, and strategic roadway improvements). The supporting recommendations also addressed strategies and principles to advance major capital investments to further study, and identified policy actions to advance future corridor mobility. The Supporting Recommendations were a complement to all of the System Recommendations, and reflected the Technical Committee's general consensus in previous discussion that the network enhancements may be just as important, or more important, than the major capital investments to improving corridor mobility.

The Citizen Advisory Committee reviewed the Technical Committee's recommendations in June 2007. The chair and vice-chair of the Policy Committee subsequently met with the Technical Committee chair and RTA staff to review the recommendations and many associated technical materials. Feedback from these meetings indicated that it was difficult to comprehend the very complex recommendations and to readily identify relevant pieces of background information from the many background materials. During the summer and fall of 2007, the RTA staff improved the presentation of the recommendations and supplemental technical information for easier comprehension by the Policy Committee and the general public.

Policy Committee Recommendations

The members of the Policy Committee received the Technical Committee's recommendations in December 2007. For further preparation, Policy Committee members and when desired, their respective staff and/or their organization's corresponding Technical Committee member, participated in [individual or small group briefings \[A48\]](#) in January 2008.

At the January briefings, RTA staff reviewed the background and pending recommendations with a [PowerPoint presentation \[A49\]](#) and then addressed any questions. [Questions and Answers \[A50\]](#) from all briefings were compiled and subsequently shared with all Policy Committee members and made available to the public. The same PowerPoint presentation from the briefings was offered at the Policy Committee meeting on February 13, 2008.

The Policy Committee reviewed and discussed the [Technical Committee's three system recommendations \[19\]](#) to make a preliminary decision on which system and projects to further develop and consider in follow-on study. The February 2008 decision was considered preliminary so that public input could be obtained and the Policy Committee decision potentially revised, prior to finalization.

The Policy Committee selected the Technical Committee's Main Line system recommendation as the foundation for their preliminary decision and added two north-south corridors from the Technical Committee's Concentric recommendation to further enhance mobility. The Policy Committee also recommended considering various combinations and extents of a Blue Line extension, BRT and HOV in the I-290/I-88 corridor. In addition, the Policy Committee preliminarily approved the Technical Committee's [Supporting Recommendations \[A20\]](#), without change.

The Policy Committee's [Preliminary System Recommendation \[A32\]](#) and [Preliminary Supporting Recommendations \[A20\]](#) were the focus of a 30-day public review and comment period in March 2008. To help inform the public about the nature and content of the pending decision, four public meetings were held at various locations in the Cook DuPage Corridor and one additional meeting was held in downtown Chicago. At the public meetings, a [PowerPoint presentation \[A33\]](#) was followed by an open, question and answer session. The meetings were not intended as public hearings and no oral testimony was taken. However, written comments were encouraged and were requested via comment form, personal letter, or e-mail. Nearly 900 individual comments were received from approximately 150 citizens and/or organizations.

RTA staff carefully reviewed the comments and summarized the results. The Citizen Advisory Committee and the Technical Committee reviewed the [public comment form summary \[A35\]](#), along with [a public comment period summary \[A36\]](#), in April 2008. Based on the results, both of the two committees recommended no change to the Policy

Committee's preliminary system recommendation, and to add a supporting recommendation to include the development of access control policies.

The Policy Committee convened on May 14, 2008 to reconsider their preliminary recommendations in light of public input and the guidance of the technical Committee and Citizen Advisory Committee. The Policy Committee discussed and unanimously approved the [System Recommendation \[A21\]](#) as final, with no change, and unanimously approved a final set of [Supporting Recommendations \[A22\]](#) with the inclusion of one additional strategy to develop and apply access control policies under the Policy Issues heading.

Action Plan

An *Action Plan* for the Cook DuPage Corridor was developed by the RTA to communicate the outcome of the Options Feasibility Study. The *Cook DuPage Corridor Action Plan* presents: (1) the Policy Committee's final recommended transportation system for further study and recommended network enhancements, (2) potential implementation issues that need to be addressed and (3) a "roadmap" of coordinated activities over the next several years to advance the proposed Cook DuPage Corridor mobility improvements. The Supporting Recommendations are presented as critical actions and strategies; potential leaders, key participants and anticipated timeframes for completion are presented. The *Action Plan* will be forwarded to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the Chicago region's metropolitan planning organization, for consideration and potential integration in the next long range transportation plan (LRTP) for northeastern Illinois.

Next Steps

The System Analysis is the third study phase of the Cook DuPage Corridor Study. The scope of the Cook DuPage Corridor System Analysis will be determined during the summer of 2008 and its focus will be to further refine, evaluate and prioritize proposed major capital investments. Network enhancements (supporting recommendations) will be advanced through the variety of avenues described in the *Action Plan*.

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