



Metropolitan Planning Council



RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES:
**MITIGATING COMMUNITY HARMS OF
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

2023



Our recent history has shown that building transportation infrastructure **does not always benefit all communities.**

As noted by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg,

“There are many places in the U.S. where a road or railroad was used to divide or segregate or even remove a neighborhood. The very fact that we have the saying ‘wrong side of the tracks’ in American English language tells you something about infrastructure.”¹

In the 1950s and 1960s, the federal government built highways through many major U.S. cities to provide connections to the suburbs under development. **In the decade between 1956 and 1966, highway construction demolished 37,000 housing units per year nationally, displacing more than 475,000 households and more than a million people.²** In Chicago, the construction of U.S. Interstates 55, 57, 90, 94 and 290 resulted in the displacement of more than 6,000 families and 2,200 individuals to make way for multilane highways.³ Black and immigrant communities were the frequent targets of these massive

federally funded public works projects. In Chicago, many neighborhoods were bisected by highways, and homes and businesses in previously healthy communities were removed. This was justified as “urban renewal.” Highways erected to speed travel to and from suburbs provided no travel improvements for the residents that lived adjacent to them but introduced harm in terms of increased noise and degraded air quality. In some cases, passenger train lines were relocated into the highway median and isolated from neighborhoods. For decades, residents have faced great difficulty crossing the massive barriers presented by highways, especially when moving about on foot, by bicycle, or via transit.

The federal government is beginning to acknowledge the racist legacy of highway construction in this country. U.S. DOT developed the Reconnecting Communities grant program in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) specifically to mitigate community harms resulting from the construction of major transportation infrastructure.

THE MPC EFFORT

In this report you will learn about the history of how highways divided the region, the impacts felt to this day, and potential solutions to mitigate those impacts. The purpose of this effort, undertaken in 2022 by the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), was to work with communities to identify potential future investments that could repair the harm of existing transportation infrastructure. Improvements could include restoring connectivity between communities to improve access to jobs, retail, and recreational areas; improving the ability to walk, bike, and access transit in safe and comfortable conditions; and creating new or improved public spaces for community activities and economic development. A crucial component of this project involves planning with and not for communities. These community-generated projects can then be pursued for funding via the federal Reconnecting Communities (2022) or other federal grant programs or via state or local funding.

BETWEEN 1956 AND 1966



37,000

housing units per year nationally were demolished due to highway construction



475,000+

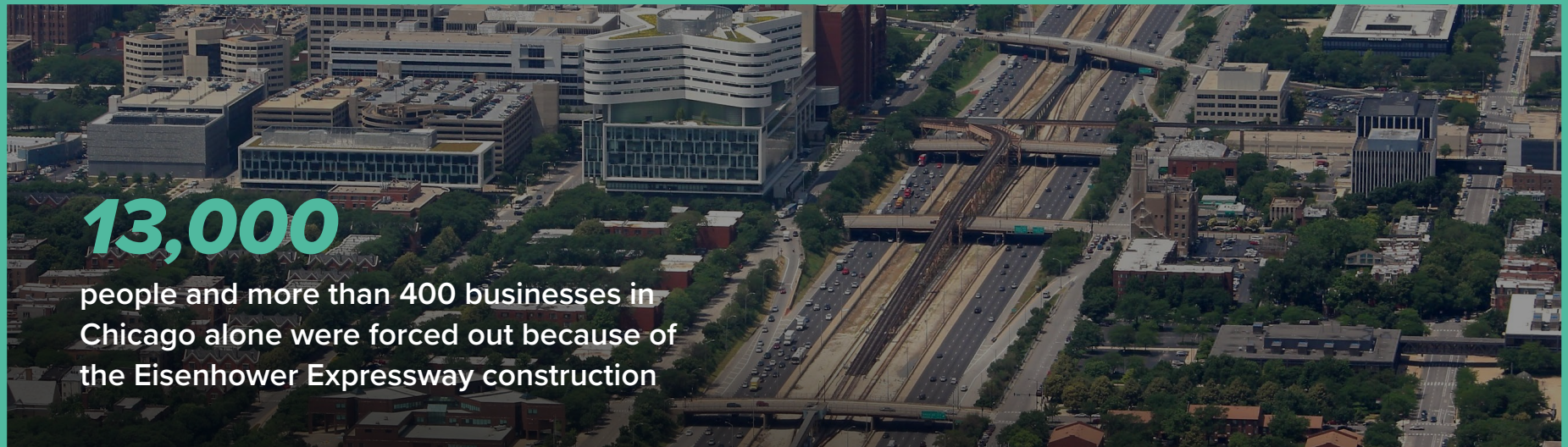
households and more than a million people were displaced

IMPACTS OF THE EISENHOWER EXPRESSWAY

The Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) on the West Side of Chicago was the first major expressway built in the region and is a prime example of the harm highway building brought to urban communities. Figure 1 shows the Garfield Park neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago before and after the Eisenhower Expressway

was constructed. Built between 1949 and 1961 at a cost of \$183 million, The Eisenhower displaced an estimated 13,000 people and forced out more than 400 businesses in Chicago alone. The rail rapid transit line serving these communities (now the Chicago Transit Authority Blue Line) was relocated into

the highway median. Mexican-Americans on the Near West Side were displaced to the Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods while immigrants of the tight-knit communities in Greektown and Little Italy were scattered across the city. The predominantly Jewish residents of West Garfield Park



13,000

people and more than 400 businesses in Chicago alone were forced out because of the Eisenhower Expressway construction

Figure 1. Garfield Park before (left) and after (right) construction of the Eisenhower Expressway // **Source:** <https://isgs.illinois.edu/ilhap>, Google maps



saw the construction of the superhighway as a physical manifestation of their political powerlessness to protect their community.⁴ When I-290 was constructed, the southern 9 acres of Columbus Park in the Austin community area were destroyed.

The park was not extensively restored until 1992.⁵ The impacts of the Eisenhower on daily community life were wide ranging. According to Historian Beryl Sattler’s book Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America, “[The Eisenhower] sliced the neighborhood in two and essentially destroyed it,” she writes.

“Routines that had marked daily life were now impossible. The walk to the newsstand for the Sunday morning paper? Forget it; what used to be a peaceful stroll now entailed crossing eight lanes of traffic. The corner tailor? Gone. The baker? Out of business.”

Such highway construction brought an end to diverse, integrated neighborhoods in Chicago. Like several other places in the U.S., many affected neighborhoods in Chicago would never recover from the impact of large swaths of concrete built to facilitate high-speed auto travel.⁶

IMPACTS OF HIGHWAYS IN CHICAGO

Figure 2 shows the intact Chinatown neighborhood before the construction of the interstate highway system and after interstate construction, where the interchanges between the Stevenson and Dan Ryan Expressways consumed huge amounts of land and created massive barriers between neighborhoods. Chinatown not only lost residential development and small businesses during the highway construction but green space as well.

Hardin Square Park was a community center with a field house serving Chinese residents that was demolished to facilitate highway construction. The community advocated for the return of park space through the development of Sun Yat Sen Park and, later, Ping Tom Memorial Park.

Figure 3 shows how the 14-lane Dan Ryan Expressway bisected communities on the South Side. The CTA Dan Ryan branch (now the southern part of the

CTA Red Line) of the rail system was built in the median of the highway, opening in 1969.⁷

RAIL: THE ORIGINAL HIGHWAY

Chicago is a major transportation hub for the Midwest and the nation. It is the rail crossroads of the country, where six Class I freight railroads intersect, and more than 500 freight trains operate every day. Metra commuter rail trains

Figure 2. Chinatown before (left) and after (right) construction of the Dan Ryan expressway and the Stevenson (I-55) interstate highway



Figure 3. Englewood/Washington Park before (left) and after (right) construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway (I-94)



run on some of the tracks owned by freight railroads and on lines that Metra owns and operates itself. Many of these rail lines are elevated, due to a city ordinance in 1893 requiring the elimination of all grade level crossings that existed at that time. This created numerous viaducts where roadways pass under the rail, which is good for avoiding crashes between cars and trains, but does not make for an appealing pedestrian environment. Viaduct locations are often dark, damp, and unappealing to walk or bike through. In some places there are limited locations where crossing the line is possible making people travel longer distances to reach a destination on the other side.

Figure 4. Viaduct Under Rail Line on South Homan Avenue, North Lawndale



THE CHICAGO SKYWAY

The Chicago Skyway was completed in 1958 by the City of Chicago to connect the Dan Ryan Expressway and the Indiana Tollway ending at the Illinois-Indiana

border. This nearly 8-mile toll road was built on a bridge over existing neighborhoods. An entrance/exit ramp drops awkwardly into the middle of Stony Island at 79th Street.

Here is an excerpt from the Chicago Tribune detailing community impact when the Skyway was built.

Figure 5. Entrance to the Chicago Skyway, Skyway ramp originates on Stony Island Avenue at 79th Street



“In 1966, Donald Bonniwell, a state highway commissioner, decried the Chicago Skyway as ‘a concrete curtain cutting off access’ by people in the southeast section of the city. The Skyway’s construction was a tragedy for many of those living or running a business along its route.

In 1957, Adeline Field, a retired phone operator, came to her door at 6815 Anthony

Ave. with a shotgun in her hand. All the other buildings on the block had been torn down for the Skyway. She was offered \$6,500 for her two-flat. Having refused, her home was condemned by the city. She was living without heat or water and faced eviction.

Chicago’s Last Department store sued for \$100,000 in damages, alleging the Skyway prevented customers from

entering its building at 10520 Indianapolis Blvd. At the other end of the elevated roadway, the Michigan Avenue Church of Christ claimed the Skyway’s entrance ramp made it ‘dark, close, uncomfortable, unwholesome, and unfit for church purposes.’”⁸

— Chicago Tribune (Sept. 25, 2022)

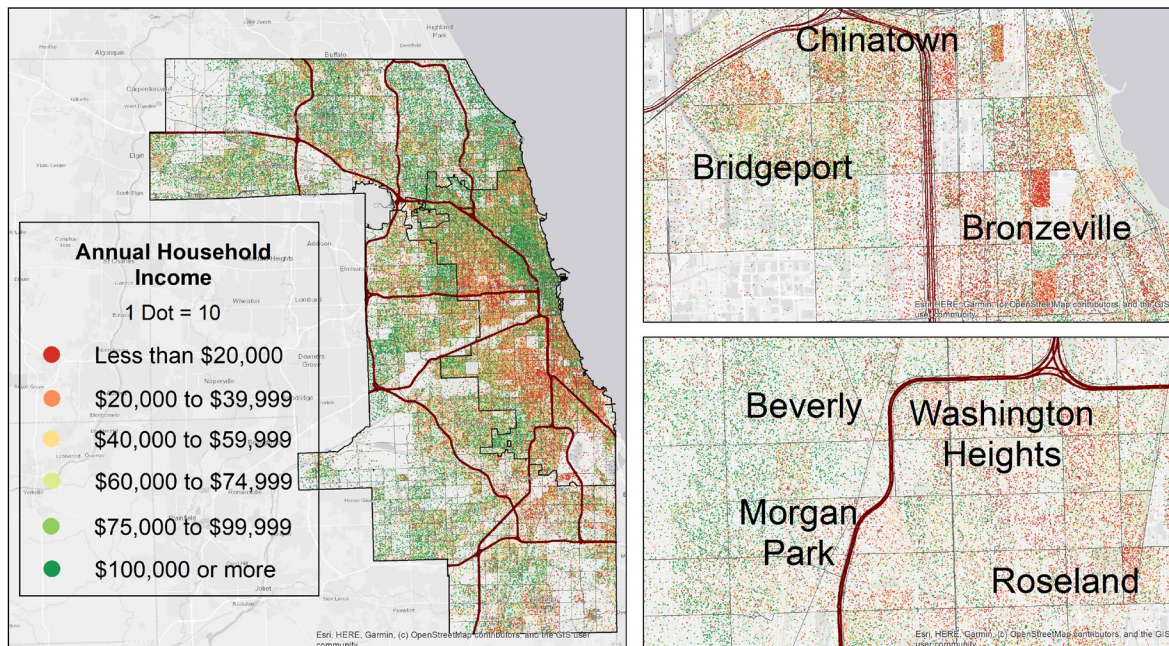
HIGHWAY IMPACTS TO COMMUNITIES

Healthy communities were severely damaged when highways sliced through them, and many areas have continued to be negatively impacted by their locations adjacent to major interstates. As shown in Figure 6, many neighborhoods near the highway network have a large proportion of low-income residents.

Additionally, highways have served to separate communities with varying economic status and amenities. For example, as shown, the low-income Roseland neighborhood is surrounded on three sides by highways that serve as barriers to connectivity to other communities where retail and jobs are more plentiful, like Beverly, to the west.

The irony of the scale of highways in the city of Chicago is the number of residents who live adjacent to them who do not use them. Figure 7 shows the density of households located near interstate highways who do not own any vehicles according to the American Community Survey (2015-2019). While car ownership may have been higher prior to 2015, current policies have not changed according to the changing demographics. As shown in the inset of Figure 7, a large proportion of the households adjacent to this ribbon of concrete have no vehicles, so the roadway currently does not improve their ability to get around the region; it only serves only as a barrier to mobility via walking, biking, and using transit.

Figure 6. Highways and Household Income in Cook County

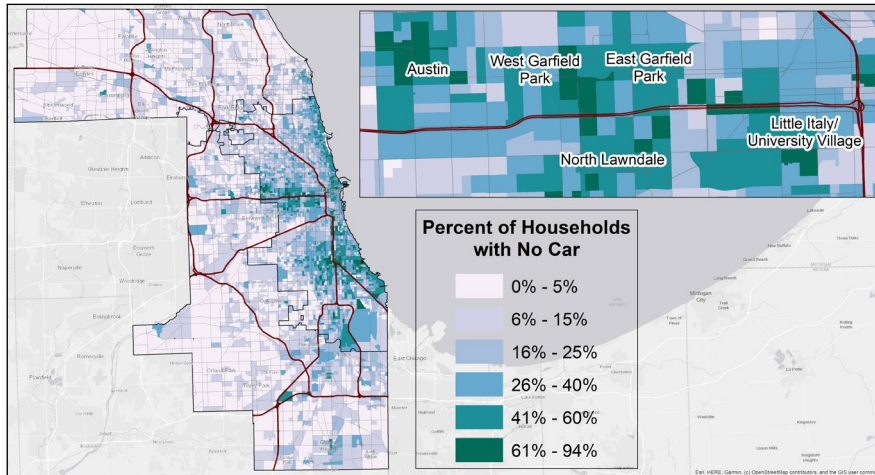


Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 Five Year Estimates

HEALTH IMPACTS

The negative health impacts of transportation infrastructure to residents living nearby are experienced daily. Fossil fuel powered cars and trucks emit particulate matter, which lodges in the

Figure 7. Highways and Auto Ownership in Cook County

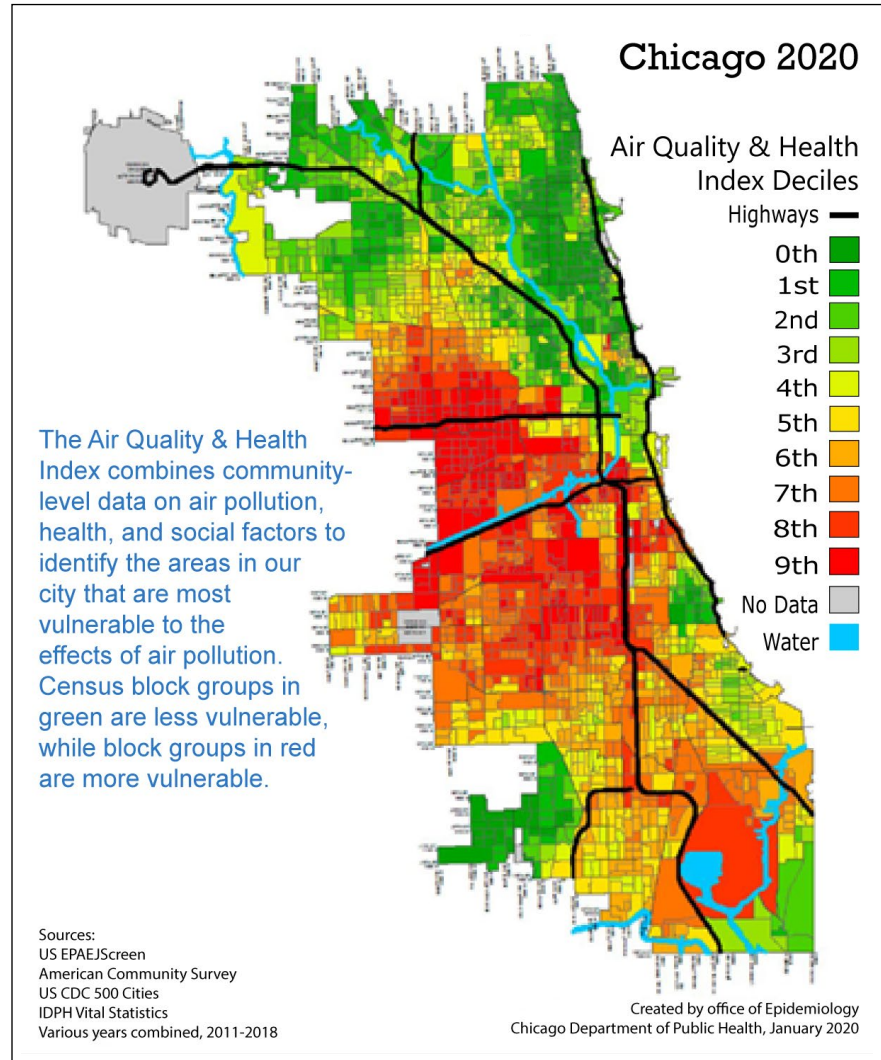


Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 Five Year Estimates

lungs of people that live nearby. As noted by the City of Chicago’s Department of Public Health in its Air Quality and Health Report:

“Chronic disease is the leading driver of Chicago’s nine-year life expectancy gap between Black and white residents and decreases in life expectancy in the Latinx population. Air pollution can both increase risk of chronic illnesses like heart and lung diseases and contribute to worse outcomes for people living with certain health conditions. The concentrations of certain types of air pollution such as particulate matter and ozone are fairly uniform across the city. Pollutants such as diesel particulate matter, on the other hand, are more prevalent in areas with significant traffic and industry. Additionally, health and social factors that make some people more vulnerable to the effects of pollution vary widely from one neighborhood to the next.”

Figure 8. Air Quality and Health Index, Chicago 2020

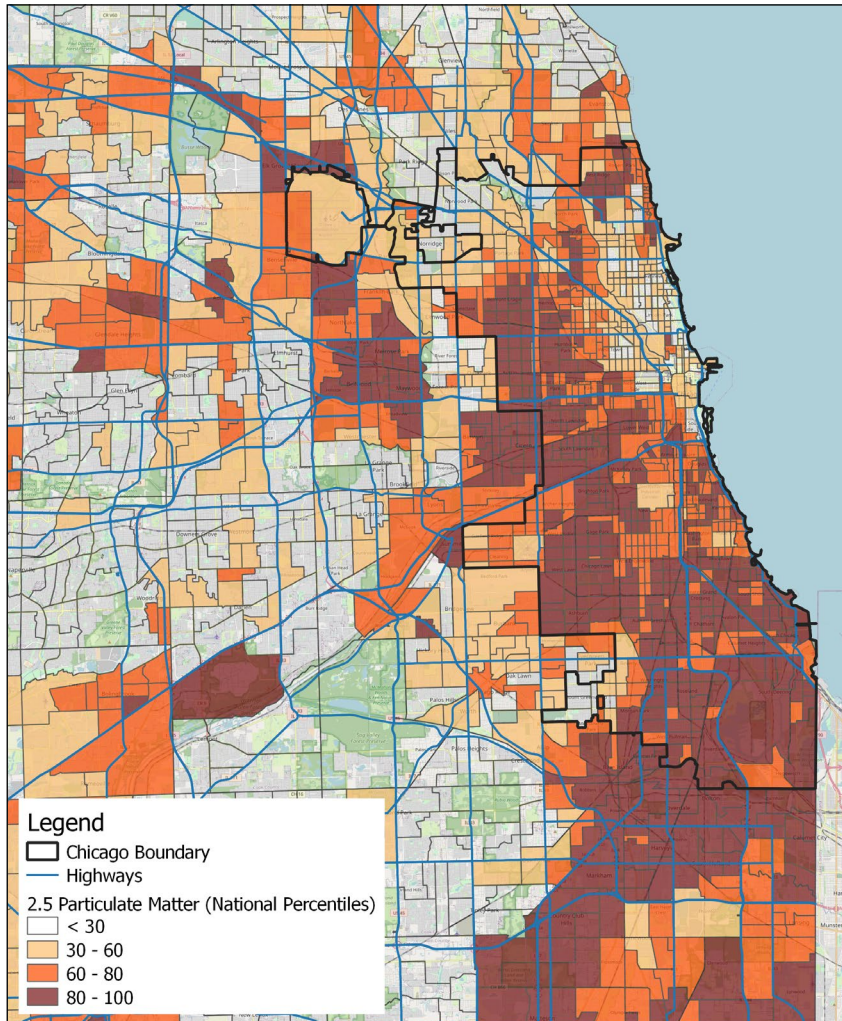


Source: City of Chicago Air Quality and Health Report, 2020

As shown in Figure 8, many areas proximate to Interstate highways in the City of Chicago suffer poor air quality and have populations that are at high risk of negative health impacts.

Figure 9 displays the concentration of particulate matter 2.5 (PM 2.5), the smallest size of particulate emissions. This size of particulate matter can travel deep into the respiratory tract. Significant areas in Chicago have PM 2.5

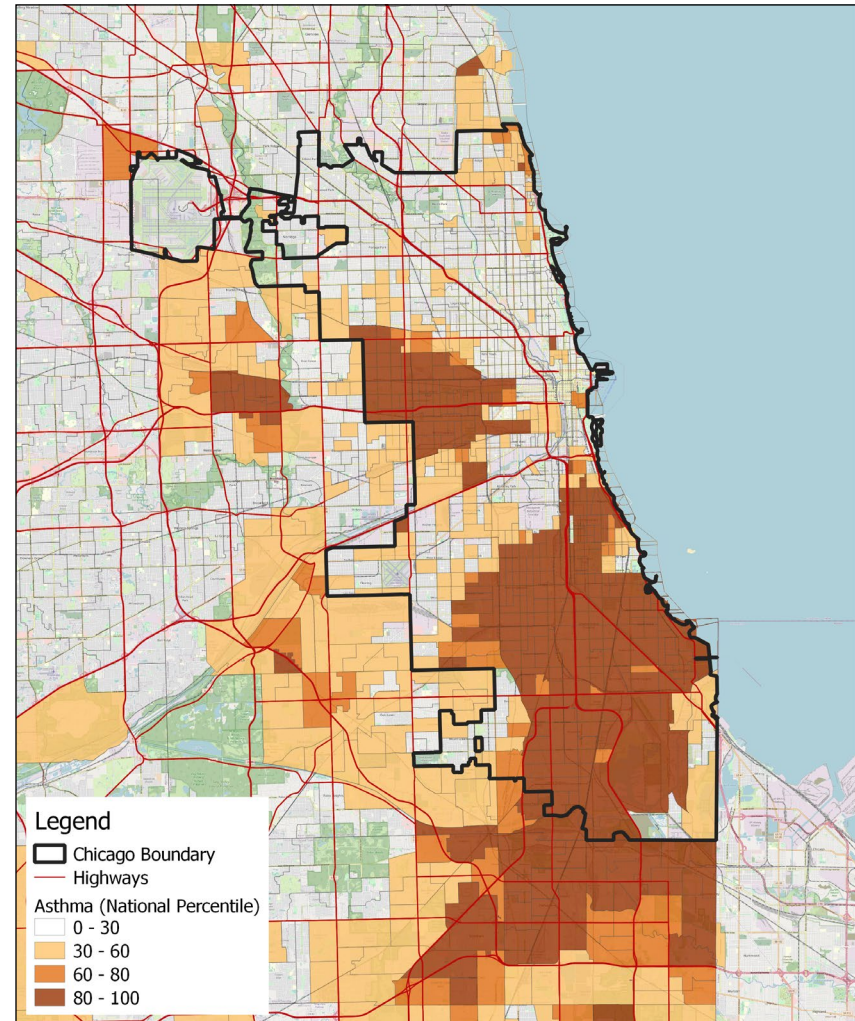
Figure 9. Particulate Matter 2.5 Concentrations



Source: [EJScreen \(epa.gov\)](http://EJScreen.epa.gov)

in the 80th to 100th percentile of national values, most located near major highways. Figure 10 shows the prevalence of asthma throughout the region. Air pollution can worsen asthma symptoms and trigger asthma attacks.

Figure 10. Asthma Prevalence Among Adults

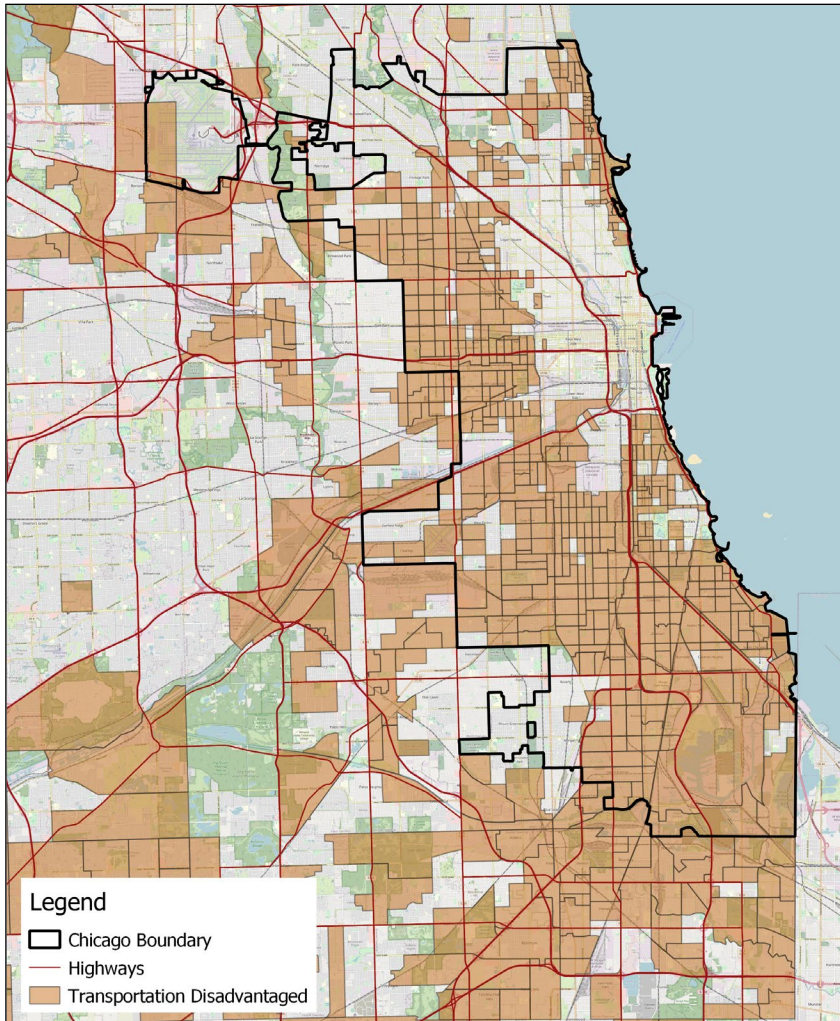


Source: [EJScreen \(epa.gov\)](http://EJScreen.epa.gov)

OTHER IMPACTS

Figure 11 shows census tracts where it takes residents longer to get to their desired destinations.

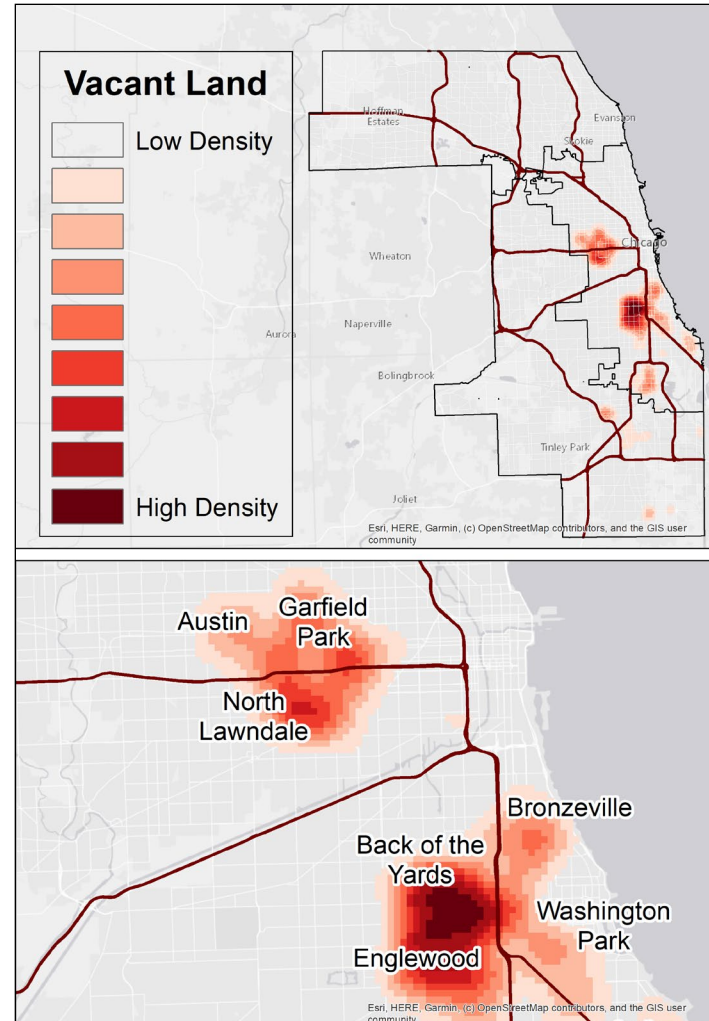
Figure 11. Historically Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts



Source: U.S., DOT, [Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

The negative impacts of highways — high volumes of traffic that result in noise, vibration, emissions, and traffic safety impacts — may play a role in how attractive certain locations are to developers. As shown in Figure 12, several

Figure 12. Vacant Property Relationship to Highways in Cook County



Source: CMAP

concentrations of vacant properties in Cook County are adjacent to major interstate highways.

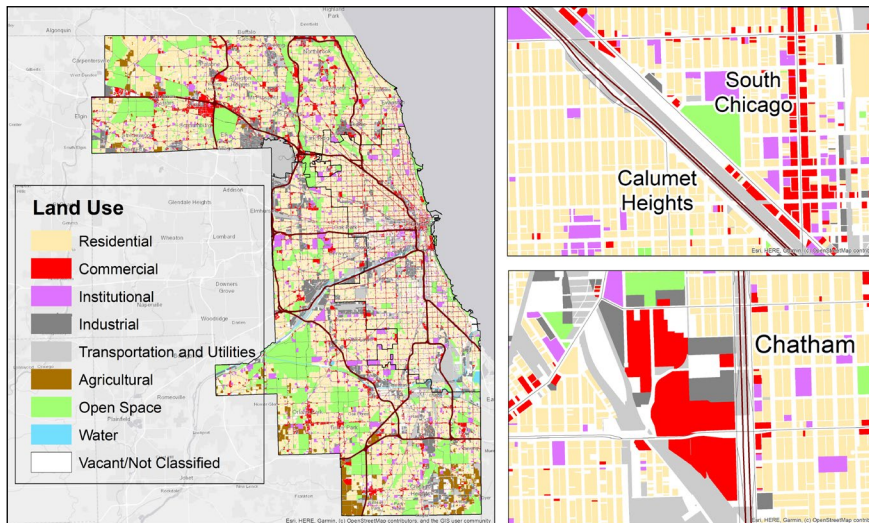
Highways can serve as a significant barrier to access between residential areas and retail or open space, as shown in Figure 13. For example, Calumet Heights is separated from the commercial activity in South Chicago by the highway.

Roadway impacts are not limited only to interstate highways. Major arterials such as Western Avenue, Ashland Avenue, Cicero Avenue, and Garfield Boulevard also present significant neighborhood connectivity barriers and safety hazards. A significant issue in Chicago along these corridors is the dramatic increase in traffic crashes. Figure 14 shows the massive increase in fatal traffic crashes in the greater Chicago region in recent years, and Figure 15 shows the

dramatic recent increase in pedestrian and bicycle fatalities. Many Chicago residents report their quality of life being negatively affected by speeding traffic that is very difficult for pedestrians to cross or cyclists to navigate.

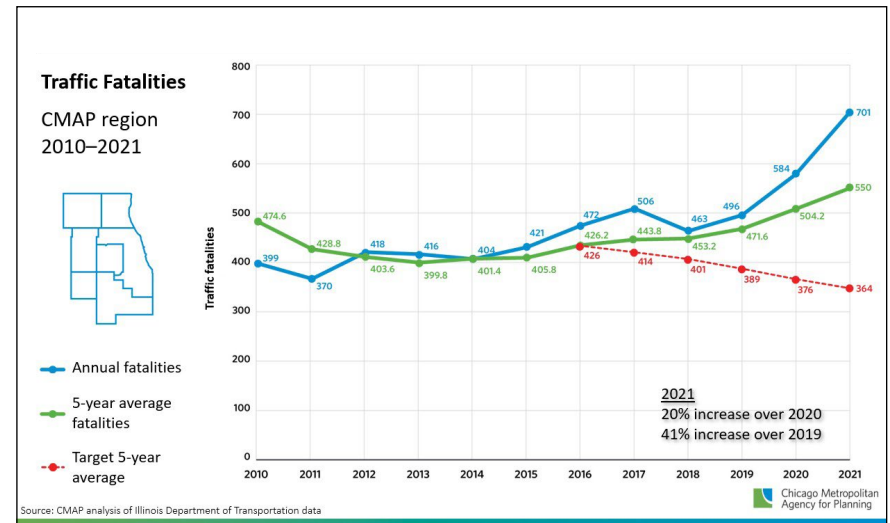
This makes **getting around the city an often terrifying and potentially life-threatening experience**, especially as personal vehicles have become bigger and heavier.

Figure 13. Highways and Land Use in Cook County



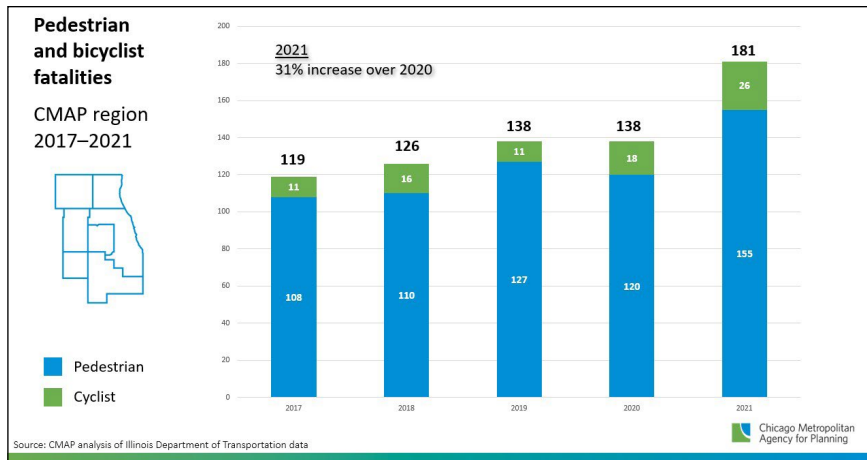
Source: CMAP Land Use Inventory
<https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/land-use/inventory>

Figure 14. Traffic Fatalities in Northeastern Illinois



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning analysis of Illinois Department of Transportation data

Figure 15. Pedestrian and Bicyclist Traffic Fatalities in Northeastern Illinois



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning analysis of Illinois Department of Transportation data

While the Chicago region boasts the second-largest transit system in the country, the rider experience can be quite unpleasant for rail users who wait for the train in the highway median (Figure 16). During the winter, the wind created by auto and truck traffic only makes the experience feel colder. The smell of exhaust is a constant assault as hundreds of vehicles race by.

Waiting riders in the highway median must tolerate deafening sound levels from the passing traffic. **As shown in Figure 17, sound levels along highways from roadway traffic regularly exceed 70 decibels, a level deemed harmful to human hearing.**⁹

Figure 16. CTA Blue Line station in the median of the Eisenhower Expressway

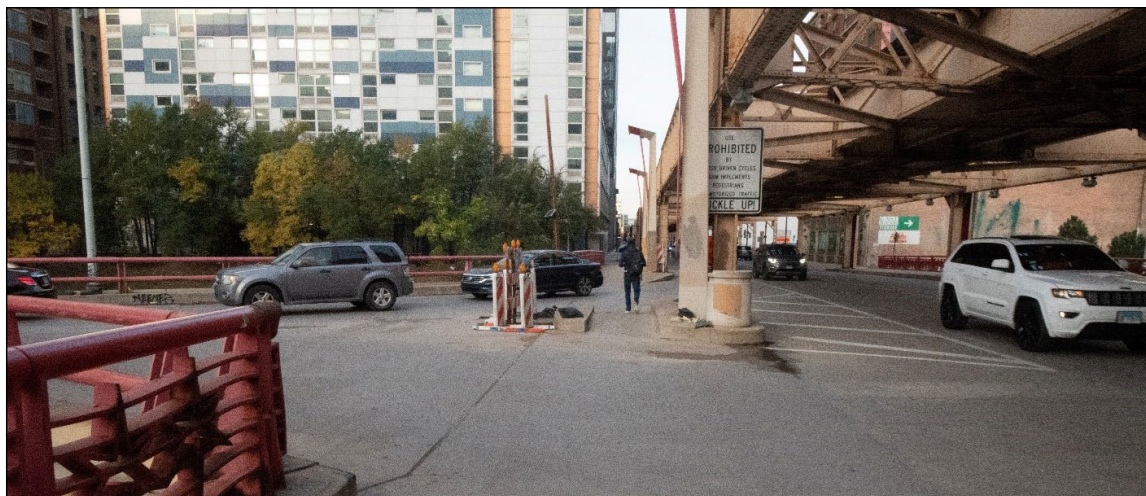


Figure 17. Noise Levels from Highway Traffic



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics Noise Map Application
<https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/National-Transportation-Noise-Map/ri89-bhxh>

Figure 18. Entrance ramps to the Kennedy Expressway in the Loop cross the sidewalk



Location in a highway median has the added detraction of stations being isolated from the very destinations transit is intended to help people reach. After riders exit a station on a highway median, they must hike the width of the highway and traverse stairs or elevators, bridges, and adjacent streets before they reach a destination or transfer. This isn't the experience riders expect from a dense urban network.

It is very challenging to build transit-oriented development near these stations since it can take nearly one-quarter mile just to get out of the highway median. The bridges over the highways, where people enter the transit stations, also have poor pedestrian environments. To overcome such challenges major investments may be needed, such as highway caps that can create new land on widened bridges at transit station entrances.

The barrier highways and arterials present to walkability cannot be overstated. Given highways require entrance and exit ramps, involving rapid changes in speed and direction, their intersection with cross streets is always

problematic. Figure 18 shows a location with a wide swath of concrete lacking crosswalk markings that pedestrians must cross when traversing highway entrance or exit ramps.

However, access-controlled interstate highways are not the only barriers to walkability. Arterials that may be four or six lanes wide and used by

thousands of trucks and cars a day can be extremely problematic to cross, as vehicles routinely exceed the posted speed limit and pedestrians must traverse long crossing distances. Figure 19 shows the roadway directly in front of the entrance to the 95th Street CTA Red Line station. While transit station area locations should be easy to access on

foot or bike, instead, this location is a multilane roadway without well-defined crosswalks and no bike lanes, making access to the train station on foot or by bike highly unappealing and downright unsafe. **Countless locations exist where access to destinations near large roadways by walking or biking ranges from unpleasant to impossible.**

Figure 19. 95th Street at CTA Red Line Station



The 95th Street CTA Red Line Station lacks a pedestrian-friendly character and has no amenities adjacent to the station.

NATIONAL CASE STUDY **EXAMPLES**

This effort asks us to recognize the deficiencies of the current built environment and identify ways to make meaningful improvements to community quality of life and accessibility by modifying infrastructure and/or the adjacent areas.

Examples in other regions demonstrate the types of projects that have been undertaken to mitigate such harms and the benefits they have achieved.

The Cap at Union Station (Figure 20), in Columbus, Ohio spans I-670 to the north of downtown. From the 1950s

Figure 20. Columbus, OH Highway Cap



Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/paytonc/141259755/>

through the 1970s, urban renewal razed a low-income Black and immigrant neighborhood known as Flytown that bordered Union Station. By the mid-70s Flytown had been replaced by I-670 and Union Station's iconic architecture designed by Daniel Burnham had been replaced by a convention center. North of I-670 the neighborhoods of Short North, Victorian Village, and Italian Village struggled until the late 1980s when Short North emerged as the artistic center of Columbus with a vibrant gay community. However, Short North shops and restaurants did not get the same convention center related business as those south of the highway. In 2004, a public-private partnership completed The Cap over the highway, which hosts nine stores and restaurants in buildings whose architecture is reminiscent of Burnham's Union Station. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) constructed the three bridges that comprise The Cap, while the rest was financed by a private developer who built the structure on top. In the

two decades since, Short North has seen a significant number of properties redeveloped from single-story buildings and parking lots into walkable mixed-use mid-rises.

The Cap provides a comfortable walking connection to Downtown, rarely experiences vacancies, and serves as an entrance onto High Street, which USA Today named one of its "10 Great American Shopping Streets" in 2017.^{10, 11, 12, 13, 14}

Chicano Park in San Diego (Figure 21), is both a neighborhood park and tourist attraction underneath the Coronado Bridge and I-5 interchange. Located in the Mexican-American neighborhood of Barrio Logan, the park is known for the world's largest collection of Chicano murals which are painted on the concrete pillars supporting the highway. The construction of I-5 and the bridge displaced over 5,000 residents of Barrio Logan in the late 1960s, but the neighborhood was promised a park underneath the viaduct in return.

IN THE LATE 1960S



5,000+

residents of Barrio Logan were displaced because of the construction of I-5 and the bridge

In 1970 when the California DOT reneged and attempted to build a highway patrol station instead, hundreds of residents of Barrio Logan occupied the area and were joined by protesters from across the state. A twelve-day standoff was followed by negotiations that secured the park's


future. A few years later, local Chicano artists began to paint the now famous murals. The Chicano Park murals are always a work in progress that have attracted talented artists and made Barrio Logan an artistic hotbed. The neighborhood around the park is now full of breweries, art studios, and

small businesses while the park itself has hosted neighborhood gatherings for fifty years including the annual anniversary party commemorating the protest that saved the park.^{15, 16, 17}

Figure 21. Chicano Park, San Diego, CA



Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/8Nn49K7Snow> & <https://unsplash.com/photos/S0M4C4k4n-Q>



The Rainbow Light Tunnels
have become a distinctive part
of Birmingham that has inspired
other cities.

The rail line that splits downtown Birmingham in two has a series of bridges and underpasses. Four of the underpasses, now known as Birmingham Lights or the Rainbow Light Tunnels (Figure 22), feature bright LED colored lights. Previously, the historic underpasses had been avoided, especially at night, for being dark and unwelcoming. In 2013, REV Birmingham, a local revitalization and economic development non-profit, worked with artist Bill FitzGibbon to install the lights, which vary in color and speed, on 18th Street, followed the next year by installations on 14th, 19th, and 20th Streets. They have become an Instagrammable attraction that draws people to downtown shops and restaurants. These underpasses that connect Five Points South and the University of Alabama-Birmingham to the northern side downtown neighborhoods of Central City and Fountain Heights are now more inviting, better used, and have become a distinctive part of Birmingham that has inspired other cities.^{18, 19, 20}

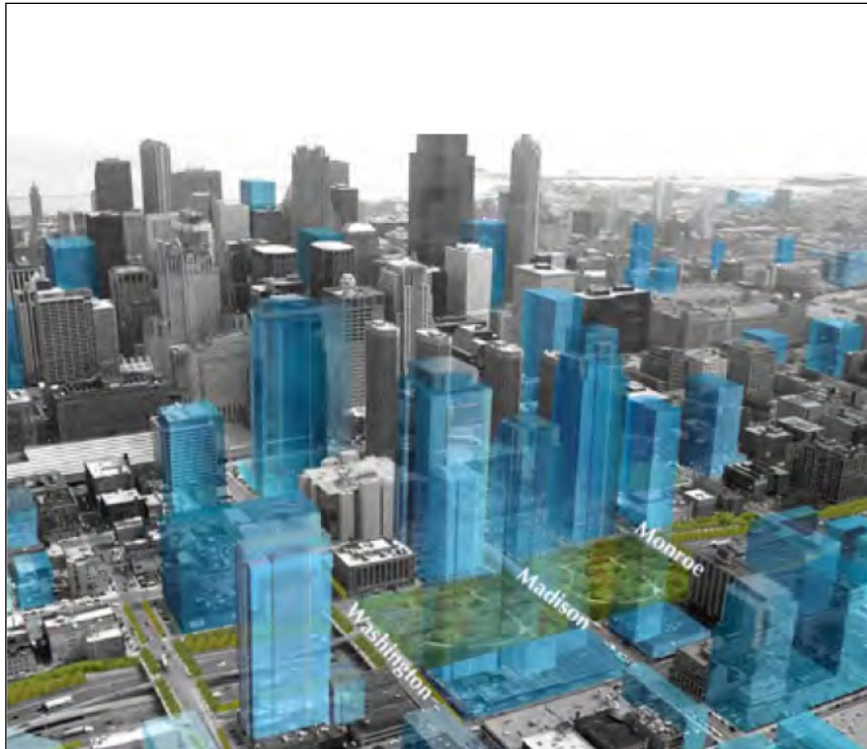
Figure 22. Rainbow Light Tunnel, Birmingham, AL

Source: <https://www.hellolanding.com/blog/13-fun-things-to-do-in-birmingham/>

CHICAGO PROPOSALS

Some solutions to the challenges presented by highways have been conceptualized in the Chicago region, but have not yet advanced. For example, in 2003 Oak Park published a Citizen Committee Report on Capping the Eisenhower Expressway in Oak Park as a proposal to finally heal the scar the highway tore through the community. The 2009 Chicago Central Area Action Plan proposed capping the

Figure 23. Rendering of a proposed cap of the Kennedy Expressway in the West Loop



Source: Chicago Central Area Action Plan, 2003

Kennedy Expressway in the West Loop to create more green space, as shown in Figure 23. However, neither has progressed despite Chicago's experience building structures over transportation infrastructure. For example, Millennium Park was built over the Illinois Central Rail Lines.²¹

CTA's 2017 Blue Line Vision Study Station and Station Access Alternatives Study proposes to enhance station access via mini caps over the Eisenhower Expressway and other station access enhancements. The study identifies multiple station locations along the Blue Line Forest Park Branch where a buildable deck is possible. Figure 24 shows an illustration of a potential highway cap between Oak Park Avenue and East Avenue in Oak Park. Such concepts should be incorporated into future plans for the reconstruction of the Eisenhower Expressway.

Figure 24. Illustration of Potential Highway Cap in Oak Park



Source: Blue Line Vision Study and Station Access Alternatives Study, CTA, 2017.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MPC approached the effort to identify future projects to mitigate the harms of transportation infrastructure in 2022 by establishing an Advisory Committee to provide oversight and guidance. An initial step was to provide an overview of the project to the Transportation Equity Network (TEN), a group of approximately 40

community-based organizations with an interest in increased participation in transportation efforts around the region, and invite members to participate on the Advisory Committee. Compensation was provided to those from nonprofit organizations. Five TEN members joined the Advisory Committee that also included members of government

agencies and consultants. The Advisory Committee convened five meetings over the course of the year to solicit input and guidance on the study approach and methods. Advisory Committee members are listed in Appendix A.

METHODOLOGY FOR PRIORITIZING POTENTIAL PROJECTS

To collect project ideas from community members, MPC developed a public interactive web-based engagement tool in 2022. The website provided brief background on the new federal infrastructure bill and grant program that inspired the project. It also provided information on the historical harm caused by transportation infrastructure. The tool enabled users to suggest projects to mitigate the issues by defining project locations on a map and sharing photos or by entering project ideas into a survey. Additional relevant projects were entered by MPC staff from reviewing Chicago neighborhood quality-of-life plans, which are community-based plans identifying desired projects to improve neighborhoods. This was a regional effort; while most of the data sources and projects submitted have more of a City of Chicago focus, projects outside of the city, along with bundled city/

suburban projects, were identified and considered. Also, as a “screening” effort, it wasn’t possible to identify or consider the many community-based plans beyond Quality-of-Life Plans, but these can be considered as opportunities arise in pursuing projects.

OUTREACH

The success of the Connecting Communities Tool required the active participation of residents across the region. MPC distributed a description and link to the tool to a broad list of community-based organizations throughout the region including TEN and many others. MPC convened an “Open House” activity with TEN members that provided guidance on how to submit projects using the tool and how to share the tool with members of their communities.

The second phase of engagement consisted of virtual and in-person events that engaged community members to suggest projects. MPC staff held a virtual meeting with high school students referred to us from Rush University Medical Center to showcase the tool and brainstorm about potential projects that students later submitted via the tool.

2022



MPC developed a public interactive web-based engagement tool to collect project ideas from community members

MPC held in-person events at Chicago Public Schools’ back-to-school engagement activities with families prior to the start of the school year. MPC was invited to have a table where the team displayed a printed map of the area surrounding the school and stickers to allow the participants to point out issues that they experienced within the area. These events allowed the team to engage with the public in person and hear verbal descriptions of project ideas that were documented in the tool. Approximately 60 percent of the 120 project ideas were generated from the engagement activities. Other residents suggested project ideas by scanning QR codes printed on the map and entering their input directly. This initiative was shared by social media and disseminated to the broader community as well. Once MPC determined the stop scoring projects, as described in the next section, the study team reached out to community leaders in the project areas. The project descriptions were refined based on this input.

PROJECT CATEGORIZATION

Categorization of the projects occurred in two phases: First, the projects were classified according to their type. The pre-screening classified projects according to their suitability to apply for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Grant, based on the characteristics listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunities, (NOFO).

The projects that did not pass the pre-screening were retained and acknowledged to document issues that residents face across the region and potential solutions. These suggestions could be candidates for funding by general transportation funds managed by transportation agencies or via other state or federal grant programs. See Appendix C for the complete list of suggestions.

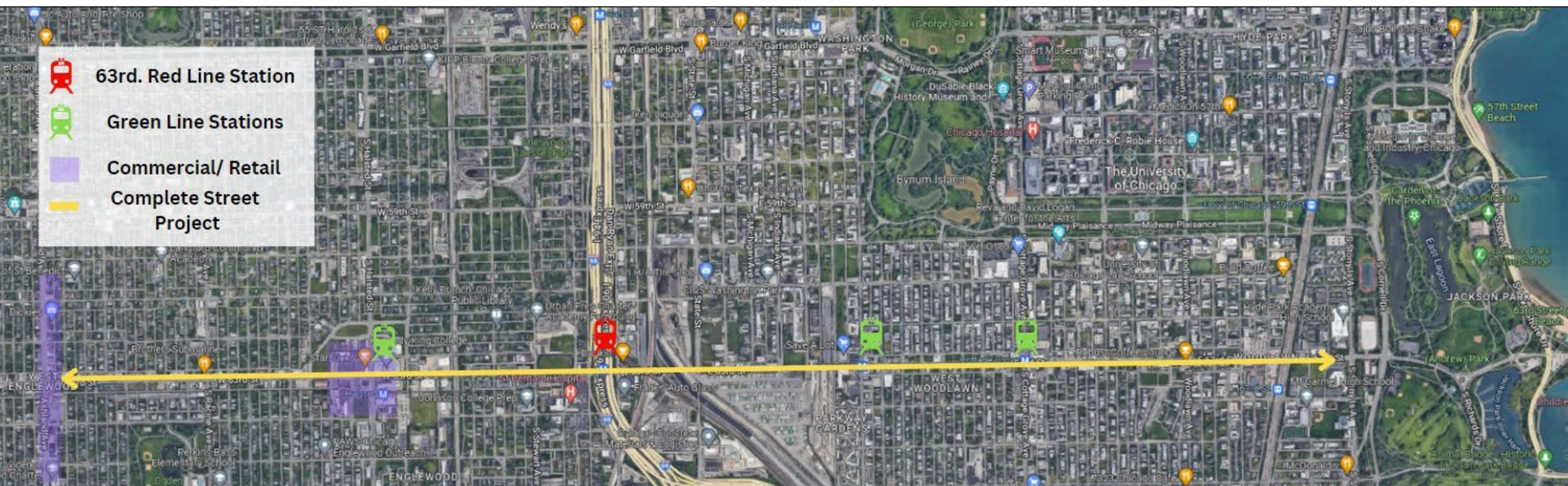
1 Categorization of projects

The remaining projects were categorized by their geographic extent (point or linear), and the type of intervention required.

Table 1. Project Categories

Points	Total Projects
Transit Infrastructure	6
Park	4
Viaduct Improvements	11
Underpass Community Space	5
Linear	
Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	42
Highway Redesign	6
Park	2

Figure 25. Example of Linear Project Definition at 63rd Street Red Line Station



Most projects were suggested at a single location but many, such as Complete Streets projects, only have impact if they extend for some distance. Therefore, the study team determined a logical length for linear projects by identifying key destinations such as retail, transit stations and green space near the point selected in the Connecting Communities tool. Figure 25 shows a Complete Streets corridor as defined by the study team defined based on input that walkability

improvements are needed around the 63rd Street Red Line station.

2 Pre-screening

In this step, the study team categorized projects into two groups based on their suitability for applying to the Reconnecting Communities Grant. A total of 76 projects continued through the pre-screening and later were scored using project prioritization criteria developed by MPC.

This pre-screening process focused on identifying eligible project characteristics listed in the NOFO such as:

- The project is on a transportation facility (highway, high-frequency transit corridor, port, airport) that represents a barrier to the community and is an active highly traveled corridor.
- The project would connect disrupted communities with desired destinations.

- Complete Streets projects were selected based on the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) functional classification of the roadway they were on. Only projects categorized as minor arterial and above were suitable.

MPC'S CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZATION OF PROJECTS

MPC developed its scoring criteria based on the categories of criteria listed in the NOFO for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Grant 2022, see Table 2. Each criterion could receive a score between 0 and 3 points. The scoring system used tools recommended by the U.S. Department of Transportation, such as the Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool [EJScreen](#) and the [Transportation Disadvantage Census Tract tool](#).

The study team mapped the projects submitted via the Connecting Communities Tool as points or lines based on their type. Later, the team made buffers of 0.5 miles for each.

For the Economic and Environmental Burden Risk, the team averaged the percentiles by block group throughout the buffered area, assigning the scores according to the average percentile. The team also developed a score for Historically Transportation Disadvantaged Communities based on whether a majority of tracts within the buffer were designated as such in the U.S. DOT tool.

For the climate resilient infrastructure, the study team assumed that it would be incorporated into the project in a meaningful way if feasible. Points were assigned based on the feasibility of incorporating elements that would address noise, heat island or stormwater management. For example, for a highway cap proposal, the team assumed that it would serve as a buffer to minimize noise in that immediate area, it would integrate green infrastructure like trees to manage heat, and that it would include green infrastructure to manage stormwater. Stakeholders raised the importance of the incorporation of appropriate

engagement methods, affordable housing, and art.

Given that the projects are in their nascent stages, and that Reconnecting Communities grant applications require details on planned considerations for these elements, the study team made the assumption that such elements would be considered in a future project development stage and did not incorporate that into the scoring rubric. Moving forward, anti-displacement strategies such as those described in MPC's [Preserving Affordability Together](#) report should be considered for all projects. The study team connected with community groups to discuss each of the top proposed projects to confirm that the project would be broadly supported, that it aligned with their work, and to refine the description.

Table 2. Project Scoring Criteria

Criteria from NOFO	MPC Criterion	Score	Supporting Tool
Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Engagement	Economic and Environmental Burden Risk	Geographic location and percentile assigned based on the presence of Particulate Matter 2.5. Low (less than 60) = 1 Med (60-90) = 2 High (90-100) = 3	EJScreen (epa.gov)
Mobility and Community Connectivity	Access to Desired Destinations	The project improves connectivity between residential locations and desired destinations. Commercial areas = 2 Green areas = 2 Both = 3	Municipalities' zoning maps
	Supports Active Transportation	The project improves: Biking = 1 Walking = 1 ADA accessibility = 1	Streets for Cycling plan, 2012
	Supports Transit	Public transportation — the project improves: Bus = 2 Train = 2 Both = 3	CTA/Metra/Pace transit service map
Equitable Development	Supports Climate Resilient Infrastructure	The project could integrate elements that contribute with: Heat Island = 1 Storm water mgmt = 1 Noise mgmt = 1	Sustainable Urban Infrastructure, Chicago Department of Transportation, 2013
	Prioritize historically transportation disadvantaged communities	Is the project in an area that is historically transportation disadvantaged? Yes = 3 No = 0	Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts (arcgis.com)

Note: EJScreen: Used to identify areas with a high presence of particulate matter 2.5 and socioeconomic burden. Zoning Maps: These maps show the location of residential areas and provide a high-level approach to identifying potential desired destinations such as commercial areas and green space. Chicago Streets for Cycling, 2012: This plan lays out desirable bike corridors and bike infrastructure types across the city; the team used it as a reference for areas with potential for bike infrastructure prioritization. Sustainable Urban Infrastructure, 2013: This document showcases the potential climate-resilient elements to be included in a Complete Streets project. Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts: This tool identifies census tracts where communities historically spend more time to get to their destinations.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

MPC scored the 76 projects that passed through the pre-screening process. A total of 22 projects scored the highest, receiving 16 or 17 points. Most projects with lower overall scores received a low score on the Economic and Environmental Burden Risk and Transportation Disadvantage. See Appendix B for a table of all projects that passed through the pre-screening process and were scored.

Table 3 presents the summary of projects by category. Each category includes a wide variety of projects. Below is the description of each category and the type of projects included.



Bicycle/Pedestrian /Complete Streets

This category comprises projects designed to improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience, such as road diets, bike lanes, sidewalks and crosswalks, traffic safety infrastructure, and access to transit infrastructure.



Transit Infrastructure

The projects in this category address the need to improve existing or new transit stations; this includes the redesign of stations, access improvement, bus shelters, and railroad barriers.



Highway Redesign

This category includes projects addressing design concerns or possible alternatives to reduce negative impacts to neighborhoods, such as highway caps, redesign of entrance and exit ramps, and highway removal.



Viaduct Improvement

Improve pedestrian and/or cyclist accommodation, lighting, add art, and make other upgrades to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists.



Underpass Community Space

Projects under this category seek activation of and improved accessibility to public spaces under transportation facilities by creation of plazas, parks, recreation and placemaking spaces under highways.



Park

Rails-to-trails development, small highway caps designed to provide green spaces above highways, and river trails.

Table 3. Project Types

Type of Project	Total
Highway Redesign	3
Transit Infrastructure	4
Viaduct Improvement	2
Underpass Community Space	2
Park	5
Bike/ Ped/ Complete Streets	6

A large proportion of all projects suggested were Complete Streets oriented, with desired strategies such

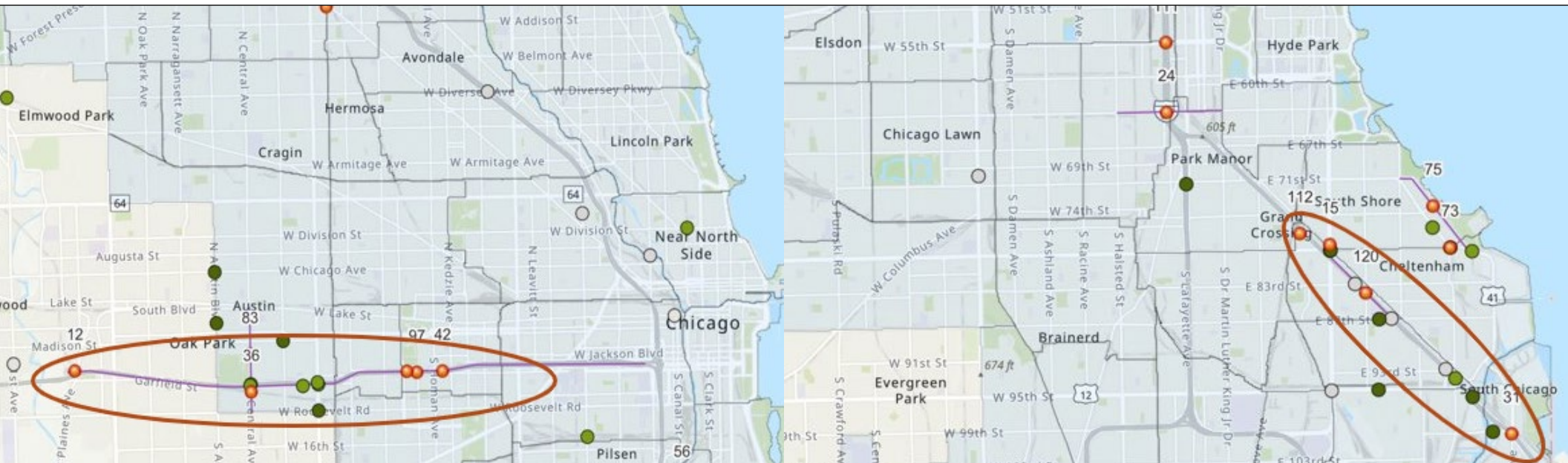
as improved pedestrian and bicycling conditions and managing vehicle speeds through traffic calming. A map of all Complete Streets projects suggested by community members is shown in Appendix C.

CORRIDORS AND BUNDLED PROJECTS

Many of the project proposals were clustered along highways across the region. The concentration of

projects raised the possibility of bundling projects, to provide more comprehensive solutions by including or integrating projects in the surrounding areas. The projects that scored lower along these corridors tended to be smaller and could be complementary to the more significant projects. Figure 26 shows the projects along the I-290 and Skyway corridors, including both highly scoring projects and other projects.

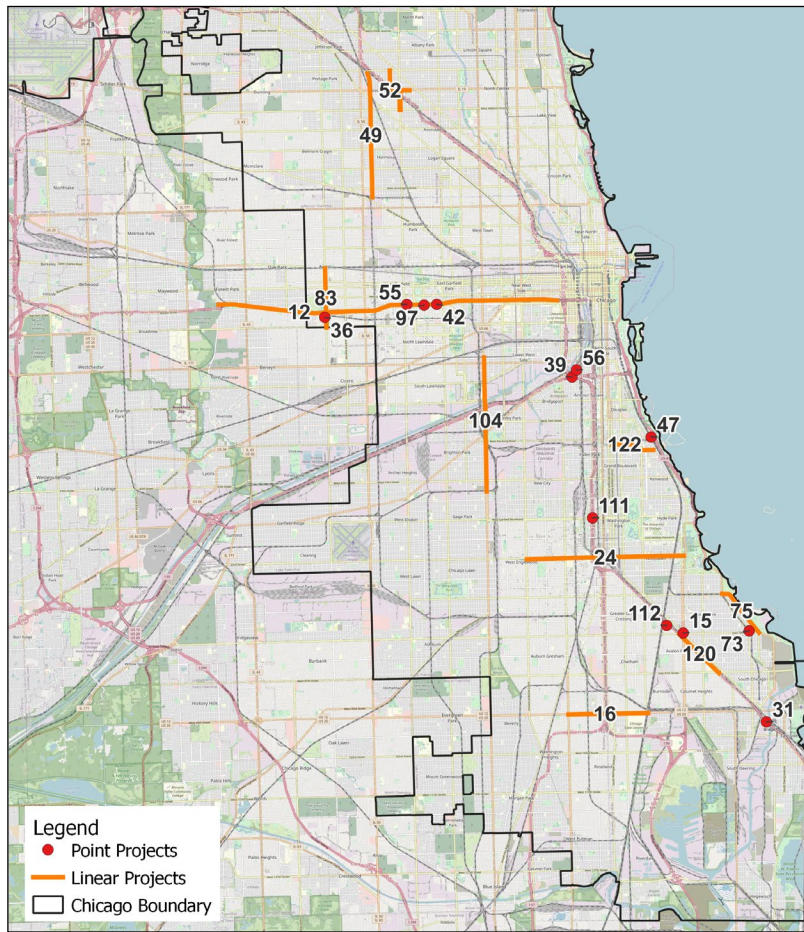
Figure 26. I-290 and Skyway Corridor Project Clusters



TOP-SCORED PROJECTS

The 22 projects receiving the highest scores are shown in Figure 27 and described below. The ID number corresponds to the project location on the map.

Figure 27. Top Scored Projects



Source: Metropolitan Planning Council, Connecting Communities 2022

EISENHOWER CORRIDOR

BLUE LINE VISION (ID 12)

Community: West Side

Type: Highway Redesign

The Eisenhower corridor and the Blue Line Forest Park branch provide a low-quality transportation experience for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. Constructed in 1954, the Eisenhower is a mobility barrier for the communities on the West Side of the city. The location of transit stations in the highway median and resulting uncomfortable pedestrian access along this corridor make the transit rider's experience unpleasant. This project proposes the implementation of improvements such as those defined in the [CTA 2017 Blue Line Station and Station Access Alternatives Study](#) that describes the renewal of the existing stations, making them fully ADA accessible for all users and adding caps to sections of the highway to create public space and improve the entrances to the stations. In addition, the proposal is for improved pedestrian access from the adjacent neighborhoods to the train line and the provision of micro-retail spaces as incubators for new businesses in the area. As members of the community said, "The community needs services, amenities, business, housing, and stores," and stations can become community destinations and provide additional services to the community.

EISENHOWER CORRIDOR

BLUE LINE CENTRAL STATION (ID 36)

Community: Austin

Type: Transit Infrastructure

Austin's [Quality-of-Life Plan](#) highlighted the need for a new Blue Line station on Central Ave. Currently, the closest train stations to this point are Austin which is located 0.68 mi. away, and Cicero, 1.0 mi. away. Adding a new station would connect this community to more destinations accessible via CTA rail. A new station could include climate-resilient infrastructure accessible to all users, allowing better access to bus routes 7 and 12, and connect the train with a bike lane on Central Ave proposed in the 2012 Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan 2020.

EISENHOWER CORRIDOR

STATION RENEWAL AND ADDITION OF NEW STATION TO THE BLUE LINE, FOREST PARK BRANCH (ID 42)

Community: North Lawndale

Type: Transit Infrastructure

The North Lawndale [Quality-of-Life plan](#) recommended the addition of a Blue Line station at Kostner as well as upgrades to two adjacent stations: Kedzie-Homan and Pulaski. The existing Blue Line stations are unpleasant to use and have poor accessibility for people with disabilities. The closest station to Kostner is 0.6 miles away. A new station would provide more convenient Blue Line access and be more appealing to use, connecting residents to desired destinations on the CTA rail system. This project should be built to include climate-resilient infrastructure such as trees and plantings.

EISENHOWER CORRIDOR

SMALL HIGHWAY CAP FOR A PARK ON INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD (ID 97)

Community: Garfield Park and North Lawndale

Type: Highway Redesign

The Eisenhower is a barrier to connectivity between the Garfield Park and North Lawndale neighborhoods to the north and south of the highway. This project proposes adding a highway cap between Independence Boulevard and Homan Avenue to increase the mobility of residents between both communities and connect the green areas on both sides. The project would also improve cyclists' experience by building bike lanes on Independence Boulevard; this Boulevard is designated as a crosstown bike route in the Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan 2020. This highway cap would also improve the transit rider experience on the existing bus routes 7 and 126 and at the Kedzie-Homan train station. In addition, according to community members, this project should incorporate spaces for retail and micro-retail to promote access to diverse members of the community to retail locations to start and grow businesses in the area.

EISENHOWER CORRIDOR

COMMUNITY PARK ON A HIGHWAY CAP (ID 55)

Community: West Garfield and North Lawndale

Type: Park

The project proposes a small cap on the highway between two bridges that cross the Eisenhower at Independence Boulevard to connect the disrupted linear park within the Boulevard. This project would connect green corridors in Garfield Park and North Lawndale along Independence Boulevard, which is designated as a crosstown bike route on the Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan 2020. This project would improve sustainable mobility options and connectivity to bus routes 7 and 126. Members of the community mentioned the possibility of this park being one component in the development of a more complex trail network as it would help to connect Independence Boulevard to the rail line that crosses North Lawndale, where currently Homan Rails Farm operates.

EISENHOWER CORRIDOR

COMPLETE STREET (ID 83)

Community: Austin

Type: Complete Streets

Central Avenue is categorized by IDOT as a minor arterial according to the [Roadway Functional Class Tool](#). The community says that this road feels unsafe to pedestrians, and there are issues with vehicles speeding. In addition, the current design of Central Ave passing under the Eisenhower, the only intersection of this type along the highway, induces speeding from drivers that come from the ramps onto Central Ave. This project proposes treatments to calm traffic between Roosevelt and the Green Line Station and at the exit and entrance ramps, as well as improved green features. It would enhance access to bus routes 85, 12, and the Green Line.

DAN RYAN CORRIDOR

SMALL HIGHWAY CAP FOR A PARK OVER DAN RYAN AT GARFIELD RED LINE STATION (ID 111)

Community: Fuller Park

Type: Park

Where Garfield Boulevard crosses the Dan Ryan, there are two wide bridges and a wide space between them. The access to Garfield train station is narrow, and the bus stops on both bridges could be much more appealing to the community. This project proposes a small accessible and walkable highway cap between these two bridges to create public green space that can also function as a gathering space. This would improve riders' experience accessing the Garfield Red Line station and taking bus routes 24 and 5, while improving the pedestrian crossing between the east and west sides of the Dan Ryan. This project would provide green open space to the surrounding communities and connect the existing green space on Garfield Boulevard disrupted by this intersection.

DAN RYAN CORRIDOR

COMPLETE STREET ON 63RD STREET (ID 24)

Community: Englewood

Type: Complete Street

West 63rd Street, where riders access the 63rd St. CTA Red Line station, needs to be more pedestrian friendly. This proposal is to implement Complete Streets improvements on 63rd between Ashland and S. Cornell Drive, upgrading a four-mile corridor with more space and an improved environment for pedestrians, bikes, and public transportation (buses and Red and Green Lines). Pedestrian upgrades are needed particularly since this route handles heavy truck traffic as just east of the Dan Ryan is a truck entry point into one of the busiest intermodal yards in the city. The Dan Ryan Expressway reconstruction failed to provide the desired north/south entry points at various locations in Greater Englewood, which has complicated pedestrian approaches at 63rd and 59th. Improving this corridor for all travel modes will better connect the community with desired destinations including businesses, schools, health facilities, and the communities on the west side of the Dan Ryan to the lakefront and the future Obama Presidential Center to the east. Streetscape improvements to the corridor should also be coordinated with development across this corridor, which currently has a high presence of vacant lots. This project has the potential to benefit the nearby Englewood Nature Trail (Agro- Eco District) under development, the locally agreed reopening of the Historic Racine Station (Greenline), the scheduled Broadband Network, entry to the St. Bernard Hospital - Ambulatory Care Center and the community's broader goal for a Green Industry Zone.

DAN RYAN CORRIDOR

COMPLETE STREET NEAR 95TH RED LINE STATION (ID 16)

Community: Roseland and Washington Heights

Type: Complete Streets

The existing conditions of 95th Street at the Dan Ryan Red Line station are not welcoming for pedestrians (see Figure 19), and the area is not easy for people with disabilities to navigate, despite the community having a higher presence of older residents. The project proposes a better integration of the station with the surrounding area by adding a Complete Street design to 95th Street, with a focus on significantly improving accessibility for people with disabilities. The project location from Halsted to Cottage Grove Avenue is aligned with the study area for an upcoming Transit-Oriented Development study funded by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA). This project can integrate elements such as protected bike lanes and improved crosswalks, which can induce the reduction of speed through roadway design. Enhancing the number of green plantings would also improve pedestrian, cyclist, and transit users' experience and help manage stormwater and heat.

SKYWAY CORRIDOR

REDESIGN RAMPS FROM SKYWAY INTO STONY ISLAND AVENUE (ID 15)

Community: South Shore and Avalon Park

Type: Highway Redesign

The Skyway's ramps, especially the one leading into Stony Island Avenue, have always been controversial. The design is confusing for all users and induces drivers to speed up, making Stony Island challenging to cross and causing safety concerns for all users. Members of the community shared that getting across Stony Island on foot is dangerous and crashes are frequent due to the unusual way the Skyway ramp drops into the center of the arterial roadway at 79th street. The project proposes a complete redesign of these ramps and a study to analyze options to reduce the impact of this Skyway connection on the community.

SKYWAY CORRIDOR

COMMUNITY SPACE PARK (ID 112)*

Community: Greater Grand Crossing

Type: Underpass

There is an abandoned space under the Skyway and Metra Rock Island corridor that is dark, poorly maintained, and has sidewalk gaps. The project proposes an underpass park to integrate surrounding green areas, improve the sidewalks and provide public space. The goal would be to make the area pedestrian-friendly and provide community facilities such as a community garden, along with a plaza with artistic and climate-resilient features.

SKYWAY CORRIDOR

COMMUNITY SPACE PARK (ID 31)

Community: East Side

Type: Park

Between 100th and 101st Streets below the Skyway, there are three unconnected parks. This project proposes creating an underpass plaza to connect these parks with a fourth parcel at the intersection of 100th Street, Ewing Avenue, and Indianapolis Avenue (US 12, 20, and 41), which intersect under the Skyway structure. This plaza would create safer and more welcoming links between these currently underutilized parks. Members of the community highlighted the opportunity for the plaza to connect the bike lanes on 100th Street with the existing Burnham Greenway trail that crosses the Skyway to the lakefront at Calumet Park and connects with the bike trail to Indiana. The community also highlighted that other existing parks in that area lack maintenance plans. Therefore, the project also needs funding to guarantee the maintenance of this plaza along with partnerships with community members to maintain the park long term.

SKYWAY CORRIDOR

REDESIGN OF THE SKYWAY (ID 120)

Community: Avalon and South Chicago

Type: Viaduct

The Skyway is considered a barrier for the community along South Jeffery Boulevard and 83rd Street where it intersects with South Chicago. The project proposes improving access from the west side of the Skyway to businesses in the area, which could be accomplished by building an underpass under the freight railroad and opening a viaduct under the Skyway to connect 83rd Street under the Skyway.

METRA ELECTRIC CORRIDOR

REOPENING METRA STATION (ID 47)

Community: Kenwood

Type: Transit Infrastructure

Oakland and the northeast side of Bronzeville are currently isolated as the existing bus routes do not have a high frequency in the area. The closest Metra Electric District station is 47th to the south and 27th to the north. This project proposes reopening the Metra Electric District 39th Street-Oakland station on the north side of Oakwood Avenue. The former station was closed at some point before 1957, several decades before the creation of Metra. In addition, this project could consider integrating projects for the connectivity of future developments on the northern end of this area. The City and the [Bronzeville Lakefront](#) developers have proposed replacing the existing 27th Street Metra Electric station with a new one on the north side of 31st Street. Any of these alternatives can be complemented by bus routes and bike lanes that connect these communities better to the prospective stations, providing better access to desired destinations and filling the gap in transportation options in the area. In addition, a new station could implement climate-resilient infrastructure and connect to existing bus routes and planned bike lanes in the area as described in the Chicago Streets for Cycling plan 2020.

METRA ELECTRIC CORRIDOR

METRA ELECTRIC — ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENT (ID 73)

Community: South Shore

Type: Transit Infrastructure

The existing conditions of the Metra Electric District station on 83rd Street limit its accessibility. The access ramp is narrow and has a utility pole that restricts the accessibility of the station. A station redesign including climate-resilient infrastructure can widen the platform, allowing better access for people of all abilities, improving the rider experience, and connecting community residents to more destinations. Additionally, the community would like all Metra stations on this line to have improved accessibility, lighting, and better maintenance of surrounding areas, which are significant issues.

STAND-ALONE PROJECTS

RAILS-TO-TRAILS PORTAGE PARK (ID 49)

Community: Portage Park

Type: Park

An underused freight rail corridor traverses the eastern side of Portage Park and crosses the Metra Milwaukee District North Line just south of West Irving Park Road. This rail corridor splits residential and commercial areas. The project proposes to repurpose this underused rail line and transform it into a biking/walking trail, providing public park space and connecting the [606 Trail](#) to the south with the planned [Weber Spur](#) trail to the north. Members of the community seek safer cycling routes separated from traffic, which this route could provide. The trail could also provide recreational and artistic features, and could connect thematically to the [Northwest Portage Walking Museum](#) along Irving Park Road that celebrates Native American history.

STAND-ALONE PROJECTS

RAILS-TO-TRAILS THE BRONZEVILLE TRAIL (ID 122)

Community: Bronzeville and Oakwood

Type: Park

The Bronzeville Trail project proposes restoring the abandoned Kenwood Embankment rail corridor and transforming it into an urban forest with an elevated trail. The trail is also included in the City's plan for [Chicago Trails and Corridors 2022](#) and is supported by [The Bronzeville Trail Task Force](#), a community group advocating for the development of this trail, organizing the community, engaging residents in the process, and pursuing a feasibility study. The development of this trail can accomplish better connectivity for the Oakland and Bronzeville communities while connecting them to green areas across this corridor and the lakefront. This trail can also increase the community's access to the Indiana Green Line station, crossing over busy arterials, connecting this transit station to the lakefront trail, and expanding access to desired destinations.

STAND-ALONE PROJECTS

UNDERPASS PARK AND PLAZA (ID 39)

Community: Chinatown

Type: Underpass

Chinatown has a vast unused space under I-55 and I-90, south of 24th Street. This area is currently fenced off and not accessible to the surrounding community. The project proposes to provide access to the space and allow programming beneath the highways. There could be opportunities for markets or other pop-up events. This project was recommended in the Chinatown [Parking Management Plan](#). Community members have noted that Chinatown is one of the communities most affected by highways and allowing the use of these spaces by the community can reverse some of the harm caused.

STAND-ALONE PROJECTS

COMPLETE STREETS NEAR KENNEDY EXPRESSWAY RAMPS ON IRVING PARK ROAD, KEELER AVENUE AND PULASKI ROAD (ID 52)

Community: Old Irving Park

Type: Complete Street

The ramps that come from the Kennedy Expressway into West Irving Park Road are extremely dangerous for pedestrians due to limited sight lines and shallow angles that allow cars to turn at high speeds. In addition, community members noted that the path below the highway, which also serves as access to the CTA Blue Line and Metra UP Northwest, is dark and needs to provide a better pedestrian experience. The project proposes implementing complete streets elements on West Irving Park and North Keeler Avenue to reduce drivers' speed while providing more space and better visibility for pedestrians and cyclists at the intersections with these ramps. This project can also incorporate better lighting, art, and upgraded sidewalks under the highway for pedestrians and transit users.

STAND-ALONE PROJECTS

RAILROAD VIADUCT IMPROVEMENT (ID 56)

Community: Chinatown

Type: Viaducts

Chinatown is divided in two by a vast elevated train facility that extends from West 63rd to West 28th Street. This structure creates some of the city's widest viaducts, extending about 400 feet along Canal Street from 23rd Street to 28th Street. Community members avoid walking through the viaducts due to the lack of maintenance, lighting, and low perception of safety. Given the rail facility to the north of 24th Street is no longer used, the project proposal is to remove part of the overhead structure to shorten the length of the viaduct underpass, or at a minimum upgrade the viaducts to make them pedestrian-friendly through improved lighting and reconstructed sidewalks. The project should consider converting one or more of the roads passing underneath into bike and pedestrian-only streets, especially 23rd or 24th, which are the most traveled by pedestrians and cyclists. "Chinatown is one community with strong roots in cycling; it is part of what we are, and people of all ages bike in Chinatown," a community member said.

STAND-ALONE PROJECTS

COMPLETE STREETS ON SOUTH SHORE DRIVE (ID 75)

Community: South Shore

Type: Complete Streets

South Shore Drive is a 2-lane roadway in a residential area that, due to its connection with US 41 (South Lake Shore Drive), is traversed by many speeding vehicles and has experienced crashes involving children near Powell Elementary School. The project proposes enhancing Complete Streets measures including adding curbs to the existing striped bike lanes to manage traffic speeds and improve pedestrian and cycling conditions.


STAND-ALONE PROJECTS

COMPLETE STREETS ON WESTERN AVE. (ID 104)

Community: McKinley Park

Type: Complete Streets

The pavement condition on Western Avenue between 31st and 18th street is extremely poor, making it dangerous to traverse, especially for cyclists. The viaduct between 32nd Street and 31st Boulevard lacks lighting and pedestrian infrastructure. This project proposes the implementation of complete streets elements on Western Avenue between the Orange and Pink Lines. This would better connect McKinley Park to Pilsen, given many families have connections to both neighborhoods, and improve access to commercial destinations and recreational spaces such as Richard J. Daley Park. The project would also enhance transit riders' experience by improving access to the two 'L' stations via bus route 49 on Western Avenue.



Next Steps. This effort seeks to elevate transportation improvement ideas generated by community members and to help secure resources to implement them.

The top-scored projects should be candidates for future federal grant applications to the Reconnecting Communities program or other competitive grant programs such as Safe Streets and Roads for All discretionary grants. Other projects suggested that were not as well aligned with Reconnecting Communities program also should be developed and other funding sources can be pursued. Other state and regional sources could include the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program and Transportation Alternatives Program grants administered by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning or the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX A: **ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Name	Organization/Agency
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Frank Zhu	Chicago Office of the Mayor

APPENDIX B: TABLE B1. PRE-SCREENED AND SCORED PROJECTS

ID	Comment from Interactive Tool or Engagement	Neighborhood or Community	Project Type	Final Score
4	<p>An important shopping center with services is hard to reach for pedestrians and bikes because the infrastructure supports automobiles. Crossing Ashland from the west is time-consuming and difficult. Approaching Riverside Plaza from the east is slightly better but requires taking a bridge across the Chicago River on Archer with a narrow sidewalk, and no bike infrastructure. From the east: Add a pedestrian/bike bridge at 31st, 32nd, or 33rd street crossing the Chicago River and connecting the plaza to the Bridgeport Street grid. Or eliminate a carriage lane on the Archer bridge and replace it with double-protected bike lanes and wider sidewalks.</p> <p>From the West: One pedestrian/bike flyover around Archer/Ashland or 33rd/Ashland. Alternatively, more prominent protected bike lanes, and wider sidewalks, and better crossing infrastructure at Archer and Ashland. Traffic calming on Ashland south of Archer.</p>	Bridgeport	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
7	The intersection of Ogden and Kostner has a lot of potholes which makes it difficult to ride bikes. Fix the potholes and create bike lanes to provide better transportation access to jobs.	North Lawndale	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
11	Implement the 100 th Street project. This project proposes bike paths on this street near the Skyway connecting the communities of Jeffrey Manor and Vet's Park with the East Side community.	Calumet Heights	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
29	Running from 96 th Street to the Calumet River along the south end of the Chicago Skyway (Interstate 90) create rare public access along the Calumet River. This site makes for a great opportunity for community recreation space with wildlife and natural improvements to the river's edge. Potentially a trail along the river with benches to watch river traffic and enjoy nature.	Calumet Heights	Park	15
40	Implement road diet to E 95 th Street.	Calumet Heights	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15

78	There are a lot of accidents because of cars coming from the ramps at high speed. Tear down the Skyway ramps.	South Shore	Highway Redesign	15
79	Complete Streets on North Laramie Ave. and West Madison St.	Austin	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
81	Complete Streets on North Austin Blvd.	Austin	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
87	Complete Streets on North Austin Blvd and Chicago Ave.	Austin	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
88	Complete Streets on South Cicero	Austin	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
106	The BNSF train traffic should be elevated or below 79 th street.	South Chicago	Transit Infrastructure	15
107	87 th Street between South Anthony Ave. and South Jeffery is very busy and sometimes dangerous for kids to cross it. Better crossing signs and crossing guards are a good idea. Complete streets would be ideal here.	Avalon Park	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
118	With a few exceptions, bridges and underpasses spanning I-94 are not pedestrian or bike friendly, high volume of traffic, high crash risk, traffic noise. W. 71 st St. is an example. Adjust stoplight cycles so that turning movements aren't allowed where/when peds/ bikes are allowed to cross. Adjust lane widths and turning radius (where feasible) to slow vehicle traffic. It will be easier and safer for residents to access businesses and transportation nearby. Less noise and fewer disruptions due to crashes would be pluses. Even worse, 2400 W 95 th St (Chicago/Evergreen Pk border).	Washington Heights	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15
121	Bike/Pedestrian trail connecting Altgeld Gardens to West Pullman and the destinations in this area.	Riverdale	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	15

30	An Underline Plaza under the Skyway and East 93 rd . A gateway plaza to the Commercial Avenue and community placemaking site. Some recent improvements, sidewalks and curbs along the site and currently a DCASE-funded sculpture on the site. The next steps are building out the plaza and creating a park of some kind (performance venue, basketball courts, skate park)	Calumet Heights	Underpass Community Space	14
35	Improve entrance and exit ramps from Central Ave. to I-290 to ensure the safety of people biking and walking along the corridor.	Austin	Highway Redesign	14
51	There are relatively few roads crossing the Des Plaines River along the west edge of Chicago. Most of these roads don't provide any pedestrian accommodations, making it extremely dangerous to access the area as a pedestrian. This is especially concerning because there is a regional trail along the Des Plaines River, generating pedestrian traffic to the area even though there are no facilities to connect the trail with the surrounding community.	Portage Park	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets	14
58	It is hard to get safely, by bike, to and from the Metra station. This is particularly true to the north.	Oak Park	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets	14
64	O'Hare airport is a major barrier to east/west travel. This is made so much worse by the conditions of Irving Park Rd. A multi-use path on West Irving Park Rd. on the south side of the airport would not only increase east/west connectivity but also provide better access to jobs in the O'Hare area.	Schiller Park, Bensenville	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets	14
69	It is very hard to cross Lake Shore Dr. at its intersections with 79 th and South Brandon Ave. We need a better crossing to the park.	South Shore	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets	14
80	Highway cap in the intersection of Cicero and the Eisenhower	Austin	Highway Redesign	14
102	Cicero and Eisenhower could use viaduct improvements	South Austin	Viaduct Improvement	14
105	At the intersection of the Eisenhower and Central Ave., there are lots of homeless people, and garbage, and there could be improvements at the entrance and exit ramps as well as to the viaduct which could use murals and infrastructure improvements.	South Austin	Viaduct Improvement	14

108	The ramps from the Skyway are not very good-looking. Art and better lighting at night would make this area better.	South Shore	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	14
9	I really like the area of the medical district, but I feel like going west on Ashland towards Pilsen, there is an opportunity to utilize lots of empty/wasted space. I think there is a lot of potential to create areas for people to gather. There are spaces where there are abandoned buildings and underpasses for streets that can be utilized. In addition, there is a lot of grass that is simply being left there without being used to its full potential. I think that parks and other green spaces can be created in this area to allow for a gathering of individuals. Creating parks and green spaces will encourage people to be more active thus improving their physical and mental health. In addition, having a space to come together and hang out will allow children and/or adults to create bonds and meaningful relationships outside of school and work. It creates a greater sense of community.	Near West Side	Park	13
38	Improve feelings of safety in underpass walkways under the elevated Union Pacific rail yard, especially on 23 rd Street.	Chinatown	Viaduct Improvement	13
44	A new CTA Brown Line L station on Division Street.	Near North Side	Transit Infrastructure	13
67	Mannheim Rd. is such a barrier in the Prairie Path.	Bellwood	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	13
91	Lexington Street is unsafe. This could be improved with speed bumps, cultural representation from the community like art, an increase in police patrols, and trash cans.	Austin	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	13
103	Viaduct improvements in the intersection of South Western Blvd. and West Pershing Road	McKinley Park	Viaduct Improvement	13
117	Crossing of Burnham Avenue and the South Shore/NS tracks. Vehicle back-ups, and unreliability of traveling across the tracks given the frequency of blocked crossings. Grade separation.	South Shore	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	13

8	On North Ashland, close to North Milwaukee Ave., there are no clear bike lanes, and it makes me nervous to bike because I feel unsafe in the street and in the way on the sidewalk. Put in bike lanes by making the street wide or decreasing the number of lanes. Roundabouts instead of lights would help eliminate the need for left turn lanes and help minimize traffic with fewer lanes. I would personally feel much safer riding my bike to get around instead of driving or taking the bus.	West Town	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	12
20	Non-existent pedestrian accommodations under the I-294 bridge.	Schiller Park	Viaduct Improvement	12
21	The catchment area for Brentano School extends north and east from there, and many students walk this stretch every day. Narrow sidewalks obstructed site lines, and on/off ramps with slip lanes that encourage faster turns make it a treacherous walk to school.	Logan Square	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	12
48	People often walk through this area and it's empty except for a broken picnic table. It is under a viaduct on 26th and Princeton (under I-90). It could improve the sense of safety on a major street.	Chinatown	Underpass Community Space	12
53	The crossing at the intersection of Burnham Ave. and the Metra SSL is frequently blocked. A grade separation is proposed here.	Calumet City	Viaduct Improvement	12
70	Western Ave. and 63 rd Street have a lot of traffic, and it is hard to cross. When there is a low traffic, cars speed up a lot. A crossing island would be useful here.	West Englewood	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	12
71	There are not enough underpasses to cross the Skyway. The existing paths have narrow sidewalks. Improve with wider sidewalks, art, and lighting.	Stony Island	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	12
74	The crossing could have better lighting and art to make it feel safer and more comfortable.	South Chicago	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	12
76	All the crossings under the highway could have more art and better lighting.	South Chicago	Viaduct Improvement	12
32	Halsted Street is very wide, and the sidewalks are too narrow. There are no protected bike lanes and no green space. I am too scared to bike or walk down this road since I see so many cars disobey traffic laws. The Halsted Bus (8) is always slow over here because it gets stuck in so much traffic. I would like to see protected bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bus lanes, and fewer car lanes.	Goose Island, River West	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	11

63	In the intersection of N Wood Dale Rd., Irving Park Rd. and Metra, it's almost impossible to safely get to the Metra station from the north without a car. A pedestrian signal at Oak would be a small, but a good start.	Hanover Park	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	11
65	Please provide bike access to the Morton Arboretum! It's almost impossible to safely get to from the south (including from the Metra station).	Elmhurst	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	11
77	Improve walkability around the intersection of South Stony Ave. and East 95 th .	Calumet Heights	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	11
54	Crossing from the Loop to the West Loop and Clinton "L" Station under the Metra is very unpleasant, especially at night. It is too dark and smells bad. It would be nice if there were more lighting and art.	West Loop	Viaduct Improvement	10
57	The Prairie Path ends at a dangerous intersection on Maybrook Dr. and South 1 st Ave. This creates a barrier to the nearby Blue Line terminal.	Maywood	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	10
59	There are very few safe bike/ped crossings over I-290 and I-294	Elmhurst	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	10
27	The North Shore Channel trail stops at Green Bay Rd. and blocks access about a half mile from the lakefront.	Wilmette	Bike/Ped/ Complete Streets	9

APPENDIX C: TABLE C1. PROJECTS NOT ADVANCING THROUGH PRESCREENING

ID	Comment from Interactive Tool	Neighborhood or Community	Project Type
89	There are dangerous buses and bikes everywhere on South Austin Blvd., but the larger problem is the potholes. Perhaps a complete streets project could resolve both issues.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
90	There are dangerous buses and bikes everywhere on West Jackson Blvd. and Cicero, but the larger problem is the potholes. Perhaps a complete streets project could resolve both issues.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
92	South Cicero could use more trees and a complete streets project.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
98	West Monroe Street does not have enough economic development. We need more streetlights, or streetscaping here.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
101	Madison and Pulaski have a lot of accidents. Could use a complete streets project.	Garfield Park	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
102.2	Cicero and Eisenhower could use safer streets.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets

119	<p>Austin Blvd over I-290. There are so many unpleasant things about it. Pedestrian infrastructure is very minimal. It's very busy and has a lot of panhandlers, increasing the perception of crash risk. And, to make it all worse, the lights are timed to have cars moving at all times, so there's almost never a safe time to cross. The entire intersection needs to be redesigned. In the interim, pedestrian refuge islands can be added at the entrance ramps. The lights can be timed so there's a time when pedestrians can cross. A concrete barrier along the sidewalk will protect pedestrians. A non-mountable median and high-visibility signage will reduce car conflicts. Austin can probably have one lane of traffic reduced on each leg going away from the intersection (northbound north of the intersection, southbound south of the intersection) and streetscape improvements put in the lanes' place. Then, southbound Austin can have a double left-turn lane, rather than a turn lane with a straight/turn lane. Improving the timing with the Harrison St. signal can reduce stopping and starting.</p>	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
2	<p>The high-speed and wide road of Clark is hard to cross on foot even though there are tons of shops, restaurants, etc., that I want to visit there. Narrow the road, add curb bump-outs, and protect the bike lane. Easier pedestrian & bike access to all those shops and restaurants!</p>	Uptown	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
3	<p>Low-density areas of the Chicago region in which residents rely heavily on a personal car to do anything. Places like 97th and Leavitt, 61st and Pulaski, 16th and Cicero, Cornelia and Narragansett, Lincoln and Peterson, Madison and California, and 95th and Jeffrey. Retrieving data. Stop prioritizing car dependency in our neighborhoods. The city's TOD and eTOD ordinances are beginning to undo the damage that has been done. Build places for people to live, work, recreate, and do all errands by walking, biking, or public transit. Build dense housing to promote more sustainable choices in lifestyle. Prioritize safety in street design, not speed and capacity. Actually, build protected (physical barrier protection) bicycle infrastructure, a city-wide network, not a piecemeal project through Ward menu funds. We need political leadership that moves around the region in ways other than private auto to make these things happen, otherwise, they don't care.</p>	All neighborhoods	Transit-Oriented Development

5	Lots of traffic on West North Ave. Building a tunnel would decrease traffic and cut down commute times.	Gold Coast	Highway Building
6	South Wentworth Ave. reaches a dead end with trees and is unpaved. If a road is built, more people or tourists will come in and out of the Chinatown community. It would open the area to people.	Chinatown	Highway Building
10	Chicago Chinatown viaducts deal with accessibility issues, but also with homeless people living in them. It is required to find alternatives for the homeless population that live in the viaducts, so they can find a stable and safe place to live. Finding a more sustainable and permanent solution in rehousing the homeless population. It will help the homeless population and create a more accessible environment.	Chinatown	Non-Infrastructure
13	Redesign Austin Blue Line Station to improve the experience for transit riders.	Austin	Transit Infrastructure
14	Redesign Harlem Blue Line station to improve the experience for transit riders.	Northwood Park	Transit Infrastructure
17	Terrifying to have to walk across the ramps to the Kennedy Expy. to get to and from the Montrose Blue Line stop. Very bad visibility in the viaduct	Portage Park	Highway Redesign
18	Tear down the skyway	Avalon Park	Highway Removal
28	From Cicero to Downtown, if the Kennedy remains, it should be a toll road where trucks are exempted in order to incentivize getting them off at grade city streets. Replacing the express lanes with a bus-only corridor that serves River North via a bus-only Ohio Connector, & the Greyhound terminal via bus-only lanes to the Jane Byrne interchange.	Kilbourn Park	Highway Redesign
33	Replace the CTA Park and Ride at Kimball and adjacent properties with affordable housing and community-focused infrastructure that serves pedestrians and bicycles, not cars.	Logan Square	Transit-Oriented Development
34	Please create an educational program for everyone on how to co-exist with bikers and scooters from the point of view of a pedestrian, driver, biker, etc. I have been run over by a bike while walking on the sidewalk. What do I do? How can I defend myself? Whom do I report to?	Lakeview	Non-Infrastructure

37	Diversey Ave. redesigns as a community hub and improves the walkability in this area (Belmont-Cragin Avenues for Growth Plan).	Belmont Cragin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
41	Beautify and repair the streetscape and improve the overall urban design on Armitage Ave. Welcoming Corridor (Source: Hermosa and Logan Square West: Here to Stay Quality of Life Plan).	Hermosa	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
43	Grow the on-street bike infrastructure network to connect to citywide and regional routes, starting with a further engineering study. There are currently no bike lanes on Ogden Ave. Please see the illustration of infrastructure suggestions below. (Source: North Lawndale Quality of Life Plan).	North Lawndale	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
45	Connect and upgrade Oak Street between Hudson and Sedgwick Streets (Source: Near North Quality of Life Plan).	Near North Side	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
46	Green passage for pedestrians between Clybourn Avenue and Blackhawk Street (Source: Near North Quality of Life Plan).	Near North Side	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
47.2	Public transportation is limited on the east end of the Quad Communities, where Metra trains and express buses bypass the neighborhood, and the 43rd Street bus offers no service after 7 p.m. For many years there has been a sense that “you can’t get there from here.” Expand transportation options by increasing CTA bus service from major new housing developments to downtown or the CTA rail system (Source: Quad Communities Quality of Life Plan).	Kenwood	Transit Infrastructure
50	This intersection and many others like it encourage unsafe driving. The right turns on red without stopping. Turning at an inappropriate speed. Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and bicyclists. Two cyclists have been struck by vehicles and killed at this intersection in recent years. We need to be more innovative and proactive to prevent these tragedies from occurring in the future. Milwaukee Ave in general should be strongly considered for a host of traffic calming measures.	Portage Park	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
60	Chicago Ave. going into the Thatcher Woods lacks sidewalks and bike infrastructure and is overbuilt. A road diet would be appropriate.	Oak Park	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets

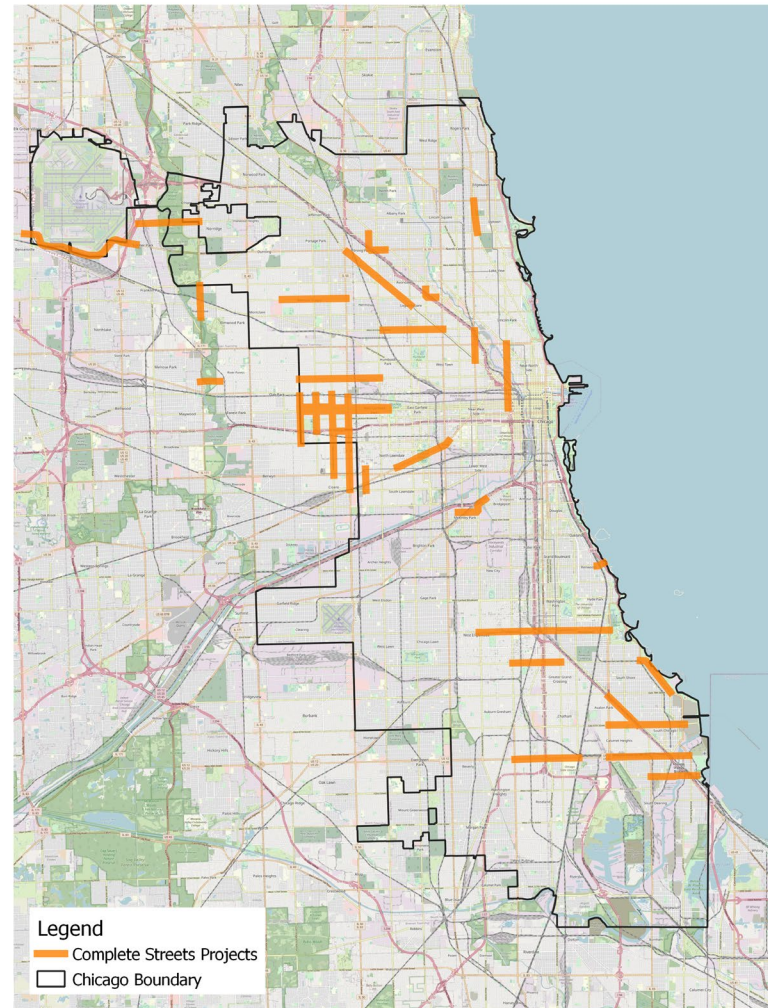
61	The railroad tracks (Metra MD-W) cut off our downtown from the rest of Hanover Park	Hanover Park	Transit Infrastructure
62	The railroad tracks (Metra MD-W) are a barrier to getting to the library.	Hanover Park	Transit Infrastructure
66	Cyclists love Cuba Road, but it's dangerous. A multi-use path would be nice to connect to downtown Long Grove.	Kildeer	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
68	Please build a bridge over Salt Creek. It has so few crossings and this one is signalized at 83 rd .	Elmhurst	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
72	Improve the Metra connectivity at 83 rd Street and add art.	South Shore	Transit Infrastructure
82	Complete streets on North Laramie Ave.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
84	West 16 th Street area needs more policing.	Austin	Non-Infrastructure
85	Kenton Ave. between West Madison and West Washington Blvd. needs more lighting and stop signs.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
86	Highway cap on West 22 nd and South Laramie Ave.	Cicero	Highway Redesign
88.2	A Park in South Cicero Ave. and Roosevelt.	Austin	Park
93	North Laramie Ave. and West Fulton Street is unsafe because there are lots of shootings here. It could be improved with cameras, lighting, and patrols.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
94	South Central Ave. and West Madison area is unsafe because there are lots of shootings here. It could be improved with cameras, lighting, and patrols.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
95	South Cicero Ave. and Roosevelt area is unsafe because there are lots of shootings here. It could be improved with cameras, lighting, and patrols.	Austin	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
96	West 16 th Street area is unsafe because there are lots of shootings here. It could be improved with cameras, lighting, and patrols.	Cicero	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
99	West Washington Blvd. and Cicero do not have enough economic development, street lights, or streetscaping here.	Garfield Park	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets

100	Amazon freight traffic disturbs hospital travelers and access to the nearby soccer field on South Laramie Ave. and West 16 th . Lots of children and elderly people traveling in this area (road diet?)	Cicero	Bike/Ped/Complete Streets
110	The green area, next to the Metra Electric between 83 rd and 87 th has an apparently abandoned trail that can be redeveloped into a park, like the 606.	Avalon Park	Park
113	Areas under bridges and viaducts have been a hub for tents to be erected in order to serve as housing and communities for unhoused people. There are multiple areas to which this applies to; in my neighborhood of Pilsen, the area I am thinking of is under the Dan Ryan on 18th St. I find this area unpleasant because it is disruptive for both people in and out of these tent communities. For people who are walking on the sidewalks, they are now forced to either walk on the street or through people's belongings to travel. Programs to invest in genuine, non-outdoor housing for unhoused people. If the city decides not to invest in real housing, I believe a temporary solution could be to have the tent communities in places that don't have high traffic. As I said, this is only a temporary solution though. I believe the first one to be a lot more sustainable.	Lower West Side	Non-Infrastructure
114	Traveling through Roseland to West Pullman on the 119 or 34 busses can feel very unsafe. I don't want to necessarily say to place police officers on the bus due to the distrust of police in the community. However, there should be some sort of security to protect CTA bus drivers and riders. People will feel more comfortable taking the bus.	Roseland	Non-Infrastructure
115	I don't like Austin. I find this area unpleasant because there is high violence. This place does not have a lot of access to markets. I believe that including more greenery in the area. Including markets with fresh foods. I believe that including gates for to prohibit people from entering the trail tracks. This will not only save lives but reduce traffic.	Austin	Park
116	Streets are poorly kept. Western Main Street to travel west, highly congested. Repave the roads on weekends, not while people trying to go to work. Make the area more accessible, increase accessibility to other parts of the city	Roseland	Non-Infrastructure

COMPLETE STREETS PROJECTS

A number of requested projects involved improvements to walking, biking and managing traffic speeds, which were defined as complete streets projects. Figure C1 shows all the complete streets projects suggested during the project, including both those that were prioritized for potential Reconnecting Communities grant applications and those that did not get through the prescreening for that grant category. In most cases the needed improvements were suggested by the public on a single block and the study team defined a longer project extent to reach logical endpoints such as transit stations or major destinations.

Figure C1. Complete Streets Project Suggestions



Source: Metropolitan Planning Council, Connecting Communities 2022

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The logo features two orange curved lines above the text. The top line is a single, smooth arc. The bottom line is a similar arc but with a slight dip in the middle, creating a sense of movement or a bridge.

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