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CHICAGO AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY 300 W. Adams Street, Chicago, Illinois 60606

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CATS CELEBRATES GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) today marks a half of century of service as a groundbreaking regional agency dedicated to planning and developing a safe, efficient and cost-effective transportation system for northeastern Illinois.

Created in 1955 to develop the first comprehensive, long-range transportation plan for Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties, CATS helped create the area's present highway and transit networks. It has also served as a national model for how to approach regional transportation needs.

CATS is comprised of a 20-member Policy Committee chaired by Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Tim Martin and with representation from all major transportation providers, a Council of Mayors representing all 273 municipalities in the region, and a standing Work Program Committee that is the operational arm of the agency.

"CATS was a pioneer in the field of regional transportation planning, helping to shape how urban transportation planning is done in our nation," said Secretary Martin. "The 21st Century will present us with a number of urban planning and transportation challenges. A regional planning body that effectively represents communities and individual commuters will become more important as we struggle with congestion and its impacts in the future."

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The agency seeks to involve the public in its activities by setting aside half the seats on task forces and committees for the general public, conducting public outreach meetings throughout the region, and publicizing its activities through mass mailings, the news media and its website, www.catsmpo.com.

The early success of CATS was instrumental in the passage of the 1962 Federal Highway Act, which required comprehensive, coordinated and cooperative transportation planning for all metropolitan regions with 50,000 or more people. CATS was officially designated as Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for northeastern Illinois by the governor and local elected officials in 1974.

As the MPO, CATS is responsible for three major products: the long-range Regional Transportation Plan; the Transportation Improvement Program, a multi-year program of transportation needs that is consistent with the long-range plan; and the Unified Work Program, an annual budget of planning programs that will be funded.

In addition to the various plans it creates, CATS also designates projects that will be funded under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program, which aims to reduce air pollution and lessen traffic congestion; operates the "Share the Drive" carpooling program; coordinates installation of Intelligent Transportation System architecture such as sequential traffic signals and traffic congestion message boards; and provides guidance for the development of efficient freight-handling operations.

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