

# Transportation Newsletter

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Northwest Municipal Conference  
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Cover Photo: City of Prospect Heights



Northwest Municipal Conference

## Dates to Remember:

*NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee*  
Tuesday, April 18, 10:30 a.m.

North Shore Council of Mayors Technical  
Committee  
Thursday April 20, 8:30 a.m.

*NWMC Transportation Committee*  
Thursday, April 27, 8:30 a.m.

Northwest Council of Mayors Technical  
Committee  
Friday, April 28, 8:30 a.m.

## NWMC Transportation Committee Discusses Cook County Transit Plan, IDOT Meeting

The NWMC Transportation Committee met March 23 and received a presentation from Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways Transit Manager Benet Haller on the Cook County Transit Plan. The presentation covered various topics such as outreach efforts, strategic recommendations and upcoming actions related to the plan. Staff also provided a summary of the March 14 meeting with IDOT central office staff and nearly seventy municipal, council of government and regional agency officials. Please see the article on p. 2 for a recap of the meeting.

## NWMC Hosts Discussion, Builds Partnership with IDOT Central Office Team

On March 14, representatives from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Local Roads team in Springfield traveled to Oakton College to introduce themselves and acknowledge and address ongoing concerns of local municipalities. Nearly seventy municipal, council of government, and regional agency officials attended the meeting, which was led by IDOT Central Office Bureau Chief of Local Roads and Streets, George Tapas.

This meeting was partly a result of a 2022 letter sent by past *NWMC President and Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering* to IDOT Secretary Omer Osman. The letter expressed longstanding concerns about IDOT's agreement and permitting processing, insufficient staffing levels, excessive review times for federal agreements and delayed issuance of right-of-way permits. The letter also provided numerous recommendations and offered local government assistance to reduce the burden on IDOT staff and more efficiently move projects to completion.

Mr. Tapas acknowledged the ongoing issues and outlined current and planned actions to address them. He highlighted improvements to processing and throughput of documents and invoices, as well as overall efficiencies of the department. One key initiative he discussed was creating a portal for municipalities to track agreements and projects through the entire process. Finally, he noted that this was the first of many discussions and stressed the department's desire to improve communications and build partnerships with local implementers and stakeholders. For more information, please contact Mr. Tapas at 217-782-6467 or [George.Tapas@illinois.gov](mailto:George.Tapas@illinois.gov).



Village of Hanover Park

## Governor Pritzker Announces Grants for Local Parks and Recreation Projects

Last month, Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) announced the allocation of nearly \$60 million in state grants to support the acquisition of land and development of recreational opportunities through the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant program.

Seventeen NWMC communities received over \$9.3 million in total grants, including: *Antioch; Arlington Heights; Buffalo Grove; Deerfield; Hanover Park; Highland Park; Libertyville; Morton Grove; Mount Prospect; Niles; Northbrook; Palatine; Park Ridge; Rolling Meadows; Skokie; Streamwood; and, Vernon Hills*. For more information and a complete list of the grant recipients, please refer to the [IDNR's press release](#).

## Apply by May 30 for US DOT's EV Infrastructure Grant Program

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) has announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Program. This round of funding provides up to \$700 million to strategically deploy Electric Vehicle (EV) charging and other alternative vehicle-fueling infrastructure projects in publicly accessible locations in urban and rural communities, as well as along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs).

The CFI is divided into two distinct categories. The Community Program will provide funding to strategically deploy publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure and infrastructure for hydrogen, propane, or natural gas fueling in communities. The Corridor Program will provide funding to deploy publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure and hydrogen, propane, and natural gas fueling infrastructure along designated AFCs. The [NOFO](#) provides a complete list of eligible applicants and projects for both categories.



City of Evanston

## Pace Outlines Kennedy Expressway Alternatives

As construction begins along the Kennedy Expressway in Chicago, Pace Bus has announced several options for suburban commuters to bypass traffic and use public transportation to get to and from Chicago.

Thanks to Pace's ability to use the shoulder to operate [Expressway-Based Service](#) on the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and Edens Expressway (I-94), buses can bypass traffic to provide reliable, affordable service to and from the CTA Blue, Yellow, Purple, and Red Lines and many Metra stations. Pace encourages commuters to check out these options using the [Trip Planner](#) or by calling the RTA's Travel Information Center at 847-836-7000. For smartphone users, Pace has partnered with the [Transit app](#).

The [Regional Connect Pass](#) provides Metra Monthly Pass holders unlimited rides all month on CTA and Pace with no day or time restrictions. Many Pace routes connect with the UP-NW Line, MD-N Line, and NCS Line. The Regional Connect Pass can be purchased from Metra ticket agents or in the Ventra app.

Many Pace services connect to the CTA Blue Line at Rosemont, Cumberland, Harlem, and Jefferson Park. For those who enjoy the convenience and affordability of unlimited [ride passes](#), a new Pace/CTA 1-Day Pass for \$5 and a new Pace/CTA 3-Day Pass for \$15 are now available. Additionally, the Pace/CTA 7-Day Pass is now only \$20. All of these passes offer unlimited rides on Pace and CTA buses and trains. Existing 30-Day Passes are also still available.

For those who pay for rides using a [Ventra](#) account, transfers from one Pace bus to another Pace bus are now free! To take advantage of free transfers, passengers must use a Ventra Card or Ventra-linked smart device, and the second or additional rides must occur within two hours of the first ride.

## IDOT Streamlines Environmental Survey Screening Process

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has released a [circular letter](#) that outlines updates to the Bureau of Design and Environment's (BDE) policies for environmental surveys. These changes aim to simplify the review process and decrease turnaround times for environmental surveys. According to the new regulations, certain qualified and trained Central Office Bureau of Local Roads and Streets (CBLRS) staff can now screen local projects for natural and cultural resources. This will assist in identifying which projects necessitate more detailed surveys through the BDE Environmental Survey Request (ESR) process, ensuring that resources are used efficiently.

The new screening processes described above are effective for all submitted documents after March 6 for new projects that have not previously submitted an ESR and are not already in the BDE ESR queue. A complete set of procedures is available in the [circular letter](#). For additional information please contact William Raffensperger, Local Studies and Plans Engineer, [William.Raffensperger@illinois.gov](mailto:William.Raffensperger@illinois.gov) or 217-785-1676.

## Metra Touts Accomplishments

Metra recently released its [2022 Accomplishment Book](#) which highlights the organization's achievements over the past year. The book features notable accomplishments in a range of categories including cost savings, increased efficiencies, improved customer experience, benefits to communities, and internal improvements in employee engagement and morale. The contents of this book offer insights into Metra's progress and contributions to the region's transportation system.

## New IDOT Dashboard Provides Capital Program Progress on Rebuild Illinois

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) recently launched a new webpage dedicated to keeping the public informed on the progress of the Rebuild Illinois capital program. The [online dashboard](#) offers information on the number of projects awarded, miles and bridges improved, safety improvements completed as well as the total amount of investment that has been made possible by Rebuild Illinois.

The dashboard highlights the impact of Rebuild Illinois on roads and bridges under IDOT's jurisdiction as well as accomplishments on the local system overseen by counties, municipalities and townships. The dashboard will be updated quarterly to reflect the latest accomplishments and milestones of the program. To access the dashboard, please visit the [IDOT website](#).



## **IDOT Hosts Kickoff Webinar for VRU Safety Assessment and New Online Tool**

At the end of March, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) hosted a kickoff [webinar](#) that provided an overview of the Vulnerable Road User (VRU) Safety Assessment. One of the key aspects of the assessment is stakeholder consultation, which involves identifying safety concerns and developing strategies to improve VRU safety. As part of this consultation process, IDOT created an [interactive tool](#) that allows the public to identify locations that may be unsafe for VRUs and suggest areas that need improvements. For further information, please contact [DOT.VRUSafety@illinois.gov](mailto:DOT.VRUSafety@illinois.gov).

## **IDOT Launches Bicycle Facility Inventory System**

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has announced the soft launch of the new statewide Bicycle and Facility Inventory System (BFIS). This online, interactive map database contains useful information about bicycle lanes, paths, trails and related features. It enables individuals to search, collect, share, edit and analyze data for project planning and visualization of bicycle facilities. During the current soft launch phase, IDOT is requesting that local bicycle facility owners contact [DOT.Bikeped@illinois.gov](mailto:DOT.Bikeped@illinois.gov) to access the system.



City of Lake Forest

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