



Photo: John Greenfield

Bikeways for All

ENVISIONING CHICAGO'S BIKE NETWORK



ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE

Our Vision for Chicago's Bike Network

In recent years, bicycling in Chicago has been transformed from a fringe activity to a mainstream mode of transportation, opening up the benefits of biking to more Chicagoans than ever before. Since 2000, the number of people biking in the city roughly tripled, with an average of 125,000 bike trips happening each day¹.

Since our founding as Chicagoland Bicycle Federation thirty years ago, the Active Transportation Alliance has been leading the fight for better bicycling. During the 2011 Chicago mayoral campaign, Active Trans and a coalition of allies released a Sustainable Transportation Platform, which asked candidates to support a 100-mile network of protected bike lanes. After the election, newly-elected Mayor Rahm Emanuel included this goal in his official transition report.

In December 2012, responding to the mayor's challenge, the City of Chicago released the first ever citywide vision for a complete bike network. The *Streets for Cycling 2020* plan proposed a 645-mile network of streets for biking, as well as proposals for possible types of bike lanes that could be installed on those streets. This plan was developed through extensive community engagement; Active Trans worked directly with the city to support this outreach process.

Chicago recently completed its 100th mile of advanced bike lanes since 2011. We're excited that Chicago has emerged as a national leader, but we know that our metamorphosis into a world-class bike city remains incomplete. Too few people have access to high-quality bikeways that provide low-stress routes for people with a wide range of individual skill and comfort levels.

Bikeways for All seeks to bridge the gap between where we are and where we need to be by laying out a vision for a seamless, equitable and low-stress bike network made up of on-street bikeways and new off-street trails.

Bikeways for All proposes 180 miles of new low-stress biking routes that prioritize three types of facilities: Protected Bike Lanes, Neighborhood Greenways and Urban Trails. We envision 100 additional miles of these new Protected Bike Lanes and Neighborhood Greenways by 2020 as well as concrete progress on the urban trail projects included here.

Today, outside of downtown, only one third of Chicagoans on the South, West, and North Sides live within one quarter mile of a low-stress bikeway. Implementing *Bikeways for All* would bring 80 percent of Chicago residents within one quarter mile of these high-quality bikeways.

Protected Bike Lanes



Because *Bikeways for All* recommends bikeway designs that are comfortable and lower-stress for people of all abilities, it excludes Chicago's older-style, "conventional" bike lanes that are generally two solid white lines 3 to 4 feet apart on the right side of the road. We also exclude many streets that are solely marked with chevrons and bike symbols ("sharrows") that encourage people driving to share the road. Since many people are uncomfortable riding on streets with these treatments, we know that these types of bike routes have missed the mark when it comes to spurring new riders.

Most of the routes and projects in *Bikeways for All* are already proposed in Chicago's 645-mile *Streets for Cycling 2020 Plan*. *Bikeways for All* identifies which of these routes should be prioritized and built next, along with recommended bikeway designs, based on the input and priorities of Active Trans members, supporters and community partners.

These are the types of routes we propose:

Protected Bike Lanes: Low-stress bike corridors on key streets between neighborhoods that use physically protected bike lanes to create an experience similar to riding on an off-street trail.

- **By 2020:** Continue installation of Protected Bike Lanes that physically separate people biking from car traffic. Pilot bike-only lanes on heavily used bike routes, like Milwaukee Avenue
- **Long Term Goal:** Complete Protected Bike Lanes network with high-quality physical separation.

Neighborhood Greenways: Local networks of well-marked routes on quiet neighborhood streets optimized for bikes with pavement markings and other treatments, like curb bump-outs and contraflow lanes.

- **By 2020:** Accelerate installation of Neighborhood Greenways and complete examples of local Greenways networks
- **Long Term Goal:** Working with alderman, residents and other stakeholders, develop and implement local Neighborhood Greenway plans for every community.

Neighborhood Greenways



Photo: <http://chicago47.org>

Urban Trails



Photo: Jeff Banowitz

Urban Trails: A connected network of off-street paths along the lakefront, Chicago River, abandoned rail lines and other corridors that provides the ultimate low-stress biking experience for people of any age or skill level.

- **By 2020:** Clear progress on proposed trail projects, such as New ERA trail, Paseo, Chicago River, Weber Spur and others.
- **Long Term Goal:** Develop and implement plan for citywide trail network, including a Chicago River Trail linking north, south and downtown.

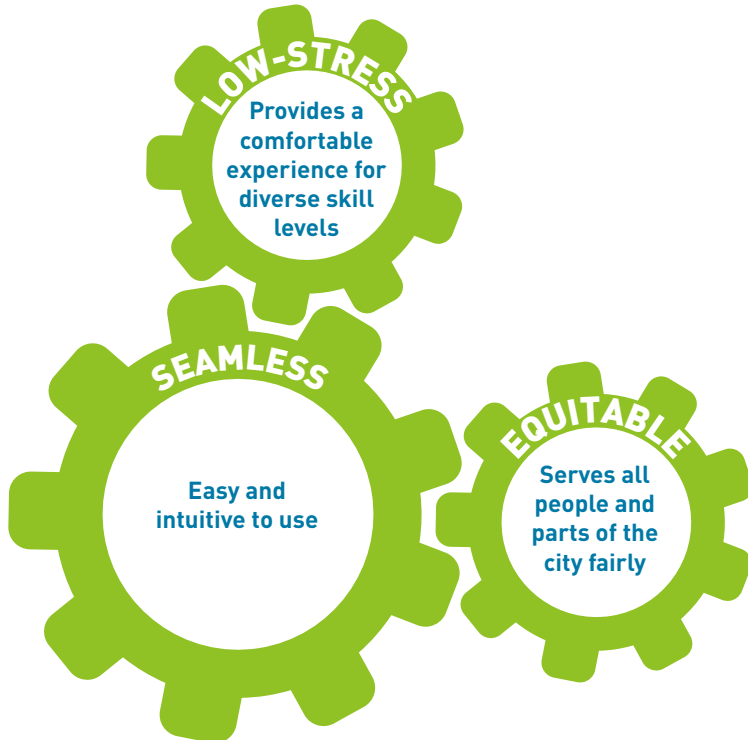
These are big goals and it will take aggressive and consistent advocacy across local, county and state government to make them happen. *Bikeways for All* is intended as a resource for advocates and community members to engage decision makers in the work of making the benefits of biking available to all.

HOW BIKEWAYS FOR ALL WAS DEVELOPED

Our intention with this report is not to supplant the work of Chicago's hard working transportation planners, but rather to celebrate and supplement it with feedback and input from the people of Chicago. This includes people who ride bikes, but also our allies such as local community leaders, educators, housing advocates and small business owners.

Over six months, Active Trans engaged hundreds of people in the process of developing this report. We hosted two workshops, one at the beginning and one at the end of the process, with an intentionally cultivated cross-section of community stakeholders from a wide range of neighborhoods, backgrounds and affiliations. We also conducted an online survey, developed collaboratively with workshop participants that garnered more than 700 responses. Input from the workshop and survey was combined with more technical analysis to generate our vision for the future of Chicago's bike network, which was then reviewed once more by key stakeholders before being published here.

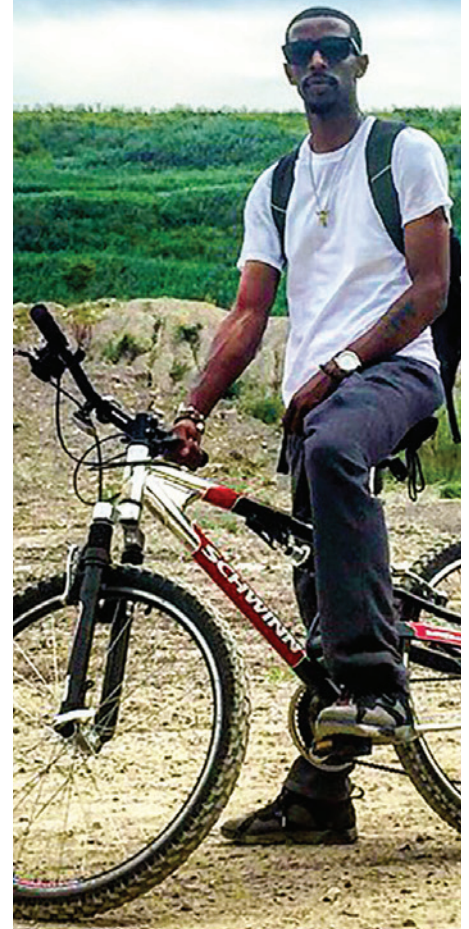
Principles guiding *Bikeways for All*



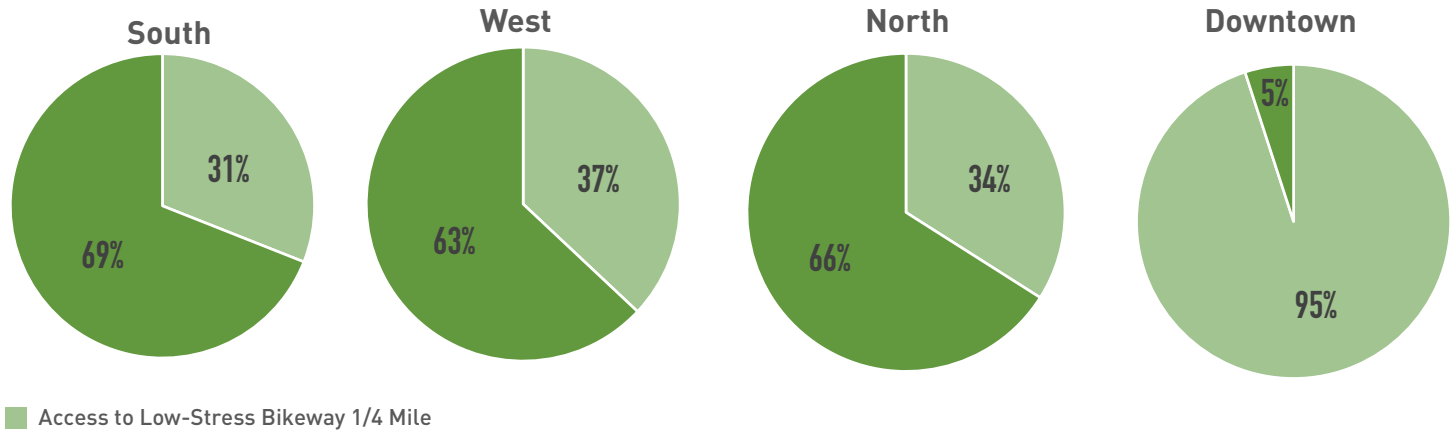
Bikeways for All will take you from wherever you are to wherever you want to go without exposing you to unsafe or stressful conditions at any point on your trip. The network is easy to navigate, goes everywhere and is comfortable for everyone.

"A bike-friendly neighborhood ushers in a new culture in the neighborhood. It will usher in health awareness, community activism, participation and I think that it will also strengthen partnerships in the community."

– David Peterson, Executive Director, A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porters Museum



Access to 'Low-Stress' Bikeways by Region

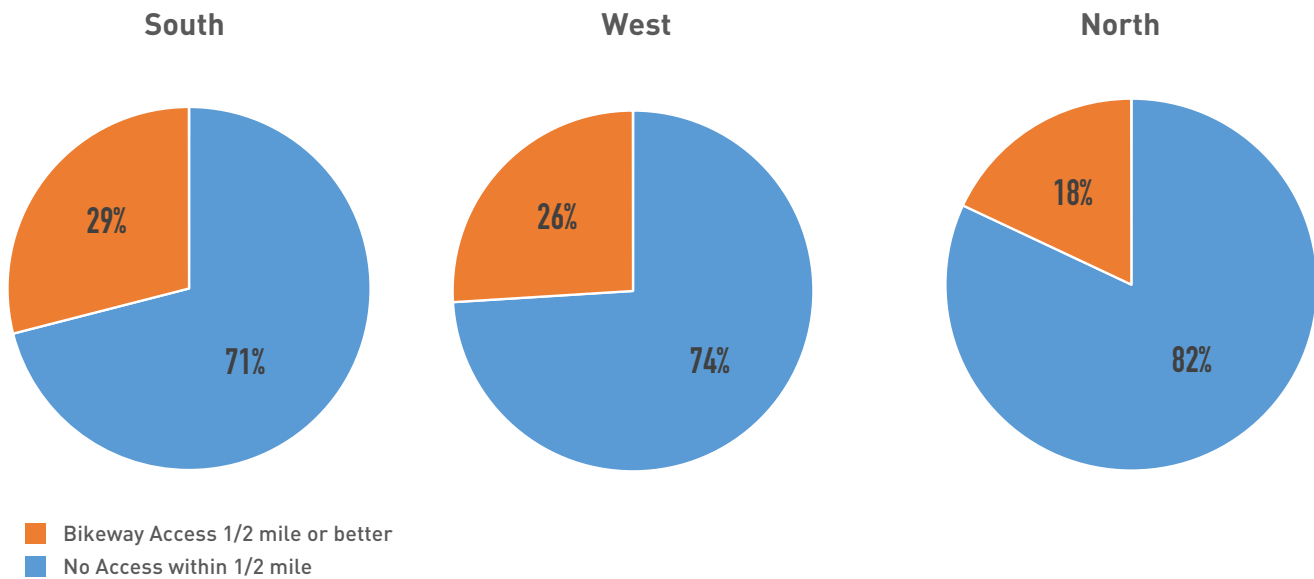


The Problem: Few Chicagoans have access to good bikeways

No big city has done more in recent years than Chicago to encourage more people to use bikes for everyday transportation. Thanks to visionary leadership, there are examples of high-quality bike routes across Chicago, such as the Clybourn Avenue Protected Bike Lane, the Berteau Neighborhood Greenway and the 606 Urban Trail.

Despite an impressive evolution, the bikeways network remains disconnected (see Existing Routes Map in appendix). Studies have shown people are more likely to ride a bike when a bike lane is a one-quarter mile away,¹¹ but, outside of the downtown core, **only about one third of Chicagoans live within one quarter mile of a low-stress bike route.**

Many Chicagoans have no access to any type of bikeway near their home



A high-level review shows relative parity in terms of the percentage of people in each part of the city that have access to **low-stress bike routes**. However, if we look at the proportion of the population with no access to **any bikeways**, including conventional bike lanes and sharrows, we see some differences emerge across the geographic regions.

Specifically, a greater proportion of people on the South and West Sides live further than one-half mile from any bikeway when compared to people on the North side. Multiple factors may be contributing to this finding, including lower population densities on the South and West Sides, larger geographic areas and different land use patterns.

Regardless of the underlying cause, these results point to the fact that Chicago's many diverse communities face unique challenges to becoming bike friendly and addressing those challenges will require local solutions.

Already, the city is proactively taking steps in this direction as indicated by Chicago Department of Transportation's announcement of a new community-based implementation planning process for the South and West Sides at the June 2015 meeting of the Mayor's Bicycle Advisory Council.



Photo: CDOT

The Solution: *Bikeways for All*

Bikeways for All envisions a seamless system of accessible low-stress bikeways throughout the city that would bring high-quality bikeways to within one quarter mile of 80 percent of Chicago residents.

In order to create a tangible vision of this goal, we embarked upon a community-led process to identify priorities for on-street bike lanes and new off-street urban trails, like the 606 and Lakefront Trail. Our goal was to create a vision for the bike network Chicago could have in the near future if we build upon the strong foundation that has emerged in recent years.

Bikeways for All proposes 180 miles of new low-stress bike routes, which includes upgrades to 91 miles of existing bike routes (see Proposed Routes Map in appendix). Many of these routes have previously been proposed in *Streets for Cycling Plan 2020* and elsewhere.

When these proposed routes are combined with the existing high-quality bike lanes (see Network Vision Map in appendix), an inspiring vision of an achievable, well-connected bike network emerges. **If all of the routes in *Bikeways for All* are completed, 80 percent of Chicagoans will live within one quarter mile of a low-stress bike route.**

Our network vision provides a robust scenario for a prioritized build-out of bikeways. Going forward, some of our recommended routes could be replaced with other routes within Chicago's Streets for Cycling plan after further analysis and public input.

Bikeways for All consists of three key elements: Protected Bike Lanes, Neighborhood Greenways and Urban Trails. Our goal is to see 100 total miles of improvements on streets proposed for Protected Bike Lanes and Neighborhood Greenways by 2020 as well as concrete progress on the Urban Trail projects



Spotlight Projects

Here are a few examples of the types of game changing projects envisioned in *Bikeways for All*.

- **Chicago River Trail:** The Chicago River is the region's original transportation corridor. As efforts continue to open up the river as a recreational and cultural destination, including projects like the downtown Riverwalk and southern extension of the North Branch Trail, a true Chicago River Trail connecting North and South Sides to downtown is an idea worthy of more focused study and planning.
- **Belmont Avenue East-West Connection:** Many of Chicago's neighborhoods are cutoff from one another by natural and human-made barriers, including expressways, train tracks, and Chicago's rivers and waterways. Providing a low-stress connection on Belmont Avenue that safely and easily carries people on bike past obstacles like the Kennedy Expressway and the North Branch of the Chicago River is an example of the type of barrier-crossing route many parts of the city would benefit from.
- **Milwaukee Avenue bike-only lanes:** The city should explore creative ideas such as bike-only lanes that re-program streets to meet extra demand for biking. Milwaukee Avenue through Wicker Park is a place to explore such an innovation because it has high bike traffic and the street is currently too narrow to accommodate quality bike lanes.
- **Big Marsh and Lake Calumet Access:** New park developments in the Lake Calumet region on the Far South Side, including an eco-recreation park at Big Marsh, create exciting new destinations that will need to be connected to Chicago's bike network. In *Bikeways for All*, we include recommendations for on-street and off-street access to the Big Marsh site.

Bikeways Costs

It is important to view the cost of improving bikeways as a strategic investment in the future of our city. Today, the Chicago Department of Transportation spends less than 0.5 percent of its budget on bike improvements on our streets, and much of this has been funded with federal dollars.

Section Two will delve into just some of the many documented economic benefits to individuals and communities when people ride bikes.

How we developed our network vision

The *Streets for Cycling Plan 2020* provides us with a strong plan for a complete on-street bike network. Our task was to work with our members, supporters and allies to determine what projects we thought should be prioritized within the city's existing plans and to fill in any remaining gaps.

To do this, we first gathered a diverse cross section of neighborhood leaders, community based organizations, bicycle advocates and transportation professionals to develop a set of criteria we thought should be used to determine priority projects in the *Streets for Cycling Plan 2020*. Criteria included factors such as providing connections to important destinations, linking to existing bike lanes and trails, and providing bike lanes in low and moderate income communities.

This list was turned into an online survey, where more than 700 people helped rank the relative importance of these various factors. Based on these results, we were able to take some of the factors, and using geo-spatial software, develop a "score" for the routes in *Streets for Cycling 2020 plan* that have not yet been built. This analysis yielded an initial map, which was then fine-tuned and revised by Active Trans staff and our working group of community members, before being published here.

Top 5 Priorities for New Bikeways – Active Trans Survey Results

1. Routes that will provide connections across major barriers to bicycling, such as expressways, railroads and rivers
2. Routes in areas with a high number of traffic crashes involving people riding bikes
3. Routes that will connect to other existing bike routes, such as on-street bike lanes and off-street trails
4. Routes that connect to key destinations, such as transit stations, schools, parks, libraries, jobs and shopping
5. Routes that provide connections between neighborhoods, such as across major streets.

Top 5 Destinations for Bike Trips – Active Trans Survey Results

- Work/office
- Neighborhood retail/shopping
- Lakefront/Lakefront Trail
- Grocery stores
- Downtown/Loop

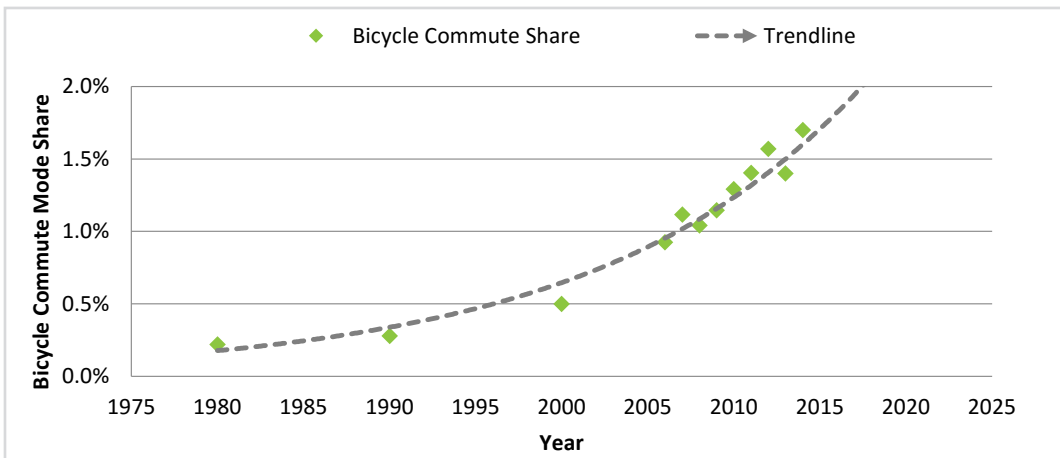
Why *Bikeways for All* Matters in Chicago

A vision for the future of Chicago's bikeways matters because thousands of Chicagoans are already using bikes to get around, and this is a positive trend we should encourage and cultivate.

PEOPLE ARE BIKING IN CHICAGO TODAY

Thousands of people use bikes as transportation every day, and many of them are forced to contend with unsafe and stressful conditions on the street. Since 2000, the number of people riding bikes has tripled. An estimated 125,000 bike trips happen each day in Chicago.

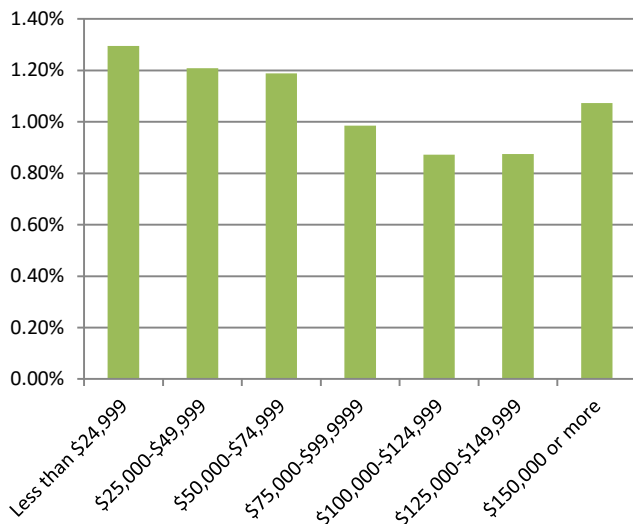
Chicago Bicycle Commute Mode Share Trends



“Bikes improve city life by equalizing access to public facilities and transit, boosting physical health, and minimizing environmental impact. The single greatest obstacle to biking is safety, and bike lanes are a key part of ensuring security for bikers.”

– *Active Trans survey response*

Chicago Bicycle Commute Mode Share by Income Group (ACS CTPP 2006-2010)



On average, about 1,500 people riding bikes are seriously injured in Chicago each year. As the number of people riding bikes has grown, this number has remained relatively flat, but it is unacceptably high and contributes to the perception that cycling is a dangerous activity, discouraging some people from using bikes as transportation.

When considering why biking matters for our city, it is also critical to remember that for a variety of reasons many people have no other choice but to get around on a bicycle. In Chicago, low- and moderate-income people use bikes slightly more than affluent individuals (see left). In addition to making the benefits of biking broadly available to all, we must not forget the urgent task of meeting the needs of people who bike because no alternative exists.

Our car-oriented lifestyle has led to many problematic and unintended consequences for our bodies, our planet and our economy. Along with walking and public transit, biking is a key tool in our toolbox of strategies to reduce our reliance on personal cars to get around.

Experience in Chicago and across the globe has shown when we build infrastructure that makes biking safe, convenient and easy, more people will use bikes as day-to-day transportation, contributing to the development of healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sustainable communities.

For example, Chicago's first protected bike lane on Kinzie Street increased ridership by 55 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ Likewise, the National Institute for Transportation and Communities found that 99 percent of cyclists on Dearborn Street and 96 percent of cyclists on Milwaukee Avenue feel that bicycle safety has increased since the introduction of protected bike lanes.^{iv} Clearly, providing better infrastructure for biking is the most effective way to get more people to use bikes as transportation.

BUT WHY IS MORE BIKING A GOOD THING FOR CHICAGO?

- **Cars are expensive and put a strain on household budgets.** On average, owning a car costs households more than \$8,000 per year, while bikes only cost an estimated \$300.^{vi} More transportation options like biking can save families serious money.
- **For local retailers, bike friendly is business friendly.** On Milwaukee Avenue in Chicago, 22 percent of cyclists claimed that due to the installation of the protected bike lane, they now stop at shops and businesses on the street more often.^{vii}
- **People who bike are healthier and more productive.** People who bike regularly use up to 32 percent fewer sick days, 55 percent have lower health costs, and can increase work productivity up to 52 percent.^{viii}
- **More biking, less pollution.** Transportation accounts for 21 percent of CO2 emissions. If 5 percent of trips in Chicago were by bicycle, we would eliminate 145 million pounds of CO2 emissions.^{ix}

As these facts demonstrate, getting more people to use bikes as transportation contributes to solving many of the toughest economic, health and environmental challenges we face.

"Studies of commercial districts in San Francisco and Toronto show that on average, cyclists spend more time per trip at businesses, visit more local businesses and spend more money than drivers do. Perhaps because they're not rushing out to pay a parking meter or look for a parking space, but can leisurely enjoy their visit."

— Kelli Wefenstette, Executive Director, Six Corners Association



WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

SET A HIGHER BAR

As advocates, our role is to fight for the positive changes we want to see in our city. Whenever we reach one milestone, our job is to ask: what's next? As we celebrate the great strides made by the city of Chicago, Chicago Park District, Illinois Department of Transportation and other public entities that work on our streets and trails, we believe the time has come to challenge ourselves with bolder and more aggressive goals.

We will use *Bikeways for All* as a new benchmark to evaluate progress towards the goal of making Chicago the most bike-friendly big city.

START A CONVERSATION

Our hope is not to present a static vision for Chicago's bike network. We want to start a conversation with people across the

city and work together to reimagine our neighborhoods and how we navigate them.

We will use *Bikeways for All* as a framework to tell the story of how biking is transforming in Chicago and why it matters across our diverse communities.

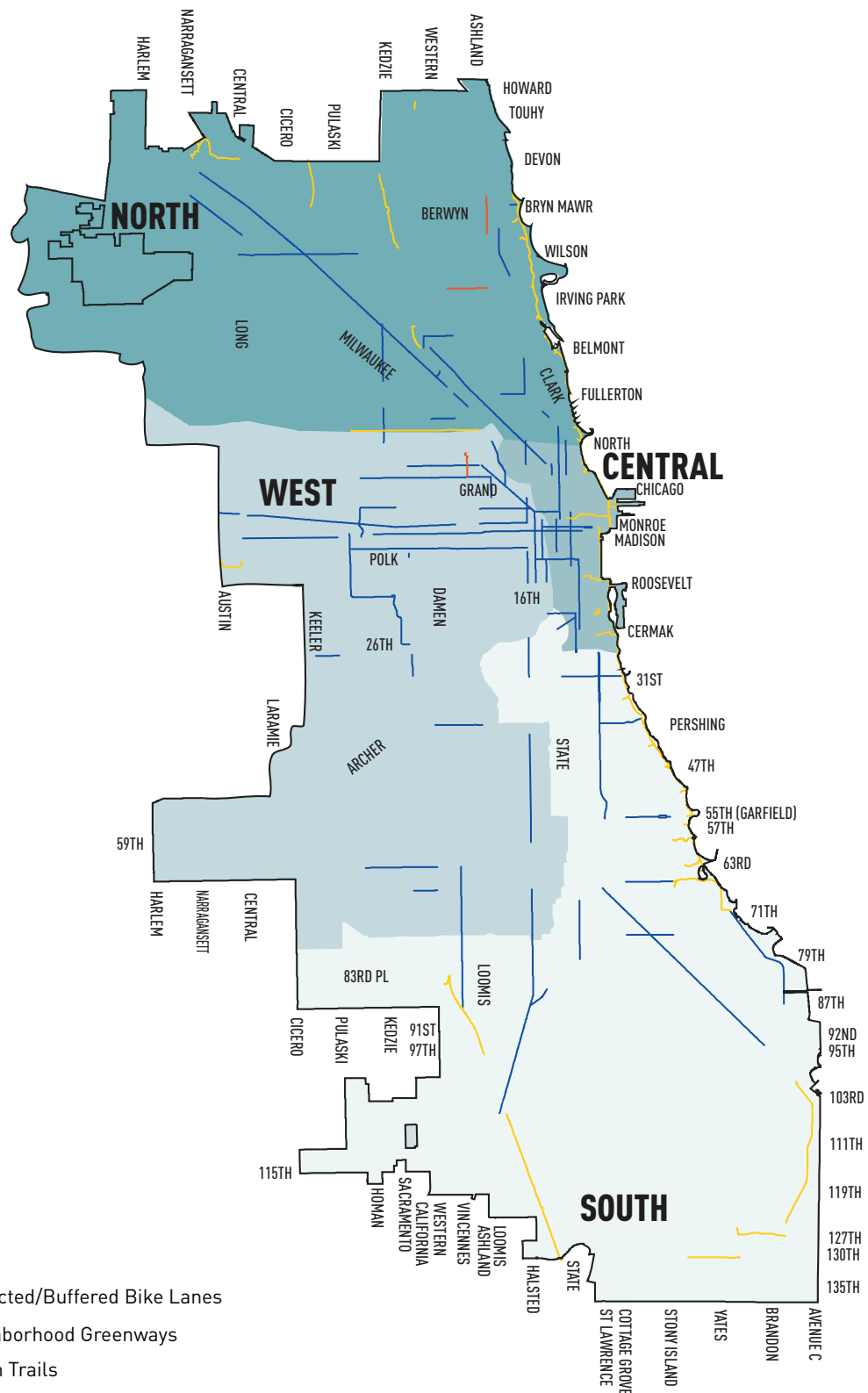
BUILD OUR MOVEMENT

None of what is included in *Bikeways for All* is achievable without political will generated by engaged residents. Having a clear vision of what we hope to achieve will enable us to connect with new leaders who share our goals.

We will use *Bikeways for All* as an organizing tool to engage community leaders and groups and develop shared goals and opportunities for collaboration.

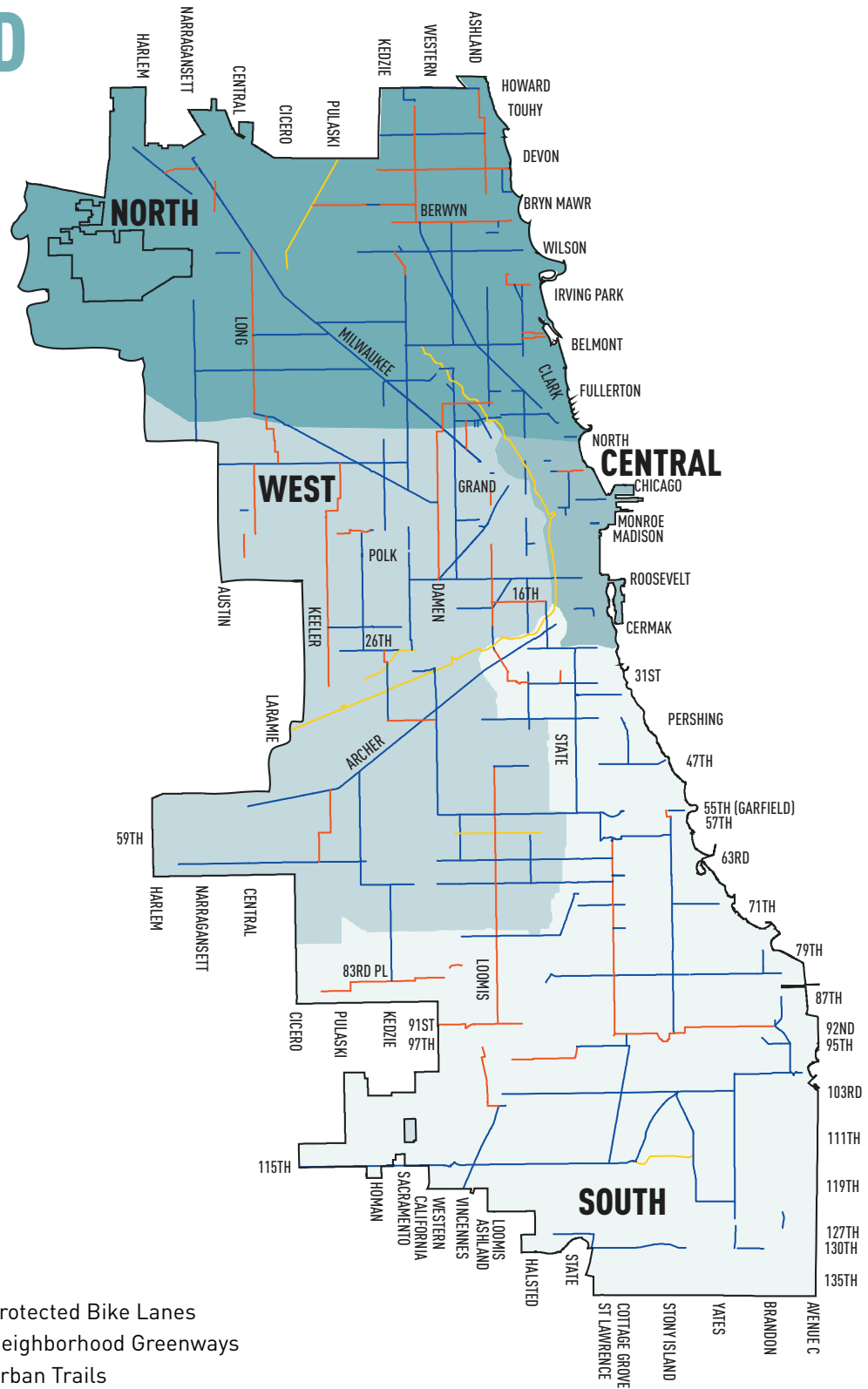


EXISTING ROUTES



- Existing Protected/Buffered Bike Lanes
- Existing Neighborhood Greenways
- Existing Urban Trails

PROPOSED ROUTES



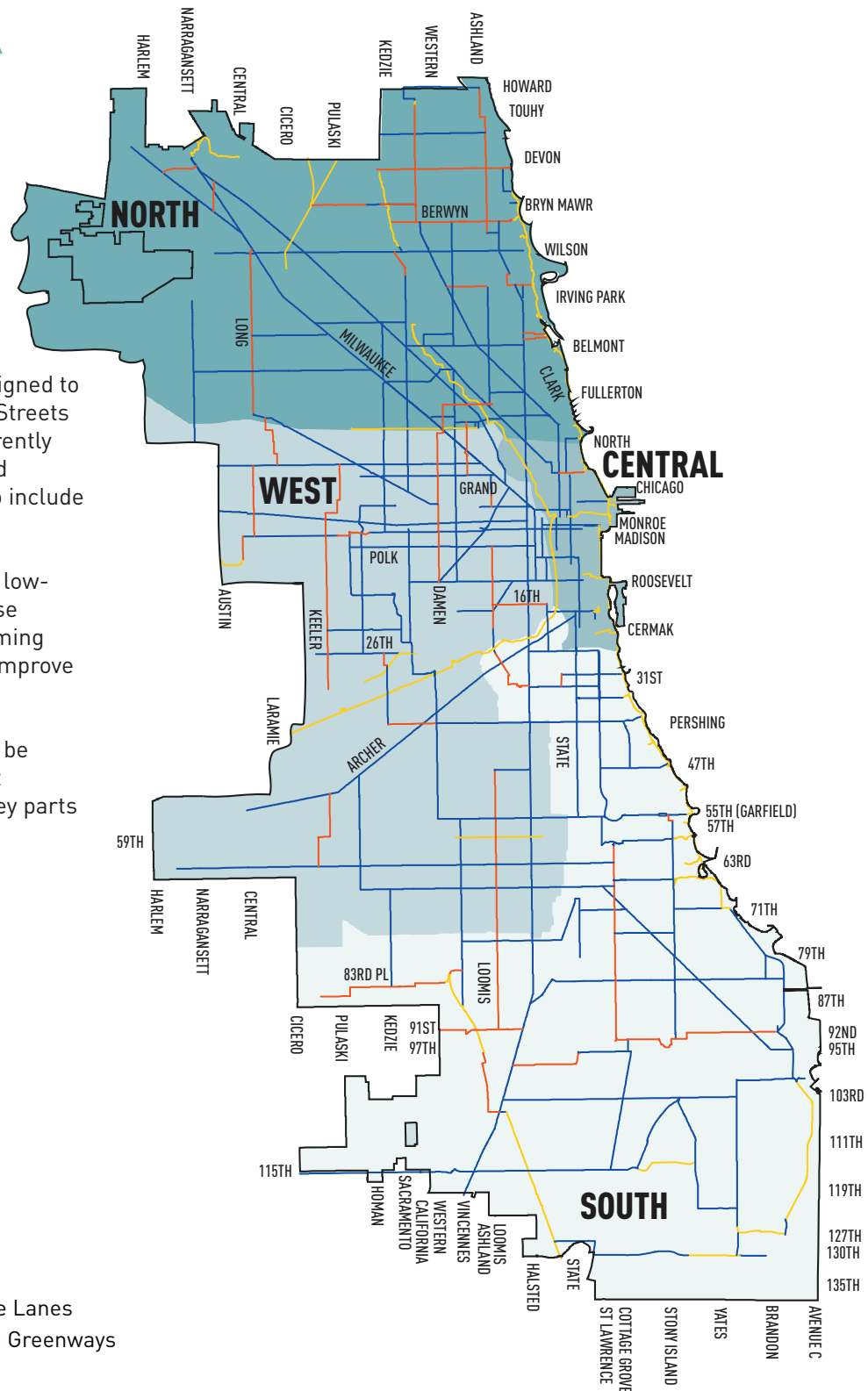
- Proposed Protected Bike Lanes
- Proposed Neighborhood Greenways
- Proposed Urban Trails

NETWORK VISION

Protected Bike Lanes are low-stress routes on busy streets that physically separate people biking from car traffic. Streets featured on this map with no bike facilities will be redesigned to include low-stress bikeways. Streets featured on this map that currently have traditional bike lanes and marked shared lanes will also include upgraded facilities.

Neighborhood Greenways are low-stress residential routes. These streets will include traffic calming measures in key locations to improve the cycling experience.

The existing trail network will be expanded to provide off-street dedicated space connecting key parts of the city.



- Protected Bike Lanes
- Neighborhood Greenways
- Urban Trails

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to the Chicago Department of Transportation for sharing *Streets for Cycling 2020 Plan* data and other resources.

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