



# COOK COUNTY CONNECTIONS

## Message from President Preckwinkle:



On August 3, 2016 the Cook County Board of Commissioners adopted *Connecting Cook County*, the County's first comprehensive transportation plan in over 75 years. I have confidence in this plan because thousands of people, like you, contributed through surveys, public meetings, emails and more to its development.

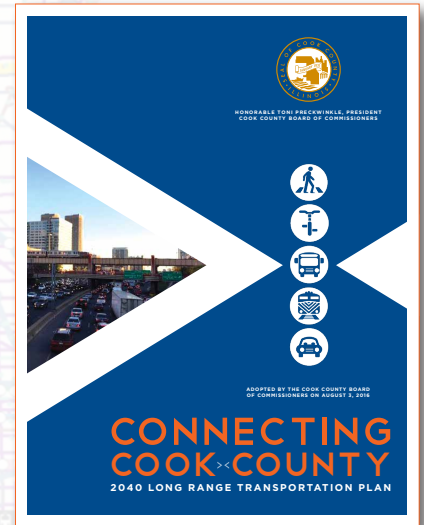
Today I'm sharing this newsletter with you to help you understand the Plan and how it will shape the County's

transportation policies and investments moving forward.

*Joni Preckwinkle*

## The Plan

*Connecting Cook County* provides the framework through which County officials, under the leadership of President Preckwinkle, can plan for the future, advocate for sound transportation policies, and—most importantly—take action. This plan identifies the needs and resources in our communities, the priorities moving forward and the work Cook County is doing to implement these priorities.



[Connecting Cook County \(Full Report\)](#)

[Executive Summary](#)

## IMMENSE DEMAND FOR TRANSPORTATION

**20**  
MILLION  
TRIPS PER DAY,  
MOSTLY BY CAR

**650M**  
TRANSIT  
TRIPS PER YEAR

**925**  
MILLION TONS OF  
FREIGHT  
MOVED PER YEAR

Transportation makes manufacturing distribution and logistics key sectors of the County's economy, supporting over **176,000 Jobs** and generating **\$12.3 billion** in personal income.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAYS

CONNECTINGCOOKCOUNTY.ORG

## The Priorities

The Plan lays out five policy priorities to shape where and how the County invests in transportation and collaborates with the many other public and private transportation service providers.



### **PRIORITIZE transit and other transportation alternatives**

Improved transit is an essential part of addressing congestion on our roads and meeting the travel needs of residents who cannot afford a car or choose not to have one. Other modes such as walking, biking, car sharing, and ride sharing connect residents to public transportation, schools, stores, work, and more and must be among the options offered to families and businesses when transportation facilities are improved.

### **SUPPORT the region's role as North America's freight capital**

Metropolitan Chicago's role as the freight center of North America brings jobs, wages, and sales revenues, but it also presents the challenges of greater congestion, wear and tear on roads and rails, and travel delays. Competitor regions have added strategic capacity and connections to capture a greater portion of growth in the freight sector. As a result, the Chicago region's market share is slipping. To retain its status as a global freight hub, the County will make plans, policies, and rail and trucking investments with strong public benefits.



### **PROMOTE equal access to opportunities**

Regions that are more inclusive – that fully use their human, transportation, real estate, and business assets – achieve greater and more evenly distributed economic growth than less inclusive areas. Within Cook County, transportation services and the opportunities

they afford are not equally distributed, which disproportionately affects African Americans and residents of south Cook County. To fully realize equitable distribution of opportunities, the County's economic development and transportation policies will create a climate conducive to business expansion and to making jobs more broadly accessible within the region.

### **MAINTAIN and MODERNIZE what already exists**

Striking the right balance between maintenance and modernization of existing transportation facilities and new construction is a challenge. It is tempting to add new capacity, but failure to maintain what already exists increases long-term operating costs, safety hazards, delays, and congestion. Bringing the average pavement quality of County roads up to "good condition" will require an additional \$60 million per year for the next 10 years. Cook County will use new practices and technologies to improve the capacity of existing transportation facilities and ensure that today's investments support future innovation and growth.



### **INCREASE investments in transportation**

Building the robust transportation network that is so critical to the region's economic competitiveness depends upon increased, more reliable and flexible revenue sources. In 2015, Cook County took the unprecedented step of ending the long-standing practice of diverting motor fuel tax funds to other uses. Starting in 2017, this action will provide an additional \$45 million per year to pursue the priorities described in *Connecting Cook County*. This first step is part of a campaign to increase funding for transportation from multiple sources, including competitive grants, taxes, tolls, and fares.



## National Experts Weighed In

Cook County had the good fortune to receive guidance and expertise from several national leaders during the development of the plan. Before *Connecting Cook County* was finalized, seven national experts in the fields of transportation and community and economic development reviewed and validated the plan thereby ensuring that it incorporates innovative work from the national landscape.

Our many thanks to:

Dena Belzer, Strategic Economics  
Anjali Mahendra, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities  
Patrick J. O'Brien, Belt Railway Company of Chicago  
Alexander Rothenberg, RAND Corporation  
Tom Sanchez, Virginia Tech  
Ron Sims, Former US Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Samuel K. Skinner, Former US Department of Transportation

## Cook In Action

Even though the plan was just approved in early August, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways has already begun implementing the Plan's policies and priorities through a range of projects. Here are a few examples.



### South Suburban Truck Route Improvements

The County's commitment to rebuild deteriorated municipal roads in Alsip, Harvey, Phoenix, Riverdale and South Holland has played a significant role in business retentions and expansions. Cook County has secured federal and state funding and contributed motor fuel tax revenue to improve truck routes in these industrial districts. This \$20 million public investment supports businesses that employ 1,170 workers, are investing \$62 million in their facilities, and expect to add 420 new jobs.

### Touhy Avenue Multi-Modal Safety and Capacity Improvement Project

Touhy Avenue carries more than 33,400 vehicles per day, 14% of which (4,750) are trucks. This route serves major job centers in Elk Grove Village (3,600 firms) and at O'Hare International Airport, as well as surrounding residential and business communities. The Touhy Avenue project will add capacity to a road with traffic volumes that already exceed its design and that has led to severe congestion and crash incidents that place it in the top 5 percent for Illinois. CMAP projects that traffic volumes will increase more than 40% by 2040.

To address these issues, the Touhy Avenue project includes roadway reconstruction, wider intersections, interconnected traffic signals, and a new by-pass at Old Higgins Road. However, this is much more than a road project; the improvements will enhance freight railroad operations by building a grade separation at the Union Pacific (UP) rail crossing, UP's second busiest line in the region. It will facilitate growth in air travel and shipping by improving access to O'Hare International Airport, the fourth busiest passenger and sixteenth cargo airport in the world. Finally, it will address the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders by adding much-needed sidewalks, crosswalks, safety islands, transit signal priority, and bus shelters. Touhy is one component of the Elgin-O'Hare Western Access project, an improvement of regional and national significance. Cook County is leading the improvement of the state route and has partnered with the Tollway and CMAP on funding.

## Moving Forward

Now that we have completed the planning process, please stay in touch and continue to learn how Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways is implementing these priorities by checking out [cookcountyil.gov/transportation](http://cookcountyil.gov/transportation).

## The Plan at Your Doorstep

The implementation of this plan will rely on quality partnerships with residents, villages, and other transportation implementers. We are excited for you to understand and embrace this plan so you can effectively collaborate with the County on its implementation. To better familiarize everyone with its elements, Cook County staff are embarking on a speaker's tour to work with local communities and organizations. If your town or agency would like a presentation on the elements of the final plan, please send an email to [info@connectingcookcounty.com](mailto:info@connectingcookcounty.com).

## Look What People Are Saying

Cook County has received wonderful feedback from communities, organizations, and the media about the plan. Check out the following press coverage:

### Seeking a bigger voice on transit, freight issues, Cook offers transportation plan

by Mary Wisniewski | July 13, 2016

**Chicago Tribune**

On Wednesday, Cook County will issue its first new long-range transportation plan in 76 years, a wide-reaching, highly detailed, 80-page document spelling out the county's priorities for promoting transit and other transportation alternatives, supporting freight rail, improving job access and increasing capital investment. [Read Full Article \(PDF\)](#)

### Cook County launches long-term transportation infrastructure plan

West Cook Reports | July 14, 2016

**West Cook News**

Ridership, freight service, parity, infrastructure upgrades and funding have emerged as Cook County's top five priorities in maintaining and improving standards for its long-term transportation-system agenda revealed with the publication of the Connecting Cook County guidebook, unveiled this week at a Cook County Board meeting. [Read Full Article \(PDF\)](#)

### Time To Focus On Bikes, Not Cars, Cook County Transit Plan Says

by Ted Cox | July 13, 2016

**DNAinfo.com**

Cook County released a 25-year transportation plan Wednesday, and Chicago bike advocates immediately endorsed it for its commitment to cycling and walking. [Read Full Article \(PDF\)](#)

### Preckwinkle unveils transportation vision for next 25 years

by Rosalind Rossi | July 13, 2016

**CHICAGO SUN-TIMES.com**

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle on Wednesday will unveil the county's first long-term transportation plan in more than 75 years, one that expands the county's focus from roads and bridges to all forms of mobility – from walking and biking to transit and freight movement. [Read Full Article \(PDF\)](#)