

2022 Illinois Sustainable Transportation Platform



Illinois' next governor and general assembly will have the power to transform streets and trails in communities across the state. An unprecedented level of federal and state funding for transportation has provided elected officials and agency leaders with a unique opportunity to dramatically improve mobility options over the next five years. Will they seize the chance to re-orient Illinois' transportation system around mobility, sustainability, and racial equity? Or will they further entrench a car-centric status quo that leaves many

residents stranded and pollutes the air at alarming levels?

The people of Illinois deserve no less than a world-class transportation system that is abundant with safe, convenient, equitable, and sustainable options for walking, biking, and public transit.

ELEVATE SUSTAINABILITY & RACIAL EQUITY IN TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING

For decades the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has prioritized vehicle speed and free-flowing traffic above all other considerations, namely safety, public health, equity, and sustainability. The department operates with little transparency, public accountability, or input, spending millions of dollars every year on projects that haven't been thoroughly vetted or approved by the people whose lives they will affect.

The results have been devastating. Walking and biking are unsafe and uncomfortable on nearly all state roads while traffic crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities are on the rise – especially on state-controlled arterial roads. Nationally, traffic

fatalities hit a 16-year-high in 2021 after increasing 11 percent from 2020. Older adults, young children, and people with disabilities are disproportionately injured and killed in traffic crashes.

Transportation is the largest source of climate-warming carbon pollution in Illinois, and transportation emissions have increased in recent years, in contrast to declining power sector emissions. Vehicle pollution disproportionately harms people of color, contributing to poor air quality and heightened threats from climate change in many Black and Brown communities. These same communities lack reliable, sustainable transportation options.

Active Transportation Alliance and our allies across Illinois call on the next governor and general assembly to:

- Establish a statewide Sustainable Transportation Commission to work with and advise the Illinois Governor's Office and IDOT on a multi-year plan to reduce transportation emissions and improve mobility and safety in communities across Illinois.
 - Establish a clear, transparent, and community-informed process for funding major transportation projects that gives priority to racial equity and climate change mitigation.
- Currently, the process the state uses to select which transportation projects to fund is not transparent, locking elected officials and residents out of key decisions affecting their communities.
 - The state's Multi-Year Plan includes only highway projects, thereby eliminating long-term comprehensive, multi-modal planning.

- When evaluating road expansion and construction projects, fully account for the additional traffic congestion and emissions generated by any new lanes – known as *induced demand*.
 - End the practice of counting road expansion and construction projects as progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Currently, these projects are evaluated to reduce emissions because of supposed increases in speeds and reduction of idling.
- Establish and fund a statewide electric bicycle incentive program to help people drive less and bike more. The program should be means-tested, with lower-income residents eligible for a larger discount.

STRENGTHEN FUNDING AND REGULATIONS TO SUPPORT PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit plays a critical role in supporting regional economies and improving quality of life across Illinois. But the reality is most Illinoisans lack access to reliable public transit service. Few state roads give priority to public transit by offering features like bus-only lanes and transit-signal priority.

The pandemic has further demonstrated the essential need of public transit service, especially for essential workers, communities of color and those who rely on transit as their primary mode

of transportation. While agencies have largely been able to meet transit riders’ needs during the pandemic despite dramatic declines in overall ridership, this was only possible because of federal emergency funding.

This emergency funding will expire and there is no plan to strengthen the system’s financial standing in the long-term and make the system work better for everyone who needs it.

Active Transportation Alliance and our allies across Illinois call on the next governor and general assembly to:

- Flex at least 25 percent of federal highway funds to support public transit projects.
- Eliminate the state-mandated farebox recovery ratio, which requires transit agencies to raise at least 50 percent of their revenue from fares. This requirement can force agencies to increase fares and cut service when they otherwise would not have done so.
- Review transit funding, governance, and fare structures and pursue changes that will ensure the long-term financial viability of a comprehensive and coordinated regional public transit system in the Chicago area that moves people safely, securely, cleanly, and efficiently while fostering efficient land use.
- Establish and fund a program to provide free year-round transit fares for youth until age 19.

Mission of the Active Transportation Alliance

Active Transportation Alliance works to improve conditions for walking, bicycling, and public transit in order to create healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities. We envision a future where all people in Chicagoland have access to a safe, seamless, convenient, and connected transportation environment that is abundant with walking, bicycling and transit options.

MAKE STATE ROADS SAFER FOR WALKING AND BIKING

People will not walk or ride a bike for short trips if they do NOT feel safe for the full length of that trip, and intimidating state roadways that prioritize the flow of motor vehicles often eliminate walking or biking as an option. In cities and towns across Illinois, state-controlled arterial streets are high-crash corridors that act as major barriers in

local walking and biking networks. When walking and biking infrastructure is built on state roads, municipalities are left to foot the bill for ongoing maintenance, leading many to turn down the investment up front due to fear of the ongoing maintenance cost.

Active Transportation Alliance and our allies across Illinois call on the next governor and general assembly to:

- Allow cities and towns to reduce their default speed limit without having to meet onerous requirements like signing every street and conducting traffic studies.
 - A person hit by a car travelling at 35 mph is five times more likely to die than a person hit by a car travelling at 20 mph. If cities can keep most traffic at 20 mph or less, they could eliminate most traffic fatalities.
- Direct IDOT to conduct an evaluation of the [2007 Complete Streets law](#); pursue updates aligned with national best practices, including (1) removing the exception for resurfacing projects (2) removing/changing exceptions approved by the IDOT Secretary based upon “documented safety issues, excessive cost, or absence of need.”
- Direct IDOT to endorse [NACTO’s Urban Street Design Guide](#), which provides essential design principles for creating safe, multimodal streets in urban areas.
 - The Departments of Transportation in Massachusetts, California, Minnesota, Utah, Washington, and Tennessee have all endorsed the guide.
- Eliminate jaywalking laws and make it legal for people walking to cross mid-block and against traffic lights when it is safe to do so.
 - Current jaywalking laws are not enforced fairly and deflect blame from people driving when they hit people walking. These laws also do not account for streets with unsafe designs, many of which are concentrated in Black and Brown neighborhoods.
- Allow people biking to treat stop signs as yields and traffic lights as stop signs.
 - Under Illinois law, it is illegal for people on bikes approaching a stop sign to slow down and roll through the stop sign if no other traffic is present. Coming to a complete stop and the need to start again from a stop can be a deterrent for some who are interested in using a bike for sustainable transportation.

