



Civic Federation Position Statement

April 13, 2004

Regional Transportation Task Force Resolutions

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The Civic Federation congratulates the Regional Transportation Task Force for engaging in public debate over the planning and governance of surface transportation in Northeastern Illinois. Given the large amount of money the region invests in transportation, citizens are well served by public discussion of these issues. A well thought out and implemented regional transportation system is critical to the quality of life for all residents of Northeastern Illinois, and a thorough reevaluation of regional transportation has not occurred since 1983.

As the Task Force prepares to vote on several resolutions, The Civic Federation urges members to test the resolutions against the following three criteria which we deem to be of prime importance to taxpayers:

- Do they improve financial accountability and promote sound fiscal policies in our transportation planning, oversight, and service agencies?
- Do they increase the amount and quality of transportation services to all people throughout the region, resulting in reduced congestion and increased livability?
- Do they maintain or improve federal funding for transportation projects?

As a non-partisan organization that advocates rational public finance policies and efficient delivery of government services, The Civic Federation has tested these resolutions in light of these criteria and makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Transportation and land use planning should be undertaken together. The Civic Federation supports the merger of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and the Chicago Area Transportation Study. Combining the planning agencies would allow for cost savings and integrate a broader range of important considerations including land use, economic development, environmental impact, transportation, congestion, and sprawl.
- 2) Regarding the proposed reorganization of the Regional Transportation Authority, the Chairman of the Board and the Executive Director should remain distinct. Most corporate governance models are moving away from the joint CEO/Chairman model. It is sound public policy to maintain the chief executive and chairman as two separate positions in order to avoid an excessive concentration of power and protect the consensus-building role of the Board. However, The Civic Federation could support increased accountability and empowerment of the RTA Board of Directors to fulfill the goals of the three criteria articulated above.

3) The Civic Federation supports any proposals to implement a universal fare card system that would increase efficiency, accountability, and ridership in the region.

4) The Civic Federation has no specific recommendation related to the proposed changes in the governance of the RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace. We would need more details on these proposals and how they meet the criteria of sound fiscal policy, improved service, and continued federal funding in order to make any recommendation.