

2015 Chicago Active Transportation Platform



We live in an era when more Chicagoans of all ages are choosing to walk, bike and ride public transit. In recent years, we have made progress in shaping our streets to reflect the needs of today's urban residents, but many barriers still exist. By working together to eliminate these barriers, we can further increase the number of trips taken by biking, walking and public transit, and significantly reduce the likelihood of traffic crashes and fatalities.

Municipal elections provide a unique opportunity to educate decision makers and the general public about the role active transportation can play in making our communities healthier, cleaner, and more economically vibrant. Communities throughout the city benefit from increased investment in alternative transportation options, particularly in low-income neighborhoods where the cost of owning a car is a major financial burden.

The following platform is intended as an educational resource to inform the general public and candidates for local office about current priorities for improving biking, walking, and public transit, as identified by our members, supporters and staff.

Active Transportation Alliance is a non-partisan member organization that does not endorse candidates for public office.

Design streets that work for everyone whether they walk, bike, use transit or drive

The City of Chicago is committed to designing streets that balance the needs of people walking, biking, using transit or driving, but too many streets and intersections throughout the city are currently designed to give priority to fast moving cars. We need to continue to invest in new infrastructure and maintenance programs that make our roads safer for all users, everywhere, and move us closer to achieving the city's goal to eliminate traffic fatalities by 2022.

Action Items:

- Establish a sustainable funding source in the city's annual budget dedicated to pedestrian infrastructure improvements, prioritizing projects that would make the most dangerous intersections and corridors in the region safer.
- Target pedestrian and bike infrastructure projects that fill in gaps in the existing street network and address inequity in the transportation system.
- Dedicate additional resources to bike lane and crosswalk maintenance year-round and increase collaboration between various city agencies involved.
- Pilot programs to temporarily or seasonally provide dedicated street space to people walking and riding bikes, such as temporary pedestrian plazas or designating traffic lanes for bikes-only on streets with high levels of bike traffic.

- Adopt an ordinance requiring relatively large office buildings to provide secure bike parking or allow tenants to bring bicycles into their offices.

Commit the city to reaching and exceeding the milestones of the *Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan 2020*

Over the last few years, remarkable progress has been made under the city’s current bike plan, the *Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan 2020*. Progress has been especially impressive on the plan’s Spoke and Crosstown Bike Routes, which connect people on bikes to different neighborhoods and the city’s downtown core. But with nearly 80 percent of bike trips in Chicago being non-commute trips like running to the neighborhood store to pick up milk, an increased focus on Neighborhood Bike Routes throughout the city is important moving forward. Neighborhood Bike Routes provide the low-stress experience most people prefer by using signage, pavement markings, traffic calming, and/or bike lanes to create calm side streets optimized for biking and walking to neighborhood destinations.

Action Items:

- Complete at least 150 miles of buffered and protected lanes (currently at 83 miles).
- Ensure continuous bikeways are installed on all Spoke Routes to the city limits.
- Mark and sign all Neighborhood Bike Routes and install additional improvements, such as bike lanes or traffic calming measures, on 100 miles of the routes.

Grow education and enforcement programs that improve the behavior of all road users

Everyone should travel respectfully and safely on our streets – whether you’re biking, walking or driving – and we need to work together to create safer conditions on the road. Increasing enforcement of traffic laws while educating all users on how to behave responsibly will help improve the environment on the road.

Action Items:

- Expand pedestrian and bike safety education programs in Chicago schools.
- Increase in-person and photo/video enforcement of existing traffic laws.
- Implement neighborhood slow zones in neighborhoods that would benefit most from reduced speed limits and increased enforcement.

Improve active transportation access and movement along the lakefront

Chicago’s 18-mile Lakefront Trail is the busiest trail in the United States, with peak daily usage exceeding 100,000 people per day, including 30,000 people per day on the busiest segments. As trail usage has spiked in recent years, many segments of the trail are often congested and dangerous, with

serious crashes all too common and some people avoiding the trail because it's too crowded. The Navy Pier Flyover will be a major safety and transportation improvement, but there are currently no plans to address overcrowding along the rest of the trail. The Chicago Park District is investing millions of dollars in new and improved attractions along the lake front, and yet it is far too difficult for people to access these attractions using the Lake Front Trail.

Action Items:

- Implement low-cost, near-term improvements over the next two years that address safety concerns (e.g. signage, pavement markings, creating separated trail space for bicyclists and pedestrians).
- Prioritize active transportation in long-term lakefront planning projects (e.g. Museum Campus, North Lake Shore Drive reconstruction), but do not wait many years for these projects to commence construction before fixing the Lake Front Trail system.
- Improve biking, walking and transit access to popular lakefront destinations that are currently difficult to reach on foot, bus or by bike.

Connect people to jobs and educational opportunities by expanding investment in and access to public transit

Chicago's hub-and-spoke transit system serves certain parts of the city well, but many neighborhoods lack access to quality rapid transit options. In comparison to systems in other American and international cities, the current system is drastically underfunded and in need of significant infrastructure improvements and expansion to function on a truly world-class level.

Action Items:

- Implement Central Loop Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) with as many gold standard features as possible, and move forward with the planning process for Ashland BRT and a BRT network plan.
- Implement "BRT Lite" improvements that can quickly and inexpensively increase bus speeds and reliability, similar to New York City's Select Bus Service.
- Support increasing investment in transit regionally and establishing a dedicated revenue stream at the county level to fund improvements and expansion of rapid transit, including the Red Line South extension and BRT routes.
- Increase accessibility of transit stations for people with disabilities, low-income residents, seniors, children and families.
- Increase frequency of Metra service within the city on lines where demand exists.
- Continue expanding Divvy by adding stations in communities where access is limited and removing barriers to participation for low and moderate income people.