

Transportation Newsletter

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Northwest Municipal Conference
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Cover Photo: Village of Mount Prospect



Northwest Municipal Conference

Dates to Remember:

NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee:
Tuesday, May 14, 10:30 a.m. — *NWMC Offices and Virtually*

IDOT Seminar:
Monday, May 20 & Tuesday, May 21
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 pm — *IDOT District 1 Office in Schaumburg (See p. 3)*

NWMC Transportation Committee:
Thursday, May 30, 8:30 a.m. — *NWMC Offices and Virtually*

North Shore and Northwest Council of Mayors Approve STP-L Programs

On Thursday, April 18, and Monday, April 29, respectively, the North Shore and Northwest Councils of Mayors approved their Surface Transportation Program - Local (STP-L) programs for FY 2025-2029. Forty-two applications from seventeen communities were received from both councils. Seventeen projects totaling an estimated \$35,410,351 are recommended for funding. The North Shore program can be found [here](#) and the Northwest [here](#).

The next steps for program approval will occur on May 31 at the CMAP Transportation Meeting, followed by final approval of the programs at the June 13 Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee meeting. Selected project sponsors can expect an award letter shortly thereafter.

Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act Introduced

On Monday, State Senator Ram Villivalam and Representative Eva-Dina Delgado introduced legislation creating the Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act (MMA). The legislation seeks to restructure transit governance and increase state funding for the region. Each legislator introduced two identical bills: [Senate Bill 3937](#) and [House Bill 5829](#) create the authority; and, [Senate Bill 3938](#) and [House Bill 5828](#) allocate \$1.5 billion in General Revenue Funds to the Metropolitan Mobility Authority Additional Operating Funding Fund.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, transit ridership fell significantly across the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) region. Since 2020, ridership has gradually recovered to just below 70 percent of 2019 levels, depending on the type of transit service used. This decrease in ridership also resulted in significant revenue loss. To ensure continued transit operations during the [pandemic](#), [Congress provided](#) \$3.540 billion of federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act funding to the RTA region. A [fiscal cliff](#) of \$730 million looms as federal relief funding will begin to exhaust in late 2025, with only a small amount remaining as 2026 begins.

In response to the looming fiscal cliff, the General Assembly last year tasked the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with identifying recommendations on how to improve transit for the region. This culminated in the release of the [Plan of Action for Regional Transit \(PART\)](#). The plan called for increased transit funding, ranging from the level needed to avoid the fiscal cliff to a “transformative” investment that would enable reimagining the region’s transit services.

The PART also identified options for restructuring the region’s transit system, ranging from empowering RTA to lead transit across the transit service boards of CTA, Metra, and Pace, to integrating the RTA and the transit service boards into one regional transit agency. Earlier this week, the Civic Federation signaled its support of the integrated transit agency [approach, issuing a report](#) estimating that integration alone could save \$200-240 million annually.

The Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act proposes to consolidate the RTA and service boards of the CTA, Metra, and Pace into a single transit agency under the auspices of a nineteen-member board. While the structure of the MMA board is similar to the current RTA board, there are some differences. The MMA board includes three appointments by the Governor and changes Cook County’s board member appointment process to be identical to the collar counties, with appointments made by the county executive and confirmed by the county board. Currently, four of the five Cook County RTA Board appointments are made by suburban members of the county board. The approval authority under the MMA board also appears to differ from that of the RTA by requiring a simple majority rather than super-majority vote.

The Act also confers new authorities and powers upon the agency. The MMA can participate in residential and commercial development near public transit stations and routes via a new internal office to promote and fund transit-oriented development and transit-supportive projects. Existing grant programs are consolidated into two new incentive funds. The Act also emphasizes more objective and transparent decision-making through performance standards and measures. This transparency also extends to the MMA board, executives and staff by requiring publication of the number of transit trips taken by board members as well as potential for establishing minimum system usage.

(Cont. on P. 3)

Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act Introduced (Cont.)

The Act also establishes a transit ambassador program alongside existing police authority, regular performance audits by the Auditor General, and formalization of bus rapid transit service as an option available for deployment by the Authority.

The Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act is one part of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition [platform](#). In addition to the MMA, the coalition's Clean and Equitable Transportation Act (CETA) portion of the platform seeks to expand the use of zero emissions vehicles and create greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Lawmakers indicated that the proposals are intended to spark discussion, with the potential for subject matter hearings to be held over the summer. The General Assembly is scheduled to adjourn the spring session on Friday, May 24. NWMC staff and committees will continue to review the legislation to assess its potential impact on the membership service territory as well as work with regional partners to address issues and concerns.



NWMC Staff

Niles Awarded Access to Transit Funding

The *Village of Niles* is sponsor of one of nine new projects recently awarded funding through the Regional Transportation Authority's [Access to Transit Program](#). The village will receive \$55,000 for future improvements, including a ten-foot side path along the south side of Dempster Street between Cumberland and Milwaukee Avenues. The project will also construct ADA ramp improvements at signalized intersections, utility relocations and fence improvements.

The proposed side path will connect existing Pace transit stops on Dempster, two of which have been upgraded to Pace Dempster Pulse Line stations (Cumberland and Milwaukee). One will remain as a stop for the Pace Bus Route 250 (Dempster at Grand), which currently lacks sufficient pedestrian access.

Plan to Attend Upcoming IDOT Seminars

On Monday, May 20 and Tuesday, May 21, the Illinois Department of Transportation is will host a seminar covering procedures and documentation for District 1 Bureau of Local Roads and Streets contract administration. Topics will include State and Federal regulations and policies, project programming, the agreement process, invoicing, and closeout. The sessions on both days will provide the same information, so attendees can choose whichever works best. Both seminars will be hosted at the IDOT District 1 office in *Schaumburg*. To register, please email dot.d1.blrs@illinois.gov with your name, agency, contact information, and selected attendance date. The deadline to register is Friday, May 10. For additional questions, please contact Temidayo.Latinwo@illinois.gov.

CMAP Offers Bike Lane Accessibility Resources

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has developed [Accessibility Considerations for Bike Lanes](#), a practical guide for municipalities and planners that explores Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements related to parking, crosswalks and sidewalk access in the context of separated bike lanes. This short guide addresses the legal risks of non-compliant bike lanes and provides resources and design guides to assist in developing an accessible transportation system.



NWMC Staff

Pace ReVision Event Recap

On April 23, Pace Suburban Bus hosted a ReVision event at Harper College in *Palatine* to rethink Pace's entire network of services, building on the principles of accessibility, equity and productivity defined in the [Driving Innovation strategic plan](#). Attendees learned about existing transit services and relevant demographic and travel patterns. The event also focused on gathering feedback from attendees to help develop future network alternatives, illustrating both key trade-offs and the opportunities that could be opened with new funding.

Public and stakeholder feedback gathered during the event will be used to develop a draft plan and eventually a final plan by 2026. For more information about Pace's ReVision event and to provide input on the plan, please visit [Pace's website](#).

Metra Sees Big Gains in Bike Ridership, Deployment of Bike Cars

Metra's Bicycle Working Group hosted a public virtual meeting on April 8, sharing the agency's progress on regional rail and inter-agency cooperation. After launching a new "bikes on all trains" policy in February, Metra has seen ridership increase by 70% over prior years. Ridership is now nearly equivalent to levels seen prior to the 2010s introduction of the Divvy bike sharing program. Metra staff also shared that they have deployed thirty-five retrofitted train cars with bicycle racks ("Bike Car 1.5") across the system, with Union Pacific having twenty-four and Milwaukee District having two of the bike cars. Metra continues to retrofit more Bike Car 1.5, with another five currently in the Pullman shop. Metra has made the full recording of the workshop available on their [YouTube page](#). For more information, please read the [Chicago Streetsblog article about the meeting](#).

IDOT Opens HSIP Call for Projects

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has opened the FY2026 local Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) for applications. \$32 million will be available in funding for this cycle, with IDOT prioritizing High Risk Rural Road (HRRR) projects and projects that protect Vulnerable Road Users (VRU). No less than 15% of the HSIP will be spent on VRU projects, so applicants are encouraged to develop programs that will utilize these funds. Priority will be given to projects that address the 2022 Illinois Strategic Highway Safety Plan emphasis areas, as well as system-wide, systemic safety improvements.

Eligible projects can receive a maximum of 90% federal funding, with the projects required to be let within two years of the announced Fiscal Year. Applications will be accepted through Friday, June 14 at 5:00 p.m. For more information, please see [IDOT's HSIP webpage](#) and read the [Circular Letter](#) for this funding opportunity.

Secretary of State Issues Modernization Report

Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias recently announced the release of the first-ever [Modernization and Efficiency Report](#), sharing efforts the office has made to create a more efficient and streamlined experience for users. The report highlights the DMV's online services, including appointment scheduling, license and ID renewals. One-Stop-Shop DMV Services and Self-Service DMV Fast Lane stations at grocery stores, libraries, and community centers allow driver's license, ID, or vehicle registration renewals. The office has also enabled electronic notarization and is establishing an online Electronic Lien and Title (ELT) System this summer.

State Opens Funding for Downtown and Economic Recovery Grants

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) has announced \$20 million in funding under the Rebuild Downtowns & Main Streets (RDMS) program and \$10 million in funding for Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery (RISE) Implementation Grants.

RDMS money will support construction, repair and modernization of infrastructure in downtown or commercial center areas of economic disinvestment. These kinds of projects can include roads, parking, public space enhancements, park investments, sustainability upgrades, structural repairs and mixed-use or transit-oriented development.

RISE will support water and sewer infrastructure, affordable housing, local workforce development, broadband, site preparation and other programs. Only one application is permitted. Awards will range from \$250,000 to \$2,000,000 with a local government 25% match. Interested parties can contact CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov. To learn more, please visit the [NOFO on the DCEO website](#) or read a [news report from Rockford's WREX](#).

PBIC Webinar on Intersection Operation Strategies

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) will host a webinar on Wednesday, May 15, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on intersection operation strategies for improving pedestrian safety. Panelists from state and local agencies will share their experiences and lessons learned. Following the presentations, panelists will respond to questions from attendees during a facilitated discussion period. Please register for the webinar [here](#).



Village of Fox Lake

Northwest Cook Transit Coordination Study

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is partnering with [Pace Suburban Bus](#), [Harper College](#), the Townships of [Hanover](#), [Palatine](#) and [Schaumburg](#), and the Villages of [Hoffman Estates](#) and [Schaumburg](#) to conduct a transit coordination study in northwest Cook County. The project will evaluate how transit agencies can maintain and improve existing, high-quality services, explore funding sources, increase accessible transit and identify new partnerships. Please visit the [project website](#) to contribute to the community survey or learn more about the study.

CMAP Accepting Summer 2024 FLIP Applications

High school students interested in learning about transportation systems, access to parks and nature, housing types and affordability and how to improve communities' quality-of-life are encouraged to apply for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) [Future Leaders in Planning \(FLIP\)](#) summer program. FLIP gives high school students the opportunity to learn about urban planning and share ideas on how to make the region a better place to live, learn, work and play. FLIP is a week-long program from July 15 through July 19, fully in person at CMAP's office in the Old Post Office Building in Chicago. To learn more about the program and apply, please visit the [CMAP website](#).

Safe Streets and Roads for All Grants Open for Applications

If your community is interested in testing new street design changes with quick-build demonstration projects, the [USDOT Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\) Grant Program](#) can help you implement these efforts! \$1.256 billion will be available for planning activities and demonstration projects in this fiscal year, directly awarded to the local jurisdiction. So far, the funding has not been competitive. Deadlines depend on the grant type your community is pursuing, from May 16 to August 29. To learn what kinds of programs are eligible, visit the [USDOT SS4A website](#), or read more from [Transportation for America](#). NWMC Program Associate for Transportation Brian Larson has previously served as a volunteer for one of these demonstration projects, so please contact him with any questions on what it looks like on the ground.

FHWA ATTIP Grant Applications Now Open

As a reminder, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has opened applications for the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP). ATIIP grants will allow communities to identify, prioritize and implement improvements to the largest barriers to safe, accessible, and equitable pedestrian and bicycle network connectivity through the development of infrastructure that will provide substantial additional opportunities for walking and bicycling.

Communities can use ATIIP grants to create plans, implement an active transportation connection between communities, or connect active transportation facilities with transit services. Awards start at \$100,000 and go up to \$15,000,000, with applications due Monday, June 17. For more information about ATIIP grants, please see the [NOFO](#) and the [FHWA ATIIP information page](#).

FRA Accepting Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and safety Improvements (CRISI) Applications

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has opened nearly \$2.5 billion in competitive grant funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) program. The program provides funds to build highway-rail grade crossing improvements, relocate rail lines, prepare rail corridor development plans or safety programs, reduce trespassing and more. Applications are due by Tuesday, May 28. For more information, please [see the NOFO](#).

Joint Office for Energy and Transportation Offers Transportation Electrification Playbook

The U.S. Joint Office of Energy and Transportation seeks to enable communities to make use of the increase in federal funding opportunities for Electric Vehicles (EV). To do so, the Office has launched the [Public Electric Vehicle \(EV\) Charging Infrastructure Playbook](#) to assist communities with planning and building zero-emission transportation infrastructure. Interactive modules within the Playbook assist with planning, engagement, site identification and deployment, and costs, funding, and revenue. Using guiding questions, worksheets, and videos, the Playbook can assist communities in their drive for local clean transportation. [Read more about the Playbook here.](#)



City of Des Plaines

Did You Miss It? News Items in Brief

Daily Herald: [Can cement be greener? Industry seeking ways to lower carbon dioxide emissions](#)

Route Fifty: [Billions in earmarks headed to states and cities](#)

Forbes: [Distracted Driving Fell After States Implemented Hands-Free Laws](#)

Daily Herald: [More lanes on Eisenhower? Extend Route 390 west? Tollway starting to make plans for future](#)

Grist via Route Fifty: [8 years into America's e-scooter experiment, what have we learned?](#)

Daily Herald: [Will your train station get a makeover? Here's what Metra is fixing in 2024](#)

Governing: [One City's Quest to Rein in Reckless Driving](#)

Route Fifty: [States explore new incentives to lower the cost of EVs](#)

Daily Herald: [What do you foresee for Route 120? Public comment sought on 9-mile stretch from Volo to Grayslake](#)

Daily Herald: [Merge CTA, Metra and Pace? Lawmakers debut fix amid pushback from suburbs, transit agencies](#)

Chicago Sun-Times: [Amtrak adds new trains between Chicago and Twin Cities](#)

Eno Center for Transportation: [FHWA: Highway Construction Costs Continued to Grow at 24% Annual Rate](#)

FHWA Adds Technical Assistance Tools

FHWA has introduced several new technical assistance tools to support project managers in ensuring smooth project implementation from preparation through execution:

[Planning and Environment Linkages \(PEL\) Handbook and Flowcharts](#): These tools offer guidance for implementing PEL approaches during the environmental review process. PEL promotes collaborative decision-making that considers the impacts and benefits of transportation system improvements on the environment, community, and economy. It aims to enhance efficiency in project development, supporting agencies in accelerating project delivery.

[New Videos on Transportation Planning Capacity Building Website](#): FHWA has added two new videos to its website. The "[Federal Transportation Planning Process](#)" video outlines the typical transportation planning process and introduces how public agencies conduct transportation planning. The "[Federal Transportation Planning Funds](#)" video explains the process for ensuring federal funding is used efficiently and compliantly, aiding State DOTs and sub-recipients in managing funds effectively.

[Guidelines on Preparing Engineer's Estimate, Bid Reviews, and Evaluation](#): FHWA has provided guidance and recommended procedures for preparing engineer's estimates and reviewing bids. These guidelines help ensure accuracy and compliance in project estimation and bidding processes.

[USDOT Project Delivery Center of Excellence Toolbox](#): This toolbox offers a range of resources related to project delivery, including project management, risk management, project development, public involvement, and more. Project managers can find valuable tools and information to support successful project implementation.

To access these resources and stay updated, project managers can subscribe to the [Project Delivery Center of Excellence listserv](#).

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