

TESTIMONY

**Testimony in Support of the Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act (MMAA)**  
*Senate Transportation Committee Hearing in Chicago*

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I am Audrey Wennink, Senior Director at the Metropolitan Planning Council, a nonprofit that advocates for sustainable and equitable urban planning in our region. We are also members of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition. The current transit funding crisis forces us to address critical issues around transit delivery for the residents of this region. The Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act (SB5/HB1833) was designed to solve the problems transit riders face today. We now have an opportunity to leverage billions in public investment over the past century and to create a resilient transit system for the future. We have made transformative changes before when the RTA was created, turning private transportation companies into public transit agencies. We can do this.

The General Assembly tasked the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with developing a report to address the region's transit funding and governance challenges. SB 5 aligns with CMAP's more ambitious governance approach outlined in the "Plan of Action for Regional Transit" report. It calls for bold reforms. Let me highlight some key aspects of the Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act.

**Governance:** Currently, there are 47 appointees to four separate transit agencies, and riders often don't know who is in charge. The MMA proposes creating a single regional transit board to oversee a vibrant, integrated transit system. To build a culture of making transit the first choice.

**Protecting Workers:** This structure would retain all the talent from CTA, Pace and Metra in operating divisions within the new agency. The MMA guarantees that current workers will retain their labor protections, including collective bargaining agreements, pension benefits, and vacation time. The act seeks to expand unionized workforces – by creating a more attractive and expanded transit system

**Safety:** Safety concerns have suppressed ridership in our region. The MMA would establish a transit ambassadors program, where staff would proactively assist riders, de-escalate conflicts, and create a safer environment.

**Incentivizing Transit-Oriented Development:** More transit riders leads to greater fare revenue supporting the system. The MMA would establish an Office of Transit-Supportive Development to promote development of housing, commercial space, and employment near transit.

**Transit Fares:** The MMA would eliminate the farebox recovery ratio, which currently mandates that 50% of operations funding come from fares. This change allows for unified fares, low-income fare options, and innovations such as fare capping, all of which can be better implemented through a regional agency.

**Service Planning:** Currently, service planning is fragmented across multiple agencies, and service levels are dictated by outdated funding formulas. The MMA would develop a regional service plan based on factors like development density, low-income households, and access to transit. By centralizing planning, we can ensure fair service allocation and logical, timed connections across the region.



The RTA was given reform powers in 2008 and tasked with full fare integration by 2015, but it has not fully utilized these powers. The General Assembly should embrace comprehensive reform through HB1833 rather than continuing with incremental changes.

The MMA aligns with the principles outlined in the CMAP PART report, developed by a diverse group of stakeholders, including business, advocates, government, and labor. Now is the time to be excited about the future of transit. The MMA offers an integrated, cost-effective structure that protects workers, makes riders feel safer, and delivers a regional system people will want to use. It is the solution we need.