



Entering the Next Decade with Sustainable Transportation and Infrastructure

Background

The transportation industry dominates the economy in Illinois' Third Congressional District. Within our boundaries, we are home to multiple Metra lines, freight service, Midway Airport, hundreds of miles of roads and bike trails, and a number of major waterways.

In order to truly maximize our transportation economy, we must ensure all of those parts are operating to the best of their abilities for the people of the Third, in concert. In looking at the Third District's transportation network as a whole, we effectively drive the best performance from all parts of the system, not just as a series of parts.

The workforce in IL03 consists of approximately 337,036 people¹. Of that total, 73.8% drive alone to work, 9.6% carpool, 10% take public transportation, and 1.9% walk. An additional 3.4% of the workforce works from home. Of the seven congressional districts that touch all or parts of Chicago, IL03 has the lowest number of workers over the age of 16 using public transportation to travel to and from work.

Addressing our infrastructure problems is more than just adding additional lanes on I-55 and major roads--we have to change the dialogue on public transportation and make it more accessible and reliable from Bridgeport to Crest Hill. We must create innovative solutions that will increase reliability and usage of green forms of transportation.

We need a representative that will ask transportation industries the tough questions on why services are not performing efficiently and not addressing opportunities for improvement. And, when action is not taken and best practices are not implemented, our representation must enact appropriate legislation to protect travelers and commuters. Our representation cannot be beholden to special interests. That's why I pledge to take no corporate donations from lobbyists,

¹ United States Census Bureau. (2017). 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Accessed from <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=17&cd=03>.

including those in the transportation industry. I will be a fighter for our district so all of our needs are met.

Key Stakeholders in Transportation and Infrastructure

I know the importance of developing strategic plans that involve all the stakeholders in a region. We need leaders that are willing to listen to the community's concerns and adapt their operations to best fit local residents--this includes regularly facilitating meetings with all transportation executives in Chicagoland alongside all members of government: federal, state, county, and local. This currently is not done.

With only 10% of the workforce in IL03 using public transportation, we need to get all transportation stakeholders in the same room to discuss ways to work together.

At a town hall in December 2018, Metra and BNSF officials confessed they had never convened to address transportation issues in our district with all levels of government, private stakeholders, the public, and other key stakeholders. We need leaders in government to collaborate with the transportation industry, holding them accountable for train idling, extraneous delays, and expanding transportation options as well as developing green economy transportation systems.

CREATE Project

The CREATE project was a strong and practical idea at its start fifteen years ago. With a plan to complete 70 projects total, there have been 29 completed CREATE projects thus far. These projects are meant to address passenger, freight, and motorist delays through public-private partnerships--involving all levels of government with the railroad industry to achieve transportation solutions.

Since the district has experienced major transportation bottlenecks, we need to address projects on a need-based analysis. CREATE funds are already allocated to address a major issue in IL03--the 75th Street Corridor. We must ensure these funds are set aside properly so construction can begin with urgency.

After talking to constituents over the last year, I know that transportation delays are truly part of everybody's everyday. CREATE has tentatively lined up projects to address freight delays in Chicago Ridge, Summit, Berwyn, Brookfield, and many areas of Chicago². It's time we raise our concerns with our legislators to make sure the issues of IL03 are met with legislative solutions in Washington. We need a leader that will fight for the commuters of the Third, not someone who simply issues press releases when there are problems.

² Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program. (2019). CREATE Projects. Accessed from <http://createprogram.org/projects.htm#grade>.

While these projects are truly intended to reduce traffic congestion, improve appearance, and increase walkability in each neighborhood, they must also address environmental concerns as well³.

A Holistic Look at the Issues--Needs of the District

In our district, we have a number of transportation issues. We have rail bottlenecks, a major airport without investment in the community around it, and crumbling bridges from Bridgeport to Will County. We also have one of the lowest riderships on public transportation compared to other Chicago congressional districts⁴. It's time our representative shifts from looking solely at the needs of special interests representing the rail industry and instead focus on the everyday needs of constituents.

We have a number of transportation deserts in the district. Transportation deserts are those areas where residents do not have proper access to public transportation. These are primarily where our transportation needs are not being met, and we are forced to rely on environmentally and economically inefficient personal vehicles as our means of travel.

Transportation deserts in-district include:

- Chicago (Bridgeport): 31st Street Bus. This service was removed from the CTA regular route, and now commuters are left with limited access to transportation. We support reinstating full service so Chicagoans have easy access to wherever they are headed.
- Summit/Bedford Park: 65th Street underpass/overpass. For years, drivers have been stopped at the train crossing for inordinate amounts of time. As your representative, I will prioritize using CREATE funds to get this project completed urgently.
- Chicago (Southwest Side): Limited access to bus and 'L' service requires individuals to plan over an hour to travel to certain destinations. That's why I support facilitating conversations with CTA, PACE, Metra, and other transportation stakeholders to increase transportation options for all parts of Chicago.
- Southwest Suburbs: Metra delays and limited service have hurt the parts of the district with already-restricted access to public transportation. In some parts of the district, especially communities on or near Metra's Southwest Service, there are only a handful of trains each day--and on Sundays there are none at all. In Will County, there are few trains that will provide an efficient means to get to Chicago.
- Metra has raised their ridership fees four times in the last five years. While rates of employment have increased across the area, when Metra increases their fare by 10%,

³ Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program. (2019). CREATE Project Opportunities. Accessed from http://createprogram.org/linked_files/20190307_CREATEGetOnBoardPresentation.pdf.

⁴ United States Census Bureau. (2017). 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Accessed from <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=17&cd=03>.

their ridership decreases 2.2% each time⁵. I support a program that will subsidize Metra's expenses to keep the cost low, incentivizing public transportation for business owners through tax credits, and supporting programs like the CTA's U-PASS which allows college students in Chicago to use the CTA for free.

- Train delays associated with the implementation of the PTC system must be further addressed. We must begin to require customers are refunded or credited when there are significant delays.

Cracking Our Dependence on Private Transportation

Yet, this alone is not enough to break the reliance on private transportation. For the long-term, I support plans to build greener infrastructure in the Third District, as well as across Illinois and nationwide. Adding lanes to highways and maintaining our roads is simply not enough.

As we enter the next decade, we need a leader with innovative transportation solutions. The District needs a leader that will provide adequate funding for public transportation so Chicagoland can have a reliable rail system, reduced car congestion, and thriving airports.

In order to increase ridership on public transportation, I propose the following:

- Building and maintaining the interstate highway is not sustainable in its current form—instead I propose using the funding for roads and allocating it into green infrastructure solutions
- Using peer-reviewed evidence detailing the benefits of public transportation for communities that are in transportation deserts
 - A 2016 study found that when new train stations are expanded into suburban communities, there is a natural spike in housing developments—nearly all of which were multi-family homes. The author found that “rail transit could be an effective tool to guide land development in suburban station areas where nearby neighborhoods have enough vacant land zoned for development and some non-residential destinations, and when there are multiple state and local mandates and incentives”⁶ (Dong, 2016). We should pursue funding not only to place new transportation stations in blighted areas, but to add service for areas that need it the most.

Environmental Impact

We need to start rethinking our transportation system and how it can work better for people in the district.

⁵ Chicago Transportation Journal. (February 23, 2018). What's up--or down--with Metra ridership? Accessed from <http://www.chitranspo.com/metra/whats-metra-ridership/>.

⁶ Dong, Hongwei. (2016). If you build rail transit in suburbs, will development come? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 82(4).

While passenger train ridership has declined in recent years, freight rail is the most energy-efficient mode of transportation. According to key experts, “On average, trains are four times more fuel efficient than trucks. They also reduce highway gridlock, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce emissions of particulate matter and nitrogen oxides” (Association of American Railroads, 2019)⁷.

It would be highly efficient if passenger and freight trains did not share track, like they do in multiple areas of the district. While this may be a large investment, it should be considered as Congress discusses an infrastructure bill. When delays are in the news, that is due to train idling--trains are often delayed or stalled due to freight interference. That has to stop for three reasons: (1) it creates burdensome delays for people trying to get from point A to B; (2) it creates a health hazard for people around transportation hubs now subject to fumes being emitted into the atmosphere; (3) it creates inordinate delays for our first responders (police, fire, and medical) trying to maneuver train crossings and provide services to those in need.

At one time, trains that idled for over 10 minutes blocking a crossing were subject to fine by local municipalities. After rulings by Illinois courts in *Village of Mundelein v. Wisconsin Central Railroad* (2006) and *Eagle Marine Industries, Inc. v. Union Pacific Railroad Company* (2008), courts held that municipalities do not necessarily have the right to fine railroads for burdensome delays. From the federal government, I propose we seek a legislative solution to this problem. When idling delays occur, we should give our mayors/communities the right to take action to make their communities safer. Railroads should be fined appropriately in terms of federal law.

While freight dominates our district, we must enact new legislation to ensure first responders get to where they're needed the most, while reducing train congestion. We should close the loopholes left from the aforementioned court cases and allow agencies or communities to fine railroads for causing inordinate delays. This proposal will, in effect, allow for better community cohesion by allowing first responders to get on the scene quickly and be far more efficient for the average commuter.

Setting Criteria to Address the Most-Needed Transportation Projects

Projects should be evaluated and assessed based on their urgency, determined by two main criteria: (1) evidence-based health hazards; and (2) risk to the general public if used.

Considering so many people in our district rely on driving, we have to make sure our roads and bridges are operational. Senators Duckworth and Durbin recently cited a study from the

⁷ Association of American Railroads. (2019). The Environmental Benefits of Moving Freight by Rail. Accessed from <https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AAR-Environmental-Benefits-Moving-Freight-by-Rail.pdf>.

American Society of Civil Engineers which said that of the 26,775 bridges in Illinois, 8.6% are structurally deficient⁸.

Bridges were ranked based on three categories: (1) deck; (2) superstructure; and (3) substructure. Of these three categories, most structurally deficient bridges fall in three pockets⁹.

- Bridgeport and McKinley Park (Chicago)
- Lemont/Palos over the Cal-Sag Channel
- Will County bridges in Joliet, Lockport, and Romeoville

These structurally deficient bridges pose a tremendous public safety concern. All levels of government should coalesce to fund these crucial infrastructure projects in an innovative way. We should not have to replace bridges regularly, but by investing in more economically and environmentally-conscious materials these bridges can last for decades with low levels of maintenance.

Green Infrastructure

I support green infrastructure projects that will truly innovate the way we think about our roads. If we continue to fill potholes and use the same systems that lead to these major problems over the years, these problems will persist. There are initiatives in other states and countries for energy-efficient roads--such as roads that generate energy and feature LED lights instead of typical pavement markings¹⁰. These roads can generate electricity, reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and reduce the costs of maintenance (like filling potholes) over time. I support initiatives to include thermal components in the roads as well, which will reduce reliance on snowplows in the winter.

We also need to invest in grants that can be given directly to communities in preparation of storms and flooding. There are many pockets in the district where flooding after storms is a regular occurrence. As climate change intensifies, we need to build sustainable infrastructure so it can withstand major storms--we can't wait until people's homes and basements are destroyed.

Nearby, although it is not in-district, the I-80 bridge is at risk of major structural problems. I propose close collaboration not only with government, but with the building trades to find innovative solutions to reduce inefficiencies in the future. In order to adequately train those in the construction industry for innovative technologies, I support a new job training center in the Midway area. This facility, which will include green workforce training programs, will allow individuals to acquire new skills and learn new strategies to be most effective in their positions

⁸ Cox, Ted. (March 6, 2019). Durbin, Duckworth urge release of bridge funds. *One Illinois*. Accessed from <https://www.oneillinois.com/stories/2019/3/6/durbin-duckworth-call-for-release-of-bridge-funds>.

⁹ Bentle, Kyle, Jonathan Berlin, Joe Mahr, and Chad Yoder. (February 16, 2019). Are Chicago-area bridges near you deteriorating? Search our interactive map. *Chicago Tribune*,. Accessed from <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-met-viz-chicago-area-bridges-in-need-of-repair-htmlstory.html>.

¹⁰ Patton, Zach. (2009). Could Roads Be the Next Source of Renewable Power? *Governing*. Accessed from <https://www.governing.com/topics/transportation-infrastructure/Could-Roads-Be-the.html>.

while also reducing our dependence on unsustainable means of production. For more information on our job training center proposal, click [here](#).

Alternative Methods of Transportation--Biking

I propose working with local government and community organizations to expand a new bike path from Willow Springs out to Joliet. With new businesses landing in Joliet in recent years, especially in the intermodal and warehouse industries, it is crucial to expand our transportation network with an environmentally-conscious approach. New bike paths should be entirely paved so commuters feel safe. A 2016 study from Will County found that of bike users, 56% (a majority) “only feel safe on separated trails/paths with few traffic crossings” (Will County Bikeway Plan, 2016, p. 17)¹¹.

Biking is increasingly becoming a sustainable means of transportation. While recreational biking is certainly an asset to a high quality of life (and our district is home to many wonderful bike paths), there is still a major gap in accessibility--especially in Will County.

I support collaboration between all levels of government to make each community more walkable and accessible for all. By expanding these bike paths, it also gives us a chance to take in our picturesque landscapes of IL03!

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Questions or comments about this policy? Please send us your ideas at info@marienewmanforcongress.com.

¹¹ Forest Preserve District of Will County. (2016). Will County Bikeway Plan. Accessed from <https://www.reconnectwithnature.org/getmedia/12f297e3-113c-4bfc-a988-82a6da8983bf/WillCountyBikewayPlan-2016.pdf.aspx>.