

Transportation Newsletter

October 2023
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Northwest Municipal Conference
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Cover Photo: City of Prospect Heights

NWMC Board Discusses RTA Strategic Plan and CMAP PART Report

At the September 12 NWMC Board Meeting, Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Executive Director Leanne Redden presented the agency's [Transit is the Answer](#) strategic plan. Her presentation focused on the plan's vision of a safe, reliable, accessible public transportation system and the fourteen advocacy and action agenda items designed to improve and better fund the region's transit system. She discussed the looming \$730 million "fiscal cliff" faced by the region and outlined the necessity for new and stable funding for transit.

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Executive Director Erin Aleman provided an update on the agency's [Plan of Action for Regional Transit \(PART\)](#), created to address the fiscal cliff and imagine a new regional transit system. CMAP staff presented the report earlier that day to a combined meeting of the CMAP Board and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Committee.

The two entities will meet again on October 11 to consider and adopt the report for submittal to the General Assembly by January 1, 2024.



Northwest Municipal Conference

Dates to Remember:

NWMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee:
Tuesday, October 17, 10:30 a.m. *NWMC Offices and Virtually*

North Shore Council of Mayors Technical Committee:
Thursday, October 19, 8:30 a.m. *Glenview Village Hall*

NWMC Transportation Committee:
Thursday, October 26, 8:30 a.m. *NWMC Offices and Virtually*

Northwest Council of Mayors: Technical Committee:
Friday, October 27, 8:30 a.m. *Barrington Village Hall*

Staff Report from IDOT's Fall Planning Conference

NWMC Planning Liaisons Eric Czarnota and Brian Larson were in Springfield this week for the annual Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Fall Planning Conference. The conference gathers transportation professionals across the state to discuss matters affecting Illinois and recent IDOT support to develop a 21st Century transportation system.

Topics included: efforts by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to improve the [EV charging grid](#); IDOT's [electric school bus grant program](#); Metropolitan Mayors' Caucus [EV Readiness Program](#); development of the [Bicycle Facility Inventory System](#) (for which IDOT is beginning direct community outreach); and, IDOT's creation of ADA Transition Plan templates to ease local plan development. Finally, *Glenview*, DuPage County and Kane County were highlighted for supporting suburban bike planning with new strategic plans.

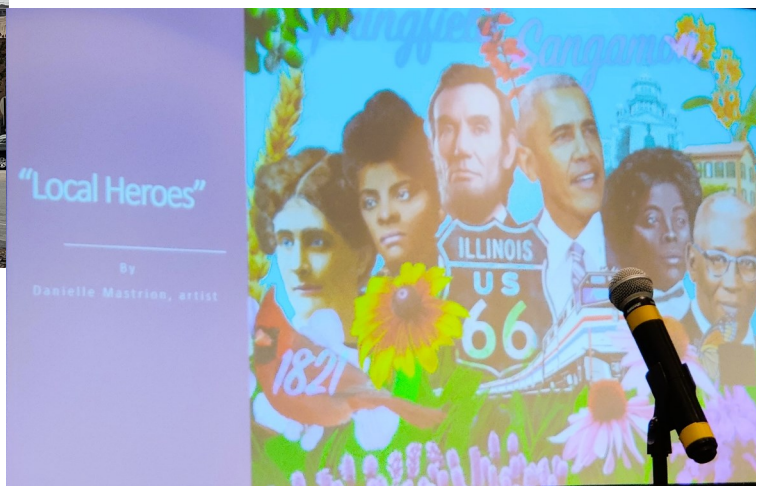
IDOT Releases Illinois Special Bridge Program NOFO

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) recently issued a [Circular Letter](#) announcing the notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for the Illinois Special Bridge Program (ISBP). Please note that this is a discretionary program, and all proposed projects must compete statewide for funding. Please note it is beneficial to have received approval of the Bridge Condition Report (BCR) from IDOT prior to applying for ISBP funding to ensure the scope of the project is appropriate. For a full list of eligibility criteria for the program please see the [circular letter](#). When submitting applications for local projects, the local public agency is also required to submit the application under a cover letter from the local public agency, which clearly defines the responsible local public agency contact person.

Applications are required to be submitted electronically through the application's email feature to your appropriate District Local Roads office by Tuesday, October 31. Announcement of the selected projects will occur with the release of the IDOT proposed FY 2025-2030 Highway Improvement Program in spring, 2024. For questions or additional information, please contact Melinda Kos, 217-785-5178 or Melinda.Kos@illinois.gov.



Photos courtesy of NWMC Staff



USDOT Releases NOFOs for Three Programs Supporting Transportation Infrastructure

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) has announced that applications are open for the following three separate and unique grant programs supporting transportation infrastructure:

- **Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grant Program.** This program provides grants to eligible public sector agencies to conduct demonstration projects focused on advanced smart community technologies and systems to improve transportation efficiency and safety. Additional information, including the prior year selections and a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is available on the [USDOT SMART](#) website. Applications are due by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 10.
- **Thriving Communities Program (TCP)** offers two separate response opportunities for potential applicants: a Letter of Interest and a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The Letter of Interest provides technical assistance, planning and capacity building support to teams of community partners that may lack the staffing or technical expertise to scope, fund, and develop infrastructure projects that advance broader community goals. There is no cost to receive this support, but applicants are required to partner with at least two other organizations. Interested applicants must identify community partners and together submit a Letter of Interest by 3:59 p.m. on Wednesday, November 15, to be considered for selection. The NOFO funds organizations

("Capacity Builders") to provide technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support to disadvantaged and under-resourced communities, enabling them to advance transportation projects that support community-driven economic development, health, environment, mobility and access goals. There are two Capacity Builder opportunities. The first is for applicants who want to provide technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support to communities across the country. The second is for state, tribal or regional organizations that want to provide technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support to communities within their state, tribe or region.

Applications for both opportunities are due by 3:59 p.m. on Tuesday, November 28.

To learn more about the TCP opportunities, please visit the [USDOT Thriving Communities website](#).

- **Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator.** This program will provide up to \$100 million in Federal funding to repair and replace existing but non-operational, electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. Eligible applicants include only State DOTs and Local Public Agencies; however, the chargers may be publicly or privately owned provided they are available to the public without restriction. For additional information and application instructions, please visit the [Federal Highway Administration NEVI website](#). Applications are due by 10:59 p.m. on Monday, November 13.

To request letters of support from IDOT for any of these programs, please contact Bureau Chief of Federal Affairs Tim McMahon, Timothy.McMahon@illinois.gov, at least two weeks prior to each program's deadlines.

IDOT Updating National Bridge Inspection Standards

A [Circular Letter](#) from IDOT was recently released notifying of an update to the National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS). The update incorporates Specifications for the National Bridge Inventory (SNBI) and provides for bridge reporting data to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for inclusion in the inventory.

IDOT is currently working on updating the Illinois Structure Information System (ISIS), bridge inventory/inspection forms and manuals to meet the requirements of the SNBI. Further, FHWA and IDOT are also developing training that will be available to aide in the collection and recording of the data required by the SNBI. Any questions can be directed to the Bridge Management and Inspection Unit, DOT.BBS.BridgeMgmt@illinois.gov.

IDOT Launches Move Illinois: the 2024 Long-Range Transportation Plan

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has introduced Move Illinois: the 2024 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The plan will strategically outline goals, objectives, and strategies for Illinois' diverse transportation network for the next 20 to 30 years. IDOT encourages stakeholders and other interested parties to complete a public survey by visiting www.moveillinois2024.com to help identify the plan's goals and objectives. Information about public events across the state is also available on the website. The LRTP is expected to be complete by the end of 2024. IDOT welcomes and encourages community input in order to develop a well-rounded plan.

IDOT Requests Feedback on the FY 2024-2027 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) recently released a [circular letter](#) requesting input for use in the planning and development of its upcoming Fiscal Years 2024-2027 [Statewide Transportation Improvement Program](#) (STIP). Written comments are due by Wednesday, November 1 and can be emailed to DOT.STIP@illinois.gov or mailed to Bobby Johnson at IDOT, 2030 South Dirksen Parkway, Room 307, Springfield, Illinois 62764.



Village of Lincolnwood

RTA Organizes Developer Panel with *Des Plaines*

The Regional Transportation Authority's (RTA) Community Planning program recently released a [developer discussion panel report](#) featuring the *City of Des Plaines*. This program provides “funding and technical assistance for transit-oriented planning and implementation activities with local partners throughout the six-county service area.” Developer Discussion Panels assist municipalities in identifying the market potential of opportunity sites for redevelopment and allow them to speak directly to development professionals about necessary components, phasing and feasibility of potential projects near transit hubs.

Focusing attention on the intersection of Oakton and Lee Streets, the city discussed ways to support the adjacent Pace Pulse Dempster Line and the goal of a nearby infill station along Metra's North Central Service Line. Panelists provided the city with a variety of recommendations and proposals the city could implement to promote transit-oriented development in the area. Please visit the [Community Planning Program](#) website for more information.



Photo Courtesy of the RTA
Des Plaines

USDOT Vehicle Inventory and Use Survey is Back

After a 20-year hiatus, the U.S. Department of Transportation Bureau of Transportation Statistics has released its latest survey on the physical and operational characteristics of the truck population in the United States. Since 2002, the U.S. has seen the number of trucks on its roadways double, while the number of vehicle-miles travelled (VMT) per truck has decreased, for both light-duty and heavy-duty trucks. This data will be used to guide investments in transportation infrastructure and vehicle technology, as well as “to evaluate truck safety, estimate emissions and energy consumption, and understand the role of trucks in economic activity.” Read more at the [USDOT webpage](#).

Happy Pedestrian Safety Month—USDOT, FHWA Offer Resources

Every October, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) celebrates National Pedestrian Safety Month and encourages leaders across the country to create a transportation system in which all people can easily and safely walk. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) offers [activities and sample social media posts and messages, free infographics, and other resources](#) to promote a safe walking environment. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has also published a [report](#) to understand the impacts of speed on traffic safety and introduce the five-stage Safe System Approach for Speed Management. The report also offers case studies and examples to overcome institutional barriers with proven, measurable reductions in operating speeds and crashes.

FTA's TOD Pilot Program Applications Due October 10

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently announced \$13.4 million in competitive grants through its Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) planning program. Funding is available to integrate land use and transportation planning for new fixed guideway or core capacity transit project corridors. To apply for funding, an applicant must be an existing FTA grant recipient – either a project sponsor of an eligible transit project or an entity with land use planning authority in the project corridor. To ensure that work meets the needs of the local community, transit project sponsors and land use planning authorities must partner to conduct the planning work. Please visit the [TOD Pilot Program webpage](#) for additional information. The application period will close on Tuesday, October 10.

RTA Releases Mobility Hub Toolkit

Mobility hubs are generally defined as locations where people can access multiple types of transportation modes in a central location including bike share, public transit, micro mobility devices, etc. There are few examples of mobility hubs in the Chicago region, leaving a major opportunity for communities to stand out with a well-designed mobility hub. The Regional Transportation Authority's (RTA) newly released [Mobility Hub Toolkit](#) can provide communities with the guidance needed to create a stand-out mobility hub, as well as identify resources for implementation of a community's vision.

US DOT Hosting its First TCP Office hours Session for Community Applicants

The US Department of Transportation (US DOT) is hosting Office Hours intended to provide an open forum for potential community applicants to ask questions or address challenges related to their Letters of Interest with members of the DOT Thriving Communities Program Team. [Join the session on Zoom](#) – no advance registration is required. If you plan to attend, you are encouraged to share in advance the topics and/or questions you'd like to discuss during Office Hours using [this Microsoft Form](#). The session will take place on Wednesday, October 11 at 2:00 p.m. Please note that US DOT cannot offer guidance on the details or competitiveness of specific applications.



CMAP Requests Feedback on IDOT's Bicycle Facility Inventory System

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is requesting municipal feedback on [IDOT's Bikeway Facilities Inventory System](#) (BFIS). This short, two question [survey](#) is designed to gauge staff capacity and current data availability. CMAP will follow up with a guide to working with BFIS data entry based on the survey results. CMAP has a limited availability for assisting municipalities, so please emphasize the value of familiarizing and engaging with this tool. In addition, IDOT can likely support the uploading of local data to streamline this process. The goal of this effort is to have a continually updated system that can be used to support bike projects and CMAP's Data Hub by generating accurate visualizations of the regional bike network and future improvements.

FHWA Announces Grants to Fix EV Stations

In order to increase EV charger reliability, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has opened applications for \$100 million in grant funding to "repair and replace existing, but non-operational, EV charging infrastructure." The US Department of Energy reports that charging stations identified as offline or temporarily unavailable account for approximately 4.1% of all public charging ports. State DOTs and local governments are eligible to apply for the program, with applications due by Monday, November 13. Please visit the [grant opportunity](#) page for more information and to apply .

USDOT SMART Grant Applications Due October 10

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) recently released a [notice of funding opportunity](#) for Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Stage 1 Planning and Prototyping grants. SMART grants "are to be awarded on a competitive basis to conduct demonstration projects focused on advanced smart city or community technologies and systems to improve transportation efficiency and safety." Applications must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 10 to the [Valid Eval submission website](#).

Did You Miss It? News Items in Brief

Daily Herald: [Why So Many Communities Are Adopting Bike Plans And How They Benefit Riders](#)

WBEZ: [There's a bold new plan to bolster public transit in Chicago. What riders should know.](#)

Streetsblog Chicago: [Baha'i hopes: Advocates help win funding for study on connecting the N. Shore Channel Trail with lakefront](#)

WGEM: [Illinois clean energy and transportation jobs are growing](#)

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