



Elections Advocacy in Chicago's Suburbs

Elections provide a unique opportunity to educate decision makers and the general public about the role active transportation can play in making our communities healthier, cleaner, and more economically vibrant. Use the resources and seven steps below to engage elected officials and candidates across all levels of government during election cycles as a way to push forward your campaign to improve local walking, biking, and transit options.

1. Get to know your local elected officials

- a. All levels (municipal, county, state, federal) play a role in transportation issues
- b. Local elected officials have the most direct control of streets and trail in your town
- c. LOOK UP the names and backgrounds of your elected officials if you're not already familiar
- d. SIGN UP for newsletters and other communications from their offices
- e. SHOW UP at town halls, regular meetings, and other events where you can have direct contact
- f. FOLLOW your officials on social media and interact when appropriate
- g. CONNECT with people in your town interested in working with you to engage elected officials on transportation issues

2. Get familiar with the elections calendar

- a. Levels of government have different election cycles
- b. Map out primary and general election dates for the next two years
- c. Prioritize engagement based upon your ability to make an impact and the competitiveness of the race

3. Develop a platform

- a. Work with allies to develop 3-5 positions about local transportation issues and projects
- b. Elected officials you're targeting should have ability to affect change on these issues
- c. Issues should affect multiple modes of transportation (not just bikes)
- d. Focus on positions with broad appeal (e.g. safety, access to jobs, economic development, etc.)
- e. Position should urge specific action on a defined timeline
- f. Secure support for positions from other local organizations and leaders (e.g. chambers of commerce, community organizations)
- g. Share platform with local media
- h. See below under 'Resources' for a sample platform that you can use and adapt

4. Develop candidate questionnaires

- a. Use platform to develop 6-8 questions on your issues
- b. Goal is to get candidates on the record in support of your goals

- c. Keep questions succinct, clear; multiple choice with option for comments is preferred
- d. See below under 'Resources' for a sample questionnaire that you can use and adapt

5. Connect with candidates

- a. Share the questionnaire with all candidates; set a deadline for responses (at least two weeks before Election Day)
- b. Publish responses online and share with your network and local media
- c. Ask questions at debates, forums, and other candidate events
- d. Allow additional candidates to respond
- e. Consider requesting meetings with candidates or hosting a forum if you have the capacity

6. Follow up during the transition

- a. Request meetings with winning candidates
- b. Connect with relevant staff and begin developing relationships
- c. Secure commitments to follow through on issues discussed during campaign

7. Stay in contact

- a. Stay in touch with officials throughout their time in office
- b. Request meetings around specific issues and projects as key decisions approach
- c. Show up at meetings, town halls, and other events to interact with officials
- d. Follow officials on social media, review newsletters and other communications

Resources

Sample Platforms & Questionnaires: activetrans.org/bikewalkeverytown

Suburban Election Advocacy Platform:

<http://www.activetrans.org/sites/files/BWETSuburbanElectionAdvocacyPlatform.pdf>

Local Candidate Questionnaire:

<http://www.activetrans.org/sites/files/BWETSuburbanLocalCandidateQuestionnaire.pdf>

2018 Illinois Sustainable Transportation Platform:

<https://tinyurl.com/2018ILStatePlatform>

2018 Gubernatorial Questionnaire Responses:

<http://activetrans.org/blog/see-where-candidates-governor-stand>

Strong Towns: 10 questions to ask someone running for local office

www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/1/3/10-questions-to-ask-someone-running-for-local-office

Where your elected official receives donations

www.elections.il.gov/CampaignDisclosure/ContributionsSearchByCandidates.aspx

Online voter registration

ova.elections.il.gov/ or www.elections.il.gov/votinginformation/register.aspx