

Transportation Newsletter

January 2026
Volume 18 Issue 1

Northwest Municipal Conference
1600 E. Golf Rd. Suite 0700 Des Plaines, IL 60016
Phone: 847-296-9200 www.nwmc-cog.org
Cover Photo: City of Park Ridge, NWMC Staff Photo



Northwest Municipal Conference

Dates to Remember:

NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian and Transportation Committee: Tuesday, January 13, 10:30 a.m. — NWMC Offices and Virtually

North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee: Thursday, January 15, 8:30 a.m. — Village of Skokie

Deadline: IDOT Crossing Safety Improvement Program: Thursday, January 15

Deadline: IDOT Local Rail-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Program: Friday, January 16

Deadline: RTA Access to Transit Grants: Friday, January 16

NWMC Transportation Committee: Thursday, January 22, 8:30 a.m. — NWMC Offices and Virtually

Northwest Council of Mayors Technical Committee: Friday, January 30, 9:00 a.m. — Village of Palatine

NWMC Bicycle-Pedestrian and Transportation Committees Host First Networking Social

On Tuesday, December 9, members of the NWMC Bicycle-Pedestrian and Transportation Committees, municipal staff and colleagues in the consulting industry gathered for a light networking social to celebrate a year of projects and policies. Over donuts, bagels and coffee, attendees chatted and compared experiences, while a slideshow of successful projects and policies including *Streamwood's* Route 59 bicycle-pedestrian bridge, *Morton Grove's* Arterial Street Improvement Program, *Pace's* new ADA Transfer Facility in *Schaumburg* and others were showcased. The NWMC greatly appreciates the involvement of each committee and wish all our dedicated members another great year!

US DOT BUILD Grants Call for Projects Now Open

The U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program is now open and accepting applications. BUILD is a competitive grant program, that provides funding for “planning or constructing surface transportation infrastructure projects that will improve safety; environmental sustainability; quality of life; mobility and community connectivity; economic competitiveness and opportunity including tourism; state of good repair; partnership and collaboration; and innovation.” Eligible projects include Title 23 federal-aid highways and bridges. \$1.5 billion dollars in funding will be available, with awards ranging from \$5 million to \$25 million for urban capital projects. Read more at the [BUILD NOFO](#). Applications are due by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 24.



NWMC Staff Photo

Access to Transit Call For Projects Closing Soon, Featuring New Trail-Supportive Development Category

From our partners at the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA):

The call for projects is now open through Friday, January 16 for RTA's [Access to Transit program](#), which improves access to the regional transit system for people walking and biking, implementing recommendations from planning studies completed through the RTA's [Community Planning program](#). To date, Access to Transit has funded 51 projects in municipalities throughout the region for a total investment of \$23.8 million.

Eligible projects include ADA accessibility improvements, bicycle infrastructure, intersection improvements, sidewalk gap connections, wayfinding, and more. Newly eligible this year from [Senate Bill 2111](#) are Trail-Supportive Development infrastructure improvements that are located within one-quarter mile of a public trail and are designed to facilitate access to and use of public transit.

Applicants can email questions to applications@rtachicago.org or contact RTA Government Affairs staff to be connected to the Local Planning team.

Kickstart Mobility Project Implementation with an Accelerated Mobility Playbook Grant!

Communities seeking to accelerate the development of safe and connected mobility networks can amplify efforts with technical assistance from [City Thread's Accelerated Mobility Playbook \(AMP\) Grant](#). City Thread will assess existing practices and develop an action plan that strengthens partnerships with local organizations to support faster project delivery. To apply, communities will need a local-based organization partner. [Learn more about the application process here](#). Applications are accepted on a rolling basis year-round.

Last Call for Two IDOT Rail-Highway Safety Funding Opportunities

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has opened applications for two rail-highway safety funding programs, the FY2027-2031 Crossing Safety Improvement Program (CSIP) and the FFY2027-2028 Local Rail-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Program (Section 130). Both programs cover safety improvements such as warning device upgrades, grade separation, interconnects, road connections, and much more. However, the programs use separate application processes. The CSIP will use the [Illinois Commerce Commission's electronic application portal](#), with applications due Thursday, January 15. [Section 130 application forms](#) must be emailed to IDOT at DOT.LRSRail@illinois.gov and are due next Friday, January 16. For more information about both programs, please see [IDOT Circular Letter 2025-16](#).



Village of Schaumburg

IDOT Opens EV Charging Infrastructure Grant Applications

IDOT has opened round 3 of funding for the [Illinois National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure \(NEVI\) program](#). Over \$65 million in reimbursable grant funding is available to build and operate light-duty and medium/heavy-duty charging stations. Eligible projects include publicly available EV charging stations, including upgrades to existing or new stations within three miles of eligible roadways. Applications are due by Friday, February 13. For more information, including how to apply and access to recorded informational webinars, please visit the [Illinois NEVI website](#) or read the [NOFO](#).

AARP Community Challenge Grants Now Open

The American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) has now opened applications for its 2026 Community Challenge grant opportunities, including Flagship, Capacity-Building, and Demonstration Grants. Flagship projects will benefit residents, especially those 50 years of age and older, with creation of vibrant public places, delivering transportation and mobility options, supporting a range of housing options, increasing digital connections, and supporting community disaster resilience, with up to \$25,000 available per grant. Capacity-Building projects are \$2,500 grants that support disaster preparedness, walk and bike audits, and home modification programs. Demonstration projects offer up to \$25,000 for projects that enhance pedestrian safety, expand high-speed internet, reconnect divided communities, and implement housing design competitions. Applications are due by Wednesday, March 4 at 4:00 p.m. For more information please visit the [AARP Community Challenge website](#).



Village of
Lincolnshire

Upcoming Transportation-Related Webinars

American Trails: [Designing Events that Engage Your Community in 2026](#) —Thursday, January 15 at 12:00 p.m.

Vision Zero Network: [Speeding Up Strategies to Slow Speeds & Save Lives](#)—Thursday, January 29 at 1:00 p.m.

Did You Miss It? News Items in Brief

Daily Herald: [‘A transformational bill:’ Transit measure gets a victory lap but questions remain on cost, local control](#)

Chicago Sun-Times: [Chicago overtakes NYC for worst vehicle congestion in the US, survey says](#)

Daily Herald: [Merry Metra — railroad launches product line just in time for the holidays](#)

Daily Herald: [Robotaxis, O’Hare boom and Red Line scrutiny: Transportation seers forecast 2026](#)

Daily Herald: [‘It’s the unknown:’ Union Pacific, Norfolk Southern seek mega merger as suburbs consider consequences](#)

Daily Herald: [Tolls on cars haven’t been raised in years — is a hike coming in 2026?](#)

Daily Herald: [How a planned bike path will close a key gap in central Lake County](#)

Chicago Tribune: [JB Pritzker signs transit bill that should avert major service cuts, but cautions that ‘transformation’ takes time](#)

Daily Herald: [‘Transit should be easy’: Pritzker signs reform bill, plugging \\$1.5 billion into Metra, Pace, CTA system](#)

Suburban Chicago Bicycling: [Bike infrastructure coming in 2026: Three bridges; roads around O’Hare](#)

Bloomberg: [We Still Don’t Know if Robotaxis Are Safer Than Human Drivers](#)

Popular Science: [Stop using so much sidewalk salt](#)

The Transport Politic: [Transit Expansion in North America: A Look Ahead to 2026, and a 2025 Roundup](#)

Government Technology: [Can Delivery Trucks Be Replaced by Ferries and Bikes?](#)

The Conversation: [Roads can become more dangerous on hot days – especially for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists](#)

Bloomberg: [A Bright Idea for Road Safety: Traffic Light Timing](#)

Urban Institute: [The Financial Feasibility of Transit -Oriented Development](#)

Journal & Topics: [Northwest Suburban Bus Routes Get Longer Hours, More Frequent Service](#)

AAA: [Drivers Support Promising Solutions to Curb Impaired Driving, New AAA Survey Shows](#)

The Conversation: [Cities aren’t built for older people – our study shows many can’t walk fast enough to beat a pedestrian crossing](#)

Reuters: [US Postal Service using 2,600 EVs for mail deliveries](#)

Daily Herald: [‘I think we’ve got a hit’: Metra riders love café car idea — what’s the next step?](#)

Daily Herald: [Should I-290 and I-88 be next routes for express buses? Pace wants to know](#)

America WALKS: [When Driving Is Not An Option: Three Takeaways from Community Design and Nondrivers](#)

Rocky Mountain Institute: [Building Smarter: How Investing in More Transportation Choices Cuts Infrastructure Costs](#)

Yale Climate Connections: [Want to reduce your neighborhood’s pollution? Try a ‘walk audit’](#)

Northwest Municipal Conference
1600 E. Golf Rd Suite 0700
Des Plaines, IL 60016
Phone: 847-296-9200 | www.nwmc-cog.org

Eric Czarnota: 847-296-9200 ext. 128
ECzarnota@nwmc-cog.org

Brian Larson: 847-296-9200 ext. 131
BLarson@nwmc-cog.org