



Connecting Communities

DuPage County

February 2, 2002

Community Assets

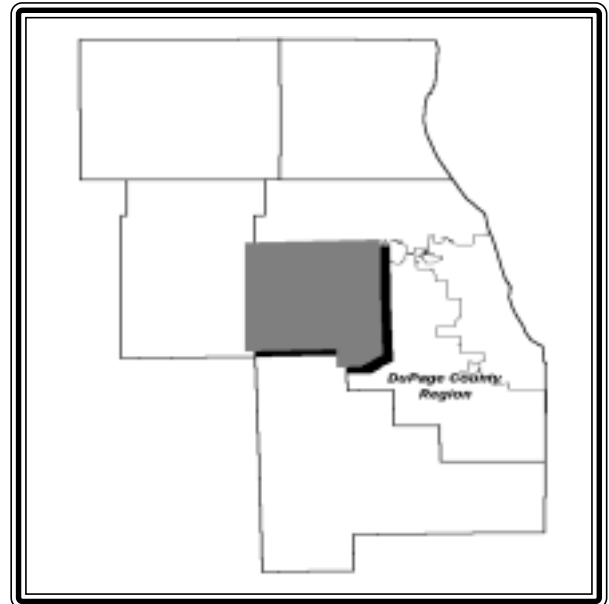
Although DuPage County is the most built-up county outside of Cook County, its population still grew nearly 16% from 1990 to 2000. More than 900,000 people, about a third of all collar-county residents, live in DuPage County. A once homogeneous population is now accented with diverse neighbors. Transportation options must diversity for meet new needs. The county was 15% minority in 2000, with communities like Addison, Oak Brook and Wood Dale having minority populations of 20-50%.

Residential areas in DuPage County are complemented by industrial centers, office parks, college and medical centers and shopping complexes. Proximity to O'Hare Airport has resulted in a very strong local economy. These assets, combined with natural landscapes and strong community fabric, contribute to DuPage County being a highly desirable place to live for those who hope to find the perfect balance between the convenience of a major city and a small-town atmosphere.

DuPage County was originally home to various Native American communities. Trappers and traders made up the first wave of Europeans in the early 1800s. Early American settlers came to the area in the first part of the 1830s and lived near present-day Naperville, DuPage County's oldest city. The farmland areas that dominated DuPage County at the turn of the last century have largely disappeared. The DuPage River bisects the county with two branches meandering through communities such as Warrenville, Downers Grove, Naperville, Wheaton, Lisle and Glen Ellyn. An extensive bicycle and pedestrian trail system that stretches through the county is another asset drawing visitors and residents to explore the beauty of the area and reminding us even now of the natural features that drew early settlers.

Who We Are and How We Travel

We came to the Connecting Communities Summit at the Wheaton Public Library with many different experiences. We included members of the disabled community, elected officials, concerned community members, environmental activists, senior citizens, and parents of young children.



We are walkers, car drivers, transit riders, and bicyclists. While some of us have special transportation needs and concerns, we all seek convenient, safe, and efficient alternatives to driving that will improve the environment and overall quality of life for our region.

Our group was slightly more female than male. Our ages ranged from young adults to the elderly, with most of the group between the ages of 31 and 50 and a fairly even breakdown of people in other age groups. The average household size in our group was 2.8 people per home. Like DuPage County, over three-quarters of summit attendees were white, with a variety of other racial/ethnic backgrounds represented. One quarter of summit participants had children under the age of 14 in their homes.

Almost nine in ten of our households have cars, with an average of two cars in those households. We average 4.7 transit trips per person per month. In January, we took 203 trips altogether. We also use our feet to get around. Those of us who walk regularly make an average of almost four trips per week. Driving alone is our primary means of getting around, and our next most likely mode of transportation is using a car with other people. Transit is our third most frequent mode of travel, followed by biking and then by walking. Sixty-five percent of our group has a bus stop within a mile of our homes while 51% of us have train service within a mile of our homes. Only 18% of us have transit frequency of more than twice an hour, which makes transit a less reliable mode for us. While we are currently car dependent, we came together at the summit to explore alternatives to auto use in our county. Improving public transportation was the top-ranked way that respondents would improve transportation in the region.

Challenges and Solutions

Increase transit connectivity and efficiency

We see a great need for transit service in our area to be enhanced. As citizens, it is our right to know about transit options and opportunities to make connections between transit services, yet our experience is that we are often in the dark about the availability of these resources. We would like to see better marketing and education by the transit agencies to make the public more aware of options to use transit. More signage and scheduling information (including accessible and audible information), as well as bus shelters, are simple steps that would be enormously helpful to us as transit users. We would chose to have our tax money invested in improved transit, rather than building new roads. Our roads are wide and easily accommodate our cars, but we would prefer to travel by other means than our personal vehicles. For those of us who do not have cars or do not drive because of age or physical ability, it is quite difficult to travel in our region.

The infrastructure for commuter rail connectivity is in place in our region, and is basically well structured for east-west travel. Properly planned transit stations are an asset to our downtowns, as they are a nucleus for businesses, shoppers, and employers. Transit stations have economic value

and also serve as a meeting point in our community; it is a top priority for us that planners recognize their worth. It is important to us to be able to access our jobs and other businesses through transit options. For many of us, mobility is limited on weekends, because of the lesser frequency of off-peak train service on most routes. We would like to see service become more frequent on many train lines in our region, including north-south connections. Transportation planners should also consider the possibility of improving connectivity in our region through a light rail system, an efficient and environmentally sound means of transportation.

Bus service improvements are needed as well. We need comfortable buses and better coordination with train service in route scheduling and frequency. We are discouraged from using buses by poor signage at bus stops that have no indications of the schedule. Having audible, accessible real-time information about bus service would be an excellent improvement to the convenience of the bus system in our area. Buses should run with greater frequencies on all routes, but especially in north-south routes connecting to train lines. It would be helpful to improve the Pace connections to O'Hare airport. Often, we are left standing on high-traffic streets, waiting for a bus without a bus shelter for protection.

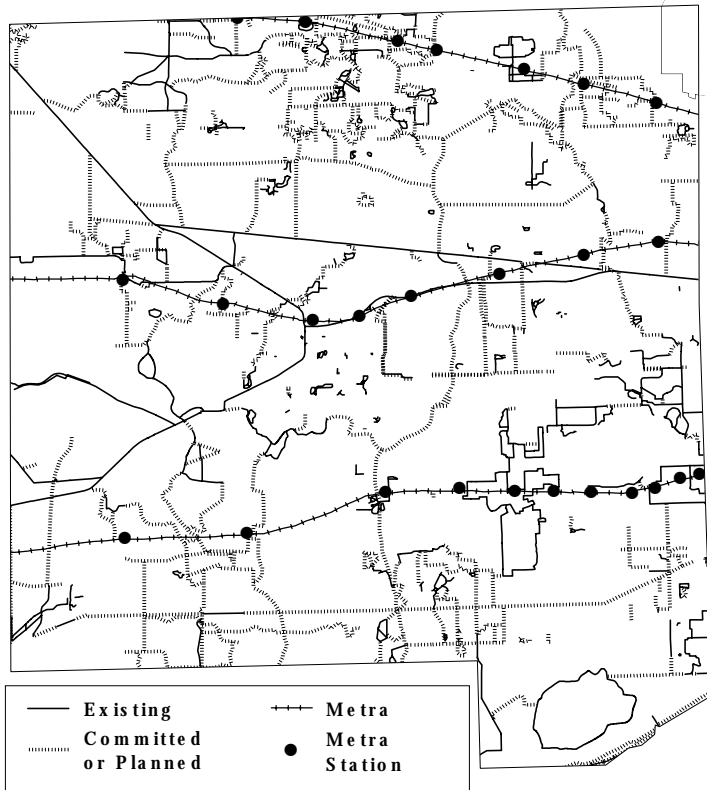
In our downtown areas, shuttle buses would be a good means of encouraging people to get out of their cars for short trips. Shuttle buses or municipal vanpools are an excellent investment to promote economic development in our downtowns since they could transport people quickly between popular destinations within short distances of each other. Naperville and the College of DuPage are particularly important locations for shuttle service.

Safety is an important concern

We are concerned about our safety as travelers in the county, both because of the dangers of driving and the threat that cars pose to us as bicyclists, pedestrians, children, and the disabled. Too often, sidewalks end in our neighborhoods with nowhere for the walker go but into the busy road itself. We are concerned that our children do not always have a safe means of travel. Bicyclists are constantly challenged to ride next to fast-moving traffic on roads without designated bike routes. It is difficult and frequently unsafe to go on a family bike ride,

since the routes are narrow if they exist at all in our neighborhoods. Safe pedestrian and bike connections to transit are important, to facilitate transit use. We propose that all new roads include transit lanes, sidewalks, and bike lanes. We place a high value on health in our community. It is unacceptable that traveling should create serious health and safety risks, whether by car, transit, bicycle or walking.

Rail/Trail Connections*



Environmental protection is crucial to us

We place a high priority on air and water quality, and all too often find them undermined by sprawling patterns of development. We are concerned by the health risks associated with air quality, such as asthma. We have a wonderful network of trails in our region that is one of our most precious assets. We refuse to have it compromised by shortsighted planning that might overlook it as a resource. We see the Grand Illinois trail that runs through DuPage County as a multipurpose resource for recreation and travel alike, which should be better connected to destinations and offer safe crossings at the roads in our county. It is important that our watersheds and our wildlife be protected. We do not want to see the small amount of agricultural and open land in our region turned into concrete or asphalt.

*Source: Chicago Area Transportation Study

Plan for the movement of people first

It is a top priority for the public to have a voice in the plans that are made locally and regionally. There should be more public outreach like that conducted this year by the Mayors' and Managers' Conference for the new Transit Plan. Neighborhoods should be walkable places. This will require changes to our roads; more sidewalks are needed alongside roads throughout DuPage county. Pedestrian signals are also needed at many intersections. Of particular note are the dangerous crossings along North Avenue, where bicyclists, students going to high school and pedestrians are all at risk in crossing dangerous intersections. Roosevelt Road and Butterfield Road also present difficult crossings. Many streets need lighting improvements, and the rights of pedestrians must be enforced as well so that we are not threatened while we are on foot. Snow removal crews should clear sidewalks and bus shelter areas so that they can be used year-round, just like the roads.

Opportunities for bicycling in our region should be encouraged, since bike transportation allows for both recreation and travel. We would like to see bike racks on buses and would like Metra to allow bikes on their trains. More bike routes are needed on both North-South and East-West thoroughfares. While our trail network is a good start, we would also like to see routes on Butterfield Road and on North Avenue. It is imperative to us that streets be designed so that all users of the roads are accommodated.

Our Vision

Planning in our region must be based upon convenient, safe, and efficient alternatives to driving. Transportation decisions affect our quality of life. Priority should be given to environmental protection as we plan our region's development. We envision transit that is reliable, comprehensive, and accessible to all people in DuPage County. Safety for drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, children, and the differently-abled is imperative in transportation planning and decision making. Public involvement in local and regional planning is an important means of making transportation plans reflect the needs of the citizens in our region. It is crucial to us that adequate funding be provided to meet our needs and our vision for transportation in our county.

Recommendations

Maximize use of transit. Increase service on existing trains to increase ridership, including weekend service. Integrate train and bus schedules to promote use. Build new accessible stations, especially in the western part of the county and where there are high employment concentrations, including County Farm Road (County Complex) and Ogden Avenue in Naperville. New and existing stations must have ADA curb cuts, telephones, bike racks, benches, audible signals and tactile warning strips on platform edges. Transit-oriented development should be encouraged with shops, dry cleaners, restaurants and restrooms near stations.

Create new and increased service to and between existing train lines and town centers by creative use of bus and shuttle routes. Emphasize north-south bus lines that create a predictable grid with train service, for instance I-59, Naperville Road, York Road. Develop shuttle service radiating out from the College of DuPage, linking with train and bus lines. Low-cost enhancements like signage, lighting and shelters at bus stops should be installed immediately. Other new service should include transit access to O'Hare, commuter service on the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern rail line, and exploration of the possibility of light rail and/or monorail in our county. Pace bus service is needed on Route 53.

Make our communities safe for all travelers. Sidewalks should receive the highest priority in DuPage County. Roads in our county should be adapted for pedestrian and bicycle use. Safe routes to schools and to places like the Morton Arboretum should be given attention first. The most dangerous routes, like North Avenue and Butterfield Road should be immediately retrofitted to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, with other roads to follow. Lighting and intersection improvements to enhance safety for pedestrians, including children, seniors and the disabled, and cyclists are an inexpensive and effective way to encourage healthy travel. Sidewalks and bike routes are a cost-effective investment. Reallocate road funds that would provide just a limited number of lane miles to build a comprehensive network of sidewalks and bike routes. The county and municipalities should adopt snow removal policies for all hard surfaced sidewalks or bike routes that equal or exceed the standard for roads.

Encourage and market the use of our trail system as a multi-use, multi-modal route that connects with other routes and modes. Emphasize the practical as well as recreational function of bike and pedestrian transportation modes. Link trails with train stations by providing cycling amenities at stations. Accommodate bicycles on Metra, but in space separate from the disabled seating.

Preserve and protect our environment. To address air and noise pollution problems, we feel that no new roads should be built in our area, although we would invest in grade separations to avoid congestion and poor air quality where rail lines and roads meet, especially Main Street in Wheaton, the Union Pacific crossing at Roosevelt Road in Glen Ellyn, Grace Street/St. Charles Road in Lombard and Belmont Road in Downers Grove. We would like to see alternative fuel buses used in our county. Priority should be given to maintaining the existing transportation infrastructure so that no further open land, prairies, farms, or wetlands are destroyed by new developments. Encourage the clustering of residential and commercial development around train stations to preserve open space and create transit-oriented development opportunities in our towns. Conduct a survey of parking to determine demand for additional parking at stations, but emphasize improving other modes of travel to stations to increase the supply of parking.

Use our taxes to give us choices. Transportation funds should be redirected to support public transit. It is more cost-effective to invest in pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation infrastructure than roads and our taxpayer money should support these uses, since they benefit us directly. Pedestrian safety should receive a substantial increase in funds to address a significant problem. These changes will require foresight in planning, and we expect our decision-makers to actively seek and respond to public input so that we can make responsible choices about growth in our region.

The DuPage County *Connecting Communities* summit participants came as individuals and as members of groups. The people who helped plan the summit came from the following groups:

Citizen Advocacy Center
DuPage Babysitting Co-op
Mothers and More
Illinois Prairie Path (IPPC)

Connecting Communities Regional Partners

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest
Chicago Design Consortium
Chicago Metropolis 2020
Chicago Rehab Network
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation
Citizen Action-Illinois
Council for Disability Rights
Environmental Law and Policy Center of the Midwest

Friends of the Chicago River
Independent Voters of Illinois-Independent Precinct Organization
Interreligious Sustainability Project
League of Women Voters of Illinois
Metro Seniors in Action
Metropolitan Planning Council
Mid America Institute on Poverty
Sierra Club
Sustain



The Citizen Transportation Plan is a project of the Chicagoland Transportation and Air Quality Commission, part of the Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2125 W. North Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, 773-278-4800, ext. 2030. Visit us on the web at www.cnt.org/2030.