

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Transportation for ALL

Chicago is a big city, not just in population but geographically. To get around we need efficient, attractive, accessible, and affordable public transit. We need streets that are safe for cyclists as well as for drivers. With federal support running out in 2024 and the Region facing a \$500 million transit budget deficit, we cannot wait to react. Chicago needs to play a leadership role in the region and Springfield to create a new structure and funding mechanism. Until we prioritize modernizing our public transit service and infrastructure, we won't be able to grow and thrive as a city.

My plan will put us on the road to meet these goals. It takes into account concerns too often considered in isolation- the challenge of the unhoused; the rising rates of crime that we feel everywhere- including on the CTA; the opportunity of building population centers closer to major transit hubs; the balance of local and regional needs in transit planning.

As Mayor, I will commit to doing everything we can to bring the highest standards to public transit in Chicago and the Region.

- I. **Public Transit must be a priority.** For too long, public transit has been seen as a source of jobs and contracts, unaccountable to the public. This ends when I get elected. I will lead the regional and statewide effort to re-make the structure and financing of public transit so it can remain essential to the social and economic vitality of Chicago. The leadership of the CTA, like leaders of all the sister agencies, will have to come before the City Council to discuss plans and progress. CTA staff will meet regularly with City Departments of Housing, Transportation and Planning, under the oversight of the Mayor's office, to coordinate and integrate CTA service and planning with City needs and priorities. Among the areas where there will be accountability are:

The Lightfoot Legacy

Have you ridden the CTA lately? Mayor Lightfoot's administration has led to the creation of a new term, "Ghost trains." These occur when the transit tracking system tells riders a train is arriving when no train is near. It is just one more example of a transit system falling apart.

The CTA lost staff during the pandemic, but had no mitigation planned. Staffing shortages have led to fewer busses and trains, unclean conditions, and increased crime. As a result, ridership has not returned after the pandemic, and the entire system is kept afloat by federal grants that run out in 2024. This major crisis is Mayor Lightfoot's legacy.

- **Restored Staffing levels.** Employee retention and positive work conditions are critical to improving service reliability and keeping buses and trains clean and safe. Without proper staffing there will be no progress on reliability, safety, or frequency. Riders will not return to the system.
- **Improved bus service.** For many Chicagoans, particularly those who are not commuting to and from the loop, buses are their most critical form of transit. Service needs to be frequent, regular, and reliable. On-time-performance must be a metric we hold ourselves accountable to. In addition to holding CTA leadership accountable, the city can help by considering dedicated and protected bus lanes and implementing traffic signal priority for buses.
- **A new reality around social services and public safety.** Our unhoused neighbors who use the L and stations as shelter are doing so because they have

nowhere else to go. We need to deal directly with homelessness by providing safe shelter and social services in the short term and building more housing in the long term. (See my housing plans.) At the same time, the CTA must develop a new approach that integrates CTA station personnel and operators with other city resources. Working with other departments, we will create a dedicated team, trained in methods of de-escalation, to provide social services and resources to houseless folks. This will also allow current security resources to focus on the crime response. (For more on this please see my public safety plan.)

- **Linking transit to housing.** We will create new housing and build density in walkable neighborhoods closer to transit. I introduced comprehensive legislation on Equitable Transit Oriented development in 2019 with \$5 Billion to promote construction and operation of housing that is affordable around transit. I will continue that work to build dense affordable housing, pedestrian infrastructure and vibrant commercial districts around transit stations and stops. We need real collaboration and leadership between the mayor's office and the departments of housing, planning, and transportation to achieve these goals. This is not just good housing policy, it is good climate and transportation policy, too.
- **Expand the system to meet demand.** I am committed to seeing the completion of the Red Line extension on Chicago's south side. We will also explore other improvements and possible expansions of the CTA system to make sure that all neighborhoods get regular, reliable and frequent service. Dynamic cities don't stand pat - they are constantly looking to improve, grow, and connect places that are isolated from each other. Among the ideas to consider:
 - Extending the Blue Line beyond O'Hare to nearby manufacturing jobs
 - A connector between Midway and O'Hare along existing right-of-way
 - Bus Rapid Transit infrastructure on arterial roads like Ashland or Western Avenues.
 - A "circle line" that links all of CTA's rail lines and all of Metra's lines

II. **Transit equity must be a priority.** Historically, our most vulnerable communities have experienced disinvestment and are not currently served by the same level of public transit as seen in other areas of the city. These communities serve as home to low-income folks, older residents, people with disabilities, the very people who tend to rely on transit the most.

- **Return to pre 2020 transit service levels** and expanding service to underinvested low-income communities and communities of color on the South, Southwest and West sides which have been neglected.
- **Explore reduced fares** for the most economically disadvantaged and transit dependent, so that all Chicagoans can access it equitably.
- **Ensure that the CTA meets its 2038 goal of making L stations 100% accessible** through the All-Stations Accessibility Program. I, together with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, will work with Pace and CTA ADA Advisory Committees to find and implement solutions to many of the issues people with disabilities face while riding transit every day. But this is just a minimum: The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities will convene a comprehensive design effort for new developments that builds in accessibility in public transportation rather than correct for it after the fact
- **Advocate for Full Fare Integration** which requires that all modes of public transit charge the same price per ride within the city of Chicago. This increases the affordability for city residents to take

transit like the Metra for the same cost as riding a CTA train. In addition, it means transfers are free, even between modes.

III. **Transportation Infrastructure** goes well beyond public transit, and our infrastructure needs are changing. We need to build for safety today, and to anticipate our future growth.

- **A City-Wide Protected Bike Grid Network.** Effective city-wide transportation planning cannot happen at the individual ward level. That just leads to inefficient and piecemeal infrastructure investments. I will work with Transportation planners, stakeholders, and transportation activists to build a comprehensive network of protected bike lanes that allows every citizen to traverse the city across the citywide.
- **Set annual goals for building bus and bike lanes.** We will use the annual budget process to set goals for capital investments in new bus and bike lanes in Chicago and will provide regular updates through the year on progress towards achieving this goal.
- **Expand the automatic Bus and Bike line Enforcement Pilot:** The Safe Street Pilot ordinance utilizes cameras for a pilot program to ticket drivers parked in bike and bus lanes. I will extend the scope of this program, so it covers the whole city, implement citizen enforcement of bike and bus lane parking by submitting photographs through 311 and include moving violations for vehicles driving in these lanes as well.

IV. **Safe Streets is a goal that requires good policy, strong management, and public buy in.** As traffic deaths have increased, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in Chicago no longer feel secure crossing streets in their neighborhoods and driving on our city's arterials and highways. It is time to rebalance transportation infrastructure to account for the changing transit patterns in our city.

- **Complete Streets:** I helped co-author and shepherd legislation to ensure Complete Streets help Chicago achieve its Vision Zero goal of zero pedestrian-vehicle fatalities and promise to continue expanding the Complete Streets vision across the City of Chicago. Complete Streets are streets designed so that everyone – people walking, taking the CTA bus/train, biking, or driving – can travel safely and comfortably along and across Chicago streets.
- **Pedestrian and Slow Streets Infrastructure:** I will prioritize pedestrian infrastructure proven to increase visibility and slow vehicular traffic such as street planters, curb bump outs, and raised crosswalks across the city targeting the most dangerous intersections, as well as placing a particular focus on slowing the side streets where families live, work, play and go to school.
- **City Wide Speed Limit Reduction:** I will work with community groups and the City Council to explore reducing the current 30 MPH speed limit in busy pedestrian and cycling corridors. Lowering the minimum speed limit in Chicago to slow down our streets will make our neighborhoods safer and prevent any more lives being lost in vehicular crashes.

V. **Success requires strong partnerships at the State and Federal Level.** Chicago should play a leadership role in Springfield in creating transportation solutions for our city and the connected region. Until we prioritize modernizing our public transit service and infrastructure, we won't be able to grow and thrive as a city. People need to be able to trust in their choices of transportation, and trust that the city hears their concerns and will work continuously to improve.

- **Intergovernmental Funding Approach:** I will lead the fight on fundamentally changing the way we finance transit and infrastructure, so that funding is plentiful, stable, and spent equitably in Chicago and NE Illinois. My primary responsibility is to the people of Chicago and my administration will use all available means to fund transportation opportunities from the CTA and Metra to cyclist and pedestrian investments. I believe in a strong public transit system, and I will be in Washington DC and Springfield to support reforms that will guarantee great service and sustainable funding.
- **Intentional City Department Coordination:** I will ensure that the city departments of Housing, Planning, and Transportation coordinate their efforts with CTA, Metra and Pace to make transportation a priority in any new corridor streetscape, visioning, or development plans put forth by these departments and ensure departments coordinate to create Transit Oriented Developments and vibrant commercial districts around transit stops.
- **Sustainable Transportation:** Efficient public transit can help to reduce emissions and restore equity all at the same time. I believe in a strong public transit system, and I will be in Springfield to support reforms that will guarantee great service and sustainable funding. I will look to find ways where Chicago will support the efforts of Illinois toward electric vehicles and implementation of clean energy law, CEJA. – sustainability
- **Regional Focus:** The city must take an active leadership role in addressing the regional transit ridership and funding challenge recently announced by the RTA and CMAP. Chicago does not exist in isolation from the region, and we need regional solutions. In the next year a new plan and potential reorganization for regional transportation will be negotiated.
- **Congestion Pricing:** I will consider following the lead of cities like New York that have begun planning on how to implement congestion pricing measures. Congestion pricing would add a toll or fee to drive on Chicago area highways into the city which would help fund Chicago and regional transportation solutions. The revenue would have to be used as a way to encourage folks to travel into the city via public transit like Metra rail or by pace bus.
- **Having Workers at the Table:** I will commit to having a transit worker serve on the CTA Board.