



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE

Transportation Reform: An Illinois Agenda

September 2009

Our vision is a transportation system that increases mobility, reduces energy consumption and global warming, supports vibrant communities, and creates a robust regional economy. We endorse the **guiding principles** of the sustainable Communities Initiative promulgated in a joint statement by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and departments of transportation, and housing and urban development.

- ⇒ *Provide more transportation choices.* Develop economical transportation choices that cut household transportation costs, reduce dependence on oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
- ⇒ *Promote equitable, affordable housing.* Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages and incomes accessible to jobs, transit, and services.
- ⇒ *Increase economic competitiveness.* Enhance economic competitiveness by giving people reliable, timely access to employment, education, institutions, and services while also giving businesses expanded access to markets.
- ⇒ *Support existing communities.* Target federal funding toward existing communities to revitalize local areas, make more efficient use of public works investments, and protect rural land.
- ⇒ *Leverage federal investment.* Align federal policies and funding to increase the effectiveness of all levels of government in planning for future growth.
- ⇒ *Value communities and neighborhoods.* Enhance communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods, whether those communities be rural, urban or suburban.

To use these principles, we need to create a new approach to transportation planning and financing. Past decisions were made almost exclusively on a “tax-and-spend” basis – what can we tax and what can we spend it on? This crude approach is insufficient to achieve the vision and guiding principles detailed above. Instead, transportation policy makers need a new approach to ensure the smartest, most efficient investment of scarce public dollars that can be leveraged for multiple benefits.

Planning and coordination are essential components to achieving a comprehensive, efficient, and prosperous transportation network in America. Federal transportation, housing, energy, workforce, and other policies and funding programs should require a holistic approach to the built environment. States, MPOs, and other fund recipients should be supported in their efforts to link land use, housing, economic development, transportation plans and investments. Federal policy should establish clear goals and objectives and allow states, MPOs, and other regional decision-makers to implement the most appropriate solution for them. Solutions should work across issue areas (i.e. housing, transportation, environment) to advance the same goals. Our consensus goals in Illinois are:

1. Fix-it-First. America's transportation infrastructure has a repair backlog of hundreds of billions of dollars. One in four bridges and one in six miles of interstate highways nationwide are in poor condition. Outdated roads, substandard design, deteriorating pavement conditions and limited safety features are a factor in 30 percent of all fatal highway accidents. A recent study showed that more than one-third of the seven largest transit agencies' assets are either in marginal or poor condition and have a backlog of roughly \$50 billion. Once the backlog has been addressed, it's estimated that it would require an additional \$5.9 billion in normal replacement expenditures to bring the system to a state of good repair. We can't keep using Band-Aid solutions to fix our pressing infrastructure problems.

Ask: Allocate new money to fix-it-first projects.

2. Seamless Transportation: A Complete System. When a passenger leaves a metro station, a bus or sidewalk must provide the connection he needs to get to his final destination. The infrastructure for cars, trucks, buses, bicyclists, and pedestrians must be planned as a system that allows people to move in a safe, coordinated, and efficient way. In order to develop a robust transportation network, it is important to encourage mixed-use and mixed-income development around transit stops and establish a *complete* system that encourages seamless transportation. Transportation dollars should encourage, not prohibit, coordinated planning.

Ask: Support Complete Streets Act.

3. Level the Playing Field. State and local transportation officials are given tremendous flexibility to plan the best solutions to meet local problems. Yet, their hands are tied by an uneven playing field – the federal government provides 80% of the funds if the proposed solution is a roadway, 50% funding if the proposed solution is transit, and, historically, 0% funding if the proposed solution is intercity rail or freight modernization. These funding discrepancies must be removed so that the local match is the same regardless of mode.

Ask: Amend surface transportation authorization to provide uniform funding levels.

4. High-Speed Rail for America. President Obama has called for a national investment in high-speed rail. Illinois is well poised to heed this call, since Chicago serves as a hub for rail service throughout the Midwest. Approximately 71 percent of miles traveled by Amtrak trains run on tracks owned by the private railroad companies. Improvements to the rails will benefit both passenger and freight movement. But the \$8 billion provided through ARRA funding, plus the \$1 billion per year proposed in the President's budget, is little more than a down payment on this important infrastructure. Long-term, sustainable funding of \$10 billion per year is necessary to achieve the President's vision.

Ask: Support Midwest High Speed Rail Initiative.

5. Prioritize Safety. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among Americans 1-34 years old. While pedestrians account for 11.4 percent of all traffic deaths, less than one percent of federal transportation funds are spent to ensure a safe walking environment. No state spends more than 2.5 percent of its federal transportation funds on pedestrian and bicycle facilities and programs. Because our streets inadequately address the needs of pedestrians or cyclists, only one in 10 American children actually walks or bikes to school. The next transportation bill must provide equal consideration, planning, and funding for crosswalks and railroad crossings, signals, sidewalks, lighting, and other pedestrian and bicycle improvements that provide a safe environment for all users of the public right-of-way.

Ask: Support Fair Share for Safety.

- 6. Reduce Demand.** Rather than focus transportation spending exclusively on increasing supply, outcome-oriented investments to reduce demand for new roadways should be explored. Although 80 percent of Americans live in urban areas, nearly half (46%) of American households do not have access to any public transportation. By connecting the dots between housing, jobs, education, and recreation, we can reduce the overall need for additional transportation infrastructure and make better use of our existing assets.

Likewise, Americans spend more than 4.2 billion hours in wasted time, 2.8 billion excess gallons of gas, and \$87 billion in lost productivity due to traffic congestion. That translates to three weeks' worth of gas, one full vacation week, and more than \$750 for every U.S. traveler stuck in traffic. With equitable pricing strategies and accessible transit alternatives in place, we can further reduce the demand and strain on our existing transportation network and improve mobility across the nation.

Two-thirds of the oil consumed by the United States is used for our transportation system, and 40 percent is used to fill the gasoline tanks of our personal vehicles. The public health costs of pollution from cars and heavy-duty vehicles have been estimated at \$40 billion to \$64 billion per year. By encouraging alternative modes of transportation and better connecting transportation to land use policies, we'll be able to achieve a cleaner, more efficient transportation network that provides travel choice, supports job growth, and promotes better health.

Ask: Support critical active transportation projects in Chicago region.

- 7. Promote Housing + Transportation.** A 2006 study of 28 metro areas found that working families spent an average of 28 percent, or \$9,700, of their incomes on housing and nearly 30 percent, or \$10,400, on transportation. Residents of compact neighborhoods where it is possible to walk, bicycle or take public transit to meet daily needs drive up to 40 percent less, on average, than those who live in automobile-dependent areas. Policies that improve access to jobs and services for low- and moderate-income families can reduce the "housing + transportation" costs for families and increase their ability to fully participate in the economy, and reduce the taxpayer burden for new highways. Such policies include encouraging compact development, including affordable housing, near jobs, transit, and amenities.

Ask: Expand funding and eligibility for Job Access and Reverse Commute program.

Active Transportation Case Studies in Chicago Region

Navy Pier Flyover

Each day, thousands of Chicago residents and tourists enjoy bicycling, walking and other forms of recreation and active transportation on the 18-mile lakefront trail. Yet, many of them are hindered by a chokepoint at a critical location, the Chicago River bridge. The City of Chicago has a plan to build a new-elevated pathway that will improve accessibility, expand capacity and remove conflicts between modes. On the 100th anniversary of Daniel Burnham's *1909 Plan of Chicago*, let's fulfill his dream and complete the lakefront trail.

Burnham Trail Gap

The Grand Illinois Trail is a 500-mile series of local and regional trails that connect Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. There is currently a two-mile gap in Chicago, near Wolf Lake. Completing the Burnham Trail will expand eco-tourism in the historic and environmentally significant Calumet region. It will also allow access to the full Grand Illinois Trail and provide recreation areas in the high-obesity Southland region.

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