



Reimagining mobility in northeastern Illinois

The COVID-19 pandemic posed lasting challenges for northeastern Illinois, creating new opportunities to reimagine the ways people and goods move throughout the region. In response to these challenges and opportunities, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) started its Mobility Recovery project.

The two-year effort — supported through extensive research, analysis, and outreach — tracked trends to better understand how our region's transportation needs evolved during the pandemic and identified numerous strategies to address these challenges.

Key pandemic trends

Travel and commute habits have changed with lower transit ridership and more of the region's residents working remotely. Congestion and car travel, meanwhile, have returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Environmental improvements were short lived — the result of more trucks on the road and the return of car travel.

Interest in biking and walking increased, while a rise in traffic fatalities and speeding raised safety concerns.

Solutions for a post-pandemic region

Invest in a stronger and more financially secure transit system to address changing demands, improve service, and ensure the system has the necessary funding to continue serving the region.

Balance the benefits and impacts of e-commerce and other freight activity to promote cleaner movement of goods and provide easier access to job opportunities.

Develop a better transportation system that improves quality of life for all and makes communities safer, more just and equitable, resilient, accessible, and economically vibrant.

How to implement



Invest in transit

Solution

Continue reforms toward a more integrated and affordable system

Enable faster and more reliable regional bus service

Identify and enact new revenues for transit

Actions

- Integrate regional fare and transfer structures across transit providers
- Improve integration between transit and complementary modes
- Implement subsidized fares for travelers with limited incomes
- Expand infrastructure investments that prioritize bus speed and reliability
- Increase capacity of public-sector staff for bus priority projects
- Allow for automated camera enforcement of bus lanes and stops
- Support new or additional revenue generated from the road system
- Broaden the state sales tax base to capture additional services
- Reform the farebox recovery ratio requirement to reflect new realities
- Pursue additional reforms to strengthen funding support

Enable safe, active, and sustainable travel modes



Solution

Invest in infrastructure to make these modes safer and more attractive to use

Update regulations for developments and land uses to make these modes more achievable

Actions

- Promote the development of complete and safe streets
- Enable local camera enforcement for speeding and bike lanes, with equitable fine structures
- Dedicate funding from local camera enforcement to infrastructure improvements
- Build networks of bike lanes, sidewalks, and paths that can connect seamlessly to key destinations in region
- Pursue appropriate transit-oriented redevelopment of surface parking lots
- Incentivize land use and development that support transit use near existing transit nodes

Balance e-commerce and freight activity



Solution

Accelerate electrification of freight systems

Collaborate with employers to increase commute options for employees

Actions

- Facilitate freight-vehicle electrification in vulnerable communities and align efforts with new state and federal funding programs
- Advance state regulations that can accelerate electrification regionwide
- Promote travel demand management strategies and investments that connect employees to hard-to-access jobs like warehousing, logistics, and distribution
- Develop comprehensive state and local requirements or incentives to promote access to regional opportunities

What comes next

- Collaborating with partners throughout 2023 to complete a report for the Illinois General Assembly and a plan of action that can ensure northeastern Illinois' transit system remains reliable, accessible, and financially sustainable. The report will build on recommendations from the Mobility Recovery project and prior work.
- Partnering with regional stakeholders to advance individual projects.
- Advocating for local, state, and federal policies that support access to funding and project implementation.

