

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE

Regional Mode Share Report



August, 2018

activetrans.org



The Active Transportation Alliance is Chicagoland’s voice for better walking, biking and transit. With an aim to create healthy, sustainable and equitable communities, our goal for 2025 is to see 50 percent of all trips in the region made by people walking, biking or using public transit.

To track progress by mode, Active Trans compiles and analyzes publicly available mode share and travel data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) and US Decennial Census. The census provides local commute data by mode on an annual basis; however, the survey data is limited since it does not capture pedestrian, bicycle or transit trips made for non-work purposes such as shopping or recreation. This report also analyzes transportation data from our regional planning organization Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) as well as congestion data from Texas A&M University’s Urban Mobility Report.

Overall Trends

The Chicagoland region has seen a substantial decrease in walking, biking and transit work trips since 1980 when nearly a quarter of residents used one of these modes to get to work. Regionally, as walking, biking and transit trips have declined, driving commute trips have increased as have the percentage of people working from home. While disappointing, over the last decade the downward trend of people walking, biking and taking transit to work has reversed and is again climbing, growing from 15.4 percent in 2006 to 17.1 percent in 2016 (Figure 1). This recent growth was mostly driven by an increase in walking, biking and transit in the City of Chicago (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Regional Bike/Walk/Transit Commuter Trends¹

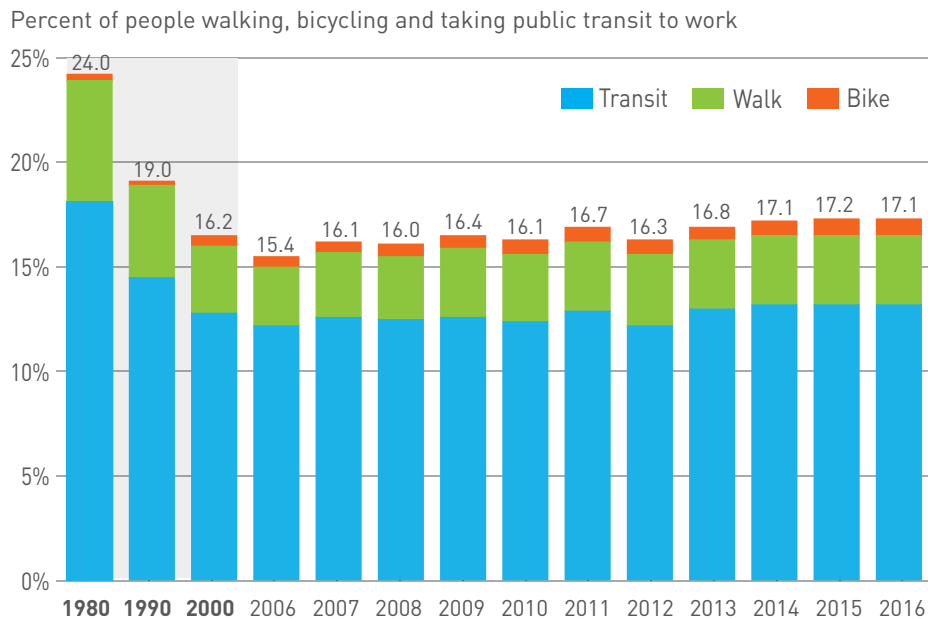
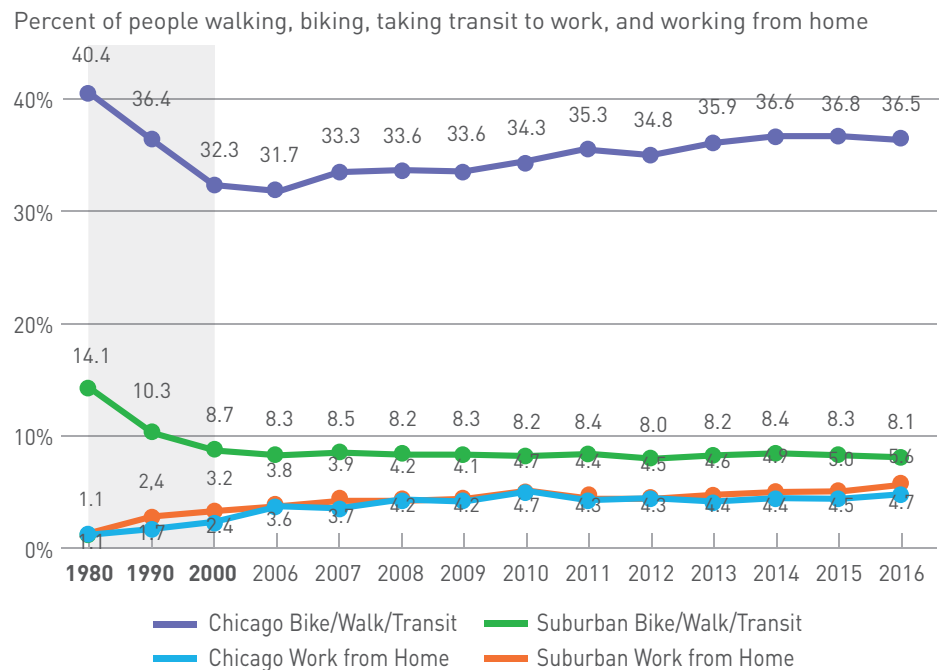


Figure 2. Chicago and Suburbs: Non-Auto Commuter Trends¹



Source: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey

NOTE: In this report, Chicagoland or the region refers to Cook County, DuPage County, Lake County, Kane County, Kendall County, McHenry County and Will County unless otherwise noted in the footnotes.



Car Dependency is Growing

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) growth has far outpaced population growth at the state level in large part because we continue to be overly dependent on cars (Figure 3). In the suburbs, the percentage of work trips by car has increased since 1980 (Figure 4) as the overall percentage of walking, biking and transit commute trips has decreased. While Chicago follows suburban trends with an overall rise in the proportion of motor vehicle trips since 1980, motor vehicle commute levels in the city have tapered down substantially over the last decade and are on a trajectory to dip back down to 1980 levels (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Regional Percent Change of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Population Growth since 1980^{2,3}

Between 1980 and 2017, regional VMT grew nearly four times faster than population.

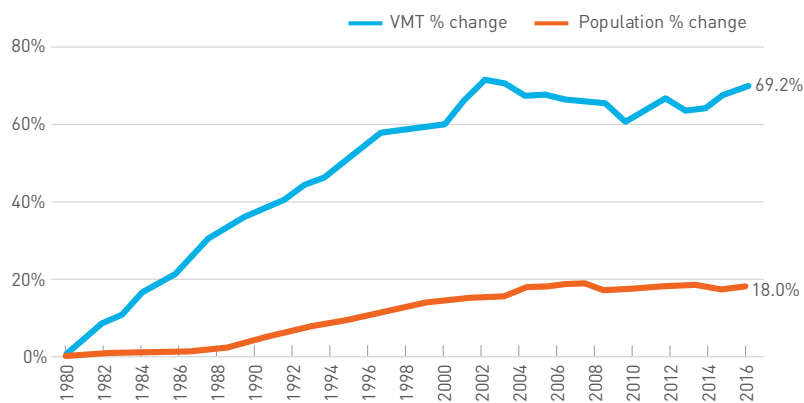
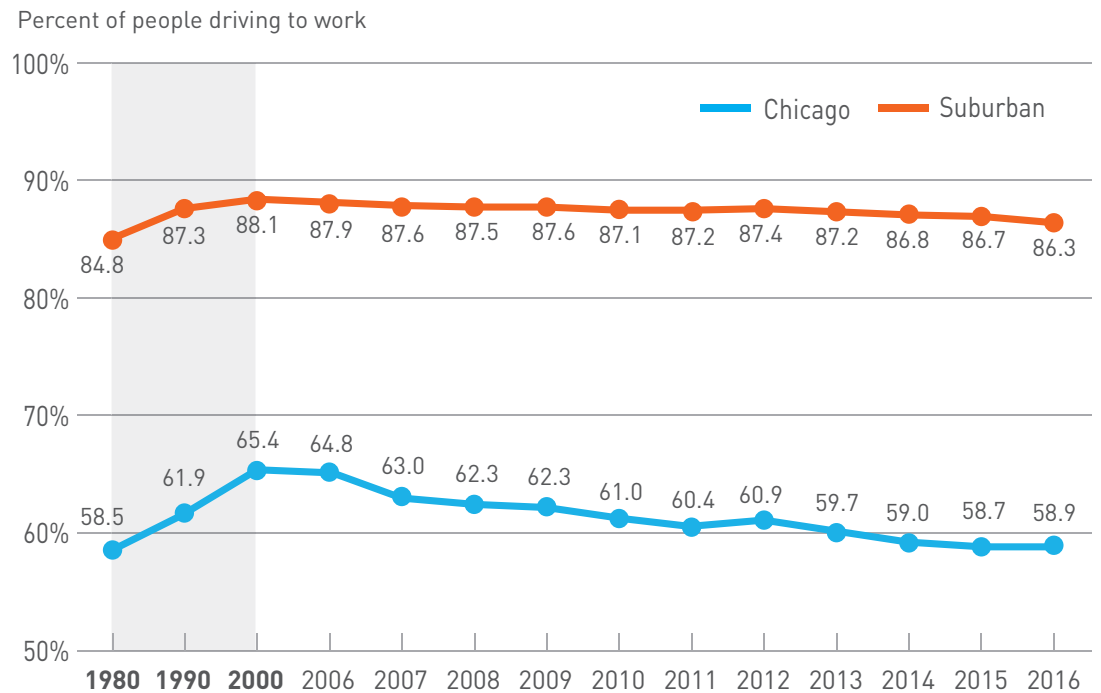


Figure 4. Chicago and Suburbs: Motor Vehicle Commuter Trends¹



Sources: US Decennial Census, American Community Survey, Illinois Department of Transportation

Car Dependency is Growing (Cont'd)

Unfortunately, with the level of car commutes rising at a disproportionately high rate to population growth and with walking, biking and transit commuter trends lagging behind, our region is not seeing the progress needed to make our communities cleaner, healthier, more livable, equitable and economically viable.

The explosion in driving since 1980 has been spurred in part by expressway expansion (Figure 5) that was purported to reduce congestion, but has not as Figure 6 shows. More driving also leads to comparatively more traffic injuries and fatalities, with more than 175 traffic injuries each day and nearly 500 traffic fatalities each year in metro Chicago⁴. Expressway expansion is clearly a bad investment; the billions of dollars going into expanding our expressways is not improving safety, mobility or congestion levels.

Figure 5. Regional Expressway Expansion and Costs

Our region continues to prioritize expressway expansion, spending billions on projects that have only shown to increase car trips and congestion longterm.

20 Years of Expressway Growth⁵

+1,000 miles of new expressways and arterial lane-miles between 1996 and 2015



Cost of Infrastructure Projects^{6 7}

\$7.4 billion (\$2 billion for expansion)

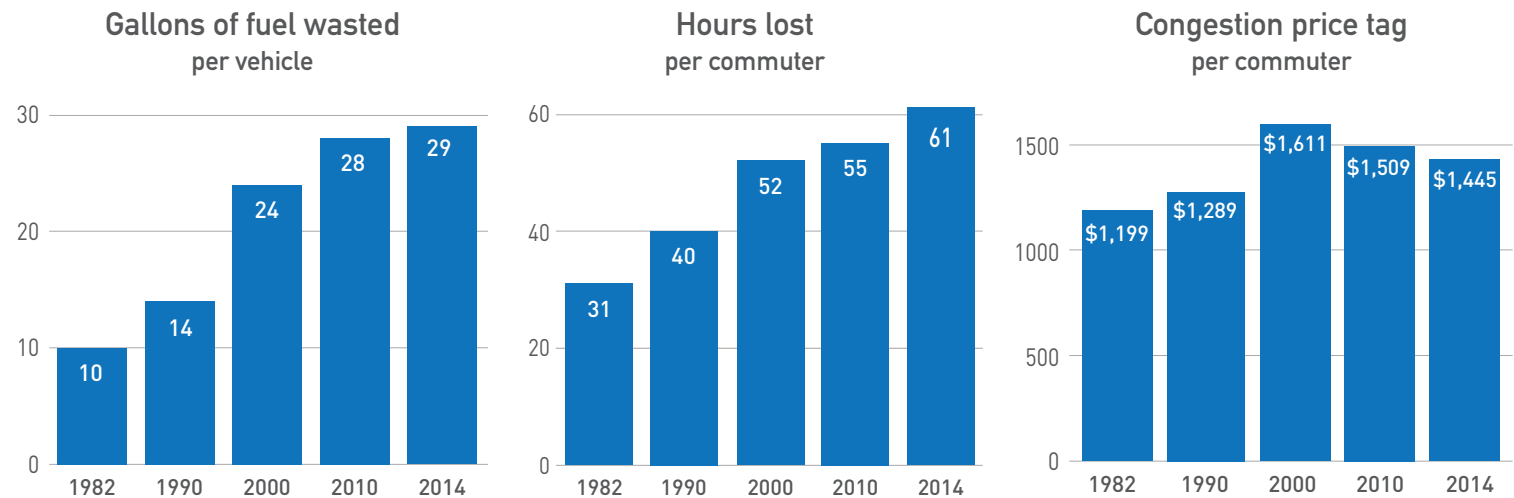
Estimated price tag of planned reconstruction and expansions of I-294, I-290 and I-55

\$12 million

Cost of Chicago's 100 miles of new bikeways from 2011 to 2015

Figure 6. Cost of Congestion in Chicagoland⁸

In 2014, Chicagoans spent 61 hours stuck in congestion and wasted an excess of 29 gallons of fuel at a price tag of \$1,445 per commuter. Over the last four decades, commuters have been spending more and more time sitting in congestion, wasting time, fuel and money.



Sources: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois Department of Transportation, Chicago Tribune (Figure 5), Texas A&M University Transportation Institute (Figure 6)

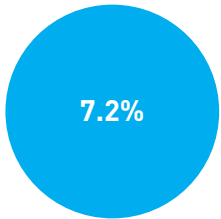
Walking Trends

Since 1980, the proportion of people commuting by foot in the suburbs and City of Chicago has decreased (Figure 8). In Chicago, however, despite a decline in population, walking commutes have rebounded over the last decade and are now approaching 1990 levels (Figure 8). In 2016, even with a growing suburban population, only approximately 47,000 commuters walked to work in the suburbs compared to nearly 90,000 in 1980. In Chicago, over 86,000 walked to work regularly in 2016, down slightly from 93,000 in 1980.



Figure 7. Regional Poverty and Walkability in 2016⁹

In the region, those who live in poverty are almost three times more likely to get to work by foot compared to those living above the poverty level. Throughout the region, focusing on equity and building complete streets with a connected network of sidewalks and safe pedestrian infrastructure is essential.

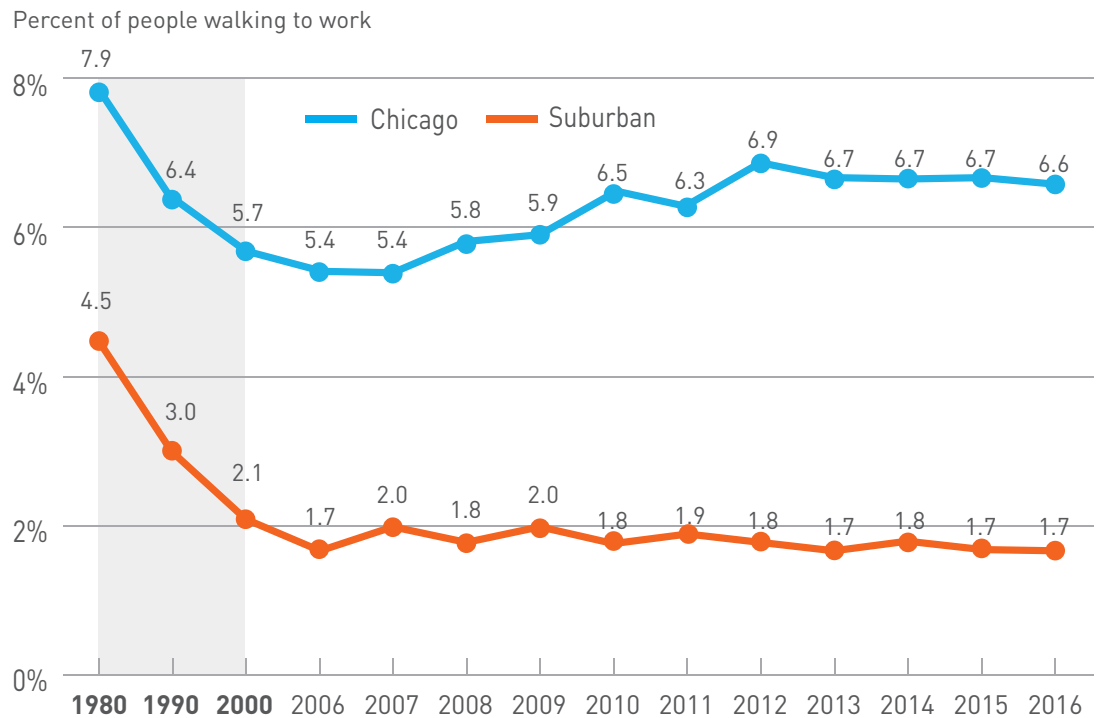


Percent of people **below the poverty level** who walk to work



Percent of people **above the poverty level** who walk to work

Figure 8. Chicago and Suburbs: Walking Commuter Trends¹



Sources: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey

Bicycling Trends

The proportion of people who report they bike to work in the suburbs has remained fairly constant over the last decade (Figure 10). However, along with population growth and a 0.15 percent increase in overall bicycle mode share, the total number of suburban residents who bike to work increased from nearly 5,000 in 1980 to over 10,000 in 2016. The City of Chicago, in spite of its population loss, has seen an even more dramatic rise in bicycle commuting with its mode share reaching 1.7 percent in 2016, growing from approximately 2,000 commuters in 1980 to over 22,000 commuters in 2016. As with walking, these numbers may underreport bicycling because survey respondents can only select one travel mode. For example, a person who bikes to a train station might identify him or herself as a transit commuter.



Figure 9. Regional Gender Gap in Bicycling in 2016⁹

At a regional level, women represent 47% of the commuter population, but only 26% of commuters who bike to work are women.



Our roads should be built with all users in mind to create safe, connected, stress-free bicycle networks that are suitable and attractive to everyone, regardless of gender, age and ability.

Sources: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey

Figure 10. Chicago and Suburbs: Bicycling Commuter Trends¹



Transit Trends

The proportion of transit commuters in the suburbs and Chicago has dropped since 1980 (Figure 12). Between 1980 and 2016, bus and train commuters in the suburbs decreased from 9.3 percent to 6.1 percent (or approximately 182,000 to 170,000 commuters), even as the suburban population grew by more than 1.5 million. In Chicago, people taking transit to work decreased from 32.4 percent to 28.2 percent (or approximately 386,000 to 371,000 commuters), following population loss; however, since 2006, the transit system has seen an upswing in ridership to work.



Figure 11. Race, Income & Transit in the Region in 2016⁹

Investment in transit is necessary to connect residents to work, school, grocery, health care and other destinations. This investment is especially vital for serving those most in need and for communities that have been traditionally underserved.

Commuters who live in poverty in the region are almost twice as likely to rely on transit to get to work.



Percent of people **below the poverty level** taking transit to work.



Percent of people **above the poverty level** taking transit to work.

A higher proportion of Black residents rely on public transportation compared to White residents in the region.



Percent of **Black residents** taking transit to work.

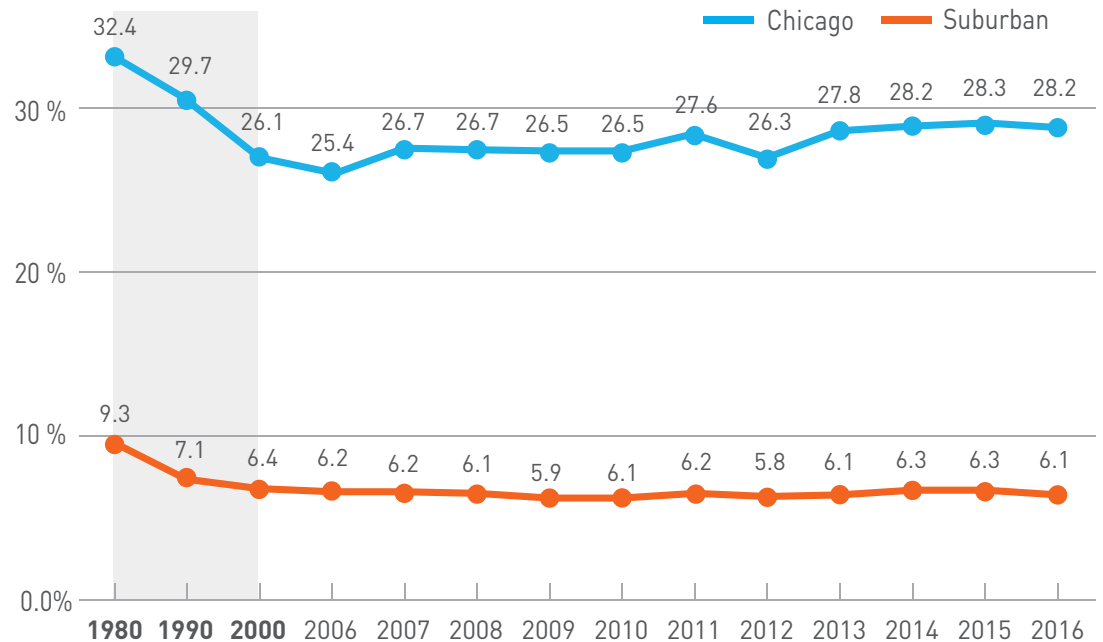


Percent of **White residents** taking transit to work.

Sources: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey

Figure 12. Chicago and Suburbs: Transit Commuter Trends¹

Percent of people taking the bus or train to work

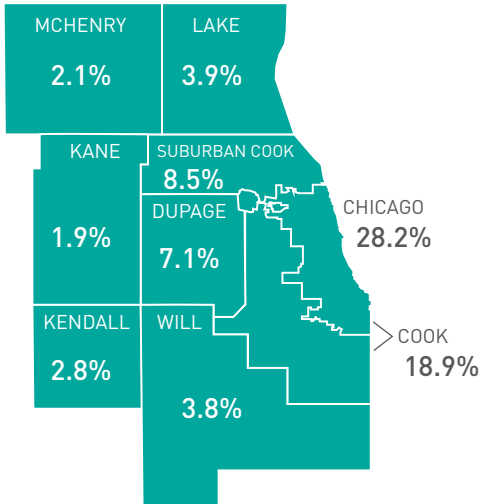


Mode Share by County in 2016⁹

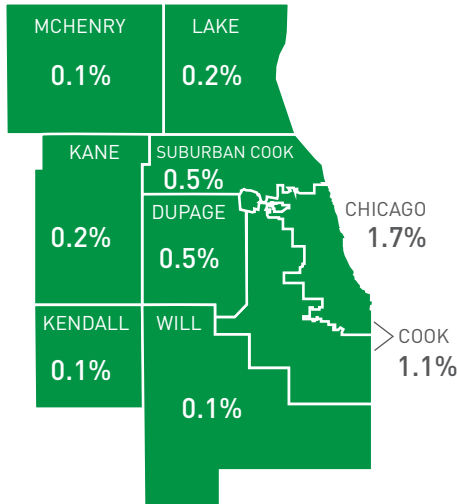
The following regional maps display mode share by county in 2016.

In the suburbs of Chicagoland, suburban Cook County and DuPage County led the way in the proportion of commuters taking transit and biking to work while Lake County led in the percentage of people walking to work.

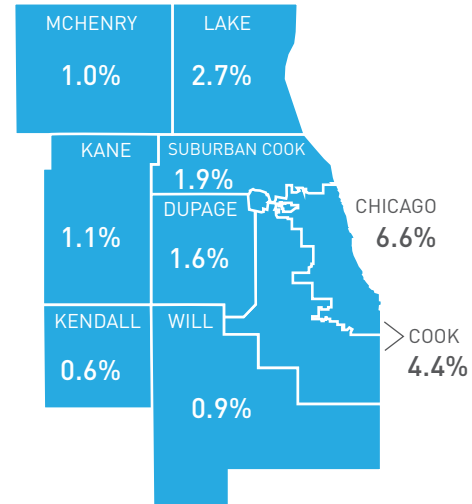
TRANSIT



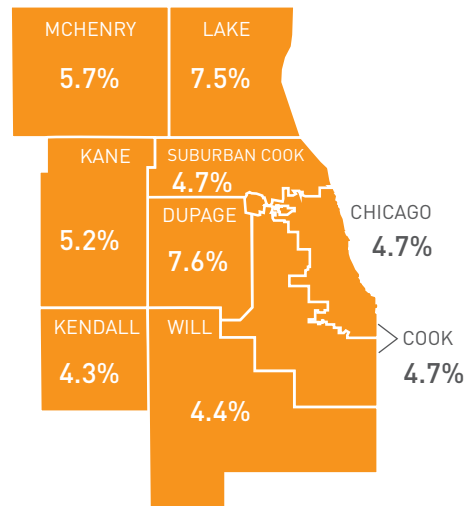
BIKE



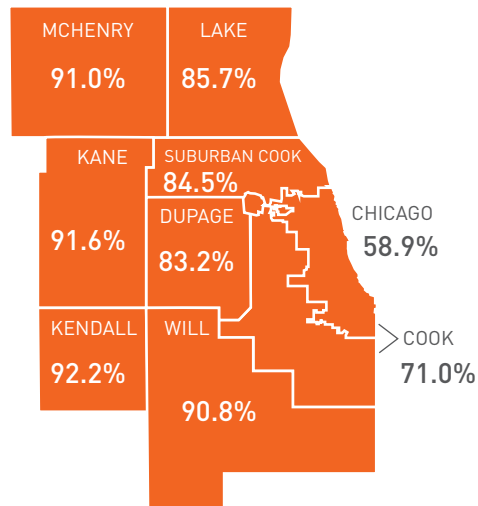
WALK



WORK FROM HOME



MOTORIZED VEHICLE

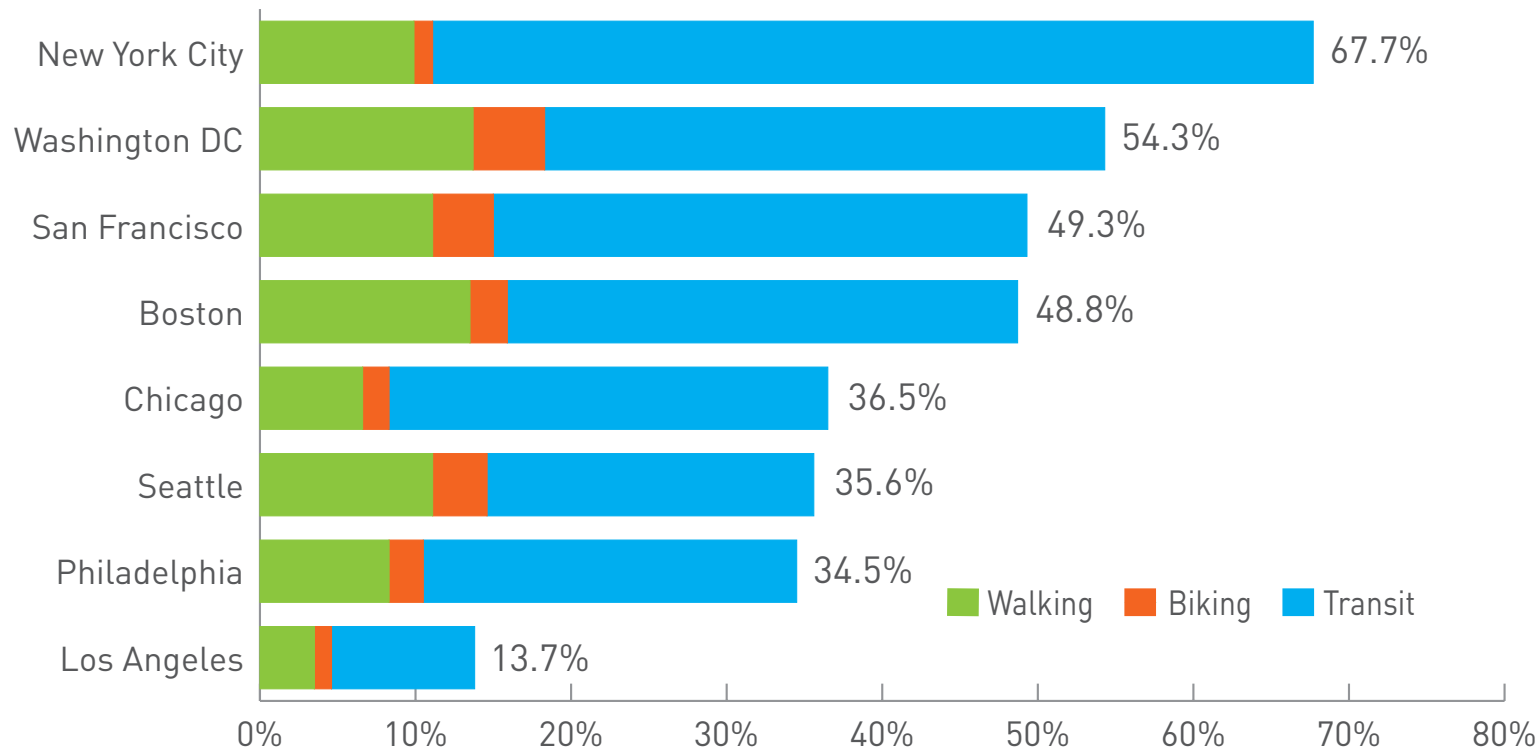


Source: American Community Survey

National Mode Share Comparison in 2016⁹

Compared to seven of our peer cities in the US, Chicago is lagging behind New York City, Washington DC, San Francisco and Boston in its walking, biking and transit mode share split. Philadelphia and Seattle rank close behind Chicago with a larger share of their commuter populations walking and biking to work.

Figure 13. Walk/Bike/Transit Commuters in 2016 Major US City Comparison



Footnotes

- ¹ ACS 2006 to 2016 1-year estimates for all counties except Kendall County. Only 5-year estimate data was available for each year for Kendall County. US Decennial Census 1980, 1990, and 2000. Census data from 1980 and 1990 excludes Kendall County. Motor vehicle trips include trips taken by car, truck, van, taxi, motorcycle and other means.
- ² Percent change compares the total number of people driving in the region in 1980 (Census) to all other years (Census 1983-2004 and ACS 2005-2016 1-year estimates). Kendall County was removed from the calculation because the data was not available in the US Census.
- ³ [Illinois Travel Statistics Report](#): Travel History, Illinois Department of Transportation, reports from 1980 to 2017
Percent change of Chicagoland vehicle miles traveled was analyzed between 1980 and 2017 with 1980 treated as the base year. VMT data for Kendall County as well as all data for 1981, 1982 and 2003 were not available.
- ⁴ [Chicago Regional Crash Report](#), Active Transportation Alliance, July 2018
Injuries and fatalities for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists have increased in aggregate between 2014 and 2016.
- ⁵ [CMAP ONTO 2050 Report: Highway System Performance Trends](#), Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, September 2017
Highway expansion statistic taken from page 17.
- ⁶ Chicago Tribune, highway expansion estimates. [Tollway unveils, advances \\$4B plan to widen Tri-State, from Balmoral to 95th](#), April 2017
[State expands plan to add toll lanes on I-55](#), Dec 2017
[Eisenhower Expressway widening project gets federal approval](#), July 2017
- ⁷ Chicago Tribune, [Build more and better bike lanes, cycling advocates urge Chicago](#), October 2015
The \$12 million price tag for bike lanes includes pedestrian crosswalks, new turn lanes for motorists, new traffic signals, signs and pavement restriping.
- ⁸ [2015 Urban Mobility Report](#), Texas A&M University Transportation Institute, August 2015.
Congestion data available for the Chicago IL-IN metropolitan area was analyzed between 1982 and 2014.
- ⁹ ACS 2016 1-year estimate for all counties except Kendall County. Only 2012-2016 5-year estimate data was available for Kendall County.