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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CATS SPRING PRESS CONFERENCE PREPARES REGION FOR 2005
CONSTRUCTION SEASON**

CHICAGO - Congress is expected to consider the latest incarnation of the massive Transportation Reauthorization Bill over the next several weeks. According to the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), final funding figures for the highly anticipated proposed legislation could reach as much as \$299 billion.

Like other transportation and transit providers around the country, Chicago area agencies are hopeful that lawmakers will provide the funding necessary for them to complete existing projects and undertake new ones. However, roads still must be maintained and public transportation services still need to be provided in the meantime. Area transportation providers are planning a full slate of projects to help improve transportation and transit services in the northeastern Illinois region.

The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) hosted its fourth annual Spring Construction and Transit Press Conference on Thursday, February 10, at CATS headquarters, 300 W. Adams St., Chicago. Representatives from the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Illinois Tollway, Metra and

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Pace provided information regarding upcoming Chicago and suburban construction projects, interagency construction coordination and tips for coping with construction.

Kermit Wies, CATS acting deputy director for planning, serving as emcee, said transportation providers must work together to ensure a safe and efficient transportation system. He urged the public to make better use of available transportation choices, citing walking, bicycling, carpooling and public transit as alternatives to driving during construction season.

Following is a brief summary of information provided by agency representatives regarding spring 2005 construction projects in the Chicagoland area:

David Seglin, coordinating planner-legislative and policy issues for the Chicago Department of Transportation, discussed his agency's anticipated 2005 capital projects. Among other projects, CDOT expects to continue the reconstruction on 63rd Street, rebuild the North Avenue Bridge and repair viaducts at Monroe and Washington streets.

Susan Plassmeyer, executive vice president-construction, engineering and facilities for the Chicago Transit Authority, discussed the CTA's plans to rehabilitate its rail lines and stations.

Leanne Redden, chief of planning for the Illinois Tollway, presented the Tollway's first capital program in the agency's \$5.3 billion congestion relief plan. *Open Roads for a Faster Future* will rebuild/restore 90 percent of the tollway system, widen or add lanes to 117 miles of the system's roads, convert 20 mainline toll plazas to open road tolling and build the long-awaited I-355 South Extension to Will County. Redden also outlined the multi-agency effort to rebuild and widen the south end of the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) and 80/94 from U.S. 41 in Indiana to 167th Street over the next two years.

Patrick Pechnick, district engineer of program development for the Illinois Department of Transportation, provided information about upcoming projects in IDOT District One, which includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties.

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The agency will begin a variety of projects this spring, including intersection improvements on I-55 at Illinois Route 53 in Bolingbrook; interchange construction, bridge widening and construction of a new bridge on I-80 at I-55; and construction of a new bridge deck and retaining walls, intersection improvement and traffic signal modernization on I-90 at Nagle Avenue in Chicago.

Blaine Krage, public relations specialist for Pace Suburban Bus Service, provided information about WebWatch, Pace's new real-time online schedule information system. Live data is collected in real time by Pace's Intelligent Bus System using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. Krage said, "If road construction projects have an impact on buses, riders can find out precisely when their bus will arrive at a specific location."

Tom Miller, senior media relations specialist for Metra, shared information about Metra's "New Start" projects. Under the program, Metra will provide additional cars, locomotives, parking and other support facilities. Projects scheduled for completion in late 2005 include new stations at Cicero, Elburn, Franklin Park, Grayslake, LaFox, Manhattan, New Lenox and Rosemont; and a total of 4,600 new parking spaces along its lines.

The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for northeastern Illinois, designated by state and local officials to administer the urban transportation planning process for the region. The area serviced by CATS includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties, plus a portion of Kendall County.

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