

Active Transportation Agenda for Chicago



Access to transportation is a human and civil right. Better connecting all Chicagoans to jobs, schools, parks, healthcare, businesses and other daily destinations must be a priority for the next mayor and city council. By providing quality transportation options for everyone and bringing order to the streets with careful planning and smart construction, Chicago's future leaders can make our streets safer and our air cleaner while boosting community health, equity and economic opportunity.

By committing to the following four-year goals and action steps, elected officials can embrace a new mobility future for Chicago that makes communities more vibrant, livable and prosperous for all.

2023 GOAL: Reduce pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries by 50 percent (in line with Chicago's Vision Zero goal to eliminate traffic fatalities by 2026), with a focus on the city's highest crash corridors in low-income communities and communities of color.

WHY? So far in 2018, 35 people walking and 6 people biking were hit and killed by cars and trucks in Chicago in preventable crashes.

2023 GOAL: Increase CTA bus ridership to more than 300 million annual rides with faster, more frequent and more reliable service.

WHY? In 2017 there were 259 million CTA bus rides, a 4 percent drop from 2016 and 21 percent drop since 2012. The CTA last had more than 300 million bus rides in 2013.

2023 GOAL: Increase access to high-quality, low-stress bikeways so two-thirds of Chicagoans live within one-quarter mile of a protected bike lane, neighborhood greenway or urban trail.

WHY? In 2018 only one-third of Chicagoans live within one-quarter mile of a low-stress bikeway.

2023 GOAL: Adopt an equity plan for transportation and infrastructure in Chicago, based on input from a working group of community leaders, advocates, agency staff and elected officials.

WHY? People living in the city's highest economic hardship community areas on the South and West Sides have the greatest challenges accessing jobs, schools, parks, healthcare, businesses and other destinations.

Transportation issues do not exist in a vacuum and achieving these goals will require action on intersectional issues, including jobs, housing, land use and access to basic services, criminal justice and policing.

- **Transportation > Jobs:** The commute to work – including the travel mode, length and quality – has an outsized impact on an individual's ability to gain and keep a job.
- **Transportation > Housing:** Policies that shape housing availability and affordability can either constrain or facilitate access to transportation for populations who stand to benefit most from that access.
- **Transportation > Land Use & Access to Basic Services:** How, where and what Chicago builds affects residents' ability to walk with a neighbor to the grocery store; bike with the family to a local park; wheelchair to weekly worship; hop on a bus to run errands; and hundreds of other types of trips have a profound impact on peoples' overall quality of life.
- **Transportation > Justice & Policing:** Historically marginalized communities, including poor people and people of color, have too often been subjected to improper traffic enforcement that has little to do with traffic safety. Meanwhile, traffic violations that present a genuine public safety hazard are not effectively policed.

The Active Transportation Alliance partners with community-based organizations with expertise in these areas and supports their fights for safer, healthier, more sustainable and more equitable neighborhoods.

ACTION STEPS: FUNDING

- Dedicate an annual \$20 million Bike Walk Fund in the city budget for better lit crosswalks, curb protected bike lanes, bus stop bump-outs and other safety infrastructure. Prioritize projects for high-crash corridors in historically disinvested communities on the South and West Sides.

WHY? Chicago spends very little local money on biking and walking projects despite the proven safety benefits for all users and the long-term health benefits of getting people to move more.

- Establish a 50 percent discounted CTA, Metra and Pace transit fare for low-income residents at or below the federal poverty line (approximately \$30,000 income annually for a family of 4).

WHY? For low-income families in Chicago, paying for transportation can leave little for food, housing and other necessities.

ACTION STEPS: INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

TRANSIT

- Develop and implement a plan for building 50 miles of new transit priority streets with dedicated bus lanes and transit signal priority. Infrastructure should be prioritized for high-ridership routes that are geographically distributed across the city including #4 Cottage Grove, #8 Halsted, #53 Pulaski, #66 Chicago, #79 79th, and #80 Irving Park. (CDOT, CTA)

WHY? CTA bus ridership has decreased 21 percent since 2012 as buses increasingly get stuck in traffic on congested city streets. Without more investment in bus service, Chicago risks more people abandoning transit for transportation options that are more expensive and less efficient, healthy and green.

- Institute a systemwide process for bus riders to tap and board through all doors across the network. (CTA)

WHY? When CTA piloted pre-paid boarding at the Belmont Blue Line station in 2017, it reduced boarding time by 56 percent.

- Fully fund Phases 1 and 2 of CTA's All Stations Accessibility Program, which would make 13 stations newly accessible to people with disabilities. (City Council, CTA)

WHY? Today 102 of 145 CTA rail stations (70 percent) are accessible to people with disabilities.

- Implement increased frequency (trains every 15 minutes or less) on the full Metra Electric District line, with a discounted fare transfer to CTA buses. (Metra, CTA)

WHY? Outside of rush hour, Metra Electric trains run only once per hour south of 63rd street.

- Apply for federal funds and identify a local source of matching funds for extending the Red Line South to 130th Street, with connections to Pace and CTA buses. (City Council, CTA)

WHY? 44 percent of residents living within a half mile of the proposed extension are unemployed and 39 percent live below the poverty line.

- Create a new transit corridor with dedicated bus lanes on North Lake Shore Drive, extending service to the South Side by 2023. (CDOT, CTA, Park District)

WHY? Bus riders already account for more than 20 percent of users on North LSD.

BIKING AND WALKING

- Install at least 50 new accessible pedestrian signals per year to help visually impaired people cross the street. (CDOT)

WHY? Chicago has only 11 accessible pedestrian signals, compared to 120 in Seattle, 200 in Minneapolis and 252 in San Francisco.

- **Establish neighborhood slow zones with reduced speed limits (20 mph) and other traffic calming features in at least 10 community areas, starting with each of the eight Vision Zero High Crash Areas. (CDOT)**
WHY? Pedestrians hit by cars traveling 20 mph have a 95 percent survival rate compared to a 60 percent survival rate at 30 mph.
- **Build at least 100 miles of new on-street bikeways, including 50 miles of protected bike lanes and 25 miles of neighborhood greenways. Protected bike lanes should be prioritized for the spoke routes identified in Chicago's Streets for Cycling Plan 2020: Clark Street, Milwaukee Ave, Lake Street/Randolph Street, Archer Ave, Vincennes Ave, South Chicago Ave, and State Street/Wabash Ave. (CDOT)**
WHY? Chicago installed only 15.9 miles of new bikeways (1 mile of protected bike lane) in 2017, down from a peak of 39.5 new miles of bikeways in 2014. (What is the growth rate of cyclists).
- **Complete at least five road rightsizing projects per year, which make streets safer for all users by repurposing a travel lane to space for people biking, walking or riding transit. (CDOT)**
WHY? Before a recent rightsizing project on Vincennes Avenue on the South Side, 64 percent of drivers were traveling over 35 mph. After the project, only 27 percent were traveling over 35 mph.
- **Complete a nearly continuous Chicago River Trail system on the North, Central and Southwest Sides – closing the gap from downtown to the North Branch Trail and extending on the South Side to city limits. This system will include mostly riverside paths but some segments may be further from the river, especially in areas with barriers to riverside development like the South Branch Industrial Corridor. (DPD, CDOT)**
WHY? By the end of 2020, 17 of the 27 miles of property along the Chicago River will have trail infrastructure, but major gaps still exist, especially on the South Branch.
- **Fund and construct at least three rails-to-trails projects, including the planned Englewood Line, Paseo Trail in Pilsen, and Weber Spur Trail on the Northwest Side, while proactively implementing policies to prevent the displacement of current residents. (DPD, CDOT)**
WHY? Access to open space in the area surrounding the proposed Englewood Line is less than half the city average (1.7 acres per 1,000 residents).

ACTION STEPS: EQUITY

- **Update police policies to prioritize enforcement of the most dangerous driving behaviors and stop using traffic enforcement as a guise to unfairly investigate vulnerable segments of the population; integrate restorative justice practices into traffic enforcement. (CPD)**
WHY? The *Chicago Tribune* has reported that 56 percent of all bike tickets were issued in majority black neighborhoods, compared with 24 percent in Latino neighborhoods and 18 percent in white neighborhoods, according to Chicago Police Department statistics.
- **Incentivize compact, mixed-use, walkable and equitable transit-oriented development that's affordable for residents of all income levels and informed by robust community engagement. (DPD)**
WHY? About half of new jobs created in the Chicago region from 2005 to 2015 are located within a half-mile of a CTA or Metra station, according to a recent report by the Metropolitan Planning Council.
- **Develop an equity plan for transportation and infrastructure in Chicago, based on input from a working group of community leaders, advocates, agency staff and elected officials. This plan should include proactive policy interventions on topics that intersect with transportation and community leadership around major infrastructure projects to prevent the displacement of long-term residents and businesses.**
WHY? Car-centric transportation systems are fundamentally unfair and unjust and discriminate against many of society's most vulnerable people. Transportation and development decisions around major infrastructure projects can indirectly contribute to inequity. For example, since the city broke ground on the 606 Trail, housing prices have increased by 48 percent in lower income neighborhoods on the west side of the trail, according to a report by the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University.