



**SPECIAL REPORT**  
ADDENDUM TO THE  
The South Side of Chicago  
*Connecting Communities Summit*

## **South Shore High School Students: Increasing Mobility to Enhance Their Futures**

Future leaders in the South Shore community gathered at South Shore High School\* on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2002 to outline their vision for community mobility. Eleven freshmen and sophomores and two City Year Chicago volunteers participated in creating this vision. Participants clearly understood the way transportation affects their community's well-being. South Shore mini-summit attendees were ready to fully engage themselves in designing plans to promote safe, accessible and reliable transportation. Students at South Shore High School are predominately Black, as is the surrounding community. Of the thirteen mini-summit participants, 10 were Black, one was Hispanic and two were White.

Attendees had a broad vision to improve many aspects of the community. The importance of access to jobs was a major theme. Concerns for the safety of pedestrians, public transit riders and automobile users were raised. Moving people safely at all hours of the day in all neighborhoods via foot, bike, public transit or automobile needs to be addressed. Alleys are particularly dangerous because of obstructed vision and automobiles traveling at high speeds. The environment was also a primary concern. Air and water quality could be improved if more people had an opportunity to choose between different modes of transportation, including cleaner modes like walking and biking. Students noted the varying levels of transit service on Chicago's South Side. Better connections between different types of transit would reduce total travel time and increase safety levels for everyone, especially youth who need the option to travel independently. Participants suggest all of these themes be considered when developing transportation plans.

Public transit was reported as the most frequently used method of getting around. Traveling in a car with others and walking were the next most likely ways South Shore students travel. Most respondents did not have a drivers' license, so driving alone was not an option. While some enjoy bicycling, it was one of the least used methods. Mini-summit participants mentioned poor cycling conditions as the main reason for not biking more frequently. Four respondents walk on a daily basis to do their errands.

All of the participants indicated a bus stop located near their home, and 38% have nearby train service. Living near transit stations did not ensure adequate service. About half of the respondents reported low service frequency with four respondents reporting service once an hour and three had service less than once an hour. In the previous month, seven attendees took transit logging a total of 349 trips. At that level of use, regular transit users average 50 trips per month. Average household size was 4.6 persons; eight households included children under the age of fourteen. Three-quarters of these younger children walk to school.

Mini-summit participants often visit Ford City Mall, Evergreen Plaza, the McDonald's at 79th & Phillips, South Shore High School and neighborhood parks. The area near the Belmont El station and downtown locations such as the Sears Tower and Navy Pier are also frequented. Students were well aware of the relationship between service and accessibility on the South Side and the need for better access to jobs in other parts of the region. Transportation could also promote economic development in South Side communities that lack jobs. Participants voiced the need to increase the overall bus service and extend service hours on the South Side.

\* South Shore High School, at 7529 South Constance Avenue, is one of the schools selected by the Board of Education for the new "Small Schools" initiative.

Bus service improvements were suggested specifically for South Cicero Avenue and the Jeffrey Express bus routes. Overall safety was a major concern, especially when using the CTA Elevated lines at night. Poor station conditions and lack of lighting discourage some from using the El after 10 p.m.

To promote job access and economic growth, as well as better connectivity, new stations were suggested. Recommended stations included new stops on the Metra Southwest at 55<sup>th</sup> Street/Kedzie Avenue, 90<sup>th</sup> Street/Pulaski Road and on the Metra Rock Island at 111<sup>th</sup> Street/Ashland Avenue. The Orange Line should also be connected to the Ford City Mall to promote economic and leisure activities. Creating new transfer points between the Metra and the El would significantly increase mobility, access to jobs and entertainment opportunities.

Strong interest was shown in bicycling, for recreation and for purposeful travel. The severe lack of biking infrastructure seriously inhibits the safe and easy passage of bike patrons. Pullman, South Shore, Kenwood, Avalon Park and Morgan Park are some of the communities targeted by meeting attendees for increased bike mobility. Students felt that bicycling could be encouraged at South Shore High School and George Washington Elementary School if the biking environment was improved. Adding more pedestrian features and improving existing sidewalks in Chatham and throughout neighborhoods on the South Side would raise the level of travel independence for students. Lakefront sidewalk improvement and upgrading the

entire sidewalk network is essential to promote healthy, active and safe lifestyles.

Traffic delays, potholes, careless drivers and construction were some of the complaints associated with roads. Public health and safety are concerns because of careless drivers and the lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Students suggested road improvement strategies to stop gridlock. The immediate repair of potholes in the Roseland community and also specifically on Stony Island Avenue is advised. Attendees would also like to see vanpools for Stony Island Avenue as a means of alleviating congestion. Trolleys should also be available to encourage free movement between Hyde Park and East Side. Suggestions to build a parking structure at the South Shore Hospital would decrease parking tension and gridlock for the South Shore community. Park and ride lots near the 95<sup>th</sup> Street station of the Red Line and also in the Lake Calumet region near to the Metra Electric District Pullman/111<sup>th</sup> Street station would promote transit ridership and also decrease congestion.

The South Shore mini-summit participants are confident their ideas will improve their community. They hope to see better access to all modes of transportation in order to move freely and decrease environmental impacts. Safety, increased reliability and cleaner conditions are important parts of transportation planning. A need for new options to reach jobs and internships, as well as a desire for more open space, steered participants to develop mobility plans to enhance their present lives and future opportunities.

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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).