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To: Charlie Eldredge, Chairman
And Members of the McHenry County Regional Planning Commission

From: Dennis A. Sandquist, Director
McHenry County Department of Planning and Development

Date: March 24, 2009

Re: Population Projections

At its March 12th meeting, the RPC requested additional information for review in reconsidering the population projections to be used as a basis for the 2030 Plan.

1. Historic Growth Data

A table showing historic growth in absolute and percentages is attached to this memo and posted to the 2030 website. The table contains columns for both the Census Bureau original and revised estimates for 1980 to 2008. I obtained the 2000 to 2007 revised estimates and the 2008 estimates from the Census Bureau's County population estimates which were released last week. The remainder of the data was provided by Jerry Davenport. Since 1980, the growth rate has averaged 2.8% and the growth number has averaged 6,098 persons.

2. NIPC/CMAP Projections

I talked with Kermit Wies and Jack Pfingston by telephone. They both reiterated that the shift-share population projection prepared by the sub-committee is defensible. They feel that it is important for the Commission to be able to articulate why they think the more aggressive population growth will be achieved. Of key concern to both Mr. Wies and Mr. Pfingston is McHenry County's miss-balance between jobs and population. McHenry County has one of the highest percentages of persons commuting out of the County for work and some of the highest commuting times in the region. In their opinion, the County will not experience sustained high population growth without employment growth. Mr. Wies stated that the County's population growth rate will be directly tied to the strength of the County's economic development policies.

According to Mr. Pfingston, nearly 100% of McHenry County municipalities participated in the local review of NIPC's 2030 population projections. They utilized NIPC's Paint the Town tool to interactive identify growth areas and densities. The McHenry County 2030 forecasts were consistent with the results of the local review exercises. CMAP is in the early stages of developing its 2040 population projections. CMAP staff has met with several McHenry County communities. According to Mr. Pfingston, thus far none of the municipalities have indicated a major change in their growth projections from their previous 2030 forecast discussions.

Under CMAP's new forecast methodology, there will be no regional control total. The regional forecast will be allowed to increase or decrease based on input from local communities. However, CMAP will require that the forecasts maintain a regional jobs-housing balance.

3. LEAM Forecasts

Dr. Deal will be providing us with additional information regarding the LEAM forecast tomorrow morning. Staff will present this information to the RPC verbally.

4. Forecast Range and/or Compromise

While not specifically addressed at the March 12th RPC meeting, since that time several Commissioners have raised the possibility of either adopting a compromise projection (splitting the difference between accepted projections) or basing the 2030 Plan on a population projection range. Given the uncertainty of projecting population growth 20 years into the future, both solutions are tenable. The primary use of the population projection will be development of the future land use map, which should be based on a general understanding of the population growth that we are trying to accommodate.

If a range is to be utilized, the RPC should agree on how it will be translated into the future land use map. Options include: 1) developing a map based on the mid-point of the population range; 2) developing a tiered land use map that identifies additional land use areas based on population triggers; or 3) developing separate land use maps for the high and low forecasts.

Of these three alternatives, staff prefers option 1 – have the plan text acknowledge a possible range of population growth and base the future map on the mid-point. This approach would be the simplest to develop and to implement. It also recognizes the inherent uncertainty in not only the projections, but also our assumptions regarding household sizes and land use densities.

A forecast range of 37,000 persons at an estimated household size of 2.9 persons per household and assumed density of 3 units/gross acre would result in a difference in planned residential development areas of 6.7 square miles. The planned development area would vary by only +/- 3.35 square miles from a map designed to accommodate the mid-point of the development range. This is 0.5% of the county land area and well within the range of error of any attempt to quantify land use within the County 20 years into the future.

If the Commission prefers to include the population range in the future land use, we suggest that it be incorporated into a single map, as proposed in option 2 above. We

would start by developing a map for the low range of the population estimate and then seek to identify secondary growth areas as necessary to accommodate the second tier of population growth.