



# INVEST IN COOK

Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways  
FY2020 Call for Projects

## INTRODUCTION

Cook County is part of the third largest urban area in the U.S.—one that provides transportation services to the nation and connects our region to the world. The Chicago region’s dense and complex network of freight and passenger transportation systems were developed by public and private investors over two centuries. Because of these assets and our central location, the metropolitan area is the freight center of North America and a transportation hub for the nation with 266,000 companies and 3.8 million jobs.

But Cook County cannot rest on its historic legacy of investments. The transportation infrastructure that was an essential element in the development of our regional economy needs to be maintained, updated, expanded, and improved in order to remain competitive and grow. Many of our transportation facilities have fallen into disrepair or become outdated. If they continue to be neglected, the ease with which people and goods move—a strength that has always been a competitive advantage—will be greatly diminished. If we do not maintain and modernize our infrastructure other regions in the nation will capture a growing share of the markets in which we have been dominant.

## Connecting Cook County

*Connecting Cook County*, the County’s first long range transportation plan in 75 years, takes stock of our transportation assets, deficiencies, and future needs and measures them against the community and economic opportunities that transportation can facilitate. The Plan outlines a new direction and a more expansive role for the County in funding and collaborating on projects across jurisdictional boundaries and in achieving greater integration of the system across all transportation modes.

The plan identifies five priorities and can be accessed at [www.cookcountyil.gov/service/connecting-cook-county-long-range-transportation-plan](http://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/connecting-cook-county-long-range-transportation-plan)

**Prioritize Transit and Other Transportation Alternatives** – Cook County has long prioritized the automobile as the preferred mode of personal travel. However, the County now acknowledges that commuter preferences are changing and indefinitely expanding highways is not a realistic or sustainable way to meet future transportation needs. Cook County will look specifically at ways to improve our transit networks and also place greater emphasis on supporting walking, biking, and car/ride-sharing as alternatives to driving.

**Support the Region’s Role as North America’s Freight Capital** – Freight plays a critical role in Cook County’s economy and its continued prosperity. While being North America’s largest port has provided our region with tremendous wealth, it has also made the Chicago region the largest chokepoint for both trucks and trains in the national freight system. To retain our supremacy in the freight industry, Cook County will focus on improving rail and truck movements through the region and on coordinating land uses in proximity to freight transportation facilities.

**Promote Equal Access to Opportunities** – Transportation facilities provide people with access to jobs, schools, healthcare, recreational activities, and stores. A high quality

transportation network provides the means by which people have access to opportunity. Historically, in Cook County, access to economic opportunities has been unfairly distributed and has disproportionately impacted African Americans and residents of south Cook County. The plan addresses these inequities by targeting transportation investments in support of business expansion and job creation in disadvantaged communities and by improving transportation options between low/moderate income and minority residents in Cook County and existing regional employment centers.

**Maintain and Modernize What Already Exists** – Though large capacity-increasing projects can be seductive, maintaining and modernizing existing transportation facilities is a top priority for Cook County. Postponing regular maintenance adds to long-term costs, reduces the appeal of public transit services, causes delay and congestion, creates safety hazards, and makes transportation more expensive for users. Cook County will first concentrate on eliminating the backlog of maintenance projects and secondly invest in technologies and building practices that modernize the transportation network.

**Increase Investments in Transportation** – Growing and maintaining the County's transportation systems will require more money. Increased investment will help our economy grow and make communities more livable. The County will pursue new and increased sources of revenue and leverage local resources by aligning state and federal funds with transportation priorities.

## **Implementing Our Transportation Vision**

The Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (DOTH) is playing an increasingly active role in supporting local governments in their efforts to build and maintain a comprehensive transportation network. The County has offered monetary and staff support to help municipal or regional transportation agencies leverage available revenues to complete or expedite transportation improvements. Through cooperation with local municipalities high priority projects have secured full funding and been completed in a timely and efficient way. The Department's involvement has helped advance projects that might otherwise have languished. DOTH has been especially successful in helping local municipalities secure federal or state funding by assisting with the local match required for those projects.

Invest in Cook represents one avenue for beginning to implement the priorities of *Connecting Cook County*. With this Call for Projects, the Department of Transportation and Highways has established a formal process that local and regional governments and private partners can use to apply for up to \$8.5 million in transportation funds to cover the cost of planning and feasibility studies, engineering and construction associated with improvements consistent with the LRTP. (Due to funding limitations, applications that are selected may receive less than the amount originally requested. In those cases, the applicants must be able to demonstrate that the proposed projects are still viable and can be completed with the amount awarded.) The Call for Projects ensures that limited resources are spent wisely by identifying the universe of transportation proposals and prioritizing them using objective and transparent selection criteria. Just as important, it strengthens the partnerships and strategic matching of funding from various sources to expedite the completion of projects vital to a stronger economy and more livable communities.

## **ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION PROCESS**

The following sections describe which entities are eligible to apply, application deadlines, match requirements, and project readiness criteria that must be met in order to qualify to apply. If your project qualifies under these basic criteria and the application is received on-time, your project will be evaluated.

## Deadlines and How to Apply

The call for projects opens on January 15, 2020 and ends at 5:00 PM on March 13, 2020. Application materials are posted on Cook County's DOT website at: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/investincook>. Applications will only be accepted electronically and must be submitted by the deadline.

## Eligible Applicants and Projects

Eligible sponsors include local governments, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, natural resource or public land agencies, and any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for transportation or recreational trails within Cook County. For projects that involve multiple jurisdictions, the application should identify a lead applicant and provide letters of support from partner entities. Private for-profit or non-profit organizations can submit project proposals as a lead applicant, but they are required to partner with a public sponsor that meets the above criteria. Proposals for multimodal projects in any phase of development will be considered. Lead applicants are limited to a single project application. Staff salaries are not an eligible expense under this program. Also, the purchase and/or maintenance of rolling stock (rail cars, buses, vans, etc.) and stand-alone lighting projects are not eligible under the Invest in Cook program.

Eligible project proposals should be consistent with the priorities set forth in *Connecting Cook County* and expand the County's involvement in multimodal projects. The following is a representative but not exhaustive list of the types of proposals sought through Invest in Cook:

- Transit Improvement Projects
  - Transit Studies
  - Transit Facility Improvements or Equipment Improvements
- Transit Service Enhancements or Improving Transit Accessibility
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Projects
  - Bicycle or Pedestrian Master Planning
  - Adding Bike Lanes
  - Traffic Calming/Road Diets
  - Multi-Use Trails
  - Filling Sidewalk Gaps
  - Intersection Safety Improvements
  - ADA-Related Improvements
- Freight Projects
  - Truck Route Planning
  - Increased Viaduct Clearance
  - Improvements to Highway-Rail Grade Crossings
  - Roadway-Rail Grade Separations
  - Roadway Improvements on Truck Routes and High Truck Traffic Road Segments
  - Railroad Improvements
- Traffic Flow Improvement Projects
  - Eliminating Bottlenecks
  - Intersection Improvements and Modernization
  - Interconnected Signal Technologies
- Bridge Improvements
- Demonstration Projects for New Technology
  - Fleet Retrofits and Replacements
  - Electric Charging Stations
  - ITS
- Corridor Studies
- Other Projects – Please consult with County Staff to determine eligibility

Cook County DOTD understands that quality project delivery requires good planning over a project's life. To foster the development of quality projects and help projects meet qualifications required to receive federal funding, applications can be submitted for projects at any stage of development, from planning and feasibility studies, to engineering design, and all the way through to final construction. Applicants are limited to one application each.

## **Project Submission Instructions**

Project information, helpful resources, and submission forms can be found on the Cook County DOTD Home Page at <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/investincook>. Project applicants must fill out the form as completely as possible and submit the form electronically at the Cook County DOTD Invest in Cook Submission Page <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/investincook2020>. The form was designed to provide descriptive information that evaluators will need to understand the scope of the project and its benefits in relation to the county-wide priorities set forth in *Connecting Cook County*. The form will be the primary tool Cook County staff will use to evaluate and rank projects.

Supporting documentation like existing plans should be referenced in the project description with links provided to copies of the plan. If a link is not available, applicants should provide a copy of the parts of the plan that apply to the proposed project or a summary of all studies/plans of no more than five pages. Other documentation like cost estimates, board resolutions, etc. should be uploaded with the application. Documents should be uploaded with the application submission at the Cook County DOTD Invest in Cook Submission Page <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/investincook2020> with cover pages that accurately identify the applicant's name, the project name, and the project location.

If an applicant needs assistance filling out the application or has questions about how to develop estimates they should contact Tim Egan at [InvestInCook.CC@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:InvestInCook.CC@cookcountyil.gov) or (312) 603-1534. County staff will be available to answer questions about the application, how to submit a competitive application, and other general questions. Depending on availability, the County will also set aside staff time to assist with more technical tasks like developing cost estimates or mapping project information. Applicants are encouraged to contact Tim Egan as soon as they know they will be requesting technical assistance. The County will prioritize aid to disadvantaged communities/applicants but cannot guarantee staff availability to help in every instance where it is required.

Please submit the completed application form and all supporting attachments like maps, studies and plans, resolutions, detailed cost estimates, and other supporting documentation through the County's Invest in Cook Submission Page <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/investincook2020>.

## **Invest in Cook FY20 Call for Projects Timeline**

Cook County DOTD's inaugural Invest in Cook will be conducted according to the following timeline. It is imperative that project applicants adhere to the application deadline and are responsive to County requests for information.

- January 15, 2020, Invest in Cook program opens and resources distributed throughout the county
- January 24, 2020, Cook County DOTD will host an in-person informational workshop
- January 30, 2020, Cook County DOTD will host an online informational workshop
- March 13, 2020, applications due
- March - June 2020, project evaluation team will review applications
- July 2020, projects will be approved by the board and programmed into the County's Multi-Year Program
- July 2020, awardees will be notified of award

## PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Cook County staff will evaluate applications using a three-step process.

### I. General Measures of Application Quality

The first level of review is meant to determine the quality and completeness of applications as prepared by the applicants. During this portion of the evaluation, projects will not be scored, but will be reviewed at a high level to identify projects with quality applications that are worth evaluating. Projects passing this stage, will be subject to a scored evaluation using criteria and measures tied to the LRTP's priorities.

To do well in the initial screening, applicants should ensure the quality and clarity of their responses. All mandatory fields in the application must be filled out and any fields that pertain directly to the type of project for which the applicant is requesting funds should also be filled in. Applicants should clearly describe the need for the project in their application, demonstrate how the proposed project addresses that need and spell out its benefits. The scope of the project and its geographic limits should be clearly delineated. Applications should include specific information about the area that may be difficult for reviewers to discern on their own.

Images are often a good way to describe a project, including its limits and potential benefits. Applicants are strongly encouraged to include maps, photos, and other graphics that help to illustrate needs and benefits. We ask that applicants provide no more than 6 graphic files (can include maps, pictures, excerpts from studies or other types of graphics). Though a map showing the project's limits is required, other graphics are optional, and lack of additional graphics will not exclude a project from consideration.

Cost estimates are required for projects seeking construction funding. The project budget for projects in other phases should be as complete as possible. County staff can help develop a cost estimate in cases of need, contingent upon staff availability and the applicant's level of need. The schedule should reflect a reasonable timeline for completion of a project with high-level milestones and start and end dates. These dates can be flexible, but proposed projects will be assessed for the likelihood that they will begin and end as forecasted. Construction projects will be held to standards consistent with IDOT's Project Implementation procedures outlined in Chapter 13 of the Bureau of Local Roads & Streets Manual. Federally funded projects, or projects seeking Federal funding, should be prepared to follow all policies and procedures outlined in Part III of IDOT's BLRS Manual.

Reviewers will consider past experiences and fiscal factors (where available) in assessing an applicant's capacity to lead and complete a project. Reviewers will also take note of barriers to implementation that might suspend activity on a project or prevent it from being completed by noting obstacles such as known environmental concerns, lack of consensus among community residents, businesses, or elected officials, and/or engineering feasibility concerns.

Very low- and low-need communities (as designated by CMAP) will be expected to match County funds on at least a one to one basis. Matches from moderate-need communities will be calculated on a sliding scale basis. Very high- and high-need communities may not need a local match to County funds.

Applicants lacking the capacity to implement a project can ask that the County lead the project.

### II. Support for the Priorities of *Connecting Cook County*

Projects submitted in response to the 2020 Call for Projects will also be evaluated using performance-based measures directly related to the priorities set forth in *Connecting Cook County*. DOT staff will download openly available and dependable data from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the University of Illinois-Chicago Urban Transportation Center and the Center for Neighborhood Technology for each of these indicators to ensure the consistent application of data across all project submissions. Projects performing well for the various measures will receive the most points; fewer points will be awarded as project performance declines. Projects will be ranked according to their score. In order to promote modal diversity, projects will be evaluated and ranked by mode: Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian, Freight, and Roadways.

The following indicators are derived from our priorities and consistent with Federal recommendations for performance measures. They will be applied to project proposals as part of the quantitative phase of the evaluation process:

Priorities	Measures
<b>Transit</b> Rail Project Buffer: ½ mile Bus Project Buffer: ¼ mile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of accessible jobs</li> <li>• Increase in jobs</li> <li>• Number of low to moderate income persons</li> <li>• Existing transit ridership</li> <li>• Presence of transit deserts</li> <li>• Number of acres of vacant land</li> <li>• Traffic congestion/delay</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation Alternatives</b> Pedestrian Project Buffer: ½ mile Bicycle Project Buffer: 1 mile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of existing jobs</li> <li>• Number of low to moderate income persons*</li> <li>• Number of bike/pedestrian crashes</li> <li>• Connections to bicycle trip generators</li> <li>• Miles of existing trails</li> </ul>
<b>Freight Transportation</b> Freight Project Buffer: 1 mile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in jobs</li> <li>• Proximity to industrial uses</li> <li>• Number of low to moderate income persons*</li> <li>• Number of accessible jobs</li> <li>• Number of acres of vacant industrialized land</li> <li>• Truck and/or train traffic count (IDOT or locally generated)</li> <li>• Traffic congestion/delay</li> </ul>
<b>Equal Access to Opportunity</b> Buffer determined by project mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of low to moderate income persons*</li> <li>• Number of accessible jobs</li> <li>• Presence of transit deserts*</li> <li>• Transportation asset's condition</li> <li>• Reduction in rail crossing delay*</li> </ul>
<b>Maintain and Modernize</b> Roadway Project Buffer: 1 mile Fatality and Injury Buffer: 100 Ft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in jobs</li> <li>• Number of low to moderate income persons*</li> <li>• Number of accessible jobs</li> <li>• Transportation asset's condition</li> <li>• Segment fatalities and serious injuries</li> <li>• Number of acres of vacant land</li> <li>• Traffic congestion and delay</li> </ul>
<b>Invest in Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage ratio</li> <li>• Availability of full funding for the requested project phase</li> </ul>

\* Please refer to maps provided on the Invest in Cook homepage for visualizations of transit deserts and disadvantaged community locations

Projects will be mapped and buffers of varying size will be applied based on project type (buffer sizes are identified in the table above). A project's performance on any given measure will be determined by impacts captured within the projects buffer, not solely along the project corridor itself.

While it is the responsibility of County staff to aggregate this data for proposed projects, applicants should include locally sourced data for measures relevant to their application to enhance reviewers' understanding of the project.

### III. Qualitative Assessment

Project reviewers will also conduct a qualitative review of applications that assesses project readiness, the applicant's capacity to complete the project, and the benefits to be derived from the project as described in the project summary. Once reviews have been completed, the Department will make project selections and build a proposed program constrained by the available Invest in Cook funding. Cook County will consider factors such as geographic equity, the mix of different types of transportation projects, the distribution of projects across phases and project feasibility in putting together final program awards.

### PROJECT TRACKING AND MILESTONES

Once selected, project applicants will be expected to develop a detailed project schedule with estimated milestone dates. County staff will ask that awardees provide brief status updates every quarter and more detailed updates as they are needed throughout the development of the project.

### APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- Signed Mayor's or Chief Executive's cover letter
- Completed project application form
- Project area map (preferably GIS shapefile showing project extents)
- Project milestone schedule
- Most recent financial audit or proof of financial standing

#### Optional Items:

- Sections or summaries of formally adopted or approved plans, studies, or reports that reinforce the need for the applicant's project (limit five pages)
- Resolutions and Certifications of Resolutions
- Detailed cost estimates (Required for construction funding requests)
- Attach any related images

Applicants should double check their applications and make sure that all applicable fields have been filled in completely and accurately. If the evaluation team finds data missing or requires more information to make a determination, a department representative will contact the applicant and make a request for the information. Applicants will have 7 days to comply with the request.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions or requests for assistance should be directed to:

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