

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE

2020 Regional Mode Share Report



Released February 2020 and updated with 2018 data

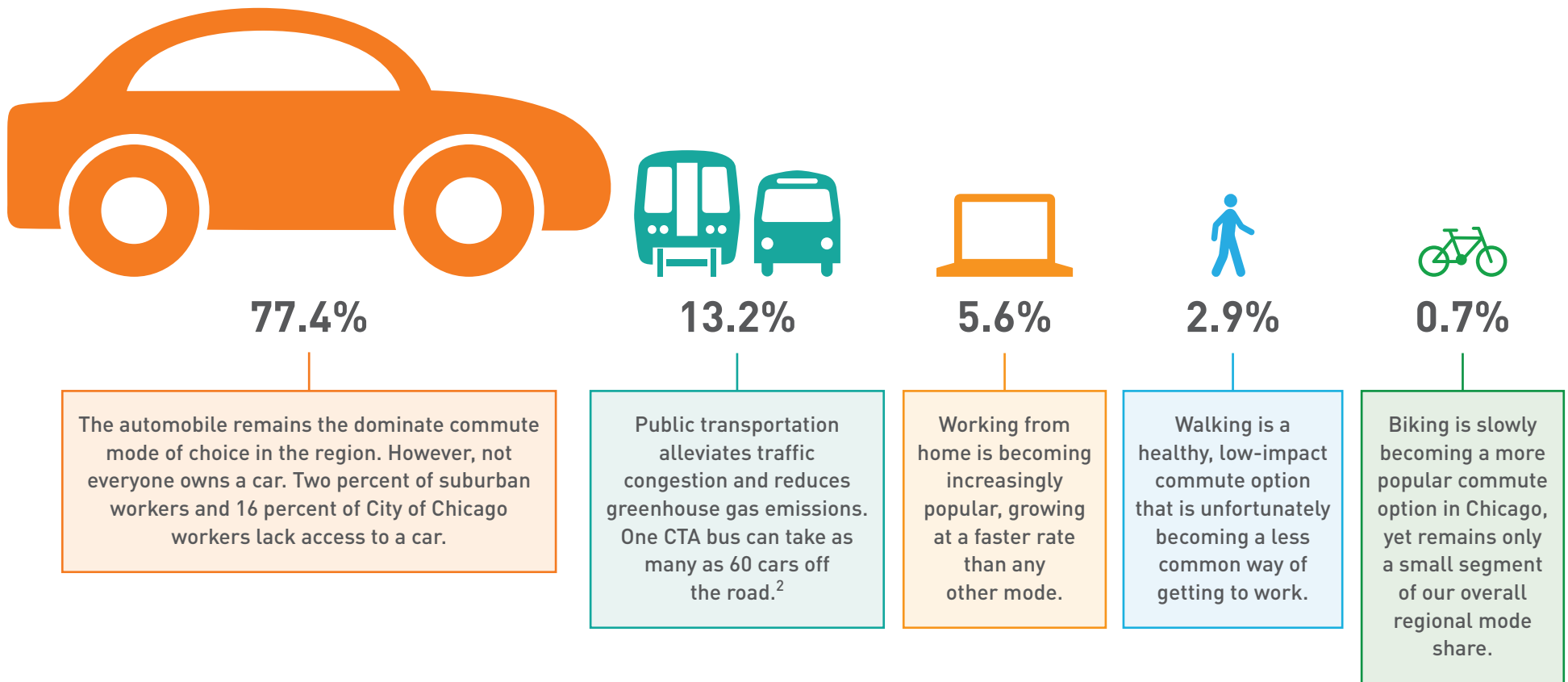
activetrans.org



The mission of the Active Transportation Alliance is to advocate for walking, bicycling, and public transit 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.

The following report tracks mode share trends for people commuting by car, transit, foot, and bike since 1980. A 2018 regional snapshot with the most recent available data is below.

2018 Chicagoland mode share snapshot¹



Sources: American Community Survey and Chicago Transit Authority

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.

Overall trends

In 1980, nearly a quarter of all Chicagoland residents commuted to work by foot, bike, or transit. Four decades later, our region has seen a substantial drop in walking, biking, and transit commute trips. The combined mode share now hovers around 17 percent (Figure 1) with growth becoming stagnate in both the City of Chicago and the suburbs (Figure 2). At the regional level, between 2017 and 2018, the number of people working from home grew by 7 percent, faster than any other mode.

Figure 1. Regional bike/walk/transit commuter trends³

Percent of people walking, bicycling, and taking public transit to

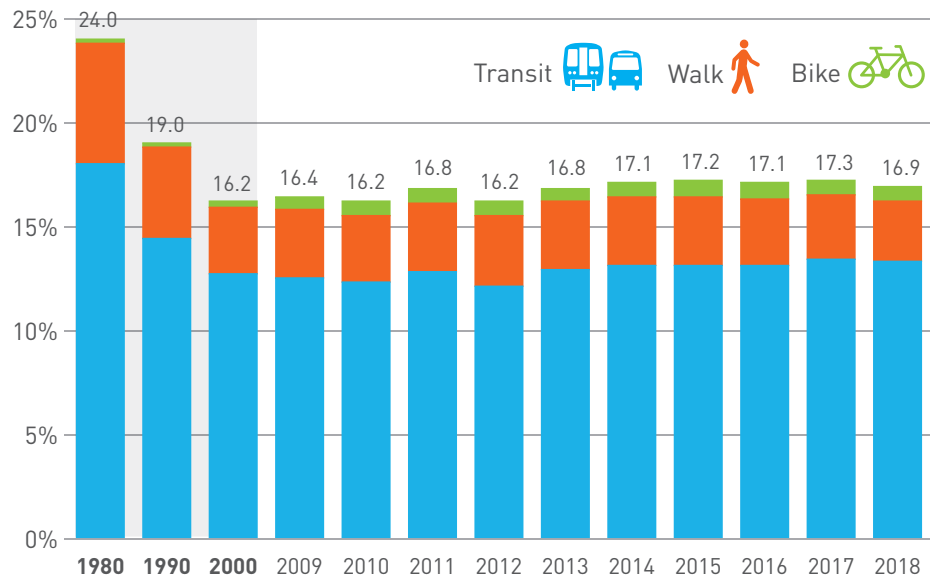
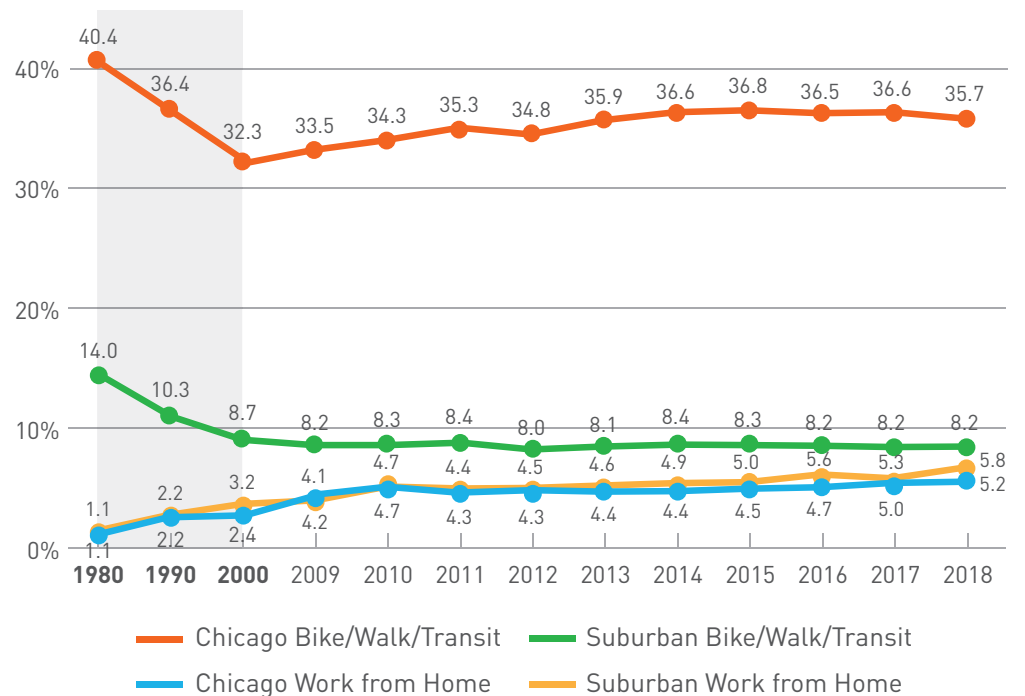


Figure 2. Chicago and Suburbs: Non-auto commuter trends³

Percent of people walking, biking, taking transit to work, and working from home



Sources: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey



Car dependency is growing

Unfortunately, commuting by car continues to be our region’s mode of choice (Figure 4) and travel distances have been rising at a disproportionately high rate compared to population growth (Figure 3). To make matters worse, walking, biking, and transit commuter trends are lagging behind. Altogether, this means that our region is not seeing the progress needed to make our communities cleaner, healthier, more livable, equitable, and economically viable.

In the suburbs, the percentage of work trips by car has increased slightly since 1980, with commuting levels holding steady around 86 percent over the last five years (Figure 4). Chicago has followed similar trends, although the city experienced a more substantial spike in car commuting in the early 2000s.



Figure 3. Regional percent change of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and population growth since 1980^{4 5}

Regional VMT grew four times faster than population.

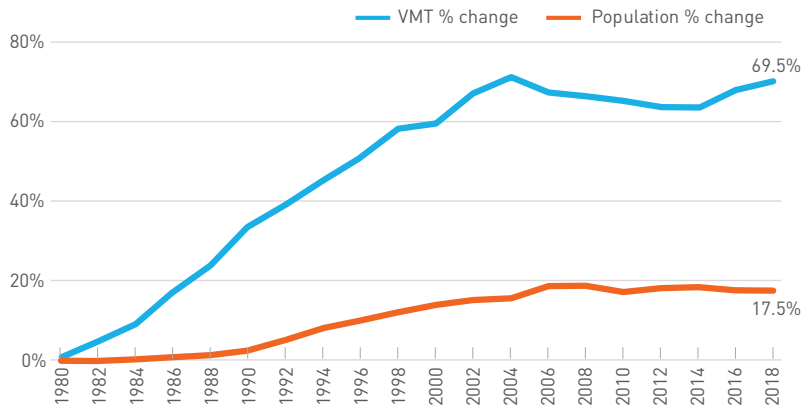
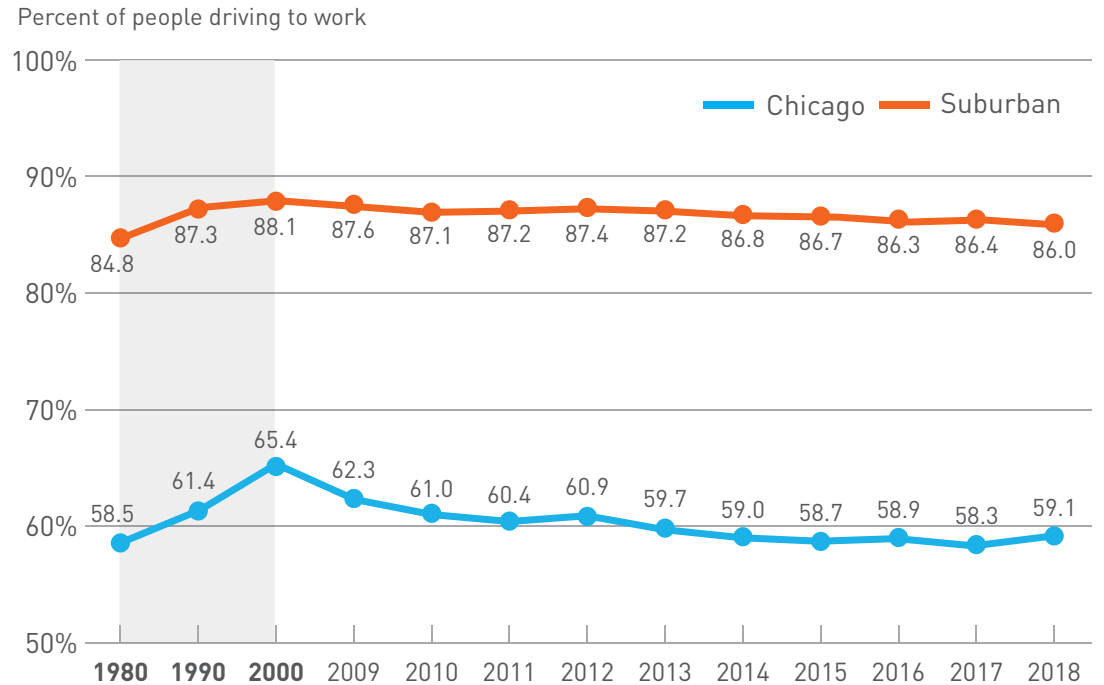


Figure 4. Chicago and Suburbs: Motor vehicle commuter trends³



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

Car dependency is growing (cont'd)

Building new roads is expensive (Figure 5) and leads to increased congestion (Figure 6), deadly crashes, and greater economic burdens placed on future generations tasked with keeping our roadways in a good state of repair. In Illinois, the percentage of our roads currently reported in poor condition grew from 4 percent in 2009 to 19 percent in 2017⁶. Instead of expanding highways, our regional focus needs to shift to maintaining our existing road network and providing more options for people to walk, bike, and take transit.

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, congestion, and maintenance expenses long-term.

20 years of expressway growth⁷

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



Cost of infrastructure projects^{8 9 10}



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

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



\$20 million

Cost of Chicago's bus priority zone improvements across 8 high-ridership routes



\$12 million

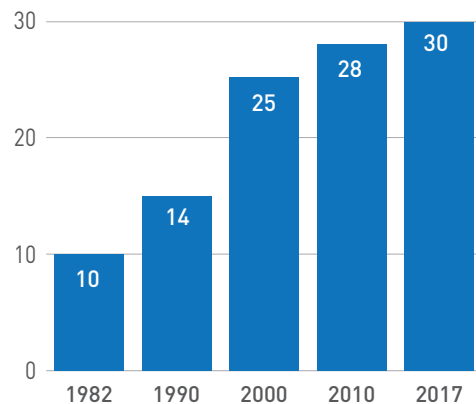
Cost of Chicago's 100 miles of new bikeways from 2011 to 2015

Figure 6. Cost of congestion in Chicagoland¹¹

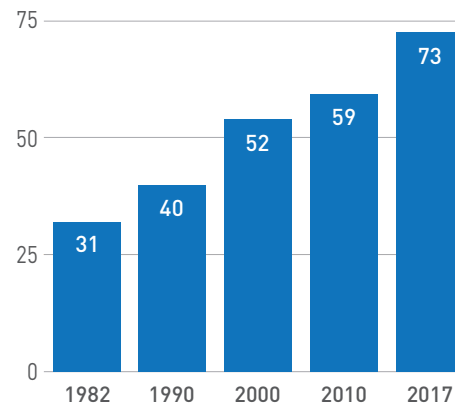
Road expansion has not alleviated congestion - Chicagoland is now ranked the third most congested metro area in the country.

In 2017, Chicagoans spent an additional 73 hours stuck in traffic and wasted an excess of 30 gallons of fuel at a price tag of \$1,431 per motorist.

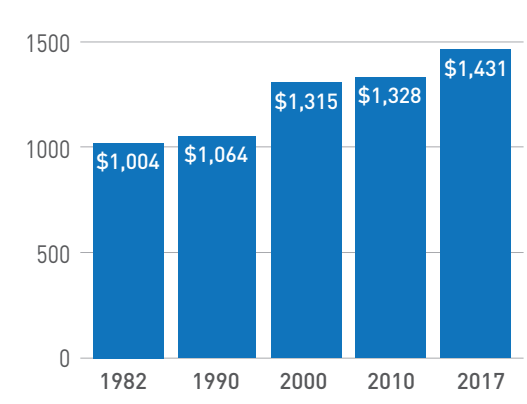
Gallons of fuel wasted per vehicle



Hours lost per commuter



Congestion price tag per commuter



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

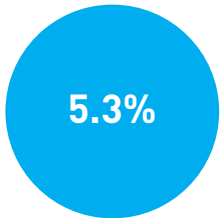
Walking trends

Since 1980, the proportion of people commuting by foot in the suburbs and City of Chicago has decreased (Figure 8). Although walking levels rebounded over the last decade, Chicago experienced a large drop in its share of walk commutes between 2017 and 2018. In the suburbs, commuting by foot has stayed more constant in recent years with a slight uptick between 2017 and 2018.

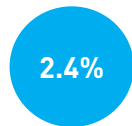


Figure 7. Regional poverty and walkability in 2018¹

In the region, those who live in poverty are more than twice as likely to get to work by foot compared to those living above the poverty level.



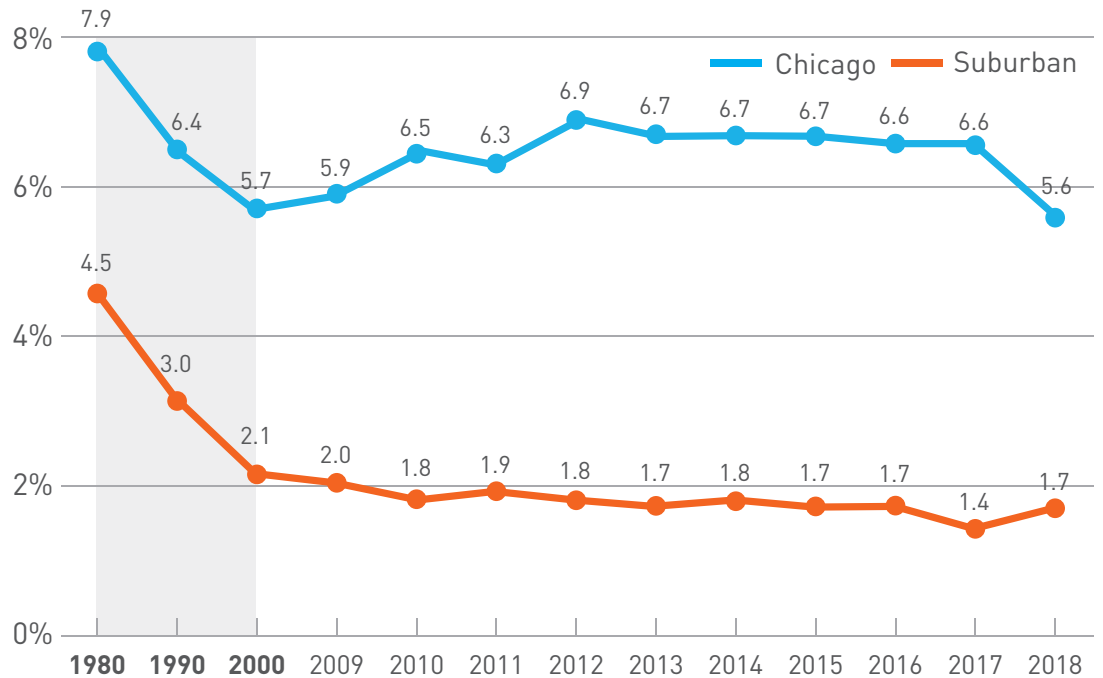
Percent of people **below the poverty level** who walk to work



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

Figure 8. Chicago and Suburbs: Walking commuter trends³

Percent of people walking to work



Sources: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey

Bicycling trends

Along with recent population loss, the proportion of people who reported biking to work in the suburbs has fallen to 0.2 percent, similar to levels in the 1990s and 2000s (Figure 10). The City of Chicago, on the other hand, has seen a steady rise in bicycle commuting with its mode share reaching 1.8 percent in 2018, growing from approximately 2,000 commuters in 1980 to nearly 24,000 commuters in 2018.

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 as a transit commuter.



Figure 9. Regional gender gap in bicycling in 2018¹

At a regional level, women represent 47% of the commuter population but only 28% of commuters who bike to work.




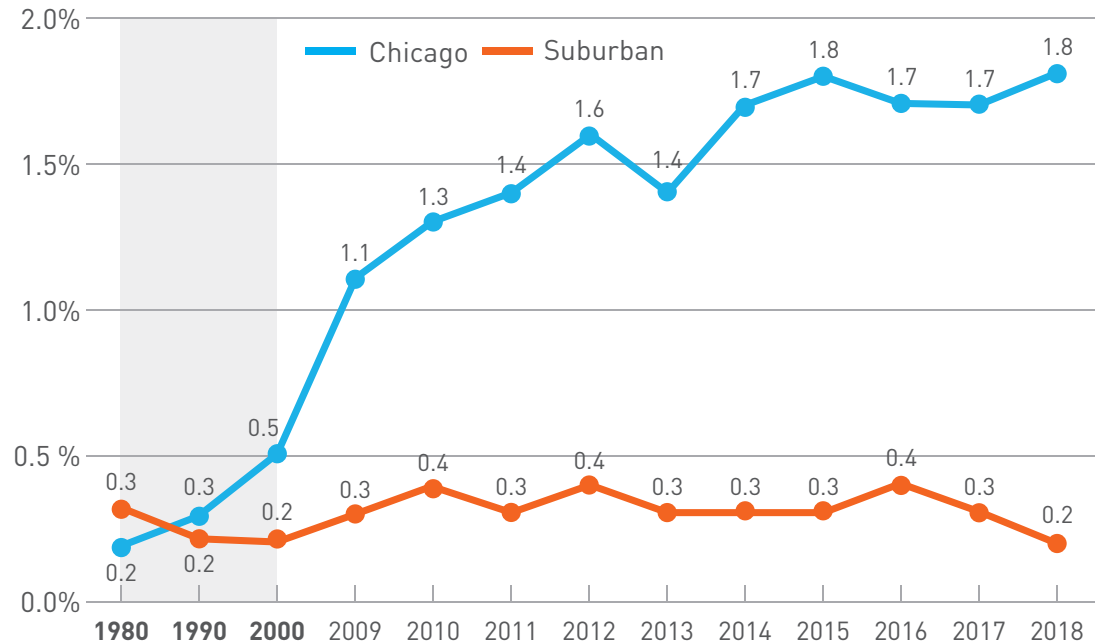
 = women riders

Figure 10. Chicago and Suburbs: Bicycling commuter trends³

Percent of people biking to work



Sources: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey

Transit trends

The proportion of transit commuters in the suburbs and Chicago has dropped since 1980 (Figure 12) and plateaued over the last five years. Between 1980 and 2018 in the suburbs, despite an overall population growth of 1.6 million, bus and train commuters decreased from 9.3 percent to 6.3 percent. During the same time period in Chicago, people taking transit to work decreased from 32.4 percent to 28.3 percent, following a population loss of nearly 300,000 people.



Figure 11. Race, income & transit in the region in 2018¹

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.

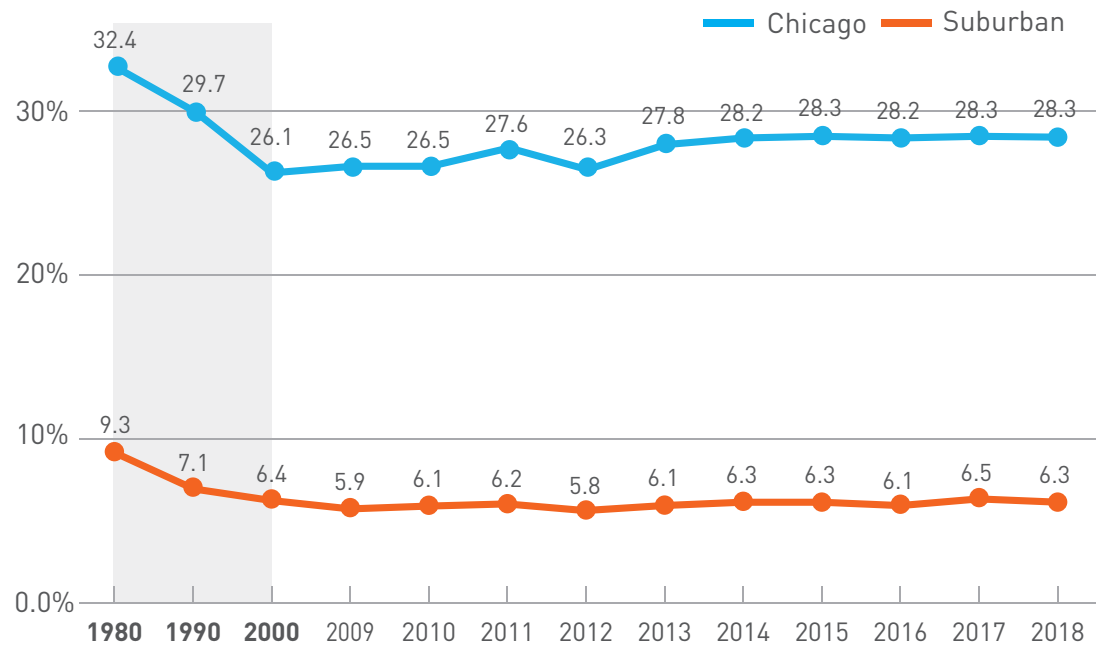


Percent of **White residents** taking transit to work.

Sources: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey

Figure 12. Chicago and suburbs: Transit commuter trends³

Percent of people taking the bus or train to work



Impacts of ride hailing¹²

Ride-hailing companies like Uber and Lyft can help fill gaps in our region's transit system. Data shows they provide a transportation option — for people who can afford it — in communities where it's often difficult to get around. Unfortunately, their rise in popularity since 2015 has also left our region with an influx of negative impacts.



Environmental impacts

At any given time, there are thousands of ride-hailing drivers on the streets of Chicago, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and fine particulate matter pollution. The City of Chicago estimates more than 8,000 ride-hailing vehicles are active in the downtown area alone during a typical morning rush period.



Congestion impacts

In Chicago, ride-hailing miles traveled with passengers have increased 344 percent from 135.9 million miles in 2015 to 603.4 million miles in 2018. More cars on the road adds to congestion, slows down buses, and results in more traffic injuries and fatalities.

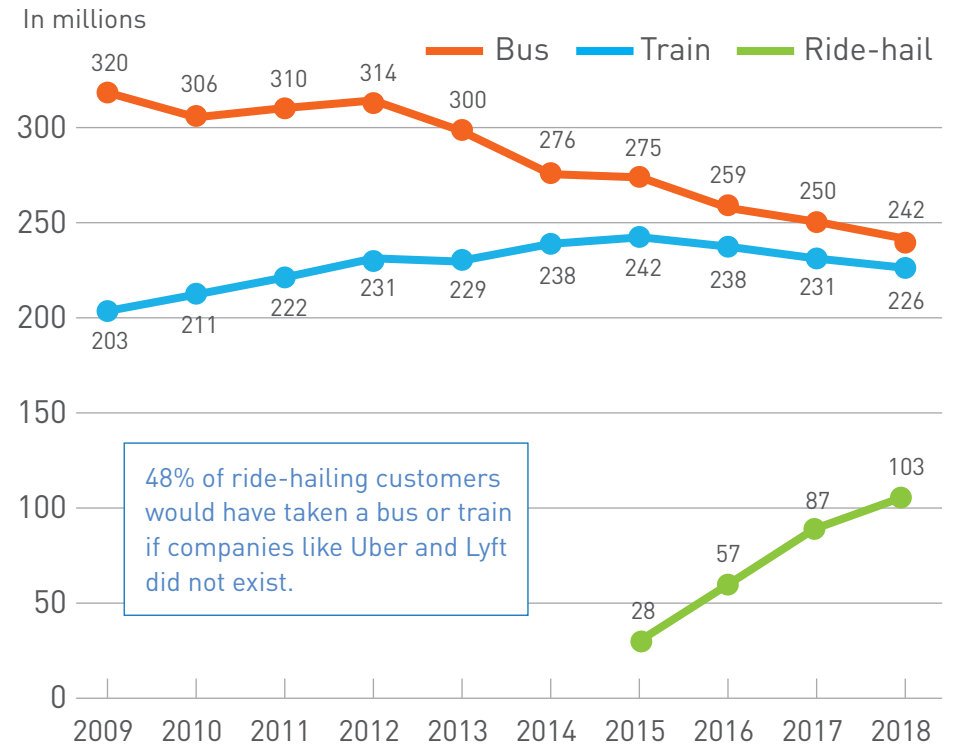


Transit impacts

Ride-hailing has significantly contributed to transit ridership loss. Between 2015 and 2018, annual ride-hailing trips increased by 75 million while CTA's annual ridership decreased by 48 million. Ridership loss from ride-hailing may lead to transit budget cuts, which will further worsen service and ridership levels.

Figure 13. Chicago bus and rail versus ride-hail annual trips 2009–2018^{12 13}

Between 2015 and 2018, bus and rail ridership levels declined while the annual number of riding-hailing trips in Chicago grew 271 percent.

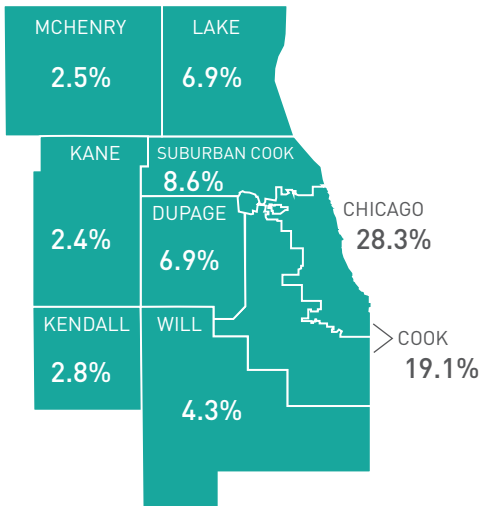


Sources: City of Chicago, Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, and Chicago Transit Authority.

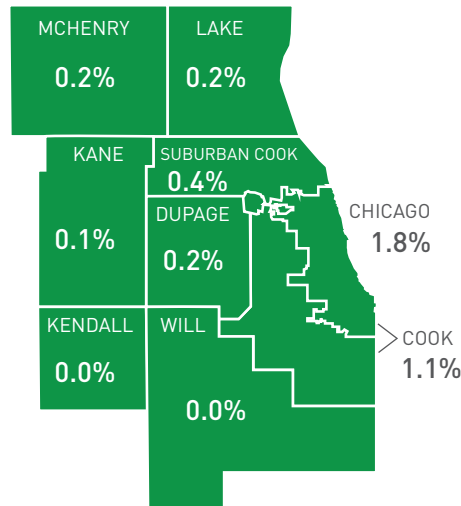
Mode share by county in 2018¹

The following regional maps display mode share by county in 2018. In the suburbs, suburban Cook County and DuPage County led the way in the proportion of commuters taking transit while Lake County led in the percentage of people walking to work.

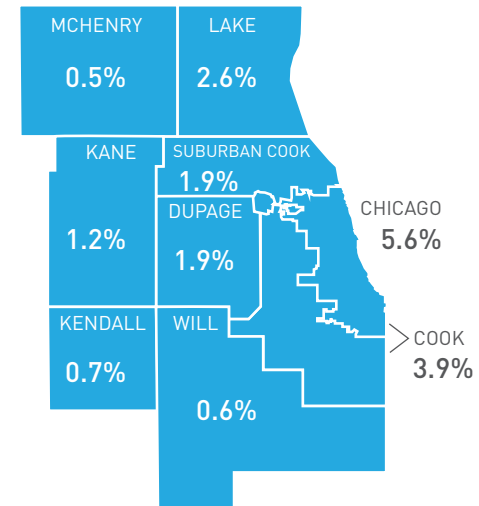
TRANSIT



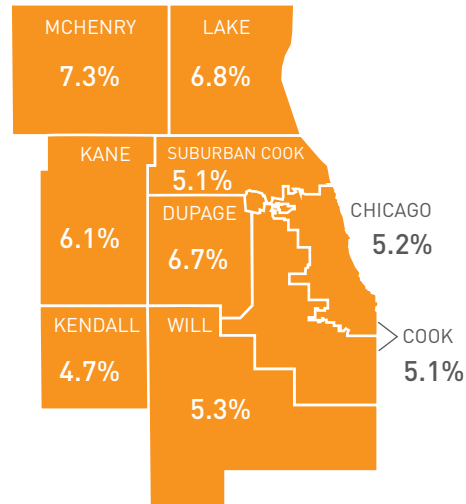
BIKE



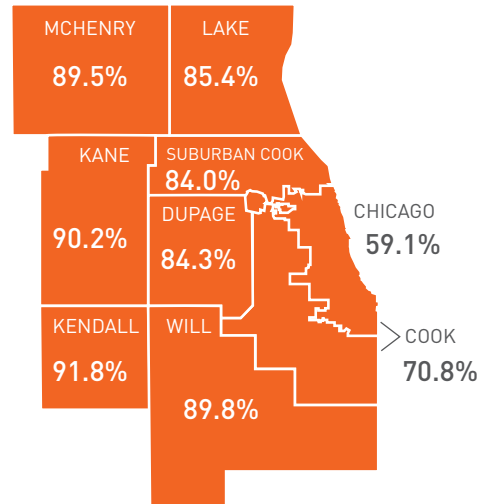
WALK



WORK FROM HOME



MOTORIZED VEHICLE

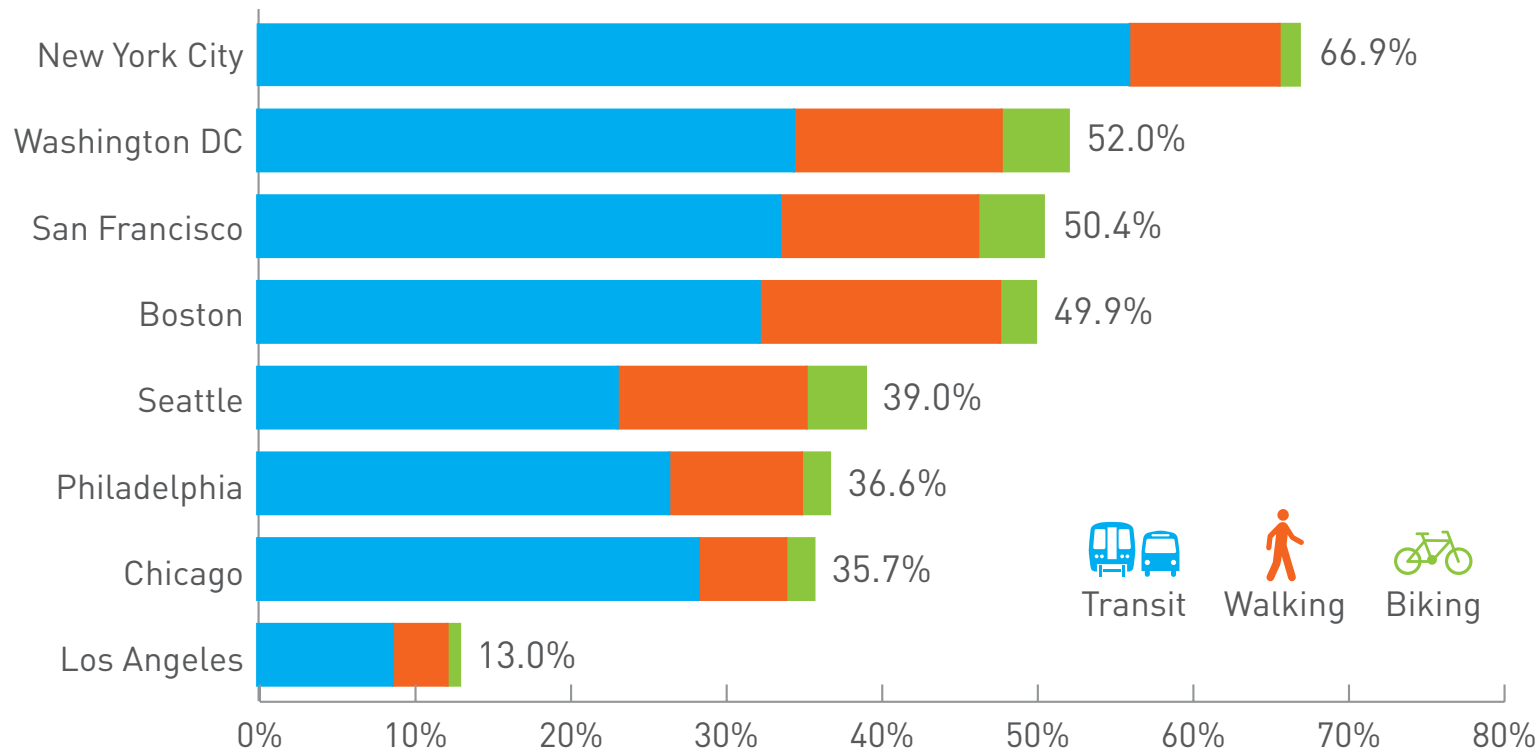


Source: American Community Survey

National mode share comparison in 2018¹

Between 2016 and 2018, compared to our seven peer cities in the US, Chicago has dropped from fifth to seventh place in its walking, biking, and transit mode share split. Now just ahead of Los Angeles, Chicago was surpassed by Philadelphia and Seattle, which both saw a rise in commute trips by foot, bike, and transit.

Figure 14. Walk/bike/transit commuters in 2018 major US city comparison



Source: American Community Survey

Methodology

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), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), as well as congestion data from Texas A&M University's Urban Mobility Report.

Footnotes

- ¹ American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 1-year estimate for all counties except Kendall County. Only 2014-2018 5-year estimate data was available for Kendall County.
- ² CTA: [Building a 21st Century Transit System](#), President's 2016 Budget Recommendations, Chicago Transit Authority. Bus-car statistic taken from page 62.
- ³ ACS 2009 to 2018 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.
- ⁴ Percent change compares the total number of people driving in the region in 1980 (Census) to all other years (Census 1983-2004 and ACS 2005-2018 1-year estimates). Kendall County was removed from the calculation because the data was not available in the US Census.
- ⁵ [Illinois Travel Statistics Report: Travel History](#), Illinois Department of Transportation, reports from 1980 to 2018. Percent change of Chicagoland vehicle miles traveled was analyzed between 1980 and 2018 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.
- ⁶ [Repair Priorities 2019](#), Transportation for America & Taxpayers for Common Sense, May 2019. Illinois statistics taken from page 20.
- ⁷ [CMAP ONTO 2050 Report: Highway System Performance Trends](#), Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, September 2017. Highway expansion statistic taken from page 17.
- ⁸ 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.
- ⁹ 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.
- ¹⁰ Chicago Tribune, [Tired of being stuck on slow CTA buses? City awards \\$20 million to a program that aims to speed things up](#), October 2019.
- ¹¹ [2019 Urban Mobility Report](#), Texas A&M University Transportation Institute, August 2019. Congestion data available for the Chicago IL-IN metropolitan area was analyzed between 1982 and 2017. Corrections to data from the 2014 Urban Mobility Report were updated in this latest report.
- ¹² City of Chicago: [Transportation Network Providers and Congestion in the City of Chicago](#), City of Chicago, October 2019. We FOIAed the aggregate annual trip data for 2016 and 2017 from the City of Chicago's Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) because this data was not available in the City's report.
- ¹³ [CTA Annual Ridership Reports 2009-2018](#), Chicago Transit Authority Ridership Analysis and Reporting. This report uses adjusted year-to-date ridership totals.