

ACTIVETRANS

UPDATE

New legislation for safer streets and better bus service moves forward



Thanks to people like you getting involved and letting your voice be heard, we've had a handful of exciting legislative wins in recent months.

One of the bills that we've been moving forward would allow communities throughout Illinois to build safer intersections on state-controlled streets.
Cont'd on page 4.

Broadview Mayor Katrina Thompson, a champion of walking & bicycling



Mayor Katrina Thompson has been planting the seeds for sustainable transportation and active, healthy lifestyles in Broadview, Illinois, over the last three years. As the village improves its walking and biking infrastructure, her efforts clearly have taken root in this west suburban community.
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Mayor Thompson pictured here in one of her Walks with the Mayor.

Chicago, Bike Grid Now! pushes for improving bike infrastructure

Creating bicycle-friendly infrastructure can often take years due to a lack of political will, scarcity of funding, and frustrating government bureaucracy. But it doesn't have to be that convoluted, according to Chicago, Bike Grid Now! The bicycle advocacy group is pushing for bicycle friendly, traffic-calmed streets that it says can be achieved sooner rather than later with minimal effort.

Cont'd on page 6.



If you took action to help advance legislation we've been fighting for, please give yourself a round of applause. Thank you!

Exploring an e-bike incentive program for Illinois

Electric bicycles could encourage more people to hop on two wheels as their primary mode of transportation, but their high costs remain a deterrent for many. That's why Active Transportation Alliance and Ride Illinois are advocating for an e-bike incentive program in Illinois — the first program in the state that would offset the cost of purchasing an e-bike.

Active Transportation Alliance and Ride Illinois are still working out the details of what they envision for the incentive program, but the cornerstone of such a program usually entails offering vouchers, rebates, and/or tax credits to qualified residents to purchase e-bikes.

The Illinois Environmental Council, Metropolitan Planning Council, Illinois chapter of the American



Photo: Steven Gross

Planning Association, Environmental Law & Policy Center, Equiticity, and Illinois PIRG have already signed on as supporters of the program.

Keeping a spotlight on better mobility during Chicago election

We want to congratulate Mayor-elect Brandon Johnson and wish him well as he prepares to lead the City of Chicago. We also offer congratulations to the new and returning members of Chicago City Council.

It was a busy election cycle for the candidates, but also for the Active Transportation Alliance and our Safe Streets for All, Transit that Works coalition. Throughout the election season, we worked steadily with the coalition to educate voters about the candidates' views on improving walking, biking, and transit.

The highlight of our candidate education efforts was a standing-room-only mayoral candidate forum held

in advance the February 24 election. Eight mayoral candidates attended the event, including Brandon Johnson and Paul Vallas. We also published responses to candidate questionnaires and held a series of focus groups in neighborhoods around the city to ask residents about their transportation challenges when walking, biking, or using transit.

The feedback from the focus groups helped inform the citywide platform on walking, biking, and public transportation that was developed by the Safe Streets for All coalition. Focus groups were held in South Chicago, South Lawndale, Garfield Park, Logan Square, and Belmont Cragin.

Valuable input for the platform also came from organizations like Chicago Family Biking, Commuters Take Action, and Chicago, Bike Grid Now! In addition we solicited input from Active Transportation Alliance members as well as labor groups, grass roots activists, community groups, and civic organizations. This multi-pronged outreach effort was critical in developing a holistic city-wide mobility platform that helped keep critical transportation issues in the spotlight for both candidates and voters. Read the platform at safestreets4all.org.



One of the focus groups was held at Holy Cross Hospital on Chicago's South Side.

Broadview Mayor Katrina Thompson, a champion of walking & bicycling *cont'd from page 1*

Because of her success in elevating walking and biking in her town, Thompson will be receiving the Public Leadership Award from Active Transportation Alliance at the Movers & Shakers Ball to be held at the Chicago History Museum on April 26 (see back cover).

Thompson's enthusiasm and commitment to improving walking and biking conditions in Broadview can be traced back to the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic forced everyone into quarantine, Thompson decided to start walking and bicycling to get some fresh air and stay active safely during the lockdown.

"I just started walking and biking, and it just became a part of my routine during that COVID period," Thompson says, "and it manifested into something that I wouldn't have ever thought would've happened."

ACTIVE MEETINGS

Those informal walks and bike rides morphed into the popular Walk/Bike with the Mayor initiative in 2020. Since then, from May to October, Thompson rides with a group of Broadview residents on Saturdays and takes a walk with another group of residents on Sundays for about an hour each day.

About 20 people join Thompson for these walks and rides. Thompson updates them on the village's latest policies and initiatives and asks for their ideas on how to improve and unite the village. "I see it as a win-win because I get to talk to them and get input from them, and we get exercise, too," she adds.

Born from these events have been new initiatives like Broadview's annual Juneteenth Festival, which has quickly become a popular draw in the community, featuring live music, food, and vendors.



Mayor Thompson (right) on one of her Rides with the Mayor.

A TOUR ON TWO WHEELS

Building on the Walk/Bike with the Mayor program, Thompson co-created the annual Tour de Proviso group bike ride with Maywood Trustee Miguel Jones. Held in October, the ride brings together hundreds of cyclists as they ride at their own pace through some of the surrounding western suburban communities that are part of Proviso Township.

Thompson cites the Tour de Proviso as one of her proudest achievements as mayor. About 450 riders took part in last year's 3rd annual Tour de Proviso, and featured local vendors as well as activities, including a bike raffle and bike registration.

"You see so much either walking or biking that you don't see riding in the car," she explains. "We can promote our community better when people can see things at eye level — whether they're walking or biking — like a small business or museum."

"We should be able to live, eat and play where we live and not have to always get in a vehicle to do it," she said. "And we can do it in a healthy way."

Better walking and biking in Broadview

- A bike path will be built along 25th Ave., a main arterial road.
- A new streetscape project from 9th to 17th Aves. along Roosevelt Rd. will create a safer environment for people walking and biking.
- Broadview is involved in an Active Transportation Alliance project to fill a 2.5-mile gap of the Des Plaines River Trail and connect it to the Forest Park Blue Line Station, the Illinois Prairie Path, and the Salt Creek Trail through Forest Park, Maywood, Broadview, and North Riverside.

New legislation for safer streets and better bus service moves forward *cont'd from page 1*

Currently, local communities are required to build intersections that will accommodate the turning of a 65-foot truck, which means there's no space left at the intersection for design features proven to save lives like pedestrian islands, curb extensions, and protected bike lanes.

The bill — which we ushered through the Illinois Senate and it soon will move to the state house — would eliminate this requirement and allow local communities to build safer intersections.

When we trim down the oversized intersections and make them more people-friendly, this is what happens:

- **We can add infrastructure proven to save lives:** Pedestrian islands, curb extensions, and protected bike lanes.
- People walking and rolling are granted shorter crossing distances, which is especially important for children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- More compact intersections means less speeding and fewer people taking turns too fast.
- Less pavement means less need for storm water detention and more green space for parkways and yards.

Stay tuned for more updates as this important legislation makes its way through the house and toward the governor's desk.



A pedestrian refuge island like the one above was proposed and rejected on Irving Park Rd. in Chicago (an IDOT-controlled road) to accommodate trucks turning off of a local, one-way street, N. Bell Ave. If that refuge island was built, it might have saved the life of Peter Paquette, who was killed by a motorist while trying to cross the street in June 2022.

MORE LEGISLATIVE WINS

In 2022, one of every three traffic fatalities in Chicago were people walking or biking. With traffic deaths at their highest point in years, we need to calm traffic on Chicago's major streets.

While we still have a long way to go to create truly equitable and safe streets for all, we must celebrate the small steps toward bigger goals along the way. Here are a few other important pieces of legislation that will make our streets better places for walking, biking, and transit.



CHICAGO The Complete Streets Ordinance

The Complete Streets Ordinance, which passed Chicago City Council in March, ensures that when CDOT is resurfacing arterial streets, it adds safety improvements such as bike lanes, bus lanes, curb extensions, and pedestrian islands.

CHICAGO

The Safe Streets Pilot Ordinance

This newly approved Chicago ordinance establishes two small-scale downtown pilot programs for automated enforcement of particular parking violations: cars parked in bike lanes, bus-only lanes, bus stops, and crosswalks. This pilot program will discourage drivers from illegally parking in places that slow down our buses and put our most vulnerable road users in dangerous situations.



CHICAGO

The Plow the Sidewalks Ordinance

This ordinance, which was introduced to Chicago City Council and will be assigned to a committee, would create a municipal sidewalk snow clearing pilot program. The pilot program will focus on disinvested neighborhoods, particularly those with high population density and many vacant properties. Areas with more young families, older people, and disabled people will also be prioritized as part of the pilot program.



ILLINOIS

A Zero-Fatalities Task Force

This bill, which has passed the Illinois Senate and is now in the House, will create a statewide task force that will help chart the path toward eliminating traffic deaths. The task force — which would include local governments, transportation departments, public health experts, advocacy organizations, and others — will develop policies and evaluate our state's approach to eliminating traffic deaths.

ILLINOIS

Adding Safety Improvements During Resurfacing

Similar to the Complete Streets Ordinance recently passed in Chicago, this state bill would require adding safety improvements for people walking and biking when IDOT is resurfacing streets. Improvements could be signage, crosswalk improvements, curb bump outs, protected bike lanes, and bus shelters. This bill has passed the Illinois Senate and is now under review in the House.

Thank you for taking action

One of the things Active Transportation Alliance does best is mobilize people to contact their lawmakers about bills that will make walking, biking, and transit safer and more welcoming.

We're grateful to everyone who emailed their lawmakers, shared feedback on frustrating and

unsafe experiences on the road, filed witness slips, and testified in front of city council and other governing bodies. In some cases, these legislative wins took years of organizing and agitation from advocates, activists, and elected officials alike.

Chicago, Bike Grid Now! pushes for improving bike infrastructure *cont'd from page 1*

Active Transportation Alliance recognized the impact that Chicago Bike Grid Now! has made in shining a light on the need for safer streets and successfully mobilizing residents to its cause by honoring the group with its Advocate of the Year Award at our annual member meeting this past December.

Chicago, Bike Grid Now! is advocating for 10 percent of Chicago streets to be prioritized for bicycles—that equates to 450 miles. Chicago has 4,500 miles of streets, but only 28 miles have protected bike lanes. “We think 10% [of streets] that are bike-prioritized is totally reasonable, and it should be citywide,” says Nate Hutcheson, who co-founded Chicago, Bike Grid Now! in 2022. “We don’t plow our streets on a ward-by-ward basis. We shouldn’t provide bike infrastructure that way either.”

Low cost, low effort

Chicago, Bike Grid Now! is pressing the city to create a network of low-stress bike-friendly streets with temporary infrastructure that can be implemented quickly with a small investment. The group is asking city officials to create a 10 mph speed limit for cars mostly on residential streets and short segments of commercial streets as needed. It wants pedestrians, wheelchair users, scooters, and cyclists to have the right of way on these streets.

The advocacy group wants the city to eventually follow up with permanent infrastructure, including planters, jersey barriers, traffic diverters, chicanes, curbs, and bumpouts. “We need to create something now that protects people and makes it safe to get around the city, and then improve it over time,” Hutcheson explains.

Proud moments

Chicago, Bike Grid Now! is part of the Safe Streets for All Coalition, a group of sustainable transportation groups that have joined forces to improve walking, biking, and public transit in Chicago. Active Transportation Alliance is a member of the coalition.

Hutcheson is particularly pleased with how much Chicago, Bike Grid Now! has grown in membership and influence in such a short amount of time. “It’s been really powerful to see the size and strength of our support increased, both people that have come



A Bike Jam organized by Chicago, Bike Grid Now!

on board to join Bike Grid Now and do this work, and then also outside in the city for safer streets,” Hutcheson says. “I think we’ve made a lot of allies, we’re educating a lot of elected officials, and hoping to hold those people accountable.”

Two initiatives of Chicago, Bike Grid Now!

Bike jams: The group holds the Bike Jams — a group ride that cycles slowly at 3 to 4 mph — in neighborhoods where it would like to see better bicycling infrastructure implemented. It partners with local community organizations to help publicize the rides and reaches out to the alderpersons who represent those neighborhoods, giving them the opportunity to speak to their constituents about what they will do to make the streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Bike buses: Chicago, Bike Grid Now! also hosts Bike Buses, in which bicyclists ride together in a group to provide safety in numbers, picking up other cyclists along the way like a bus. Cyclists join the bike buses along three routes — N. Halsted St., S. Halsted St., and N. Milwaukee Ave. — and can join the rides at certain stops. The group even has a “bike bus tracker” that lets people know when the bike buses will arrive at the various stops. Learn more at bikegridnow.org.

Bold solutions needed from state to address transit problems

At a recent hearing on our regional transit system held by the Illinois Senate, the Active Transportation Alliance and other advocates urged lawmakers to step up with needed support for a host of transit problems, including a looming funding cliff and the need for better governance for the transit agencies.

During the hearing, Illinois Senate committee members heard from the leaders of the local transit agencies, leaders from local labor and business organizations, and representatives from local advocacy and planning organizations. Dorval Carter, president of the CTA, was the only transit agency leader not in attendance.

Before the hearing, Active Transportation Alliance teamed up with Commuters Take Action and Access Living to hold a press conference to shine a spotlight on how the state needs to get serious about supporting public transit during a time of great need. The press conference was intended to reinforce the sentiments conveyed by advocates in the hearing — that lawmakers must look for bold solutions to address this enormous budget shortfall and a host of chronic transit issues.

Day-to-day reliability problems

As most transit riders in Chicago know, our transit system has serious reliability problems. There is little transparency and accountability from the CTA, and making matters worse is a faulty bus and train tracking system. Another challenge facing the system is the CTA's difficulty in hiring people to fill hundreds of vacant positions. The effects of unreliable and poor service and staffing issues are being disproportionately felt by the Black and Brown riders who are the core users of the transit system.

"Since the onset of the pandemic, the Chicago Transit Authority's service has deteriorated significantly and thousands of commuters are victims to ghost buses and late rides every day," said Morgan Madderom, an organizer with Commuters Take Action.



Morgan Madderom from Commuters Take Action speaks at a press conference before the hearing.

The impending funding cliff

In coming years, transit agencies are expecting a \$730 million shortfall, which represents roughly 20 percent of the annual transit budget. This funding gap could require drastically cutting back service and needed improvements for CTA, Metra, and Pace starting in 2026.

Jacky Grimshaw, vice president of government affairs at the Center for Neighborhood Technology, said during her testimony that a 20 percent operating budget gap cannot be addressed simply by cutting 20 percent of service. "It might require a 30-40 percent service cut to reduce operating costs by 20 percent," she said.

Rethinking governance structure

In her testimony at the hearing, Audrey Wennink, senior director of transportation at Metropolitan Planning Council, said over the past 40 years the governance structure for transit in Northeast Illinois has not changed, but our mobility needs have. She urged the committee to take a closer look at the four separate boards overseeing four different transit agencies in Northeast Illinois: "Who is appointing these boards? What overlap is there? Does this support good regional decision making and service coordination? What other models are out there that we should consider?"

"Now is the time to double down on developing a vision for the future of transit in a post-COVID world," she said. "We know we need to fix the problems of today while also addressing the problems of tomorrow."

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE

CHICAGO BIKE MONTH

PRESENTED BY FREEMAN KEVENIDES LAW FIRM



May is Chicago Bike Month. Let's get rolling.

- A series of group rides throughout the city, including the Ride of Silence on May 17
- Meet Active Trans staff and fellow riders at a series of biking celebration stations
- Film screening
- Bike to school events
- Bike repair clinics



Visit activetrans.org/bikemonth for the calendar of events.



2023 Bike Commuter Challenge

The annual bike challenge, presented by Keating Law Offices, has been extended for one full month: **May 15 – June 11.**

biketoworkchallenge.org

Movers & Shakers Ball

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE

Wed., April 26 | 6–9pm
Chicago History Museum

Join us as we honor our most important active transportation champions of the year.

Silent auction | Hors d'oeuvres
Drinks | Paddle raise
See an early Chicago "L" train

For more information and tickets: activetrans.org/ball



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