

REIMAGINING LOGAN BOULEVARD TO LATHROP HOMES

CURRENTLY



AFTER



ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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About Active Transportation Alliance

The mission of Active Transportation Alliance is to promote walking, biking and public transit to create healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities.

“Residents use this part of Logan daily to take their kids to school and drop them off at daycare. For far too long it has been a high-stress, terrifying experience to walk, bike and drive on Logan to Lathrop Homes. As the neighborhood’s population rapidly increases, we need active ways of getting around without relying solely on cars to do so.”

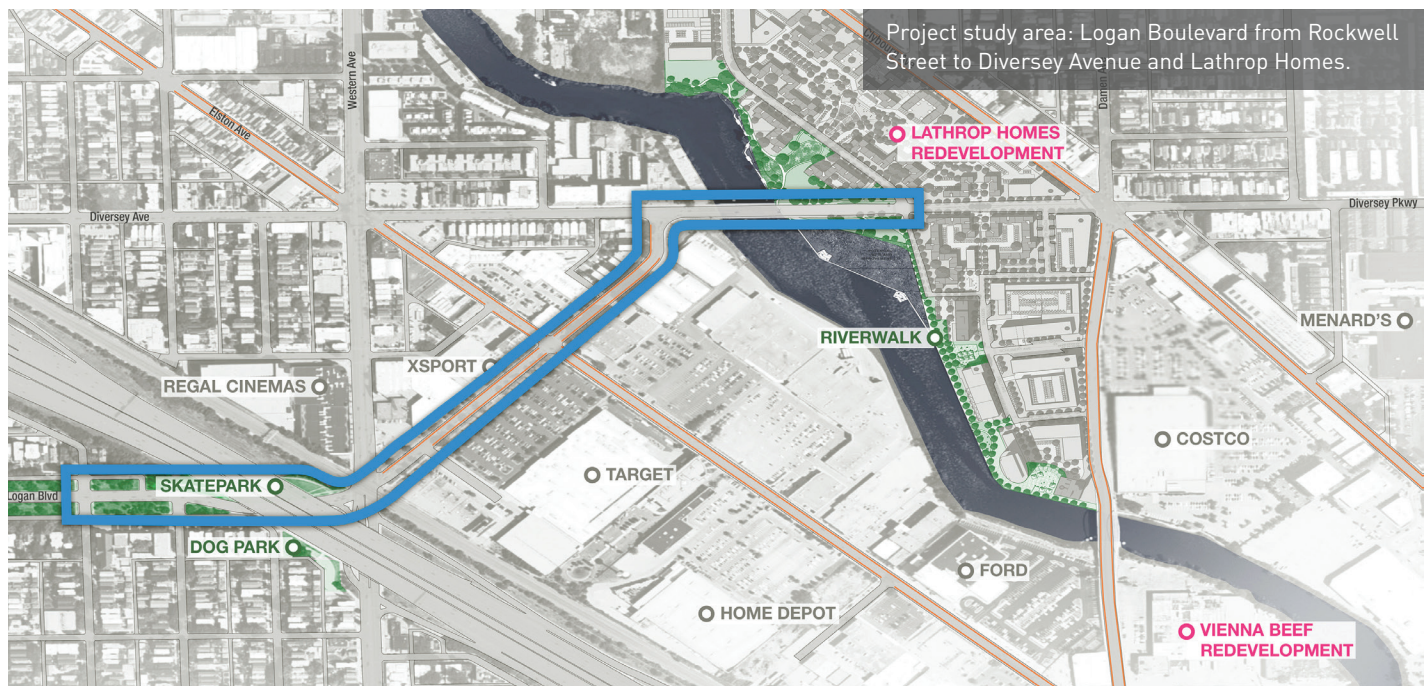
– Nancy Aardema, Executive Director of Logan Square Neighborhood Association

“The retail district surrounding Elston Avenue has many local businesses that will benefit tremendously from improved access. Being able to walk and bike safely to these businesses and an eventual Chicago River Trail will strengthen economic development by safely linking retail areas on both ends of Logan Boulevard.”

– Jessica Wobbekind, Executive Director of the Logan Square Chamber of Commerce.



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INTRODUCTION

For many years, Chicago residents and advocacy organizations have pushed for a continuous multi-use trail along the Chicago River that creates a new transportation and recreation corridor for people walking and biking. The City of Chicago has long shared this goal and recently affirmed this commitment in the Our Great Rivers vision plan released by the city and partners in 2016. Building on this long history of advocacy, the Active Transportation Alliance (Active Trans) developed the Chicago River Trail Action Plan, which identified the steps needed to create a continuous and accessible trail along the Chicago River.

One of the most important action steps is to improve east-west bicycle and pedestrian access to and from the Chicago River along Logan Boulevard in Logan Square. Logan Boulevard is a crucial east-west transportation corridor, which many people rely upon for daily travel between residences, schools, churches, big box stores, entertainment venues and public housing. In recent years, density in Logan Square has exploded, increasing demand for active ways to get around the neighborhood that results in less people relying on cars to do so.

At the same time, ongoing redevelopment of the historic Julia Lathrop Homes includes exciting plans to revitalize the riverfront in this area, making improved access an urgent priority. With safe access to the river, community residents will be able to

take advantage of this new transportation network: just north of Lathrop Homes, the city is building the 312 RiverRun Trail between Belmont and Montrose Avenues and the Manor Greenway from Montrose to Lawrence Avenues—both of which will add connections along the river. Despite these positive developments, conditions for people walking and biking on Logan Boulevard remain hazardous.

To address these dangerous conditions, Active Trans secured funding to facilitate a project with community partners to identify the most significant challenges to people walking and biking on a stretch of Logan Boulevard and recommend improvements. The study area is just under 1 mile (page 4) starting at Rockwell Street and running east to Diversey Avenue and Lathrop Homes. The study area covers five major intersections, including Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue, a high-crash intersection where people walking, and biking have been killed by motor vehicles.

To ensure broad participation from residents and stakeholders, Active Trans partnered with Logan Square Neighborhood Association, a multi-issue grassroots community organization with an over 50-year history of serving the neighborhood, and Port Urbanism, an architectural firm. In addition, more than 20 stakeholders provided input and reviewed recommendations through the project's advisory committee.



Inaugural project advisory committee meeting on January 24.

PROJECT GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The goal of this project is to develop an action plan for improving walking and biking conditions in the study area with a focus on improving access to the Chicago River Trail.

These improvements will support a number of outcomes for the surrounding community, including:

- Improved safety for all transportation users in the study area, including people walking, biking, and driving cars.
- Increased capacity of Logan Square’s transportation network to serve the neighborhood’s rapidly growing population.
- Increased physical activity and improved public health by creating safe access to the growing network of trails along the river and a future 27-mile continuous Chicago River Trail.
- Strengthened economic development by improving access to local retail and job opportunities.
- Enhanced public spaces that move Logan Boulevard closer to the intent of Chicago’s boulevard system, which was to create healthy, accessible and livable neighborhoods and places of leisure activity.

PROCESS

The project recommendations were developed through a review of existing conditions, input provided by advisory committee members, meetings with stakeholders, and surveys filled out by neighborhood residents.

Review of Existing Conditions

Active Trans met with Alderman Joe Moreno and Alderman Scott Waguespack to discuss opportunities and challenges to improving walking and biking on Logan Boulevard to Lathrop Homes. Active Trans also reviewed data sets relevant to the study area, including crash data, population growth, and demographic information.

Neighborhood Engagement

We gathered input from residents who filled out more than 500 project postcards at community events, such as the Boulevard Bolt Food Truck event and Logan Square Farmers Market. We also provided presentations to neighborhood groups and published an online survey that generated over 1,000 responses.

Project Advisory Committee

Active Trans identified key stakeholders and organized an advisory committee of more than 20 stakeholders to oversee the project. The committee met multiple times throughout the project to inform and review recommendations.

Walk Audit

The advisory committee walked the study area on July 12 to identify the challenges people face when walking and biking. Faded crosswalks, bike lanes that end abruptly, erratic driver behavior and pedestrian signals that do not provide enough time to cross were some of the challenges observed by the group.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES

Traffic Volume

Most of the study area (Logan Boulevard from Rockwell Street to Diversey Avenue) sees an average daily traffic count of 8,900 cars,¹ making it an excellent candidate for right-sizing a short segment from Western Avenue to the Service Drive.² Roads with four lanes like Logan Boulevard that carry an average of 12,000–18,000 cars daily are considered ideal candidates for right-sizing. Logan Boulevard easily fits into this category, seeing an average of more than 3,000 cars less than the low end of this range. As shown in the crash map section that follows, speeding was a major contributor to fatal and serious crashes. Research shows that right-sizing roads, also known as road diets, has been proven to reduce traffic speed, improving safety for all users.³

¹ Illinois Department of Transportation's Roadway Inventory September 2017 file

² Road Diets: Fixing the Big Roads by Dan Burden and Peter Lagerwey

³ Road Diet: Informational Guide, U.S. Department of Transportation

CRASHES IN THE STUDY AREA

The stretch of Logan Boulevard from Rockwell Street to Diversey Avenue and Lathrop Homes is a high-crash area for all transportation users. The maps on this page and on pages 5, 6, and 7 show the combined number of crashes for all transportation users, bicycle crashes and pedestrian crashes in the study area between 2011 and 2016.

During this time frame, the following number of crashes occurred:

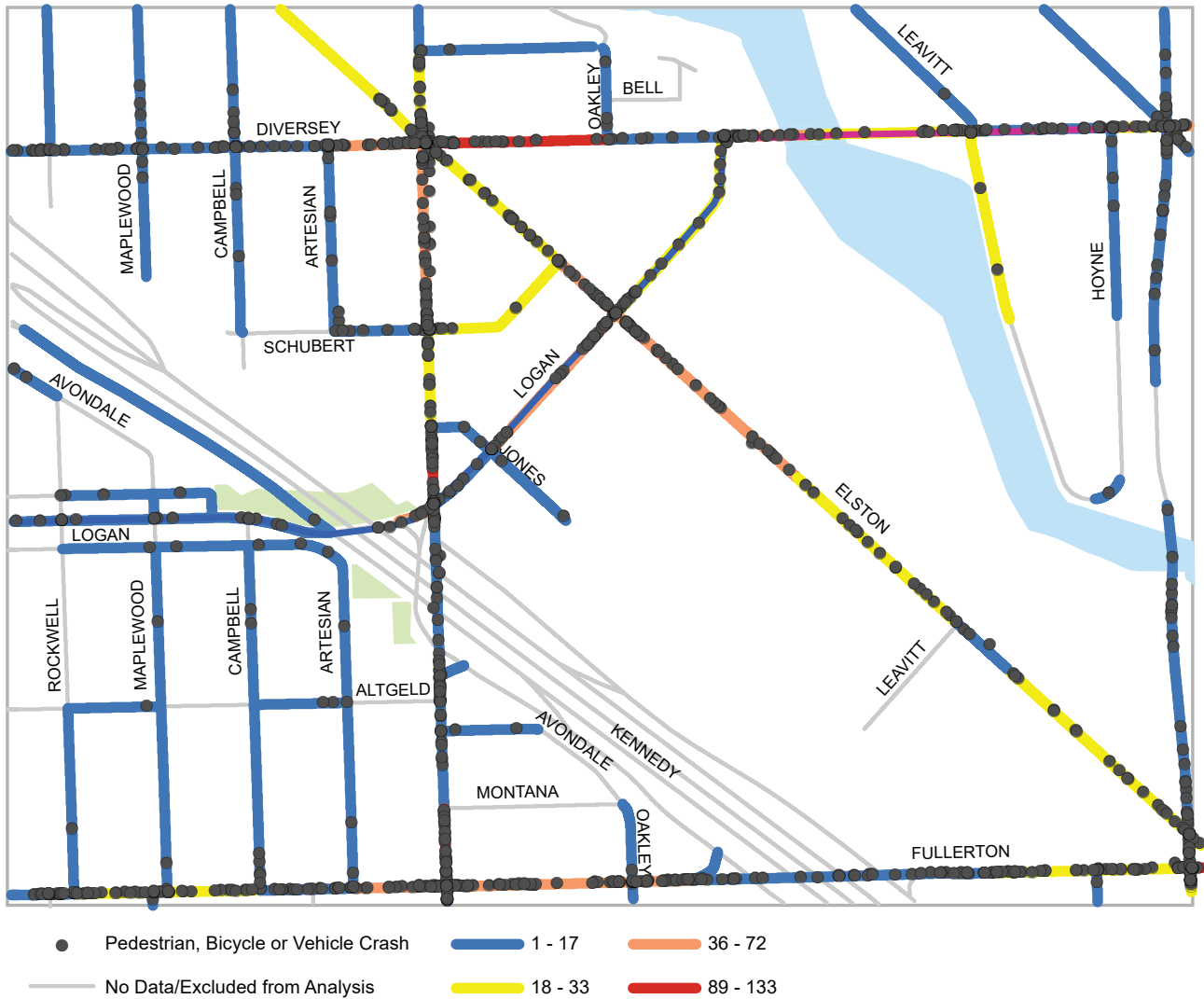
- People walking experienced 48 crashes.
- People biking experienced 70 crashes.
- People driving experienced 1,707 crashes.

These maps demonstrate the major intersections in the study area are in dire need of safety upgrades. These intersections include: Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue, Logan Boulevard between Western Avenue and Elston Avenue, and Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue. *The majority of fatal and serious crashes in the study area were caused by speeding and failure to yield.*

AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC (AADT)



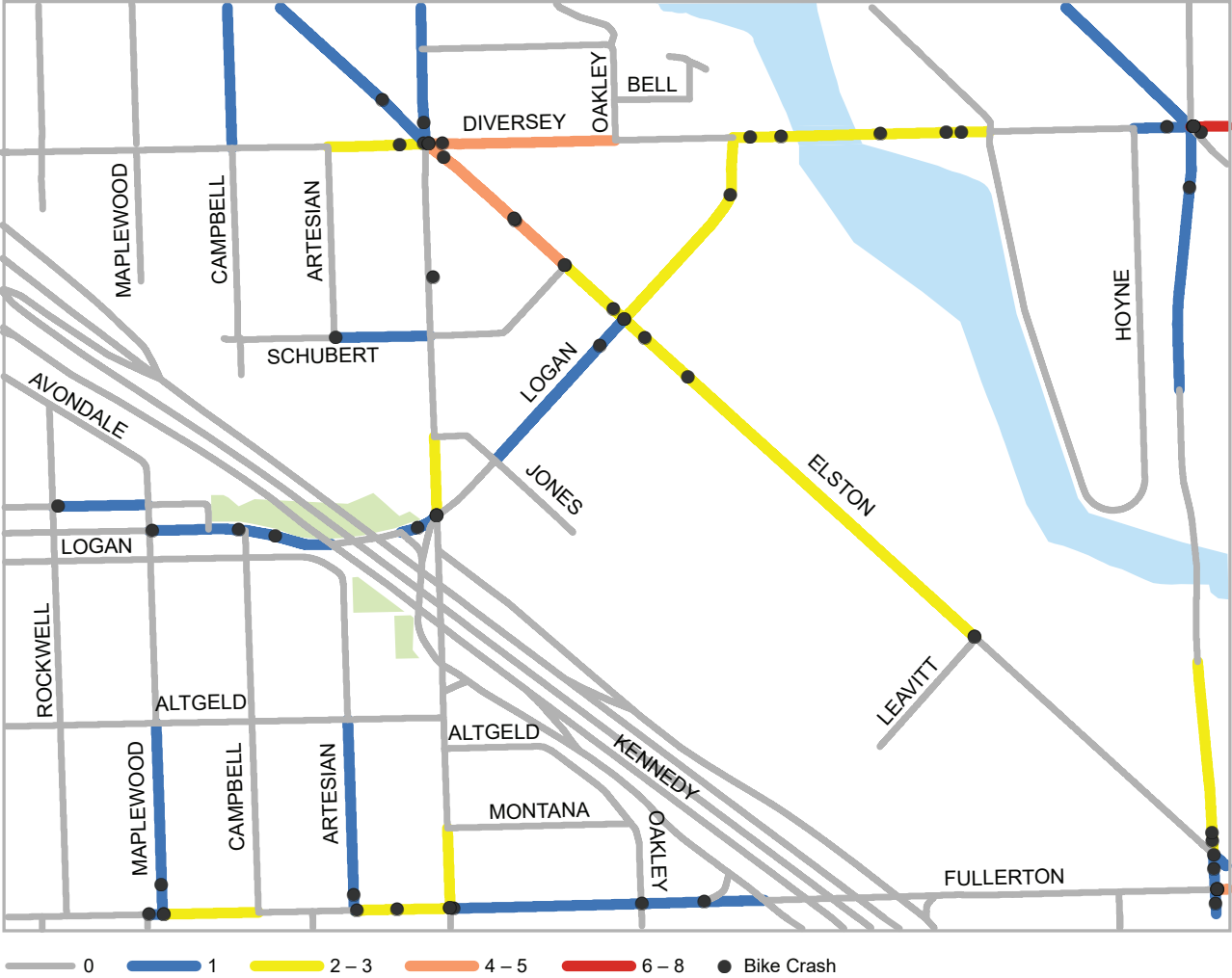
NUMBER OF CRASHES BY ALL TRANSPORTATION USERS BETWEEN 2011-2016



“Fostering safer and more inviting pedestrian and bicycle connections between Logan Boulevard and Lathrop Homes carries the potential to generate significant safety and mobility benefits and mitigate rising traffic congestion. I’m appreciative of all the neighborhood organizations and their representatives that participated in this initiative.”

– Alderman Waguespack (32nd Ward)

BICYCLE CRASHES BETWEEN 2011-2016



Advisory committee evaluating walking conditions on Diversey Avenue bridge. Pictured from left to right: Jessica Wobbekind, Logan Square Chamber of Commerce; Kim Coventry, Richard H. Driehaus Foundation; Steve Lynch, Patrick Engineering; Steve Simmons, Active Trans; and Paul Sajovec, 32 Ward Alderman Scott Waguespack.

PEDESTRIAN CRASHES BETWEEN 2011-2016



Advisory committee discussing opportunities and challenges identified on walk audit.

RENDERING: Logan Boulevard west of Western Avenue with safety upgrades such as bike lanes and improved lighting.



CHALLENGES FOR PEOPLE WALKING AND BIKING IN THE STUDY AREA

The following obstacles to walking and biking were identified by the advisory committee, by the survey respondents, and during the walk audit.

CHALLENGE #1: Stressful and dangerous conditions for people walking

- Crosswalks are faded throughout the entire study area, and there is no crosswalk on the south side of Logan Boulevard at Western Avenue.
- Pedestrian signals appear to be set at the minimum walk time plus clearance time. People that were observed walking slowly, due either to limited mobility or walking with children, were not given enough time to complete the crossing in the allotted time. None of the crossings have audible signals for people with visual impairments.
- Sidewalks on Logan Boulevard are too narrow, especially under the railroad bridge at Logan Boulevard/Western Avenue, have no buffer from the travel lane and discourage walking west of its intersection with Western Avenue.
- Sections of sidewalks along the entire study area have cracks and pieces missing. Priority areas for improvements include: Leavitt Street and Diversey Avenue, Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue, Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue, and Western Avenue between Logan Boulevard and Altgeld Street.
- Sidewalks across the Diversey Avenue Bridge in each direction are extremely narrow and are cut off by the bridge supports.

- Construction at Lathrop Homes has severely damaged sidewalks at Leavitt Street and Diversey Avenue.

CHALLENGE #2: Perilous conditions for people biking

- Bicycle lanes on westbound Logan Boulevard between Diversey Avenue and Western Avenue terminate after Logan Boulevard crosses Western Avenue.
- There is no dedicated space for bikes on Logan Boulevard between Rockwell Street east to Western Avenue and on Diversey Avenue between Logan Boulevard and Clybourn Avenue.
- There are no bike signals within the entire study area.
- Bike lanes on Logan Boulevard terminate at Diversey Avenue, funneling cyclists into a wide Diversey Avenue Bridge and fast-moving traffic.
- There is no dedicated space for bikes on Diversey Avenue between Logan Boulevard and Clybourn Avenue.

CHALLENGE #3: Confusing street design contributes to many crashes

- Stretches of Logan Boulevard where visibility is poor and extra capacity of cars includes the highway underpass at Western Avenue and Logan Boulevard, the entrance to the Windy City Fieldhouse on Logan Boulevard before Target, the two right-turn lanes at Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue and the traffic signal for owners of townhomes at Diversey Avenue and Logan Boulevard.

Existing conditions on Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue.



- Another confusing area is the entrance to I-90/I-94 and Western Avenue from eastbound Logan Boulevard at its intersection with Western Avenue.
- A stretch of Diversey Avenue has one lane for cars then expands to two lanes before returning to one, creating confusion for drivers and encouraging them to compete for space around the Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue intersection.
- Many intersections in the study area have a wide design, especially Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue, encouraging drivers to speed through the corridor.
- Poor viability of vehicles exiting the I-90/94 ramp turning northbound on Western Avenue or westbound on Logan Boulevard due to concrete bridge columns and railroad bridge.

CHALLENGE #4: Challenges facing all transportation users

- Inadequate lighting at Western Avenue and Logan Boulevard poses a challenge to all users in the corridor.
- The angle of the intersection at Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue makes it difficult for all users to see the traffic signals.
- Street markings are faded, creating confusion for all users.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The following recommendations for walking and biking improvements have strong support from the project advisory committee, online survey respondents, and neighborhood residents. It's important to keep in mind that making improvements for people walking and biking increases safety for all transportation users, including people driving.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Redesign stretches of Logan Boulevard that are confusing for all transportation users

- Remove a travel lane on a short segment of Logan Boulevard from Western Avenue to the Service Drive and redesign stretches that create unexpected bottlenecks on Logan Boulevard. Key areas that should be reviewed for improvements include:
 - Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue.
 - Dual right-turn lanes on Logan Boulevard at Diversey Avenue.
 - The entrance to the Windy City Fieldhouse just east of Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue.
 - The stand-alone traffic signal for townhome owners at Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue.
 - The entrance, via a right-turn lane, to I-90/94 and Western Avenue heading east on Logan Boulevard.



- Implement traffic-calming measures to reduce the speed of cars, such as speed bumps, bump-outs, and refuge islands for people walking. During every project activity, people identified distracted and speeding drivers and a high volume of traffic as the major obstacles to walking and biking.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Improve conditions for people biking

- Add protected bike lanes on Logan Boulevard and the Diversey Avenue Bridge to create safe connections to existing bike lanes on Elston Avenue and Clybourn Avenue.
- Study the possibility of using the inner boulevards as low-stress bike routes.
- Add bicycle wayfinding signage that clearly identifies the space for bikes. Prioritize the most challenging stretches of Logan Boulevard for signage, namely Logan Boulevard and Diversey Avenue, Logan Boulevard and Elston Avenue, and Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Improve streets and intersections for people walking

- Re-paint the crosswalks in the study area.
- Add a crosswalk on the south side of Logan Boulevard at Western Avenue (see below).
- Build a sidewalk at Logan Boulevard and Campbell Avenue where people walking have already created a desire line from the inner boulevard at Campbell Avenue across the grass median to sidewalks on Logan Boulevard.

- Improve traffic signals for people walking in the entire study area. Add audible crossing signals for people with visual impairments, lengthen the pedestrian signal phase so that people have longer than 25 seconds to cross, and ensure that traffic signals are positioned so they are visible to all transportation users.
- Improve lighting under the highway underpass at Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue to improve visibility for people walking and bicycling.
- Repair broken sidewalks and fill sidewalk gaps. Priority areas include Leavitt Street and Diversey Avenue, the north side of Diversey Avenue at Logan Boulevard, Logan Boulevard and Western Avenue, and Western Avenue between Logan Boulevard and Altgeld Street.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Enhance Logan Boulevard by making it a warm and welcoming place

- Consider placemaking strategies like adding “Welcome to Logan Square” artwork on the highway overpass visible from westbound Logan Boulevard at Western Avenue.
- Increase comfort and appeal for people walking and biking. Consider adding shade trees, benches, landscaping, trash cleanup and graffiti removal.



RENDERING: A right-sized Diversey Avenue bridge with improved sidewalks and new bike lanes.

TOP PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY RESIDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Safety. Slow the cars down. Create enough space safe for pedestrians, not just bikes. Not as an afterthought. Visible crossings. Also, make viable the bike path so they don’t use the pedestrian space. Take a car lane. Do a separate lane for bikes, plus widen sidewalks where needed like the underpass at Logan and Western. Directional signage at Western and Logan. Clean it up, too.”

“The underpass at Logan Boulevard and Western. Unsafe for bikers to ride on the street there.”

“Cyclists need space on the road to be separated from cars in this area. Drivers drive way too fast, and it is very scary to ride a bike and have them driving so fast and close to you. A lot of drivers on this stretch do not understand the markings for shared lanes. Also, it is hard to keep a straight line on a bike when cars are turning into the parking lots near Target and on to Elston. Drivers need to change lanes to make these turns, and they are not looking for cyclists.”

“Improve resident connectivity. Make our neighborhoods more connected by more than just car.”

“Clearly visible bike lanes, preferably with barriers; expanded pedestrian infrastructure, including lighting, crosswalks and traffic lights. Bike safety signage.”

“I would like to see continuous protected bike lanes on Logan Boulevard that intersect with other major bike hubs (such as Elston Avenue) for the purpose of commuting, shopping and socializing.”

“Street markings, especially for pedestrians, where Logan Boulevard intersects Western Avenue. I would particularly like to see a crosswalk on the south side of Logan Boulevard.”

“A continuous, well-marked, safe route through the area around the Kennedy, Western, and Diversey.”



RENDERING: A right-sized Logan Boulevard between Western Avenue and Elston Avenue.

ACTION PLAN/NEXT STEPS

STEP #1: Active Trans and Logan Square Neighborhood Association will convene the project advisory committee quarterly to review progress towards walking and biking improvements and collaborate with supporters to ensure these safety upgrades remain a top neighborhood priority.

STEP #2: Active Trans and advisory committee members will research and identify fundraising strategies with the goal of securing funds and working with the Chicago Department of Transportation to build some of the project’s long-term recommendations like redesigning problematic areas of Logan Boulevard to increase safety for all users.

STEP #3: Active Trans and the project advisory committee will advocate for safety improvements with decision-makers, such as elected officials and city and state departments.

STEP #4: Active Trans will provide technical assistance as needed to neighborhood residents, project partners, elected officials, and city and state departments.



CONCLUSION

Strong support exists among neighborhood residents and stakeholders for improving walking and biking conditions on Logan Boulevard from Rockwell Street to Lathrop Homes. The average daily traffic count on Logan Boulevard between Rockwell Street to Diversey Avenue is only 8,900, making it an ideal candidate for removing a travel lane from a short segment from Western Avenue to the Service Drive. Right-sizing Logan Boulevard would create space that could be dedicated to protecting people who bike and walk through this busy transportation corridor and encourage more people to choose active transportation options.

The over 1,000 responses to the project’s online survey demonstrate these improvements are smart public policy and would bring many benefits to Logan Square. More than 80 percent of respondents say they would use an improved Logan Boulevard to connect to a Chicago River Trail, and more than 70 percent would use it to shop in the commercial area, exercise for health and well-being, and protect the environment by driving less.

At the same time, growing interest and investment in the river and the city’s progress towards a continuous trail makes this an excellent time to create a safe connection between Logan Square and the river. Moreover, the growing density in Logan Square means more people will need active options to travel around the neighborhood. Improving walking and biking on Logan Boulevard would also move it closer to the original aspirations for Chicago’s boulevard system—which was designed to create healthy, accessible, and livable neighborhoods and places of leisure.

PROJECT RENDERINGS FROM PORT

BEFORE



AFTER



Logan Boulevard west of Western Avenue.



Logan Boulevard under the expressway at the intersection of Western Avenue.



Intersection of Western Avenue and Logan Boulevard.



Logan Boulevard at Elston Avenue.

BEFORE



AFTER



Logan Boulevard approaching Diversey Avenue.



On Diversey Avenue Bridge, facing east.