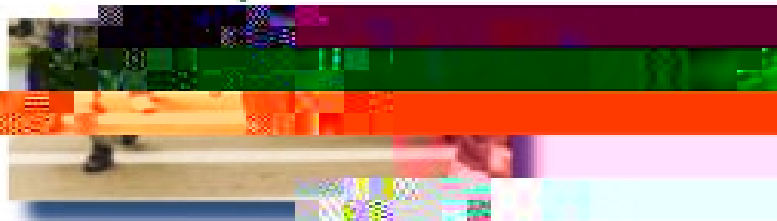
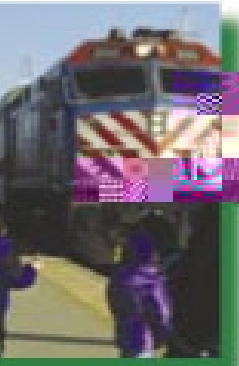
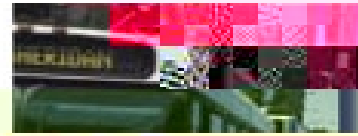
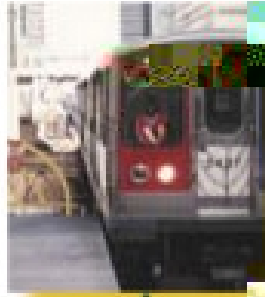


Changing Direction: Transportation Choices for 2030



New Choices for a New Century

A quiet revolution is taking place in Chicagoland.* This revolution opposes destructive state and regional policies that have reduced the public's choices and degraded communities for the last half-century.

Many of the most successful suburban communities have begun to revitalize their town centers, or have even built town centers where none existed before. Whole communities have risen up to reject "big box" stores, usually for fear of traffic nightmares or to preserve a cherished downtown. Citizens in various parts of the region have challenged plans from the state department of transportation that would turn their local roads into speedways.



Some people want to work and play in the same place.

In the City of Chicago another sign of revolution is apparent in changing demographic trends. The city's population rose in 2000 for the first time since 1950, fueled primarily by an increase in the Hispanic population. White flight still occurred between 1990 and 2000 but a countermovement was evident with former suburbanites moving into city neighborhoods,

seeking the convenience and energy of walkable communities served by multiple transit routes. There is a growing awareness in urban and suburban communities of the efficiency and dynamism of "old fashioned" places.

Generational change is progressing as steadily as ethnic change. The baby boom generation will reach retirement age in the first quarter of the 21st century. The ranks of non-drivers, and of people using wheelchairs and other auxiliary devices, is about to rise dramatically. The region has not been configured to meet a growing senior population's needs.

Northeastern Illinois residents are acutely aware that their tax money fuels the restriction of their choices and the encroachment of traffic on their neighborhoods. The public is dissatisfied with the emphasis on roadway expansion over transit options. The most basic, inexpensive and healthful mode of travel – walking – is effectively prohibited in some places and dangerous in most.

Summit Attendees

The 500-plus Chicagoland residents who gathered at Connecting Communities Summits and mini-summits in the first two years of this new century believe that their tax dollars are not being invested wisely to meet the challenges of the new century. They expressed their dissatisfaction in ways as diverse and unique as their local communities, but their concerns can be captured collectively by one word – *choice*.

The summit attendees were representative of the region in their travel habits. As a group, they reported in surveys that their primary way of moving around their communities and the region was by car. Yet by an eight-to-one margin they preferred expanded transit options over construction of new roads.

* Chicagoland, or the Northeastern Illinois region, includes the six counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.



Household transportation expenditures in the six counties of Northeastern Illinois consume about 15% of the average family's budget. This region has the second largest transit system in the nation. The availability of public transit reduces the regional average for household transportation spending by \$876 per year, when compared to the national average. Local variations in household transportation expense correlate directly with the amount of transit available in a particular community (see figure above) and to a lesser extent with the safety and convenience of pedestrian and bicycle options.

The Regional Budget for Transportation

The official 2020 Regional Transportation Plan² calls for spending \$40 billion on transportation infrastructure between 2000 and 2020. When the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) expands the plan by an additional 10 years, to 2030, that number is likely to rise to at least \$60 billion. Sixty billion dollars seems like a huge sum of money, but spread over 30 years and eight to ten million residents, it is just above \$200 per year per

person. This is very little compared to the household expenditures driven by the availability or lack of travel choice.

If current spending patterns are carried forward over the next 30 years, almost 60% of all transportation investment will be directed to road maintenance and construction. About 40% of the region's investment will go to maintain and build transit. Less than one half of one percent will be dedicated to walking and bicycling.

This investment pattern causes individuals to pay increased household transportation costs to compensate for the region's lack of transportation choice.

Federal transportation law was changed a decade ago to allow more flexible spending with what had previously been designated "highway funds." Both the public and federal government support transportation "choice" but transportation planning agencies in this region have not seized the opportunity to retarget highway dollars.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Reallocate spending priorities to provide choice.**
- ▲ Move funds from highway construction into transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- ▲ Integrate transportation infrastructure decisions with strategies that reduce incentives to drive, like Location Efficient MortgagesSM,



What Do Taxpayers Want?

Transit is the Highest Priority

Voices are rising across the region for transit improvements. Grassroots citizens and community activists chose transit over new roads by an eight-to-one margin to improve transportation in the region. Other constituencies have voiced similar priorities. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) held a number of public meetings about regional issues in 2001 and 2002 comprised largely of governmental officials.³ Chicago Metropolis 2020, a business coalition formed to address regional issues, conducted outreach directed primarily to the business community.⁴ Both the NIPC and the Metropolis 2020 outreach processes uncovered a strong desire for more transit options, supporting grassroot priorities. The region is united in its desire for transportation choice.

Transit choice allows residents to achieve several mutually beneficial goals. Pedestrian traffic near stations and bus stops stimulates local economic development projects. Reduction of auto use achieves environmental benefits. More transit options provide increased access for populations with disabilities, seniors and children. Household transportation spending can be re-directed from investment on depreciating assets to investment in appreciating assets like education or housing. Or families can improve their quality of life with discretionary purchases.

Increase Rail Transit

The desire for increased rail transit was heard throughout the entire region. City residents on the South and West Sides face difficult commutes. The new rail projects most frequently mentioned in the city were the Mid-City Transitway, the Red Line Extension to 130th Street and the Gray Line.⁵

The desire for increased rail service was equally strong in suburban areas and produced a greater mixture of project proposals. New service to facilitate travel from suburb to suburb was the most significant transit priority in suburban communities. In the Calumet area where jobs are scarce, and in North/Northwest Cook

County, where commuters pour onto local roads on the way to work, rail transit is seen as a highly desirable way to create additional job access. In the built-up suburbs of DuPage County and West Cook County, congestion increases with every road expansion; transit is seen as a viable and attractive alternative to highway expansion proposals, especially as an alternative to widening I-290 in the Western suburbs. Recent reports that the reconstruction of the “Hillside Strangler” cost \$140 million and created two years of construction slow-downs but made no appreciable difference in travel times⁶ offer hard evidence that current state transportation policies create expensive failures rather than travel choice.



Rail transit is highly desired everywhere in the region.

Improve Bus Service

Citizens had numerous ideas for improving bus service throughout the region. They would like to see a grid of



would decrease travel time on buses. Automated signal pre-emption is seen as a necessary enhancement to expedite bus travel. In places where rail is desirable, but impractical for fiscal or other reasons, the public would like to begin to implement Bus Rapid Transit systems, using a combination of existing roadway and new exclusive bus lanes. There was strong support in many different communities for conversion of transit

fleets to alternative fuel vehicles. To increase transit use for the 80% of trips that do not involve the work commute,⁷ the region will need to provide new flexible types of service. Trolley and shuttle bus service were seen as viable alternatives for local travel. Travel within towns and between adjacent towns, as well as trips to malls, health facilities, schools and colleges could be met by

marketing trolleys as an attractive alternative for short auto trips. Demand-responsive systems for populations with disabilities, especially those for whom mainline service is not available or not an option, need to be integrated across local boundaries.

Pedestrian Access is Fundamental

Pedestrian access is an essential component of both bus and rail transit. Streetscapes that are comfortable for pedestrians are an incentive to transit use. Ample sidewalks and ramped crossings within one-half mile of all rail stations and bus stops should be the standard in all areas of the region. Attractive, well lit waiting areas with shelters and benches emphasize that pedestrians are an integral part of the landscape.

Link Transit and Cycling

Some transit operators have taken impressive steps to link transit and bicycles, a policy that meets with strong approval from the public. Pace has outfitted its whole fleet of buses with bike racks; use of the racks quadrupled between 2001 and 2002, to over 1100 riders a month in mid-summer.⁸ The Chicago Transit Authority has begun to install bike racks on its bus

fleet and allows bicycles on the rail system during all but the heaviest rush hour periods. Metra has been very slow to respond to the public's call for better links between bicycle and train travel, in spite of the success of bicycle accommodations by other transit systems locally and across the nation.

Getting to transit by bicycle can be a larger challenge than getting on it. The public can not understand why the simple and inexpensive enhancements needed to accommodate bicycles on the streets within a few miles of transit are not done routinely. Ample bike parking at all train stations and most bus stops is another simple and inexpensive incentive to cycle.

Promote Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development is seen by the public as a sensible and sustainable way to encourage economic growth without the unfavorable impacts of remote malls and "big box" stores. Shops and services near stations increase the local tax base. Transit-



The Loop is one of many transit destinations.





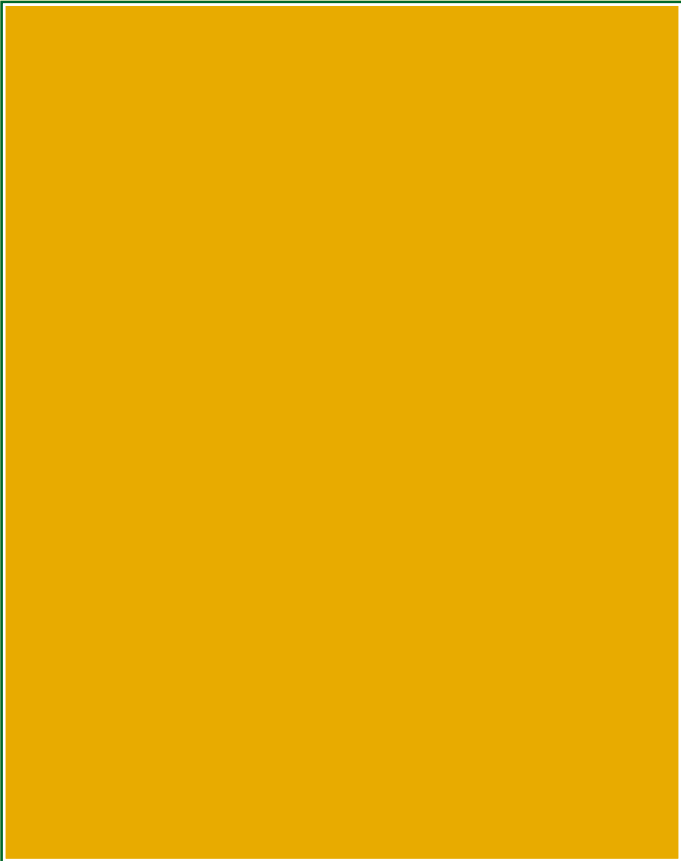
Coordinate Existing Systems

Another transit theme is sounded

oriented development creates a sense of shared public space and a center for the community. In turn, the economic and community activities around a station draw increased riders to the transit system.

Transit-oriented development doesn't just evolve in most places. It must be planned. One of the largest barriers to robust transit-oriented development is the dedication of acres of land around stations to auto parking. In many communities, residents initially expressed the desire to increase parking to entice commuters to use transit, as well as expressed a desire to create transit-oriented development at local stations. To resolve the potential conflict, the public supported comprehensive transit-oriented development as the highest priority, with increased bus feeder service or with parking at a more remote location served by shuttle vehicles.

Minimizing parking will create an attractive transit environment, discourage short auto trips (over half of the emissions of a trip are released in the first 8.5 minutes after starting a cold engine),⁹ allow for ample bus boarding/d disembarking areas near train stations, and maximize revenue to communities from tax-generating land uses.



Provide a Full Range of Options

Invest in Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths

Seniors who remember safe, neighborly city streets now fear crossing local intersections. People with disabilities face mobility limitations caused by poor sidewalk surfaces and a lack of ramps at crosswalks, not to mention the absence of sidewalks in some communities. Parents drive children to nearby activities or to school for fear of traffic injuries, reducing opportunities for independence and physical activity. Without resorting to the expensive option of purchasing a car, many teens in suburban communities are housebound. Cyclists everywhere report the constant hazards of moving within traffic that is indifferent or hostile to their rights as travelers.

Currently, only one half of one percent of regional transportation dollars fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements. For every two lane-miles of new roadway, it is possible to build 100 miles of sidewalk or bike path.¹⁰ The public made strong recommendations for major increases in pedestrian and bicycle options. In addition to improved access, the public expects to attain other goals by reducing encroachment of roads on human-scaled infrastructure.

The taxpaying public believes that pedestrians and cyclists are treated like second class citizens. The deeper truth is that even the minimal funds used for their benefit are applied disproportionately. While the state funds 80% of roadway expenditures and local communities pay 20%, sidewalks are funded at a 50/50 state-to-local match.¹¹

Eliminate Hazards

Pedestrians and cyclists from every area of the region who try to co-exist with traffic on existing streets feel threatened. Multi-lane roadways in DuPage County were reported to be formidable barriers to both pedestrians and bicyclists. Bicycle lanes were proposed for rural roads in Will and McHenry Counties. Paving a small portion of the shoulder in rural communities would add little expense relative to the benefit gained.

In city neighborhoods there was a groundswell of support for policies to reclaim urban streets. Northsiders were particularly vehement about pedestrian rights. Among recommendations made throughout the city were wider sidewalks, street furniture, pedestrian plazas, roadway redesign to slow traffic, stronger enforcement of pedestrian and bicyclist rights, improved pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stations, and even covered bike trails for winter use. “Car-free villages” were recommended for city neighborhoods in the Central Area of Chicago.

Improve Crossing Signals

Other recommendations applied more generally to all areas of the region. Improvements were suggested to crossing signals. In some cases the timing was not sufficient for all pedestrians to cross the roadway safely. Audible signals to aid visually impaired travelers were also recommended. In both city and suburban communities there were recommendations that sidewalks and bicycle routes be plowed in winter. Current snow plowing practices often obstruct crosswalks and bikeways.

Facilitate Purposeful Cycling

While the public, including those who don’t cycle, proved to be very receptive to bicycle infrastructure, there was consensus that in some places bicycle infrastructure is exclusively recreational; too little priority is placed on bicycle travel to commute to work or to accomplish household errands. The City of Chicago and some suburban municipalities have made a good start in providing some safe, functional routes and some bike parking near transit and commercial areas. The public has responded so well that bike racks in many areas are filled to capacity. This is evidence of the wisdom and fiscal responsibility of these modest investments. The demand for both recreational and purposeful travel options was extremely strong everywhere and often linked to the desire to access transit easily and efficiently.



Plan for a Full Range of Trips

This region's planning and construction policies have focused disproportionate attention on ways to accommodate the vehicles in which people commute to jobs. Yet the commute to work is only one of the five daily trips the average person makes.

The transportation projects that should facilitate trips to schools, daycare, the cleaners, health facilities, the friend who lives a half mile away or a recreation site are often very different from the projects designed for the work commute. Because appropriate options are not offered for non-work trips, commuters must often compete with other travelers for limited road space, frustrating both groups. The region needs to determine the most efficient way to accommodate a variety of trips to reduce congestion, improve air quality and promote choice.

Strategies to Move Freight

The region's ability to plan for freight movement has become just as irrational as its investments to move people. Communities in the South, West and Southwest parts of the region appeal for a coordinated strategy to address rail and road intersection conflicts with a system of grade separations.

Freight shipment and transfer is a vital part of the regional economy. The movement of freight is itself an important industry that adds more than \$8 billion per year to the regional economy and employs more than 135,000 people in the region.¹² Freight service is essential for every industrial business, and freight distribution puts products on the shelves of every store. Better planning could increase the freight sector's employment and financial benefits but reduce the negative impacts of congestion and air pollution. Many



Encourage Land Use Reform

A dual approach is needed to address the transportation crisis so clearly identified by the public. In addition to new transportation policies, land use reforms are necessary. Municipalities should amend their local zoning ordinances to encourage compact development to support transit, if their residents are to reap the benefits of choice. Residents of suburban communities often articulate a need for “corner stores” and other amenities near their homes, to reduce their daily car trips and free roadway space for longer trips. In many places single-use zoning requires residents to “use a gallon of gas to get a gallon of milk.”

Use “New Urbanist” Designs

The public addressed the growing use of “New Urbanist” design¹⁴ to create streetscapes that promote walking, bicycling and transit. Buildings with windows and porches facing the street offer an inviting streetscape. Blank walls and garage doors do not. Sidewalks that are uninterrupted by driveways draw more use, are seen as safer and are less obstructed by parked vehicles. Developments laid out in a grid pattern offer walkers, cyclists and transit users predictable options. Curved streets and cul-de-sacs can present an incomprehensible challenge to neighbors from the other side of town.

Parking lots separating commercial buildings from street activity present a pedestrian with a gray sea to cross – territory in which he or she clearly does not “belong.” Commercial buildings near to where people begin their



A Broader Vision

Improve the Region's Quality of Life

The transportation infrastructure choices the public makes are deeply embedded in the broader goals they cherish for the region. Priorities spring from a deep-seated belief that these investment decisions are fundamentally quality of life decisions. The public believes the role of transportation engineers should be to implement regional policy decisions in the most efficient, cost-effective manner, not to determine regional policies. In this region the taxpayers perceive that they have been excluded from these decisions for decades by transportation agencies.*

Choice Promotes Health and Safety

Auto use is heavily advertised as the way to reach the American Dream, but instead has steadily degraded the quality of life for the American public.

Obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other health problems related to inactivity are on the rise across the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 22 states reported that at least one of every five people was obese in 2000.¹⁶ Thirty-eight percent of the population of Illinois is overweight and nearly half lead sedentary lifestyles.¹⁷ The medical community has just begun to study the impact of daily transportation choices on overall activity levels.

As conditions for biking and walking have declined, so too have rates of physical activity. Across the nation, the number of trips people take on foot has



Daily exercise becomes a habit over time.

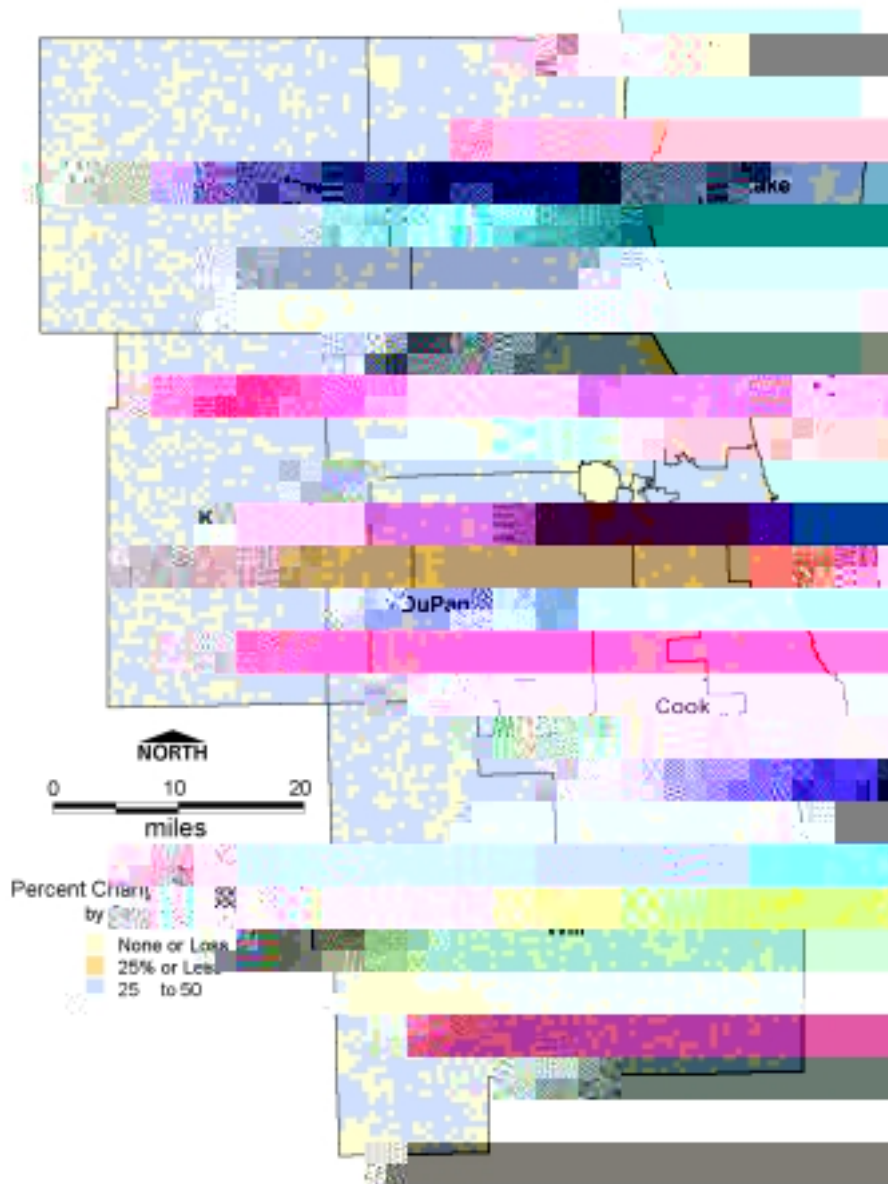


Which Vision Should We Choose?

Scenario One assumes people will continue to disperse throughout the region in a sprawling pattern. Scenario



Scenario Two: More Compact Development



The Center for Neighborhood Technology analyzed potential housing and travel trends to visualize the effects of future growth policies. Analysts looked at two scenarios to predict the increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 2030. Both scenarios assume a population increase of 1.8 million people by 2030, as (preliminarily) forecast by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

The model used in the analysis held certain variables constant, including the number of residential acres, the amount of transit access and household size. The model does assume that at certain density levels, businesses and services will tend to locate near enough to households that some trips can be made without a car.



Create a More Healthful Environment

Northeastern Illinois is a “severe” non-attainment area for air quality, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. A new standard, which the region may have even more difficulty attaining, is likely to go into effect after 2003. There is debate about the degree to which transportation emissions impact air quality, although it is clear that increased emissions are not an asset to human health.

Asthma is a growing threat to public health, for both children and adults. Lack of activity, coupled with increased particulate emissions, worsens the problem. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of people with asthma grew 75% from 1980 to 1994.²³ Asthma can be triggered by exposure to allergens, indoor pollutants and ambient air pollutants (such as ozone, acid aerosols and diesel particulates). Approximately 25% of children in the United States live in areas that exceed the federal standard for ozone and nearly 5 million people under the age of 18 are affected nationally.²⁴

The public understands that personal health is impacted by the natural environment. There is a strong emphasis on environmental integrity throughout the region. In the collar counties of DuPage, Kane, McHenry, Lake and Will, air quality was a particular concern. Other environmental issues like protecting open space, water resources, wildlife habitat and agricultural land were also considered to be very important.

Cook County and Chicago residents tended to be more exclusively focused on the air quality impacts of congestion in and near their communities. The remedies for environmental damage proposed by citizens closely parallel their remedies for other transportation burdens – more choice for pedestrian, bicycle and transit options. People throughout the region also recommend converting transit fleets to alternative fuel vehicles to improve air quality and human health.

Strong, Sustainable, Equitable Communities

There is a strong sense that transportation dollars are wasted on expensive attempts to build more of the same projects that have failed to offer viable options in the

past. Public funds are used to build projects that drain the life from existing communities near the center of the region, sully outlying towns with unsustainable development and plow through county agricultural preservation policies. Inhabitants of Prospect Heights and Pilsen, Glen Ellyn and Oak Park, Itasca and Northbrook, Barrington and Austin fought back to save their communities.

Eastern Will County residents have endured years of uncertainty about the fate of their farms because of the proposal to build an airport 41 miles from downtown Chicago (in spite of the fact that the last airport the state built, in Mascoutah, IL is severely underutilized). Kane County is the most recent area mobilizing to save its way of life. Recently announced plans to construct a highway through the sparsely populated, western part of the county would dissolve the county’s endorsed land management plan and agricultural preservation policies.

Expand Opportunities for Regional Equity

There is a strong message that regional growth must advance equitably. This message is articulated in many ways. Residents of Chicago’s South Side and the South Suburbs were keenly aware that their communities have suffered from disinvestment. Regional investment decisions either failed to respond to, or actually worsened, disinvestment by drawing industry and households to outlying areas served by new roads. The consequence is longer commute times for the least affluent communities. Of the 33 communities that have average commute times of 30 minutes or more and have incomes below the regional median (\$51,680 in 2000), more than half are concentrated in the South Suburbs.

Residents of the Central Area of Chicago contend with a web of rail viaducts, but have little or no local access to Metra service. Two important CTA train routes in the Central Area were allowed to deteriorate to the brink of abandonment until communities mobilized to save them. The Green Line rehabilitation did not restore all the original stations and the deterioration of the Blue Line (Cermak Branch) caused significant and ongoing service reductions. In both cases the



Illinois General Assembly

Restructure regional planning agencies.

- Require extensive and meaningful public involvement.
- Require that the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) be proportionally representative with a majority of members independent of the state department of transportation.
- Ensure that land use decisions will precede and guide transportation investment decisions.
- Revise the Regional Transportation Authority charter to equalize tax benefits and burdens and to require coordination of existing transit assets.
- Authorize creation of a Freight Transportation Authority to enhance the economic opportunities of freight handling and minimize the air quality impacts.

Support transportation choice.

- Set aside 33% of federal Safety dollars to fund “Safe Routes to Schools.”
- Require that all road construction and rehabilitation projects serve multi-modal uses and are sensitive to community context.

- Fund bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure at the same state-to-local ratio as roads, i.e. 80/20 versus 50/50.
- Charter Flex state and federal highway dollars into the transit fund.
- Flex state and federal highway dollars into the bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure fund.
- Guarantee state funding to match federal





Local and Regional Partners Connect with Communities Summits

Regional Partners

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest

Chicago Design Consortium

Chicago Metropolis 2020

Chicago Network

Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

Citizen Action — Illinois

Council for Disability Inclusion

Environment

Faith Initiative

Illinois

Illinois Department of Transportation

League of Women Voters — Illinois

Metropolitan Council

Metro SE

North

West

Local Partners

Citizen Action Committee

Lincolnway SCAT

Residents United to Retain Agriculture in Cornland

Shut This Airport Nightmare Down

MI

The North Branch of the Chicago River — May 19, 2001

48th St

B'nai

Chicago Rehab Network

Lawrence Avenue Fine Beverage Co-op

North Shore College Prep High School

Northwest Community Center

Evansville Sustainability Circle

Interfaith Housing Ctr. of the North Suburbs

Palatine/Willow Road Community

Lake County — July 24, 2001

Citizens Org.

Lake County

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McHenry County — September 1

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