



## **North Side College Preparatory High School Students Look to the Future**

North Side College Preparatory High School (NSCP) is bursting with youth, energy and high hopes. Its new facility, new staff and the students themselves personify the hopes we all have for a bright future. The Center for Neighborhood Technology's *Connecting Communities* summits are an exercise in looking systematically at the future, especially in the area of transportation and community-building. CNT was provided an opportunity to conduct an abbreviated summit at North Side College Preparatory High School. The results of this special session at the school are reported here.\*

The students at North Side College Preparatory High School come from all over the city but are predominantly North-siders. The school is very diverse but students had a common set of high expectations for themselves, their leaders and their communities. The students are eager to take a leadership role in transportation planning; "The public should be involved in local and regional planning" was the most highly ranked statement in the values section of the questionnaire.

The two classes that participated in the mini-summit were almost evenly divided between male and female students. Five of the students were Asian, five black, eight Hispanic, 18 white, and three categorized themselves as other/biracial.

Transit and "cars, with others" were the two most likely modes used by the students, with "walking" being the most frequently cited third choice mode. Some students walk as often as 10 and 20 times a week; others (nine others) make no trips on foot. Only two students say that their most likely choice right now is to bike, although nine others listed biking as a second or third choice. The flexibility to travel by multiple modes was valued very highly, second only to the concern about congestion.

Virtually all of the students lived near transit of one kind or another. Of the 25 students who used transit, the average number of trips last month was 32. Children under 14 in the students' families had very different travel-to-school patterns. Fifteen families drove their younger children to school, 10 families relied on bus service and in only two families did children walk to school.

NSCP students travel to a wide variety of places in the city and suburbs. Their reported destinations ranged from downtown Chicago to northern Lake County and from the lakefront to the west and northwest suburbs. Parks, zoos, sports stadiums, movie theaters and shopping areas were very popular destinations. The lakefront was a highly regarded destination.

\* At the invitation of Julie Peterson, Environmental Science teacher at NSCP, CNT staff conducted a mini-summit during two class periods on May 11, 2001, consisting primarily of a rapid version of the Transopoly game and the survey (which not all students were able to complete due to time constraints). Thirteen students from NSCP also attended the North Side *Connecting Communities* summit on May 19, 2001; some had participated in this mini-summit and some hadn't.

Safety, especially pedestrian and bike safety, were cited as issues for NSCP students and their families. Suggestions were made to slow traffic, create safer crossings and to provide more crossing guards. The lakefront was seen by many as needing more cycling and walking trails, as were the forest preserves. New bike routes and widened sidewalks were recommended for a variety of thoroughfares, including one recommendation to put bike lanes “everywhere.” The need to extend the lakefront bike path all the way to Evanston received multiple mentions.

Very innovative ideas were offered. NSCP students recommend moving parking off of streets to neighborhood parking lots to free a lane for exclusive bus use. New train service was desired, including a connector line between the Red and Blue Lines and a north-south route along Pulaski, as well as an Amtrak station in Rogers Park. New stations were also suggested at Kedzie (Metra), Foster (Blue Line) and Kedzie/Leland (Brown Line).

NSCP students also expressed some universal complaints: bus maintenance and bus bunching, pot hole repair, specific congestion points, and better parking enforcement topped the list. Using road medians for planters was questioned.

A good deal of emphasis was given to bus route expansion, usually framed as expanding service on existing routes. East-west bus routes were much more likely to be seen as candidates for increased service, with every major east-west route mentioned one or more time as needing more service. Bus-only lanes were recommended for Devon, Foster, Addison and Kimball. There were additional recommendations for more express bus service, more owl service and more rush hour service on some north-south lines.

Parking lots were seen by some as a way to entice drivers onto transit or to remove parked vehicles from potential bus routes. This recommendation spurred a lively and inconclusive debate between classmates about the environmental costs of parking lots.

New road lanes were seen as solutions to some congestion problems. Among the lane addition recommendations were: Lake Shore Drive (proposed extending the end point into the suburbs) and creating left turn lanes at some six-corner intersections.

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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](http://www.cnt.org/2030).