



SPECIAL REPORT
ADDENDUM TO THE
Central Neighborhoods of Chicago
Connecting Communities Summit

Latino Community Wants Transportation Changes to Reflect Ethnic and Cultural Background

The Latino community is a growing population in the region that needs better representation and a stronger voice and role in the transportation planning process. On Wednesday, August 7, 2002, residents of the predominantly Latino communities on Chicago's near west side gathered to discuss transportation and land use needs at the Telpochcalli School. The *Connecting Communities* mini-summit was cosponsored by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the Blue Line Transit Task Force and the Coalition for the Telpochcalli Community Education Project. Attendees envisioned a transportation system that would not only be efficient, safe and accessible, but would reflect their community's history and ethnic background.

The mini-summit format was modified slightly to accommodate the local partner's desire to focus on the economic development opportunities fostered by transportation investments. Attendees had the opportunity to indicate on maps where they would like to see new economic, housing and recreational or social center developments. This group recognized the potential for economic development and the impact that it would have on public transportation in the community. Two out of the top three highest-ranking recommendations for this community related to increased economic development as supporting transit and sound planning for transit stations to provide an economic asset to a community.

The group was comprised of 29 members representing the communities of Pilsen, North Lawndale, Little Village, the town of Cicero and the Illinois Medical District. In survey response, the group was split evenly between ten male and ten female attendees ranging in ages from 21 to 65.¹ Meeting attendees were predominantly Latino along with four black and one Native American attendee.

The meeting was conducted in both English and Spanish, with one main translator for the presentations and instructions as well as bilingual table facilitators. Monolingual Spanish speakers sat together at one table.

Attendees use all modes of transportation to move throughout their communities and the region. The most frequent destinations in the community include: schools, churches, movie theaters, businesses along 26th Street, Randolph Street, and Taylor Street, Douglas and Harrison Parks, the Mexican Consulate, Casa Aztlan, the Mexican Fine Arts Museum, University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Chicago Medical Center. Destinations outside the community include: Riverside and Ford Malls, Lake Michigan, the Loop, Chinatown, Greektown, Navy Pier, South Chicago, Hyde Park, O'Hare/Midway, Wicker Park, Oak Park, Cicero and various museums.

A primary obstacle to travel in this community was the lack of safety; poorly paved and ill-lit sidewalks and streets were cited as the main deficits. Attendees suggested better maintenance and repair of transit stations and bus stops would improve safety. Additionally, economic development near transit stations would decrease crime and make community members feel safe. The most frequently identified areas needing economic development are along two major east-west corridors: 18th Street, which runs in close proximity to the Cermak Blue Line rapid transit stations and Roosevelt Road, from Cicero to the west and Halsted to the east. New stores, groceries, service related stores and specialty shops were among suggestions of the types of economic development desired.

Other kinds of developments, including housing and social or recreational, were suggested to increase safety and connectivity in the community. Additional community center and park assets will increase local

¹ Twenty of 29 attendees completed surveys.

movement and community vitality. Some of the recreational developments included additional facilities in existing parks that would house shelters and grills for picnickers. Ideas included social service offices in major shopping centers as well as community centers near every Blue Line rapid transit station on the Cermak line and other major intersections throughout the community. Discussion for housing included suggestions for more housing that would have affordable units. In particular this group wanted to see more affordable housing for seniors.

Meeting attendees sought to solve several obstacles to travel in the community. They proposed that on weekends a corridor, 26th Street from Blue Island to 14th Street, be closed to auto traffic and open solely to pedestrians and bicycles. This concept was based on similar traditions in Latin American countries where streets and major boulevards are open only to pedestrian traffic. Increased pedestrian traffic would facilitate community connectivity and decrease crime. Sidewalks and bike lanes are the backbone of this project, the project calls for bike lanes and bike parking to be installed as well as sidewalk improvements along the 26th Street-Blue Island-14th Street corridor. To increase acceptance of the closing of this corridor, the suggestion was made to allow parking at the jail on weekends. Even though auto traffic would be prohibited, this proposal includes a shuttle bus that would be provided to increase accessibility to this corridor.

This community puts a high priority on neighborhoods that are both walkable and bikeable with particular emphasis on safety for children. For attendees with

children, 88 percent of respondents said that their children walk to school. Attendees ranked safety and mobility for children as the second priority for improving travel in the region. In addition, improving bike access and pedestrian access were in the top four ranked responses. Attendees also wanted to see more attention paid to building and maintaining sidewalks in this community.

Attendees ranked transit as the most frequently used mode of getting around and a vital part of this community's transportation system. Eighty percent of the attendees said that they had a bus stop near their home. Improving bus access and service to this community is crucial for maintaining this primary mode of travel. More frequent service was consistently suggested for improving existing bus service. Heavy priority for increased service was suggested on: #82 Kimball/Homan, #18 16th/18th, #54 Cicero, #37 Sedgwick/Ogden, #53 Pulaski, #12 Roosevelt and #49 Western. Attendees also noted that more frequent service was needed on other routes, including: #94 South California, #54 Cicero, #50 Damen, #37 Sedgwick/Ogden and #49 Western.

This community is aware of the importance of transportation and its relationship to economic vitality. Transportation recommendations were made with housing, social, and economic developments in mind. Improved transit service to jobs and connectivity with other neighboring communities and the rest of the region is highly desirable. This community's vision emphasizes connecting neighborhoods with sidewalks and bike lanes as well as increasing transit service, thereby improving safety and mobility for all.

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 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.