

Policy and Program Recommendations for IDOT's Active Transportation Plan

On behalf of the 69 organizations and agencies listed below, thank you for your commitment to improving walking, biking, and rolling in communities across the state. The agency's work to update its 2014 Bike Plan into an Active Transportation Plan inclusive of walking and rolling is commendable and we are excited to see the positive impacts the final plan will have on the safety, connectivity, and accessibility of active transportation throughout the state.

Through numerous conversations with partners, municipalities, and advocates about policy, program, strategy, and goal ideas for the state's first Active Transportation Plan, the following ideas were compiled for your consideration. We believe these recommendations will help strengthen the plan, set the Department and plan up for success, and help Illinois become a healthier, cleaner, more equitable, and vibrant state for residents and visitors alike.

Active Transportation Plan Goals

In addition to the safety, connectivity, equity, and partnership goals identified in the plan overview, include goals to improve public health, the environment, economic vitality, and provide affordable, accessible transportation (including access to transit):

- **Public health & environment:** Providing safe and plentiful options for walking, biking, and rolling can help reduce chronic disease in children and adults and help shift trips to active modes of travel to improve air quality, reduce fossil fuel dependence, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Economic vitality:** Boost the use of active transportation as a placemaking tool to build economically/culturally vibrant streetscapes where people live and work – change streets from being used to take people/wealth out of communities to becoming platforms for neighborhood economic development and places where people can age in place.
- **Affordable, accessible transportation:** Given that such a large share of trips are less than 5 miles, providing increased active transportation facilities and complete networks that provide access to key destinations will help create more affordable transportation options for road users and shift short trips out of vehicles on the roadway system. As a result, roadway capacity can be used for longer trips not possible by transit and reduce the pressure on IDOT to expand roadways.

Education

- **Recurring Staff Trainings** – Commit to regular, recurring Compete Streets trainings for IDOT staff, municipal staff, and transportation professionals throughout the state. Provide technical trainings and continuing education opportunities on topics such as emerging trends in facility

design, bicycle and pedestrian network planning, traffic calming solutions, designing pedestrian facilities for accessibility, and applying design guidelines to context sensitive solutions. IDOT staff can additionally offer an ongoing education program for municipal planners and engineers on the development of active transportation projects and how to effectively collaborate with IDOT on them.

- **Travel Demand Management (TDM) Program** – Develop a statewide and/or regional Travel Demand Management Plan and Program to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips and facilitate greater awareness and use of the state’s public transit and active transportation networks. See [Washington State’s](#) and [Colorado’s](#) TDM Plans as examples.

Funding & Assistance

- **Increased Funding** – Given that the demand and cost for active transportation projects exceeds available funding, utilize latitude granted under federal law to strategically flex federal formula funds toward improvements to pedestrian, transit, bicycling, ADA, and other more sustainable modes of transportation. Additional money could be included in the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP), Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Grant, or a new funding program and could also be used to eliminate local match requirements for complete street projects. We suggest the development of a new program like the [Massachusetts Complete Streets program](#) that funds municipal development of Complete Streets plans and then unlocks additional state funding for communities to implement projects in the municipal plans.
- **Phase I Engineering** – Securing funds for Phase I Engineering (PE I) of a project can be difficult. This can prevent a project from moving forward and being awarded funding for other phases of a project. Allocate more funds to help communities pay for PE I for complete streets projects and dedicate a specified percentage of ITEP funds to PE I only projects. Additionally, state funds could also be set aside for Phase II Engineering to help create more shovel-ready projects around Illinois.
- **Prioritization Criteria & Equity** – Develop prioritization criteria for IDOT-led projects and projects identified in the state’s Active Transportation Plan that encourage investment in high-comfort bicycling, walking, and rolling facilities for all ages and abilities. Specifically, prioritize walking, biking, ADA, and safety investments in transportation disadvantaged and underserved areas including low-income areas, communities of color, and locations where major destinations are not accessible by walking, biking, or rolling.
- **Technical Assistance** – Many regional and local agencies lack staff capacity or technical expertise to apply for grants and/or manage state and federal funding, which results in delays and returned or unused funds. Provide comprehensive grant development and project implementation assistance with a focus on supporting underserved communities. Colorado, for example, started a [Regional Grant Navigator program](#) that provides local governments with additional staff to pursue funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.
- **Maintenance** – The requirement for local governments to commit to paying for maintenance often results in bike and pedestrian elements being removed from or not included in state route projects. Create a statewide maintenance fund and/or research other possibilities to assist disadvantaged communities, rural communities, and other often overlooked communities in

meeting this requirement. Additionally, develop a standard process where IDOT staff begin having maintenance discussions with affected municipalities and counties early in the project development process, either during the planning phase, Phase I engineering, or early in Phase II engineering. Early involvement will allow local agencies to weigh in on the facility design and its impact on maintenance and better plan for future maintenance needs.

Infrastructure, Design, & Evaluation

- **Design Guidance** – Recommend that IDOT formally 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, Colorado, Minnesota, Utah, Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee have all endorsed the guide.
- **Quick-build/Demonstration Projects** – Commit to providing technical assistance or develop a statewide program to support communities in planning, designing, and implementing active transportation demonstration projects.
- **Transit Connections** – Collaborate with transit providers, local communities, and other stakeholders to enhance active transportation connections to and from transit. Prioritize incorporating transit-supportive infrastructure into project development, including first- and last-mile connections.
- **Bicycle & Pedestrian Counters** – Deploy both permanent and temporary/moveable counter technologies throughout the state to understand where and how many people are walking and biking in a range of locations throughout the state. Also, consider implementing emerging technologies, such as [VivaCityLabs](#), to gather and analyze relevant data. Make the data publicly available.

Policy & Process

- **Healthy Transportation Policy Directive** – Adopt a departmental policy directive that states that all IDOT projects are to be designed and implemented in a way that ensures road users have access to safe and comfortable healthy transportation options on state routes. See [Massachusetts DOT's policy directive](#) as an example.
- **Evaluate 2007 Complete Streets Policy** – Evaluate the state's [2007 Complete Streets law](#) including evaluating to what extent it is successfully being implemented and resulting in complete active transportation networks with improved pedestrian/bicyclist safety. Pursue updates aligned with national best practices, including requiring the public documentation of any Complete Streets exceptions approved by the IDOT Secretary. More effective Complete Streets policies have fewer exceptions and clearly communicate the circumstances and process by which exceptions are granted.
- **Setting Speed Limits** – Move away from using the outdated and unsafe 85th percentile approach to determining speed limits. Adopt a Safe Systems approach that targets a safe operating speed for all users, especially on multimodal streets. In tandem with lower speed limits, proven safety

countermeasures should be included in roadway projects to match design speeds with safer target speeds.

- **Accessibility Evaluation** – Develop a tool to evaluate how transportation investments affect active [transportation access to key community destinations](#). For example, [Virginia SmartScale](#) uses an Access to Multimodal Choices measure.
- **Level of Service (LOS) Requirements** – Level of service requirements prioritize cars over safety and are focused on easing congestion – as a result, roads and intersections get wider and overbuilt, negatively impacting bicyclists and pedestrians. Evaluate and adopt other metrics for IDOT to consider when evaluating projects that give all modes equal consideration in a project e.g. [multimodal level of service \(MLOS\)](#), Level of Traffic Stress (LTS), or Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS). It is critical to ensure that roadway design changes do not negatively impact pedestrians and cyclists in service of other transportation goals, i.e. adding turn lanes in the name of traffic safety which widens the intersection so that the experience is more dangerous and worse for pedestrians.
- **Multi-Year Plan (MYP)** – Complete Streets elements should be conceived of when a project is first initiated. Require that high-comfort Complete Streets facilities be included in a project’s scope in order for regionally significant roadway projects to be added to the Multi-Year Plan or the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). High-comfort facilities could include sidewalks, high-visibility crosswalks, refuge islands, curb bump-outs, protected bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, side paths, and other separated facilities. When multimodal facilities cannot be added to a given roadway project, separate walking and biking facilities should be built nearby.
- **Excessive Costs Policy** – Remove any funding cap or excessive costs policy related to the amount of construction funds that can be spent to add complete streets facilities to a roadway project. This will allow for higher quality facilities designed for all ages and abilities to be included in more projects.

Staffing

- **Increase Staff Capacity** – IDOT staff are managing a large portfolio of transportation projects and current staff capacity is limited. Research opportunities to fund several new full-time positions at IDOT’s central and district offices. This would include more bike, pedestrian, and transit planners and engineers. Progress on our state’s active transportation networks requires having sufficient state staff to do the work.
- **Complete Streets Teams** – Designate staff in each IDOT district to champion Complete Streets and help implement several of the strategies listed in this memo. Ensure that Complete Streets staff are part of every roadway project team to ensure active transportation elements are included and that any roadway design changes do not negatively impact pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Staff Recognition Program** - Create a staff recognition program for best active transportation projects developed by IDOT.

Signed,

Access Living
Active Transportation Alliance
American Solidarity Party of Illinois
Arlington Heights Bicycle Club
Batavia Active Transportation Commission
Better Streets Chicago
Bike Palatine Club
Bike, Pedestrian & Transit Subcommittee for the Village of Villa Park
Bike Walk Bartlett
Bike Walk Highland Park
Bike Walk Oak Park
Bike Walk Wilmette
Blackstone Bicycle Works
Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)
Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Chicago Heights Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center
City of Litchfield
City of Woodstock
Commuters Take Action
Cycle Brookfield
Downers Grove Bicycle Club
Elgin Community Bikes
Elmhurst Bicycle Club
Environmental Defenders of McHenry County
Evanston Bicycle Club
Foundation for Homan Square
Folks of Spokes Bicycle Club
Friends of Cycling in Elk Grove
Friends of the East Branch DuPage River Trail
Go Green Illinois
Go Green Morton Grove
Go Green Wilmette
Go Green Winnetka
Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health
Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs
Jackson County Health Department
Joliet Bike Club
Major Taylor Trail Keepers Chicago
Metropolitan Planning Council
McHenry County Bicycle Advocates
McHenry County Bicycle Club
Midwest Sustainability Group
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nature, Culture, and Human Health Network
North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council (NLCCC)
NorthShore – Edward-Elmhurst Health

Openlands
Park Ridge Cycling
Peoria City County Health Department
Quad Cities Bicycle Club
Respiratory Health Association
Ride Illinois
Sierra Club Illinois Chapter
Skokie Bike Network
Southern Five Regional Planning District & Development Commission
Spin Doctor Cyclewerks
Springfield Bicycle Advisory Council
Springfield Bicycle Club
Strong Towns Batavia
Strong Towns Chicago
Village of Bartlett's Bike & Run Advisory Committee
Village of Broadview
Village of Channahon
Village of Godley
Village of Justice
Village of Park Forest
Village of Summit
Village of Thornton
Walkers and Bicyclists for a Safer Community (Sun City, Huntley)