

# Transportation Newsletter

June 2023  
Volume 15 Issue 6

Northwest Municipal Conference  
1600 E. Golf Rd. Suite 0700 Des Plaines, IL 60016  
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Cover Photo: Village of Grayslake



**Northwest Municipal Conference**

## Dates to Remember:

*NWMC Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee Outing  
to Hoffman Estates*  
Tuesday, June 20, 10:30 a.m.  
Bell Works, *Hoffman Estates*

*NWMC Annual Gala*  
Wednesday, June 14, 6:00 p.m.  
Hyatt Regency, *Deerfield*

## Welcome Brian Larson to the Northwest Municipal Conference

On May 8, Brian Larson began his career with the Northwest Municipal Conference as our new Program Associate for Transportation. Brian is currently pursuing a Masters of Urban Planning and Policy degree at the University of Illinois at Chicago and previously received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Juris Doctor degree from the University of Illinois College of Law. His duties include staffing the North Shore Council of Mayors as well as the NWMC Transportation and Bicycle/Pedestrian Committees. Brian and his family reside in *Arlington Heights*. Please join us in welcoming Brian to the Conference family!

## NWMC Transportation Committee Talks State of the Region, Plan of Action for Regional Transit

On May 25, the NWMC Transportation Committee met and received two presentations from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) staff. CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman presented the agency's [State of the Region 2023 report](#) that "celebrates organizations and individuals successfully working to improve northeastern Illinois, its communities, and its peoples, while bringing attention to public sentiment on key quality-of-life issues."

Senior Director and Policy Advisor Laura Wilkison presented the [Plan of Action for Regional Transit \(PART\) project](#). The project brings together "representatives from the business, community, environmental, labor, and civic sectors to develop and submit a comprehensive regional transportation plan to the governor and General Assembly on or before January 1, 2024." Please click on the link above for more information on PART, including meeting materials and the list of steering committee members.



Village of Northbrook

## IDOT Hosts Special Program Assistance Conference

On Tuesday, May 23 and Wednesday, May 24, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) held a Special Programs Assistance Conference at the IDOT District 1 office in *Schaumburg*. The morning session on May 23 provided general information about three programs: the Economic Development Program (EDP); the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP); and the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS). During the afternoon of May 23 and all day on May 24, IDOT staff were available by appointment to discuss specific projects and applications in a one-on-one setting.

NWMC staff attended the Tuesday morning informational session. Please contact Eric Czarzota, [ecarzota@nwmc-cog.org](mailto:ecarzota@nwmc-cog.org), or Brian Larson, [blarson@nwmc-cog.org](mailto:blarson@nwmc-cog.org), with any questions about these programs.

## MPC Releases Bike and Pedestrian Database

The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) recently completed a regional Bike and Pedestrian Dataset that features three interactive maps for [planning and policy](#), [TIP funding](#) and [sidewalk coverage](#). The goal of these datasets is to help municipalities enhance their bike and pedestrian infrastructure by providing a comprehensive tool to guide efforts that would be maintained on an ongoing basis. The database can be found [here](#). Please contact MPC Senior Director Audrey Wennink, [awennink@metroplanning.org](mailto:awennink@metroplanning.org) for more information.



## **IDOT to Host Vulnerable Road Users (VRU) Safety Assessment Webinars**

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is hosting a series of engagement sessions for the Vulnerable Road Users (VRU) Safety Assessment. During these webinars, IDOT will share initial safety analysis findings and moderate a discussion to hear from stakeholders. IDOT would like to learn about local pedestrian and bicyclist safety needs and priorities to enhance the analysis and direct outcomes to improve VRU safety statewide.

Four webinars will take place on June 7 and 8 with specific discussion areas as follows:

Wednesday June 7

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. [Urbanized Areas](#)

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. [Non-urbanized Areas](#)

Thursday June 8

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. [Cook County](#)

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. [Collar Counties](#)

Attendees are welcome to participate in as many webinars as applicable and can register in advance by clicking on the webinar links above. For more information, please contact [DOT.VRUSafety@illinois.gov](mailto:DOT.VRUSafety@illinois.gov).

## **IDOT Bicycle Facility Inventory System (BFIS) Is Now Live**

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) recently announced that the Bicycle Facility Inventory System (BFIS) went live on May 17. IDOT provided a recording of a previous webinar that [shows how to use the system](#). Stakeholder agencies can add new facilities, update existing facilities, and mark facilities as decommissioned. Users can access help using the button at the bottom left corner of the page. Public agencies who have questions or want access to make changes to the system should contact: [DOT.BikePed@Illinois.gov](mailto:DOT.BikePed@Illinois.gov).

## **The Illinois Tollway Creates I-PASS Assist for Low-Income Households**

I-PASS Assist offers eligible drivers all the benefits of I-PASS, including the standard 50 percent discount on tolls, as well as additional benefits, including waiving the transponder deposit fee and allowing drivers to open an account with as little as \$4 in prepaid tolls. In addition, participants may have fees accrued from unpaid tolls dismissed—and avoid future fees for missed tolls.

Working through a partnership with the Illinois Department of Revenue and the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Tollway is able to verify the eligibility of households for I-PASS Assist using a secure web form that requires minimal information to determine if household incomes fall below the required threshold, which is based on 250 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines or if households are currently participating in SNAP or TANF.

Please visit <https://www.illinoistollway.com/assist> to access the application.

## **Apply Today for the Safe Streets and Roads for All Program**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) has issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary grant program. Funding is available to develop or update safety action plans, conduct planning and development activities in support of a plan, or carry out projects and strategies identified in a plan. Applications are now open and are due electronically by Monday, July 10. For more information, please review the [SS4A NOFO](#).

## **NWMC Members to Benefit from Metra's 2023 Construction Program**

At the beginning of May, Metra announced a variety of construction projects in 2023 to help ensure that customers can continue to enjoy safe and reliable service. Metra is focusing nearly a quarter of its annual capital spending (\$119.5 million) on rebuilding and renewing station facilities. Improvements impacting NWMC member communities include:

### **Station Improvements:**

*Grayslake* – platform replacement (Milwaukee District North Line)

*Kenilworth* – rehab and upgrade station facilities (Union Pacific North Line)

### **Crossing Replacements:**

*Bannockburn* – Half Day Road (Milwaukee District North Line)

*Barrington* – Main/Cook Street (Union Pacific Northwest Line)

*Des Plaines* – Graceland Avenue (Union Pacific Northwest Line)

*Lake Forest* – Everett Road (Milwaukee District North Line)

*Niles* – Touhy Avenue (Milwaukee District North Line)

### **Track Projects:**

*Hanover Park* – install signalized pedestrian crossing (Milwaukee District West Line)

*Highland Park to Chicago* – replace 41,000 ties (Union Pacific North Line)

*Lake Forest* – install new crossovers (Milwaukee District North Line)

*Libertyville* – replace 2,500 feet of track to fix worn curves (Milwaukee District North Line)



Village of Wheeling

Construction work began the first week of April and will continue through the fall, weather permitting. The construction schedule for all projects will be posted on the [Metra website](#) along with [a complete list of regional projects](#).

## USDOT Tool Explores Impacts of Underinvestment in Transportation

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) has launched the [Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#). This interactive web site uses Census Tracts and other data to explore the cumulative burden communities experience in five areas as a result of underinvestment in transportation: Transportation Insecurity; Climate and Disaster Risk Burden; Environmental Burden; Health Vulnerability; and, Social Vulnerability. Several tools in English and Spanish provide instructions in how to use the ETC Explorer and the [Justice40 Story Map](#) provides case studies that show how transportation projects are working to provide safe, multimodal transportation options to underserved communities.

The ETC Explorer will be featured in an upcoming FHWA [Tools to Conduct Equitable Safety Data Analysis](#) webinar scheduled for Wednesday, June 14 at noon. Panelists will share USDOT tools that can support equitable data analysis for roadway safety planning, project prioritization and discretionary grant application. This is the second webinar in the [Equity in Roadway Safety Webinar Series](#), with the first session available online.

## Cook County Releases First-Ever Bike Plan

On May 24, [Cook County issued its first-ever Bike Plan](#). Spearheaded by the county's Department of Transportation and Highways (DoTH), the priorities laid out in the Bike Plan include: increasing everyday cycling by connecting existing bike infrastructure to major destinations; creating a core low-stress bike network to ensure riders feel comfortable; and, increasing access to bike lanes and paths through equitable investments.

The plan recommends enhancements including 90 miles of new off-street paved trails, 150 miles of new side paths and at least 230 miles of new on-street bike routes throughout the county. Once fully implemented, the plan ensures that 96% of county residents will live less than a mile from a bike path or lane suitable for any rider or ability level.

## RTA to Restart Transportation Tuesday Events

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is bringing back Transportation Tuesday, a four-part webinar series held each Tuesday in June from noon to 1 p.m. The free, virtual sessions will allow attendees to hear from experts, ask questions and learn about hot topics in transportation planning as they relate to implementation of the RTA's new regional transit strategic plan, [Transit is the Answer](#).

The Transportation Tuesday series will include regional and national leaders, along with RTA staff leading discussions about the opportunities, challenges and resources available to the Chicago region. Participation is free, but registration is required. Read a description of each event and register on the RTA's [Connections Blog](#).

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