

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY COMMUNITY PLANNING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION REPORT



Regional
Transportation
Authority

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LOCAL PLANNING

Adopted in 2018, the [*Invest in Transit*](#) strategic plan for northeastern Illinois calls for the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to support a thriving, resilient region with a system that provides attractive, cost-effective travel options and helps reduce congestion.

The RTA Local Planning division offers two programs that provide funding and technical assistance for local governments across northeastern Illinois to create and implement plans that guide development of station areas to meet community needs, expand job and housing accessibility, and improve the overall transit experience.

Since 1998, technical and financial assistance from the [Community Planning program](#) has helped local governments plan for walkable and more sustainable communities near transit stations and along transit corridors. These planning studies better prepare communities to attract public-private partnerships, housing and job development, leverage infrastructure investments, and improve efficiency in delivering government services. Through this program, the RTA has invested over \$21 million in local planning initiatives and collaborated on over 200 projects, helping to ensure that local land use decisions focus on maximizing the benefits of transit.

The [Access to Transit program](#) was created in 2014 to leverage funding for local governments to complete small-scale pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects — such as sidewalks, bike racks, and pedestrian crossing signals — that improve access to transit services. The program has leveraged \$2.2 million in RTA funding to secure \$10.8 million in federal funding for 28 projects in communities across the region.



Transit-oriented development at the 143rd Street Metra Station at Orland Park

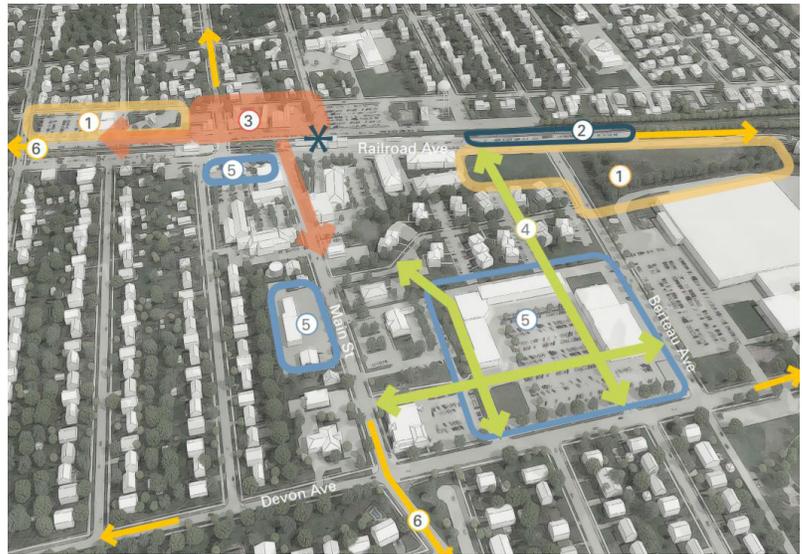
COMMUNITY PLANNING PROGRAM

The RTA established the Community Planning program to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD) and improve transit access in communities. Its mission is to leverage our region’s commuter train lines, bus routes, and other extensive transit assets to enhance local economies and quality of life.

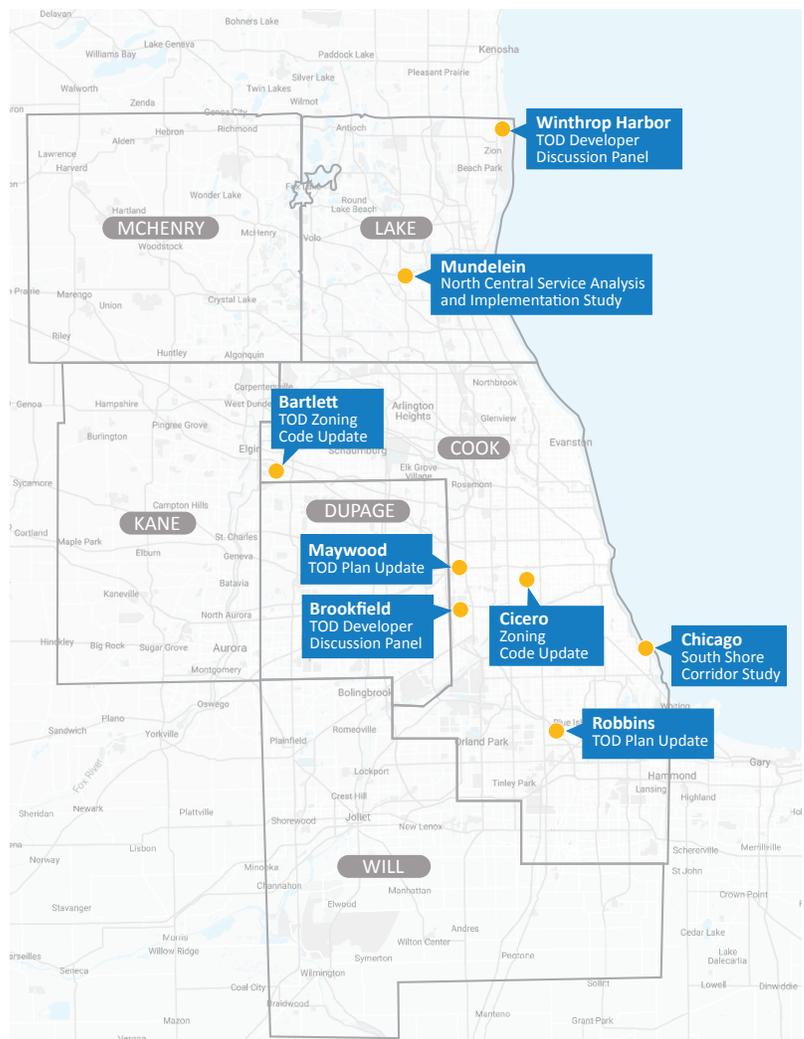
Communities use the program as an important tool in planning for and implementing TOD that addresses the needs of their residents and businesses. Examples of eligible projects include TOD plans, developer discussion panels, and efforts to develop special funding districts in transit areas. When implemented, these plans guide community development, providing more efficient access to affordable transportation while improving quality of life and public health.

Because putting a completed plan in action is frequently a challenge for local governments, the Community Planning Program also supports “next-step” implementation initiatives, including organizing and hosting developer panels or hiring a consultant to write zoning code updates.

Each year — for the past several, in conjunction with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance program — the Community Planning program solicits proposals for projects that are reviewed by staff and approved by the RTA Board. In 2018, eight applications were selected, as shown in the adjacent table and map. Learn more about these and other Community Planning projects on rtams.org.



Example highlighting development and connectivity recommendations from the Bartlett TOD Plan (2018)



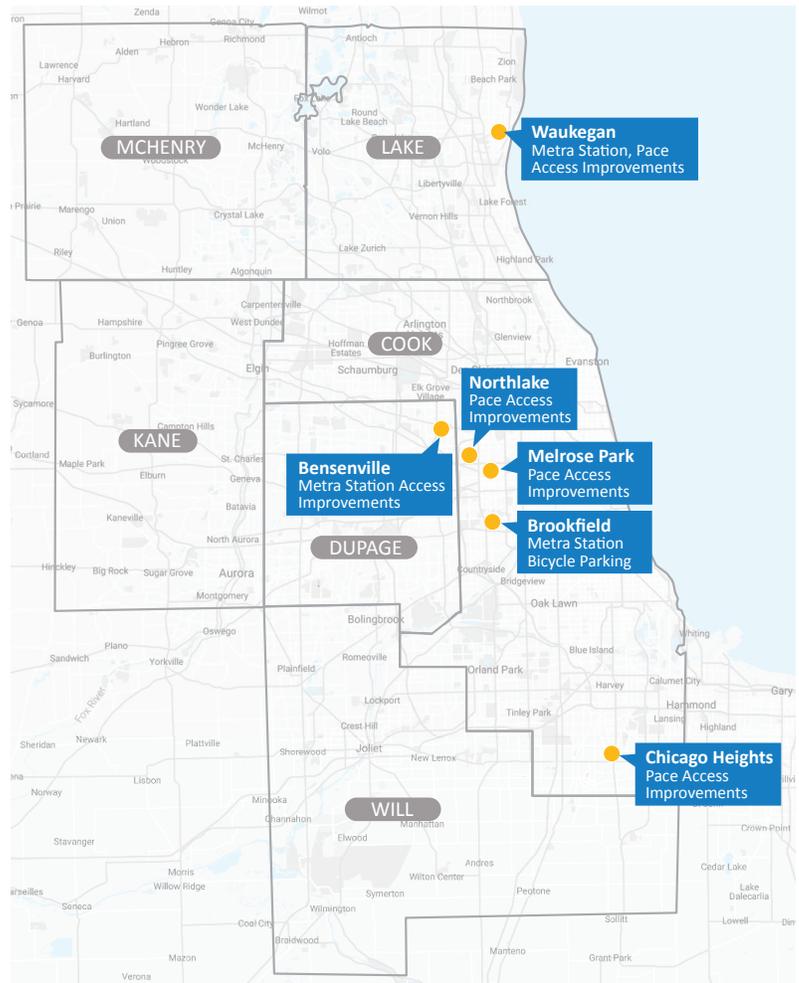
New Projects Added in 2018

ACCESS TO TRANSIT PROGRAM

The Access to Transit Program leverages RTA and local funds with federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) grant funding to help implement small capital projects that improve accessibility for commuters across the region.

The Access to Transit Program can assist communities in implementing recommendations from the Community Planning program or from the CMAP Local Technical Assistance program. The Access to Transit Program has supported 28 projects since 2014. An analysis conducted by the RTA found that every \$1 invested in transit results in roughly \$1.90 of economic benefit created in the Chicago region, attracting businesses and improving quality of life.

Through its annual solicitation of proposals, Access to Transit prioritizes projects that fill gaps between commuters and transit facilities, creating safer and more efficient connections while also improving the commuter experience. In 2018, the program selected six new projects, as shown in the adjacent table and map. Learn more about these and other Access to Transit projects on rtams.org.



New Projects Added in 2018



BEFORE



AFTER

New covered bike parking at the Mount Prospect Metra Station funded through the 2016 Access to Transit Program

ABOUT TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

A key focus of both the Community Planning and Access to Transit programs is supporting transit-oriented development (TOD), which is accomplished when walkable, mixed-use communities are located near transit.

To provide increased accessibility or mobility options for residents and visitors, successful TOD incorporates diverse housing, retail, and job options within an approximate $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile distance of train stations or bus stops. Ideally, TOD improves housing affordability near a station area for residents of all income levels, while limiting displacement of current residents. Some common elements of TOD include:

Mixed Use



Overall, zoning allows a variety of residential, commercial, office, institutional, or other land uses. By mixing residential uses with employment and entertainment uses, “mixed-use development” helps community members remain active throughout the day, reducing the necessity of driving. This combination of uses near train stations and bus routes also encourages residents to use transit for accessing jobs, housing, and recreation.

Walkability



“Walkability” is a measure of how receptive an area is to pedestrians, especially those using a wheelchair or other mobility assist devices. Factors include well maintained sidewalks, crosswalks, street design, and building accessibility. A pedestrian should feel that they are safe and welcome at all times.

Transit



The presence of high-quality and convenient transit service is critical to thriving and equitable places. While rail stations, bus stations, or transit corridors are the focal points of TOD, bikeshare or additional mobility options also play a key role in extending public transportation access to neighborhoods that are not immediately adjacent to transit stops.

Density



Denser land use is key to bringing a critical mass of residents and workers to a TOD area, creating vibrant places and impactful transit services that support the entire community. There is no ideal density, as each community should determine what suits it best.

2018 TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY

Over the years, completed Community Planning projects have strengthened the connection between land use and transit.

By adopting and implementing these plans, municipalities have encouraged developers to build new residential, office, and retail space, giving residents better access to new housing and employment. These improvements often provide significant economic and quality of life returns for municipalities and residents. RTA staff track and document these impacts through quarterly updates to RTAMS (Regional Transportation Authority Mapping and Statistics), the agency's public mapping, data, and report warehouse at www.rtams.org. Each year, the RTA also surveys municipalities that have received Community Planning assistance. The annual survey tracks private and public investment and associated policy implementation in TOD areas. The most recent survey results can be found below.

SURVEY RESULTS

The TOD Implementation Survey specifically seeks updates from municipalities regarding projects completed through the Community Planning program. To identify plan implementation results and track new developments from the preceding year, in summer 2019 the RTA sent 76 surveys, of which 39 were completed by municipal partners.

Respondents were asked to identify TOD projects that were either approved, under construction, or completed in their community in 2018. This includes any residential, office, commercial, or mixed-use developments that are located within their TOD plan's study area.

Typically, a TOD plan study area encompasses the ½-mile radius around a local train station or the ½-mile buffer along a bus transit corridor. Twenty-four communities indicated some type of TOD activity.

Additionally, the survey asked respondents to report on any infrastructure improvements or transit-supportive policy changes that the municipality built or enacted to implement recommendations from their Community Planning study. Thirty-two communities indicated policy changes and/or infrastructure improvements that occurred in 2018.



TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

An important component of TOD is design that enhances pedestrian accessibility. Creating seamless and safe pedestrian connections can improve overall pedestrian mobility, also providing access to the regional transit system and for existing or planned residential or commercial developments.

Community Planning studies frequently recommend improvements to sidewalks, bike lanes, streetscapes, and other types of pedestrian infrastructure. These simple and cost-effective investments also encourage individuals to walk and bike, reducing their dependence on automobiles.

The survey reported that 33 percent of the respondents enhanced their bike infrastructure, 26 percent took on streetscape improvements within their study area, 23 percent made improvements to nearby sidewalks and pedestrian signals, 10 percent enhanced parking facilities in the area, and 21 percent made station improvements. Three communities completed these infrastructure improvements through RTA's Access to Transit program, including new sidewalks and crosswalks in LaGrange, Rolling Meadows, and University Park.



Sidewalk and crosswalk improvements approaching the Midlothian Metra Station, funded through the Access to Transit Program

DEVELOPMENT REGULATION CHANGES

Municipal zoning ordinances, zoning maps, and subdivision ordinances typically regulate the way land is developed in communities. To allow for the construction of walkable mixed-use developments, a community may need to modify their existing zoning regulations. Options include creating downtown mixed-use zoning districts, establishing design guidelines, and enacting form-based codes that influence development patterns.

Multiple respondents did revise their land use regulations as a first step to implement their TOD plans. Ten respondents revised their zoning ordinances to be consistent with TOD plan recommendations, two implemented design guidelines for new developments, three created overlay districts, and four implemented other supporting guidelines or regulatory standards since the completion of their TOD plan. One community, Morton Grove, updated its land use regulations through the Community Planning Program.

FINANCING AND FUNDING SOURCES FOR TOD

Another way to encourage TOD implementation is to establish specialized local funding sources or districts. TOD areas concentrate development and the corresponding tax base of a community, providing cost savings for public services due to the density. This clustering effect increases land values around transit, where local communities can use a tax increment

financing (TIF) district to capture a portion of the value for public revenues.

Communities can use TIF revenues to reinvest in infrastructure and/or create new infill redevelopment opportunities by assembling vacant or underutilized land within the TOD area. To maintain and enhance a TOD area, some merchant associations self-tax to create a Business Improvements District (BID) or a Special Service Area (SSA), recognizing the market draw that the civic space of the TOD area provides to local businesses.

This year's survey results indicated that seven respondents authorized the creation of a TIF district, while 12 established other unique funding sources, including a new BID in Richton Park.

CIVIC EVENTS

TOD areas encourage a lively sense of place where the community can meet. They give families and visitors opportunities to play, celebrate, and reconnect with their neighbors in places accessible by transit. The survey asked respondents if any civic events had been held in the community's study area since completion of their plan.

Around 49 percent of the respondents mentioned hosting a yearly winter holiday lighting, 49 percent conducted live summer concerts, 28 percent regularly held a farmers' market, 36 percent held street fairs, 15 percent convened an annual Fourth of July parade, and 23 percent hosted a local food festival in the area surrounding their transit station.

These results indicate that the TOD areas are catalysts that create a strong sense of community and a lively center of local activity.

PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE CHICAGO REGION

Twenty-four of the responding communities reported that 59 development projects were either in design, approved, under construction, or completed during 2018 as shown in the "TOD Implementation Survey Results" graphic on page 7.

The information on the next page summarizes TOD projects that were reported throughout the Chicago region.

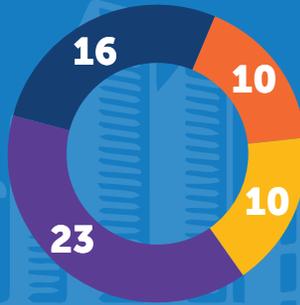
Several of the same development projects were reported in both this and last year's surveys. Three projects went from a status of being approved in

2017 to under construction in 2018, and eight went from a status of being under construction in 2017 to complete in 2018.

TOD IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY RESULTS

Developments Reported in 2018*

59 Total
41% Mixed-Use



KEY

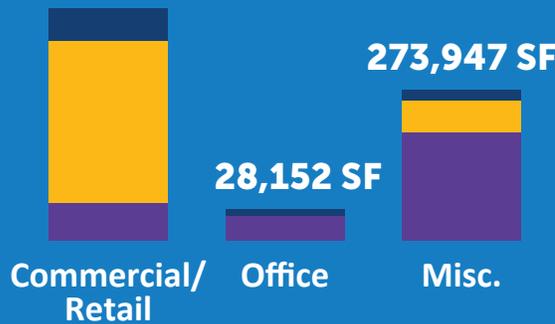
- Design & Development
- Approved
- Under Construction
- Completed

Units/Square Feet (SF) Reported in 2018

ALL PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT



407,757 SF



3,589 Units



Residential

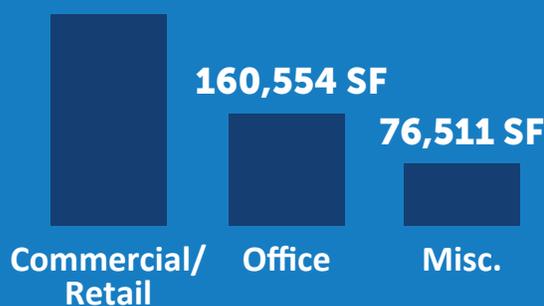
🏠 = 100

Completed Developments Reported from 2014-2018

78

Projects Completed

364,870 SF



3,155 Units



Residential

🏠 = 100

* RTA staff were able to supplement missing survey data with news media on projects in development or under construction in 2018. If available, information was validated or edited by municipal staff.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Recent implementation efforts of several communities illustrate how to support active lifestyles, efficient land use, and local economic development initiatives. Highlights of projects in Bensenville, Oak Park, and Brookfield are described below.

BENSENVILLE

Bensenville has made significant improvements to pedestrian accessibility around the community's downtown Metra station. The ongoing enhancements include new sidewalks, curb ramps, and new streetscapes. Improvements at the station, completed through the Access to Transit program, included a new bus depot to include a warming shelter and layover area, sidewalks and crosswalks through the parking lot, new bicycle parking at the station, and improved lighting in the commuter parking lot. These additions help improve multi-modal access to the Metra station as well as providing safe and comfortable pedestrian infrastructure for commuters.

In 2009, Bensenville completed a Transit Improvement Plan and Station Area Study through the Community Planning program to assess the potential for improving the community's overall transportation system and revitalizing its corridors and Metra station area. Key goals were to increase transit ridership and facilitate TOD along bus corridors and the downtown station area. To advance recommendations from that plan, in 2012 the Village hosted a developer discussion panel in partnership with the RTA and the Urban Land Institute (ULI). Panel recommendations included how to create an identity and brand awareness, sell village owned property, pursue a Quiet Zone designation along the Metra Line, create a permanent outdoor space on Village Hall property, and encourage multi-family residential development within the TOD area. Village staff and officials are diligently working to move these recommendations forward.



Pace bus access improvements at Bensenville Metra Station (2018)

OAK PARK

TOD developments are booming in Oak Park, with the Village reporting five new or in-progress mixed-use development projects in 2018 for new housing options and commercial space near the community's multiple Metra and CTA stations. The five projects, some completed and some currently under construction, add 1,270 residential units and 50,000 square feet of commercial space to the Village. District House, a development completed in 2018, replaced a single story fast-food restaurant at 700 Lake Street with 28 condo units and first floor retail within walking distance of the Oak Park Metra and Oak Park CTA Green Line stations. A development that was under construction in 2018, Eleven33, replaced a surface parking lot at Harlem Avenue and South Boulevard with 263 units and 10,000 square feet of retail immediately adjacent to the Harlem CTA Green Line station. These developments will provide new housing options for residents wanting to live in a walkable mixed-use community immediately adjacent to public transportation.

Oak Park completed an Intermodal Station Area Plan through the Community Planning Program in 2003. This study examined ways to increase usage of the station, improve access to the station by alternative modes of transportation, enhance transfers between

modes at the station, and integrate with development plans. Village staff and officials have made significant progress in implementing the recommendations over the past 15 years, providing their residents with increased transit access to jobs and opportunities throughout the region.



Mixed-use development recently completed in Oak Park

community's website to increase their visibility to developers. Recent construction in the area includes a nine-unit multi-family building on Fairview Avenue and a six-unit multi-family building approved for Burlington Avenue, both within a block of the Metra station.



Panel members at the Brookfield Developer Panel (2018)

BROOKFIELD

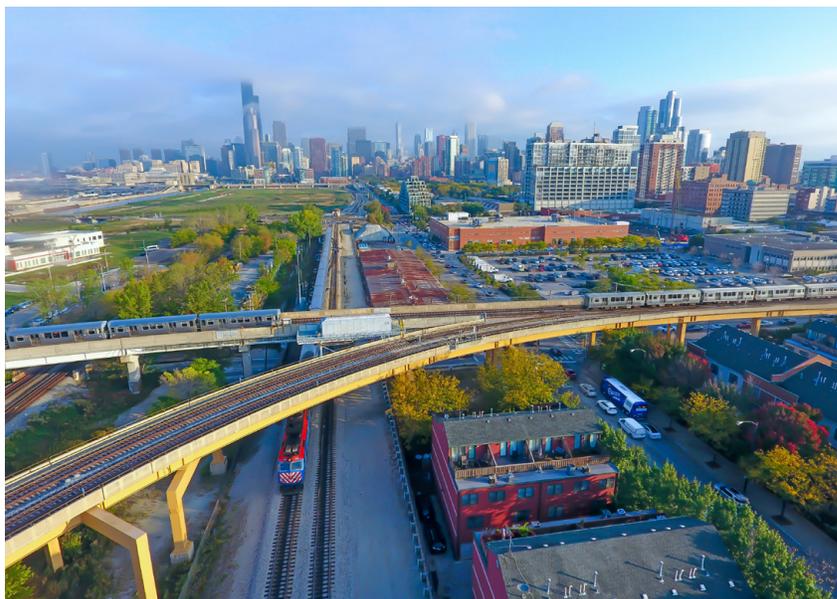
The Village of Brookfield has taken on several planning initiatives through the Community Planning program to advance TOD in their community. In 2017, the Village completed its zoning modernization project with assistance from the RTA, which established a transit-supportive form-based code for the three Metra station areas. The new zoning allows greater density in TOD areas, streamlines the development process and promotes a pedestrian-friendly built environment. Following this effort, in 2018 the Village hosted a developer discussion panel to seek expert guidance on how to attract infill development near the Brookfield Metra station. Overarching panel recommendations included improving the pedestrian environment, pursuing small-scale development projects, incentivizing economic development projects, and leveraging the community's assets to promote growth. Since then, Brookfield has made significant pedestrian and accessibility improvements— including new crosswalks and ramps — immediately adjacent to the Brookfield station, in addition to posting development opportunities on the

CONTINUING OUR WORK

As documented in this report, RTA planning efforts over the past 21 years have resulted in the addition of walkable, mixed-use transit-oriented developments and improved transit accessibility across the region. With this assistance from the RTA Community Planning and Access to Transit programs, communities have leveraged their local transit services and infrastructure by locating housing, jobs and retail in close proximity to train stations and bus routes. Doing so has improved transit effectiveness in the region through access improvements; reduced sprawl and increased walking and biking by promoting compact development; reduced auto emissions; and provided potential household cost savings for residents who walk, bike, or use transit as opposed to driving a car. It is important for the RTA to consistently consider new, innovative planning approaches, topics, and projects so our local planning programs can evolve to address current and relevant planning topics, helping to ensure that municipal planning and implementation efforts will maximize local benefits of the transit system.

Moving forward, staff of the RTA Local Planning division will continue to assist communities throughout the region. Through the Community Planning program, staff will continue to pursue traditional TOD and corridor studies with municipalities, in addition to focusing on implementation efforts in communities that have completed initial planning studies. This assistance will help ensure that zoning code updates, developer discussion panels, and innovative financing studies will continue, along with new efforts to address new and emerging planning topics, such as equity and new mobility options. To address important issues of equity in TOD, RTA staff will use an equity “lens” when evaluating each TOD project scope’s approach to housing and transportation affordability and to anti-displacement strategies. Additional work will include continued participation in regional planning efforts to address equity, affordability, and inclusionary zoning to help inform current and future planning efforts so that all residents in the region can benefit from TOD.

Transit access and mobility improvements will continue as existing Access to Transit program projects complete construction of new sidewalks, crosswalks, covered bike racks, and other small-scale access improvements throughout the region. In an early 2020 call for projects, the RTA will seek applications for traditional access improvements such as sidewalks and crosswalks, as well as innovative projects that not only provide pedestrian and bicycle access to transit but consider new mobility options for increasing access.



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (RTA)

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is the unit of local government charged with financial oversight, funding, and regional transit planning for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, and Pace bus and Pace's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Service. The RTA system serves two million riders each weekday with 145 CTA rail stations, 240 Metra commuter rail stations, 350 bus routes, with a combined 7,200 transit route miles throughout Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties of northeastern Illinois.

RESOURCES

Visit www.rtachicago.org for more information on the Community Planning and Access to Transit programs, in addition to many other resources, which include:

[Invest in Transit](#): Regional Transit Strategic Plan 2018 - 2023

[Chicago Regional Green Transit Plan](#): Describes the environmental benefits of transit in the region and provides a roadmap to making the transit system greener

[Transit Works](#): The Benefits of Transit-Oriented Development

[TOD Basics & Resources](#): Additional information and resources about TOD.

[TOD Resident Survey Report](#): Shares results of residents surveyed throughout the Chicago region who live in suburban TOD areas and were asked why they chose to live near transit and if their lifestyles have changed since moving from their previous address.

[Municipal Funding Opportunities for Transit-Oriented Development](#): This guide includes local, regional, state, federal and private foundation sources available to help implement TOD.



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