IN BRIEF
Last year, a large, bipartisan group of legislators advocated for including walking and bicycling funding in the 2019 capital bill. Thanks to their efforts, the Rebuild Illinois capital plan includes $50 million annually for walking and bicycling projects. Funds are awarded through the existing, federally funded Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP), where demand for projects exceeds available dollars by a factor of seven. The new funds are prioritized for low-income, “high-need” communities.

THE PROBLEM
As work begins with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) on implementation, it’s become evident that the current language lacks clarity on two key points:

1. How often IDOT should set aside the $50 million in new state funds for ITEP.
2. How to define “high-need” communities.

WHAT THE BILL DOES
The bill clarifies the walking and bicycling portion of the capital plan:

1. Each year, in addition to any other funding to ITEP the Department shall set aside $50,000,000 received by the Department from the Road Fund.

WHY?
During work on implementation, IDOT expressed uncertainty as to whether the funding is annual or is for each two-year grant cycle. Legislators understood the funds to be allocated annually throughout the process of preparing the capital plan.

2. At least 25 percent of funding shall be directed towards projects in high-need communities, based on community median income and percentage of population living below the federal poverty line.

WHY?
During work on implementation, IDOT found property tax base data to be difficult to access and not a strong indicator of a community’s need. The data for percentage of population living below the federal poverty line is more available and reliable.

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