

Written Testimony for Senate Capital Hearing in Grayslake, May 3, 2019

Topic: State funding to help municipalities build safer streets and trails for all users

Submitted by: City of North Chicago

While cars will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for most North Chicago residents and visitors, small increases in the use of other modes of transportation could help activate the City's sidewalks and improve public health. Many of North Chicago's arterial roads accommodate fast-moving traffic, which creates unsafe and unpleasant conditions for people walking or biking along these roads. The City is working on implementing the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and is working on promoting itself as a community that supports active transportation, including walking, biking, and transit. North Chicago seeks to influence the travel choices of residents and visitors with education programs and community events.

Before the adoption of the City's Comprehensive Plan, a Compact Complete Streets Policy Guide was adopted to help the City prioritize and plan for street and transportation system improvements that will serve all users: pedestrians of all abilities, cyclists, transit riders and users of motor vehicles. The goal of the guide was to promote best practices by providing residents and visitors alike with improved, more enjoyable and safer access to their destinations.

North Chicagoans experience life through their daily commutes, summer festivals, block parties, and even views from their front porches. These types of public activities are often a reflection of a community's overall vitality and conditioned on the nature of surrounding streets. So, to move away from the narrow perspectives of the past, it is essential to build and maintain our roads for healthy business districts, vibrant neighborhoods, and high quality of life. More importantly, we must remember to measure success on safety, choices, and livability.

The City of North Chicago is geographically compact enough to be efficiently navigated by cycling or walking, provided that proper facilities and improvements are available. With many utilitarian trips being less than two miles from home, often these trips can be made by foot or bike. Local schools are sites of high traffic congestion at drop-off and pick-up times on school days. By providing opportunities to increase the number of trips to similar community destinations utilizing non-motorized vehicle or pedestrian modes, there is the potential to reduce traffic congestion in these areas and beyond. This also encourages a healthy alternative that will help reduce pollution and noise while improving the community's quality of life.

Committing state funding to help communities, like North Chicago, build safer streets and trails, help lower transportation costs by providing individuals and families with options other than driving. The National Coalition for Complete Streets notes that "when residents have the opportunity to walk, bike, or take transit, they have more control over their expenses by replacing car trips with inexpensive options.