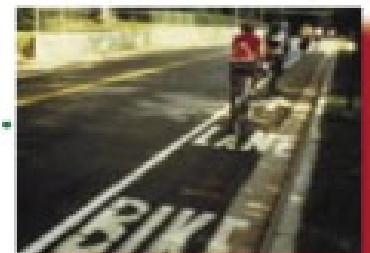


Changing Direction: Transportation Choices for 2030





Summary of the Public's Plan

The general public has been excluded for too long from transportation decisions in Northeastern Illinois. Given the opportunity, the citizenry would fundamentally reform transportation planning to accomplish broader regional goals. The overall vision the public prefers would provide more transportation choice; include the public in transportation decision-making; re-invest in existing communities; invest to enhance land use and quality of life goals; provide a safe travel environment with improved accessibility for all; create a cleaner environment and preserve open space; and equalize the distribution of resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Reallocate spending priorities to provide choice.**
- **Improve transit options for all users and potential users.**
- **Create safe walkable and bikeable streets.**
- **Ensure the efficient movement of freight through the region.**
- **Encourage sustainable land uses.**
- **Integrate regional transportation plans with High Speed Rail initiatives.**
- **Design communities that promote physical activity.**
- **Reallocate funds to better serve the safety needs of non-motorized users.**
- **Minimize transportation impacts on the natural environment.**
- **Ensure that transportation planning agencies respond to the public.**
- **Improve accommodations for travelers with different abilities.**

How the Plan Was Developed

Connecting Communities Summits were held in eleven local areas of the Northeastern Illinois region between April of 2001 and August of 2002 to facilitate public involvement in transportation planning. Before each summit, local and regional partners assisted Center for Neighborhood Technology staff to invite a broad spectrum of the general public. "Mini-summits" were held to supplement the data collected at the geographic summits. Mini-summits were aimed at targeted groups that were not strongly represented in the summit process, or groups that have special needs and concerns.

A summit report was written for each area, based on the priorities expressed by the public. Summit participants met a second time to review, amend and approve their report. Summit and mini-summit reports can be obtained at www.cnt.org/2030 or by calling 773 278-4800, ext. 2030.

Changing Direction: Transportation Choices for 2030 is the synthesis of summit and mini-summit reports. This plan reaffirms and expands on the goals and principles of the *Citizen Transportation Plan* (1995).

Acknowledgments

The Center for Neighborhood Technology wishes to acknowledge and thank the many local and regional partners who helped to make this process successful. Partner organizations are listed on the back cover. Acknowledgement and thanks are also offered to the individuals from throughout the region who commented on and helped refine this report: Alba Alexander, Eraina Dunn, Amanda Eichelkraut, Sue Harney, Ben Helphand, Richard Martin, Steve Perkins, and Sheila Schultz. Photos on pages 2, 5, 7 and 11 were provided by Sustain. Maps were produced by CNT.



Maps and budgets were used to help people set realistic priorities.



New Choices for a New Century

A quiet revolution is taking place in Chicagoland.* This revolution opposes destructive state and regional policies that have reduced the public's choices and degraded communities for the last half-century.

Many of the most successful suburban communities have begun to revitalize their town centers, or have even built town centers where none existed before. Whole communities have risen up to reject "big box" stores, usually for fear of traffic nightmares or to preserve a cherished downtown. Citizens in various parts of the region have challenged plans from the state department of transportation that would turn their local roads into speedways.



Some people want to work and play in the same place.

In the City of Chicago another sign of revolution is apparent in changing demographic trends. The city's population rose in 2000 for the first time since 1950, fueled primarily by an increase in the Hispanic population. White flight still occurred between 1990 and 2000 but a countermovement was evident with former suburbanites moving into city neighborhoods,

seeking the convenience and energy of walkable communities served by multiple transit routes. There is a growing awareness in urban and suburban communities of the efficiency and dynamism of "old fashioned" places.

Generational change is progressing as steadily as ethnic change. The baby boom generation will reach retirement age in the first quarter of the 21st century. The ranks of non-drivers, and of people using wheelchairs and other auxiliary devices, is about to rise dramatically. The region has not been configured to meet a growing senior population's needs.

Northeastern Illinois residents are acutely aware that their tax money fuels the restriction of their choices and the encroachment of traffic on their neighborhoods. The public is dissatisfied with the emphasis on roadway expansion over transit options. The most basic, inexpensive and healthful mode of travel – walking – is effectively prohibited in some places and dangerous in most.

Summit Attendees

The 500-plus Chicagoland residents who gathered at Connecting Communities Summits and mini-summits in the first two years of this new century believe that their tax dollars are not being invested wisely to meet the challenges of the new century. They expressed their dissatisfaction in ways as diverse and unique as their local communities, but their concerns can be captured collectively by one word – *choice*.

The summit attendees were representative of the region in their travel habits. As a group, they reported in surveys that their primary way of moving around their communities and the region was by car. Yet by an eight-to-one margin they preferred expanded transit options over construction of new roads.

* Chicagoland, or the Northeastern Illinois region, includes the six counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.



Who Pays? We Pay!

Taxpayers Shoulder the Burdens

The costs taxpayers incur to facilitate individual movement at the expense of collective access are much too high. The public pays three times for the transportation choices made available by state and regional planning agencies. First, taxes fund construction and maintenance of various transportation projects. Individuals and families pay a second time to make household transportation purchases, based on the infrastructure choices available to them. Taxpayers pay a third time to mitigate air and water quality impacts of the transportation system and for health care costs caused by air pollution and a lack of routine physical activity.

Because of a lack of travel options in some areas, transportation costs consume an increased portion of household budgets. People use a variety of terms to describe dissatisfaction with consequences of “auto-dependence,” “the automobile mono-culture” or “auto-centric culture.” They have good reason to be dissatisfied.

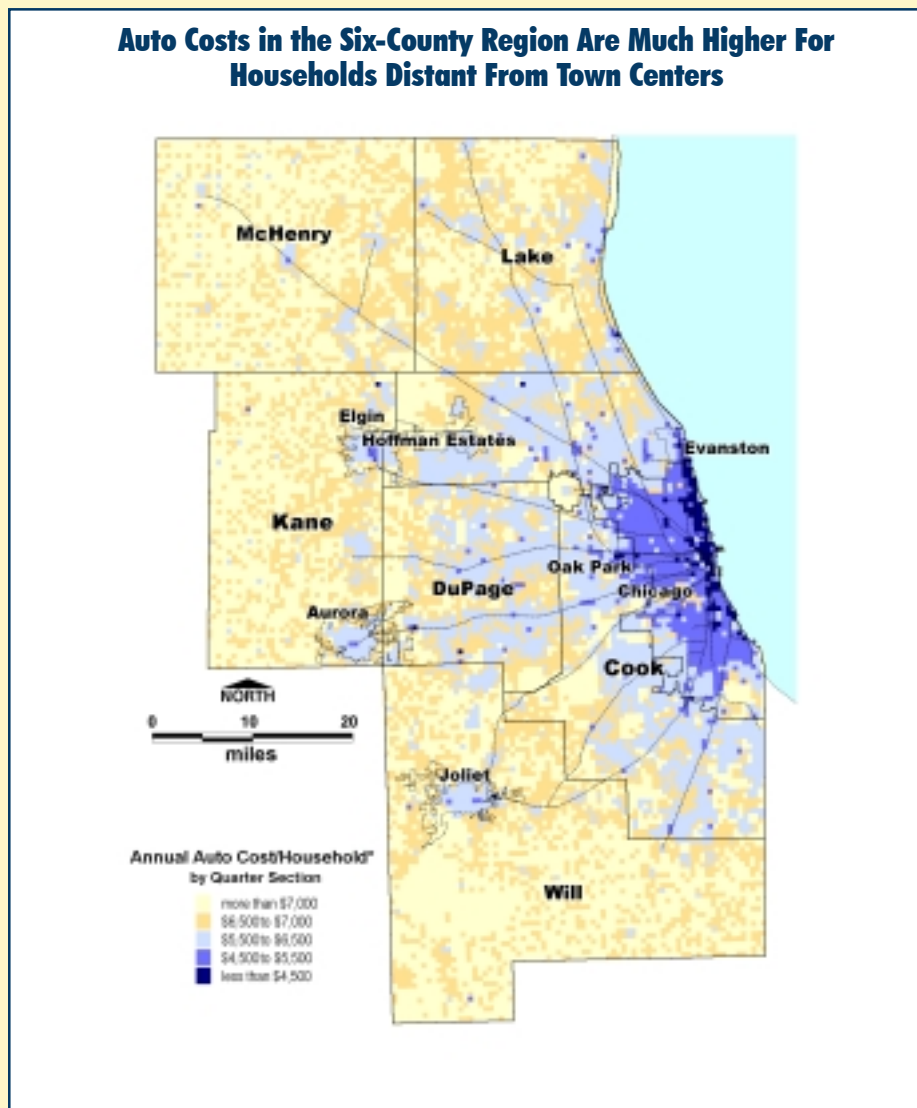
The Impact of Sprawl

According to research published in *Driven To Spend*,¹ there is a correlation between sprawl and increased transportation costs. With sprawl development the only viable travel option is the most expensive; choice is limited. Although regional growth is inevitable, the current investment in new roads can be channeled into other transportation options to improve community access, environmental quality and household investment options.

Transportation and the Household Budget

Transportation, the second highest expenditure in the household budget, consumes a national average of 18 cents out of every household dollar or \$6,312 annually.* Only housing consumes more of the average household budget. Income devoted to home ownership creates household wealth. Auto ownership creates debt. The weight of household transportation spending is especially burdensome for lower income people who are forced to spend up to 36 cents out of every dollar on transportation.

Auto Costs in the Six-County Region Are Much Higher For Households Distant From Town Centers



* Census figures for 2000 indicate that nationally the transportation portion of the average household budget is now 19%.



Highest and Lowest Average Household Auto Costs by Suburban Municipality

Lowest Average Auto Costs

Oak Park	5,232
Evanston	5,407
Cicero	5,444
Berwyn	5,501
Harwood Heights	5,573
Elmwood Park	5,618
Highwood	5,693
Blue Island	5,739
Maywood	5,740
Forest Park	5,727

Highest Average Auto Costs

Old Mill Creek	7,068
Mettawa	7,049
Bull Valley	7,041
Barrington Hills	7,034
Prairie Grove	7,000
Wayne	6,987
Wadsworth	6,968
Long Grove	6,958
Spring Grove	6,955
South Barrington	6,947

Household transportation expenditures in the six counties of Northeastern Illinois consume about 15% of the average family’s budget. This region has the second largest transit system in the nation. The availability of public transit reduces the regional average for household transportation spending by \$876 per year, when compared to the national average. Local variations in household transportation expense correlate directly with the amount of transit available in a particular community (see figure above) and to a lesser extent with the safety and convenience of pedestrian and bicycle options.

The Regional Budget for Transportation

The official 2020 Regional Transportation Plan² calls for spending \$40 billion on transportation infrastructure between 2000 and 2020. When the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) expands the plan by an additional 10 years, to 2030, that number is likely to rise to at least \$60 billion. Sixty billion dollars seems like a huge sum of money, but spread over 30 years and eight to ten million residents, it is just above \$200 per year per

Federal transportation law was changed a decade ago to allow more flexible spending with funds designated for highways.

person. This is very little compared to the household expenditures driven by the availability or lack of travel choice.

If current spending patterns are carried forward over the next 30 years, almost 60% of all transportation investment will be directed to road maintenance and construction. About 40% of the region’s investment will go to maintain and build transit. Less than one half of one percent will be dedicated to walking and bicycling.

This investment pattern causes individuals to pay increased household transportation costs to compensate for the region’s lack of transportation choice. Federal transportation law was changed

a decade ago to allow more flexible spending with what had previously been designated “highway funds.” Both the public and federal government support transportation “choice” but transportation planning agencies in this region have not seized the opportunity to retarget highway dollars.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Reallocate spending priorities to provide choice.**
 - ▲ Move funds from highway construction into transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - ▲ Integrate transportation infrastructure decisions with strategies that reduce incentives to drive, like Location Efficient MortgagesSM, car sharing, “live-near-work” policies, transit-oriented development and “green insurance.”



What Do Taxpayers Want?

Transit is the Highest Priority

Voices are rising across the region for transit improvements. Grassroots citizens and community activists chose transit over new roads by an eight-to-one margin to improve transportation in the region. Other constituencies have voiced similar priorities. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) held a number of public meetings about regional issues in 2001 and 2002 comprised largely of governmental officials.³ Chicago Metropolis 2020, a business coalition formed to address regional issues, conducted outreach directed primarily to the business community.⁴ Both the NIPC and the Metropolis 2020 outreach processes uncovered a strong desire for more transit options, supporting grassroot priorities. The region is united in its desire for transportation choice.

Transit choice allows residents to achieve several mutually beneficial goals. Pedestrian traffic near stations and bus stops stimulates local economic development projects. Reduction of auto use achieves environmental benefits. More transit options provide increased access for populations with disabilities, seniors and children. Household transportation spending can be re-directed from investment on depreciating assets to investment in appreciating assets like education or housing. Or families can improve their quality of life with discretionary purchases.

Increase Rail Transit

The desire for increased rail transit was heard throughout the entire region. City residents on the South and West Sides face difficult commutes. The new rail projects most frequently mentioned in the city were the Mid-City Transitway, the Red Line Extension to 130th Street and the Gray Line.⁵

The desire for increased rail service was equally strong in suburban areas and produced a greater mixture of project proposals. New service to facilitate travel from suburb to suburb was the most significant transit priority in suburban communities. In the Calumet area where jobs are scarce, and in North/Northwest Cook

County, where commuters pour onto local roads on the way to work, rail transit is seen as a highly desirable way to create additional job access. In the built-up suburbs of DuPage County and West Cook County, congestion increases with every road expansion; transit is seen as a viable and attractive alternative to highway expansion proposals, especially as an alternative to widening I-290 in the Western suburbs. Recent reports that the reconstruction of the “Hillside Strangler” cost \$140 million and created two years of construction slow-downs but made no appreciable difference in travel times⁶ offer hard evidence that current state transportation policies create expensive failures rather than travel choice.



Rail transit is highly desired everywhere in the region.

Improve Bus Service

Citizens had numerous ideas for improving bus service throughout the region. They would like to see a grid of service wherever possible, rather than routes that meander over an irregular course. They seek more frequent bus service to enhance its practicality. Bus-only lanes at choke points were seen as a solution to the impact of auto congestion on bus schedules. Express bus service on existing, heavily traveled routes



would decrease travel time on buses. Automated signal pre-emption is seen as a necessary enhancement to expedite bus travel. In places where rail is desirable, but impractical for fiscal or other reasons, the public would like to begin to implement Bus Rapid Transit systems, using a combination of existing roadway and new exclusive bus lanes. There was strong support in many different communities for conversion of transit

Linking CTA, Metra and Pace - a relatively inexpensive step - would increase access and mobility for everyone.

fleets to alternative fuel vehicles. To increase transit use for the 80% of trips that do not involve the work commute,⁷ the region will need to provide new flexible types of service. Trolley and shuttle bus service were seen as viable alternatives for local travel. Travel within towns and between adjacent towns, as well as trips to malls, health facilities, schools and colleges could be met by

marketing trolleys as an attractive alternative for short auto trips. Demand-responsive systems for populations with disabilities, especially those for whom mainline service is not available or not an option, need to be integrated across local boundaries.

Pedestrian Access is Fundamental

Pedestrian access is an essential component of both bus and rail transit. Streetscapes that are comfortable for pedestrians are an incentive to transit use. Ample sidewalks and ramped crossings within one-half mile of all rail stations and bus stops should be the standard in all areas of the region. Attractive, well lit waiting areas with shelters and benches emphasize that pedestrians are an integral part of the landscape.

Link Transit and Cycling

Some transit operators have taken impressive steps to link transit and bicycles, a policy that meets with strong approval from the public. Pace has outfitted its whole fleet of buses with bike racks; use of the racks quadrupled between 2001 and 2002, to over 1100 riders a month in mid-summer.⁸ The Chicago Transit Authority has begun to install bike racks on its bus

fleet and allows bicycles on the rail system during all but the heaviest rush hour periods. Metra has been very slow to respond to the public's call for better links between bicycle and train travel, in spite of the success of bicycle accommodations by other transit systems locally and across the nation.

Getting to transit by bicycle can be a larger challenge than getting on it. The public can not understand why the simple and inexpensive enhancements needed to accommodate bicycles on the streets within a few miles of transit are not done routinely. Ample bike parking at all train stations and most bus stops is another simple and inexpensive incentive to cycle.

Promote Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development is seen by the public as a sensible and sustainable way to encourage economic growth without the unfavorable impacts of remote malls and "big box" stores. Shops and services near stations increase the local tax base. Transit-



The Loop is one of many transit destinations.





Pedestrian traffic is critical to the success of most transit systems.

Coordinate Existing Systems

Another transit theme is sounded throughout the region: better coordination of existing transit systems. Since public dollars have already funded existing investments, taxpayers would like to maximize their benefit. The relatively inexpensive step of linking CTA, Metra and Pace service and fare structures would increase access and mobility for everyone, facilitate reverse commutes and non-radial commutes and increase the ease and attractiveness of using transit.

oriented development creates a sense of shared public space and a center for the community. In turn, the economic and community activities around a station draw increased riders to the transit system.

Transit-oriented development doesn't just evolve in most places. It must be planned. One of the largest barriers to robust transit-oriented development is the dedication of acres of land around stations to auto parking. In many communities, residents initially expressed the desire to increase parking to entice commuters to use transit, as well as expressed a desire to create transit-oriented development at local stations. To resolve the potential conflict, the public supported comprehensive transit-oriented development as the highest priority, with increased bus feeder service or with parking at a more remote location served by shuttle vehicles.

Minimizing parking will create an attractive transit environment, discourage short auto trips (over half of the emissions of a trip are released in the first 8.5 minutes after starting a cold engine),⁹ allow for ample bus boarding/disembarking areas near train stations, and maximize revenue to communities from tax-generating land uses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Improve transit options for all users and potential users, coordinate existing service and create a transit-supportive environment.**
 - ▲ Serve existing communities with a variety of transit options.
 - ▲ Increase state funding for transit and dedicate some federal highway funds to transit projects.
 - ▲ Employ a multi-modal approach that emphasizes clean and healthful access to transit nodes.
 - ▲ Extend bus service to allow evening and weekend travel on all routes.
 - ▲ Retrofit transit fleets to use alternative fuel vehicles.
 - ▲ Revise the RTA charter to enforce coordination of transit operations, eliminate competition between service boards and equalize the RTA tax structure.



Provide a Full Range of Options

Invest in Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths

Seniors who remember safe, neighborly city streets now fear crossing local intersections. People with disabilities face mobility limitations caused by poor sidewalk surfaces and a lack of ramps at crosswalks, not to mention the absence of sidewalks in some communities. Parents drive children to nearby activities or to school for fear of traffic injuries, reducing opportunities for independence and physical activity. Without resorting to the expensive option of purchasing a car, many teens in suburban communities are housebound. Cyclists everywhere report the constant hazards of moving within traffic that is indifferent or hostile to their rights as travelers.

“Car-free villages” were recommended for city neighborhoods.

Currently, only one half of one percent of regional transportation dollars fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements. For every two lane-miles of new roadway, it is possible to build 100 miles of sidewalk or bike path.¹⁰ The public made strong recommendations for major increases in pedestrian and bicycle options. In addition to improved access, the public expects to attain other goals by reducing encroachment of roads on human-scaled infrastructure.

The taxpaying public believes that pedestrians and cyclists are treated like second class citizens. The deeper truth is that even the minimal funds used for their benefit are applied disproportionately. While the state funds 80% of roadway expenditures and local communities pay 20%, sidewalks are funded at a 50/50 state-to-local match.¹¹

Eliminate Hazards

Pedestrians and cyclists from every area of the region who try to co-exist with traffic on existing streets feel threatened. Multi-lane roadways in DuPage County were reported to be formidable barriers to both pedestrians and bicyclists. Bicycle lanes were proposed for rural roads in Will and McHenry Counties. Paving a small portion of the shoulder in rural communities would add little expense relative to the benefit gained.

In city neighborhoods there was a groundswell of support for policies to reclaim urban streets. Northsiders were particularly vehement about pedestrian rights. Among recommendations made throughout the city were wider sidewalks, street furniture, pedestrian plazas, roadway redesign to slow traffic, stronger enforcement of pedestrian and bicyclist rights, improved pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stations, and even covered bike trails for winter use. “Car-free villages” were recommended for city neighborhoods in the Central Area of Chicago.

Improve Crossing Signals

Other recommendations applied more generally to all areas of the region. Improvements were suggested to crossing signals. In some cases the timing was not sufficient for all pedestrians to cross the roadway safely. Audible signals to aid visually impaired travelers were also recommended. In both city and suburban communities there were recommendations that sidewalks and bicycle routes be plowed in winter. Current snow plowing practices often obstruct crosswalks and bikeways.

Facilitate Purposeful Cycling

While the public, including those who don’t cycle, proved to be very receptive to bicycle infrastructure, there was consensus that in some places bicycle infrastructure is exclusively recreational; too little priority is placed on bicycle travel to commute to work or to accomplish household errands. The City of Chicago and some suburban municipalities have made a good start in providing some safe, functional routes and some bike parking near transit and commercial areas. The public has responded so well that bike racks in many areas are filled to capacity. This is evidence of the wisdom and fiscal responsibility of these modest investments. The demand for both recreational and purposeful travel options was extremely strong everywhere and often linked to the desire to access transit easily and efficiently.



Plan for a Full Range of Trips

This region's planning and construction policies have focused disproportionate attention on ways to accommodate the vehicles in which people commute to jobs. Yet the commute to work is only one of the five daily trips the average person makes.

The transportation projects that should facilitate trips to schools, daycare, the cleaners, health facilities, the friend who lives a half mile away or a recreation site are often very different from the projects designed for the work commute. Because appropriate options are not offered for non-work trips, commuters must often compete with other travelers for limited road space, frustrating both groups. The region needs to determine the most efficient way to accommodate a variety of trips to reduce congestion, improve air quality and promote choice.

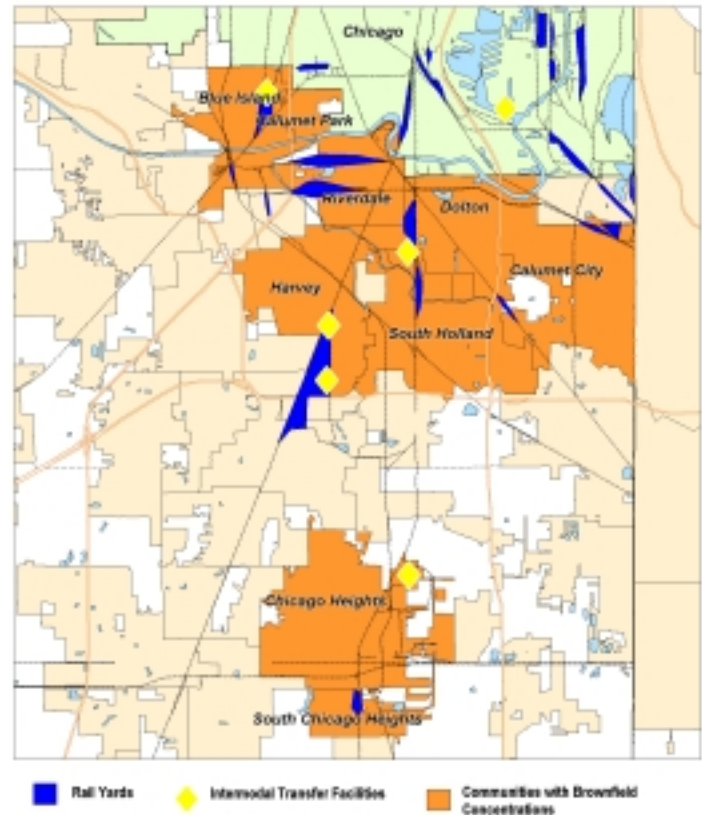
Strategies to Move Freight

The region's ability to plan for freight movement has become just as irrational as its investments to move people. Communities in the South, West and Southwest parts of the region appeal for a coordinated strategy to address rail and road intersection conflicts with a system of grade separations.

Freight shipment and transfer is a vital part of the regional economy. The movement of freight is itself an important industry that adds more than \$8 billion per year to the regional economy and employs more than 135,000 people in the region.¹² Freight service is essential for every industrial business, and freight distribution puts products on the shelves of every store. Better planning could increase the freight sector's employment and financial benefits but reduce the negative impacts of congestion and air pollution. Many rail lines abut vacant land in Chicago's South Side and in the South Suburbs; better planning could enhance economic development in the areas where it is most needed.

Integrated freight transportation planning means guiding the location of industrial businesses and making

Industrial Redevelopment Opportunities Near Rail Lines Waterways, Highways and Rail Intersect Near Vacant Land in the South Suburbs



strategic public investments that will allow freight to move by efficient types of transportation such as railroad or barge. When planning is not integrated, trucks carry a disproportionate share of total freight. Freight moved by truck causes three times more air pollution per load than loads carried on rail. Truck shipments also clog the roadways and increase pavement maintenance costs. Because freight planning has not been coordinated in Northeastern Illinois more than 90% of large freight loads are moved by truck.¹³



Encourage Land Use Reform

A dual approach is needed to address the transportation crisis so clearly identified by the public. In addition to new transportation policies, land use reforms are necessary. Municipalities should amend their local zoning ordinances to encourage compact development to support transit, if their residents are to reap the benefits of choice. Residents of suburban communities often articulate a need for “corner stores” and other amenities near their homes, to reduce their daily car trips and free roadway space for longer trips. In many places single-use zoning requires residents to “use a gallon of gas to get a gallon of milk.”

Use “New Urbanist” Designs

The public addressed the growing use of “New Urbanist” design¹⁴ to create streetscapes that promote walking, bicycling and transit. Buildings with windows and porches facing the street offer an inviting streetscape. Blank walls and garage doors do not. Sidewalks that are uninterrupted by driveways draw more use, are seen as safer and are less obstructed by parked vehicles. Developments laid out in a grid pattern offer walkers, cyclists and transit users predictable options. Curved streets and cul-de-sacs can present an incomprehensible challenge to neighbors from the other side of town.

Parking lots separating commercial buildings from street activity present a pedestrian with a gray sea to cross – territory in which he or she clearly does not “belong.” Commercial buildings near to where people begin their errands (from home or work), with comfortable access routes for walkers, bikers and transit users and modest amounts of parking, promote community vitality. Businesses that can be reached by many modes can invest in expansion instead of investing in the construction and maintenance of auto-storage facilities.

Transportation Policies and Land Use Plans Should Not Conflict

The public believes that there must be efforts to ensure that transportation policies don’t continue to sabotage land use planning. There are better roadway configurations than those that currently assault some communities. One remedy is called Context Sensitive Design.¹⁵ Context Sensitive Design does not disrupt or hamper local

community safety. The historic, cultural and economic attributes of a community are respected by this new methodology. Roadways are adapted to fit community context, rather than the community being forced to adapt to the limitations imposed by the road.

Support the Development of High Speed Rail

High Speed Rail offers a new opportunity to the region, one that is highly supported by the public for economic as well as transportation benefits. Full realization of those benefits will be highly dependent on the extent to which High Speed Rail is integrated and coordinated with existing ground and air transportation systems. Infrastructure improvements needed for dependable High Speed Rail service, such as grade separations with roadways and intersecting railroads, will benefit freight service as well, and will provide safety improvements for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create safe walkable and bikeable streets.**
- ▲ Redesign roadways to be multi-modal and sensitive to community context.
- ▲ Fund bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure at the same state-to-local ratio as roads, i.e., 80/20 versus 50/50.
- ▲ Commit at least 5% of regional transportation resources to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- ▲ Improve signage, signalization, crosswalks and provide pedestrian amenities.
- **Empower a public agency, with public participation, to make integrated plans and strategic investments to ensure the efficient movement of freight through the region.**
- **Encourage land uses that support mixed-use zoning, transit-oriented development and compact design.**
- **Integrate regional transportation plans with High Speed Rail initiatives.**



A Broader Vision

Improve the Region's Quality of Life

The transportation infrastructure choices the public makes are deeply embedded in the broader goals they cherish for the region. Priorities spring from a deep-seated belief that these investment decisions are fundamentally quality of life decisions. The public believes the role of transportation engineers should be to implement regional policy decisions in the most efficient, cost-effective manner, not to determine regional policies. In this region the taxpayers perceive that they have been excluded from these decisions for decades by transportation agencies.*

Choice Promotes Health and Safety

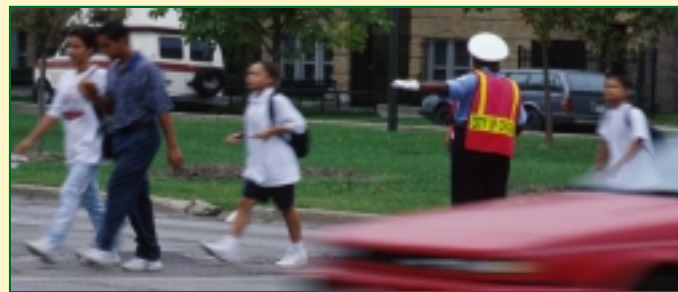
Auto use is heavily advertised as the way to reach the American Dream, but instead has steadily degraded the quality of life for the American public.

Obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other health problems related to inactivity are on the rise across the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 22 states reported that at least one of every five people was obese in 2000.¹⁶ Thirty-eight percent of the population of Illinois is overweight and nearly half lead sedentary lifestyles.¹⁷ The medical community has just begun to study the impact of daily transportation choices on overall activity levels.

As conditions for biking and walking have declined, so too have rates of physical activity. Across the nation, the number of trips people take on foot has dropped 42% over the last 20 years.¹⁸ There has been a decrease in the average number of pedestrian fatalities recently, but many public health experts speculate that the reduction is due to the decrease in overall pedestrian travel rather than to safer conditions. There were 4,763 pedestrian fatalities, in the United States in 2000, down from 5,584 in 1995.¹⁹ In Illinois, pedestrian injuries account for almost 15% of all traffic deaths, but receive only eight-tenths of one percent of the federal transportation dollars administered by the state department of transportation.²⁰

Parents Want Safe Choices

Parents are frustrated with the lack of safe and reasonable choices for their children. Some children spend most of their time indoors and inside cars. Their parents hope to avoid an unequal encounter between a 75-pound child and a 2,000 pound machine. Since nearly 25,000 child pedestrians are injured annually in the U.S. by motor vehicles²¹ this is an understandable impulse. Parents are just beginning to understand that their protective impulses have enduring consequences.



Daily exercise becomes a habit over time.

Healthy Behaviors Are Learned

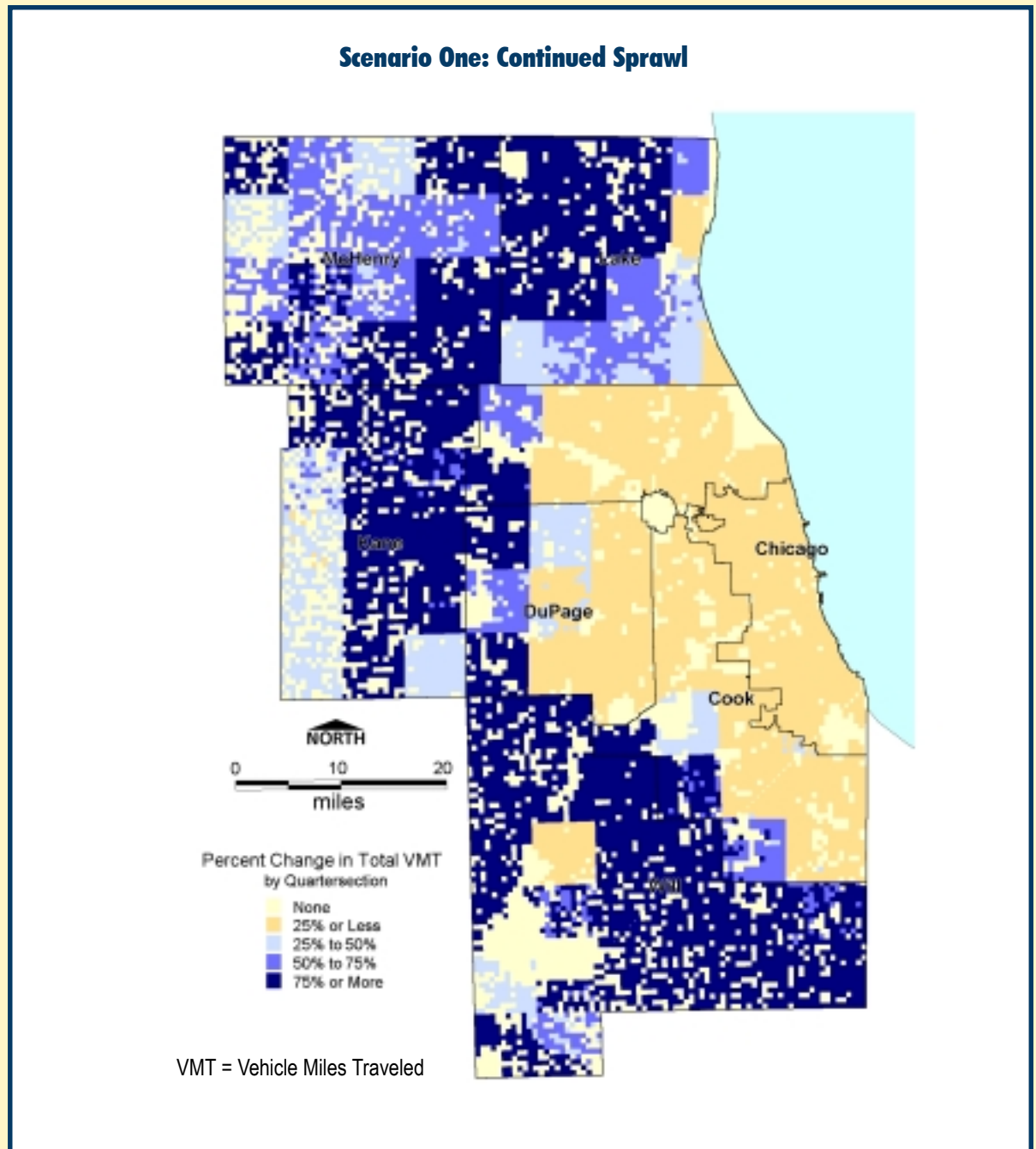
Reduced activity levels become life-long habits for children who never or rarely walk to school or can't play outside in front of their homes for fear of traffic. Inactive children are not merely at risk of health consequences when they reach middle-age. Pediatricians report that heart disease, high blood pressure and Type II (adult-onset) diabetes, which once afflicted adults, now appear with increasing frequency in children.

The proportion of overweight children between the ages of six and eleven has tripled since the 1970s.²² Today, fewer than one student in eight walks or bikes to school. The Surgeon General recommends thirty minutes of exercise a day, to help Americans live happier and healthier lives. The ability to walk or bike to school would help many more children meet that very minimal guideline.

* The Chicago region is unique in the nation with a regional planning body, the Chicago Area Transportation Study, that is separate from the land use agency, composed almost exclusively of one demographic segment, not geographically representative, controlled by the state department of transportation and with committees composed primarily of transportation bureaucrats.



Which Vision Should We Choose?

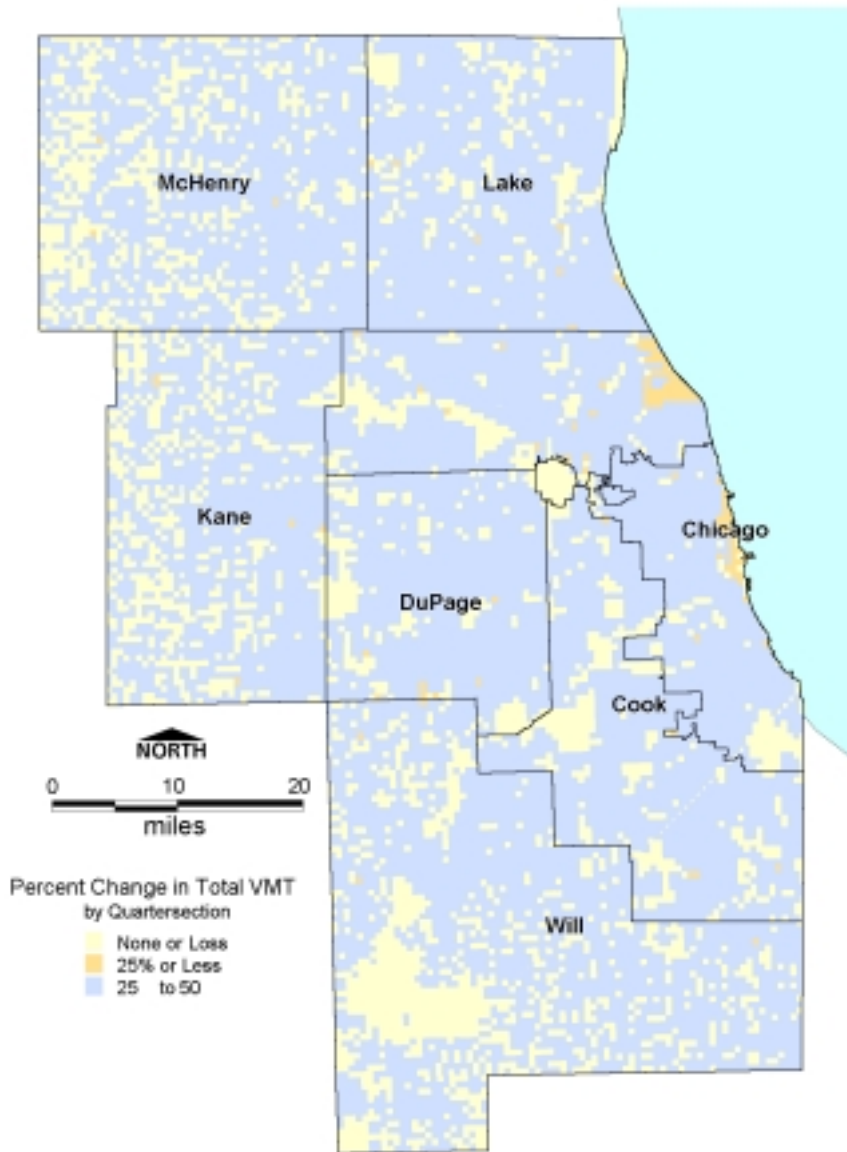


Scenario One assumes people will continue to disperse throughout the region in a sprawling pattern. Scenario Two assumes every existing community in the region will grow at the same rate as the overall regional rate, maintaining the same proportion of the region's population as it had in 1990. Scenario Two assumes more compact land use in existing communities.

The projected increase in the region's population and households means that vehicle miles traveled will increase throughout the region in both scenarios (except where land is preserved from development). New infrastructure to facilitate choice will help to slow the increase in congested travel.



Scenario Two: More Compact Development



The Center for Neighborhood Technology analyzed potential housing and travel trends to visualize the effects of future growth policies. Analysts looked at two scenarios to predict the increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 2030. Both scenarios assume a population increase of 1.8 million people by 2030, as (preliminarily) forecast by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

The model used in the analysis held certain variables constant, including the number of residential acres, the amount of transit access and household size. The model does assume that at certain density levels, businesses and services will tend to locate near enough to households that some trips can be made without a car.



Create a More Healthful Environment

Northeastern Illinois is a “severe” non-attainment area for air quality, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. A new standard, which the region may have even more difficulty attaining, is likely to go into effect after 2003. There is debate about the degree to which transportation emissions impact air quality, although it is clear that increased emissions are not an asset to human health.

Asthma is a growing threat to public health, for both children and adults. Lack of activity, coupled with increased particulate emissions, worsens the problem. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of people with asthma grew 75% from 1980 to 1994.²³ Asthma can be triggered by exposure to allergens, indoor pollutants and ambient air pollutants (such as ozone, acid aerosols and diesel particulates). Approximately 25% of children in the United States live in areas that exceed the federal standard for ozone and nearly 5 million people under the age of 18 are affected nationally.²⁴

The public understands that personal health is impacted by the natural environment. There is a strong emphasis on environmental integrity throughout the region. In the collar counties of DuPage, Kane, McHenry, Lake and Will, air quality was a particular concern. Other environmental issues like protecting open space, water resources, wildlife habitat and agricultural land were also considered to be very important.

Cook County and Chicago residents tended to be more exclusively focused on the air quality impacts of congestion in and near their communities. The remedies for environmental damage proposed by citizens closely parallel their remedies for other transportation burdens – more choice for pedestrian, bicycle and transit options. People throughout the region also recommend converting transit fleets to alternative fuel vehicles to improve air quality and human health.

Strong, Sustainable, Equitable Communities

There is a strong sense that transportation dollars are wasted on expensive attempts to build more of the same projects that have failed to offer viable options in the

past. Public funds are used to build projects that drain the life from existing communities near the center of the region, sully outlying towns with unsustainable development and plow through county agricultural preservation policies. Inhabitants of Prospect Heights and Pilsen, Glen Ellyn and Oak Park, Itasca and Northbrook, Barrington and Austin fought back to save their communities.

Eastern Will County residents have endured years of uncertainty about the fate of their farms because of the proposal to build an airport 41 miles from downtown Chicago (in spite of the fact that the last airport the state built, in Mascoutah, IL is severely underutilized). Kane County is the most recent area mobilizing to save its way of life. Recently announced plans to construct a highway through the sparsely populated, western part of the county would dissolve the county’s endorsed land management plan and agricultural preservation policies.

Expand Opportunities for Regional Equity

There is a strong message that regional growth must advance equitably. This message is articulated in many ways. Residents of Chicago’s South Side and the South Suburbs were keenly aware that their communities have suffered from disinvestment. Regional investment decisions either failed to respond to, or actually worsened, disinvestment by drawing industry and households to outlying areas served by new roads. The consequence is longer commute times for the least affluent communities. Of the 33 communities that have average commute times of 30 minutes or more and have incomes below the regional median (\$51,680 in 2000), more than half are concentrated in the South Suburbs.

Residents of the Central Area of Chicago contend with a web of rail viaducts, but have little or no local access to Metra service. Two important CTA train routes in the Central Area were allowed to deteriorate to the brink of abandonment until communities mobilized to save them. The Green Line rehabilitation did not restore all the original stations and the deterioration of the Blue Line (Cermak Branch) caused significant and ongoing service reductions. In both cases the



populations most impacted are lower income and people of color. Pilsen residents wonder how the region found funds in 2000 for two Metra extensions into rural areas, at the same time the 254,112 people living within one mile of the Cermak Branch were in danger of losing service altogether for lack of rehabilitation funds.

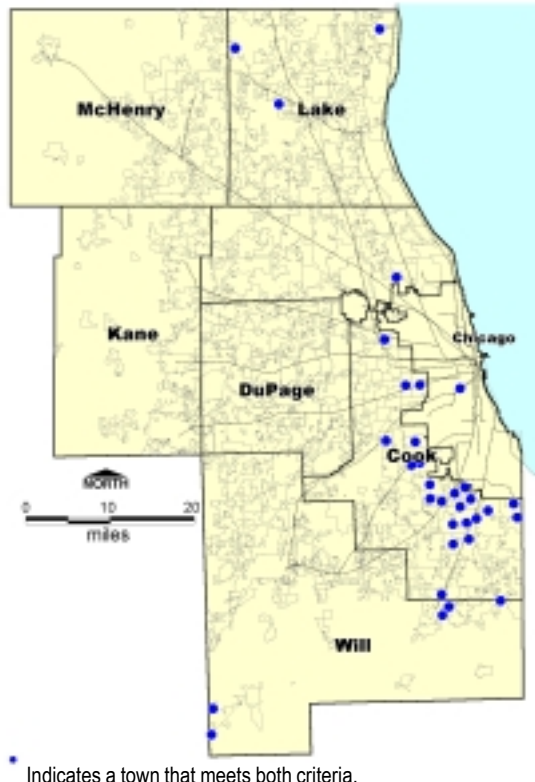
Reduce the Jobs-Housing Mismatch

Another regional equity issue that often arose was the imbalance in access to jobs, particularly from the communities with the least household resources. The “jobs-housing imbalance” has become a regional crisis, with low-income households unable to find affordable housing near newer job centers and often unable to find jobs near existing moderately priced housing. Employers report difficulty finding and retaining workers willing to make arduous commutes. Because the jobs-housing mismatch requires a coordinated approach to both land use and transportation policy, this region is unable to apply remediation strategies. Northeastern Illinois is unique because transportation planning (the responsibility of the Chicago Area Transportation Study) is separate from land use policy-making (the responsibility of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission).

Develop a Better Travel Environment for People with Mobility Limitations

In every part of the region, citizens strongly articulated a sense of the injustice done to seniors and members of the disability community by current transportation policies. The public was keenly aware that improvements for people with mobility limitations also benefit the region as a whole. Most people have traveled in or pushed a stroller at some point. Everyone hopes for “golden years” characterized by independence, mobility and essential opportunities for low-key exercise. Equality of movement for the very young, the very old and the disabled is fundamental to a civilized society.

Towns With Average Commutes of 30 Minutes or More and income Below the Regional Median



• Indicates a town that meets both criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Design communities that promote physical activity.
- Reallocate highway funds to better serve the safety needs of non-motorized users.
- Minimize transportation impacts on the natural environment.
- Ensure that transportation planning agencies respond to the public.
- Improve accommodations for travelers with different abilities.



Legislative Objectives

Illinois General Assembly

Restructure regional planning agencies.

- Require extensive and meaningful public involvement.
- Require that the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) be proportionally representative with a majority of members independent of the state department of transportation.
- Ensure that land use decisions will precede and guide transportation investment decisions.
- Revise the Regional Transportation Authority charter to equalize tax benefits and burdens and to require coordination of existing transit assets.
- Authorize creation of a Freight Transportation Authority to enhance the economic opportunities of freight handling and minimize the air quality impacts.

Support transportation choice.

- Set aside 33% of federal Safety dollars to fund “Safe Routes to Schools.”
- Require that all road construction and rehabilitation projects serve multi-modal uses and are sensitive to community context.

- Fund bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure at the same state-to-local ratio as roads, i.e. 80/20 versus 50/50.
- Flex state and federal highway dollars into the transit fund.
- Flex state and federal highway dollars into the bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure fund.
- Guarantee state funding to match federal funding opportunities
- Increase funding for track upgrades to support high speed rail service.

United States Congress

- Ensure that Northeastern Illinois receives funds commensurate with its role as the core of the nation’s economic and transportation systems.
- Dedicate sufficient funds to alleviate impacts caused by one-third of the nation’s domestic freight traveling through the region.
- Reinforce the public involvement requirements of federal transportation law.
- Work with the regional transportation agencies to provide ample funding for maintenance. Provide new funding only for projects that have been approved in the Regional Transportation Plan.

Footnotes

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³ *Common Ground: A Blueprint for Regional Action*, Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, 2002.
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⁵ <http://community-2.webtv.net/GLRTS/GRAYLINECONVERSION/>
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⁷ *Transportation Data from the 2000 Census*, Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2002.
⁸ Pace press release, August 22, 2002.
⁹ Interview with Dean Englund, Deputy for Development, Chicago Area Transportation Study, August 19, 2002.
¹⁰ Congressman James Oberstar, speech in Las Vegas on September 23, 2000.
¹¹ Local Agency Agreements, *Bureau of Design and Environment Manual*, Illinois Department of Transportation, 1998.

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¹⁴ <http://www.cnu.org/>
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¹⁶ *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000.
¹⁷ *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*, Illinois Department of Public Health, 1995.
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²¹ *Traffic Safety Facts 2000*, US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2000.
²² *Mean Streets 2000*, op. cit.
²³ “Forecasted State-Specific Estimates of Self-Reported Asthma Prevalence — United States, 1998,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, December 4, 1998.
²⁴ *National Air Quality and Emissions Report, 1997*, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, US Environmental Protection Agency, 1998.





Local and Regional Partners Connecting Communities Summits

Regional Partners

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest
Chicago Design Consortium
Chicago Metropolis 2020
Chicago Rehab Network
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation
Citizen Action – Illinois
Council for Disability Rights
Environmental Law and Policy Center of the Midwest
Faith In Place

Friends of the Chicago River
Independent Voters of Illinois-Independent Precinct Organization
League of Women Voters, Illinois
Metropolitan Planning Council
Metro Seniors in Action
Mid America Institute on Poverty
Sierra Club
Sustain- The Environmental Information Group

Local Partners

Calumet Region – April 7, 2001

Human Action Community Organization
Lincolnway SCAT
Residents United to Retain Agricultural Lands
Shut This Airport Nightmare Down
Ministers Conference of South Cook County

The North Side of Chicago – May 19, 2001

48th Ward
Break the Gridlock
Chicago Rehab Network
Lawrence Avenue Development Corp.
North Side College Prep High School

North-Northwest Cook County – June 18, 2001

Evanston Sustainability Circle
Interfaith Housing Ctr. of the North Suburbs
Palatine/Willow Road Community Mobilization Team

Lake County – July 24, 2001

Citizens Organized for Sound Transportation
Lake County Conservation Alliance
League of Women Voters- Lake County
Woods and Wetlands Group, Sierra Club

McHenry County – September 19, 2001

McHenry County Defenders

Central Neighborhoods of Chicago – October 24, 2001

Bethel New Life, Inc.
Blue Line Transit Task Force
Westside Health Authority
Westtown Leadership United

The South Side of Chicago – November 28, 2001

Center for Urban Politics & Policy at Chicago State University
Creech Memorial Presbyterian Church
Greater Southwest Development Corp.
Greater Washington Park Community Development Corp.
Southeast Chicago Development Commission
University of Chicago Environmental Center

DuPage County – February 2, 2002

Citizen Advocacy Center
DuPage Babysitting Co-op
Illinois Prairie Path (IPPC)
Mothers and More

Southwest Metro Region – February 28, 2002

Human Action Community Organization
Institute for Public Policy and Administration, Governor's State University
Lincolnway SCAT

Kane County – March 16, 2002

Community Energy Cooperative – Elgin
The Conservation Foundation
Dundee Township
Illinois Public Interest Research Group
Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District

West Cook County – May 4, 2002

Faith In Place
Progress Center for Independent Living

Mini-Summit Sites

Best Practices High School, Bosnian Herzegovinian American Community Center, Catholic Office of the Deaf, Inspiration Cafe, North Side College Prep High School, Maria High School, Pilsen Alliance, South Shore High School

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