# OUR WAY FORWARD 2050

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

# Final Report

WILL COUNTY

SEPTEMBER 2025


PREPARED BY

CIVILTECH

All Together.

CEMPEL
INTERNATIONAL
TRANSPORTATION
CONSULTING

RSG
the science of insight

*Message from the*

# Will County Executive

Our shared mission is to improve the living standards of county residents and visitors by offering a transportation system that is safe, cost-effective, dependable, and supportive of economic growth. We engaged with residents regularly during this plans development to identify which transportation projects are deemed essential and what opportunities existed to expand our vision of transportation. After extensive discussions with residents and stakeholders throughout the county, we gained valuable insights into the community's needs. Recognizing that no single solution can address the diverse transportation requirements for people and goods across the county, this Long Range Transportation Plan embraces our regional diversity by proposing a range of transportation alternatives, thus providing essential choices for those residing and working here.

The *Our Way Forward 2050* Plan aims to define transportation priorities with both optimism and realism, addressing the top priorities identified by our residents. The conclusions, recommendations, and priorities outlined in this plan will direct future studies and projects to achieve our objectives. We will maintain partnerships with regional agencies and neighboring communities to deliver efficient transportation solutions that benefit Will County residents.

The plan acknowledges and aligns with federal, state, regional, and local planning initiatives, supporting their goals and strategies. Synchronizing with other plans that address economic growth, land use, resilience, and sustainability is a fundamental aspect of our plan, ensuring that transportation investments within the Long Range Transportation Plan framework contribute to the achievement of regional goals. Transportation serves as a key component of many of our regional priorities, such as economic prosperity, fostering vibrant communities, and environmental sustainability. This plan aims to align with those priorities.

We invite you to read this document with optimism for the future of Will County and its residents. We believe that despite challenges, numerous opportunities exist. We are dedicated to exploring these opportunities and providing a diverse transportation system that promises a prosperous future and upholds a high quality of life for everyone living in the county.

Sincerely,

**Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant**

*WILL COUNTY EXECUTIVE*

*Message from the*

# Will County Engineer

I am pleased to present *Our Way Forward 2050*, which outlines our strategic vision for enhancing mobility, safety, and infrastructure throughout the region. This comprehensive plan considers the county's rapid growth, evolving transportation demands, and the need for effective freight movement to support residents, businesses, and visitors over the next 25 years.

Our key objectives include:

- **Ensure Safety for All Travelers:** Provide a safe transportation system for any means of travel, accommodating motorized and nonmotorized trips.
- **Maintain and Modernize Existing Transportation Conditions:** Preserve and maintain transportation assets and manage their operations using a range of strategies, tools, and technologies; modernize infrastructure to latest standards when possible.
- **Support Economic Development:** Support economic development and competitiveness by providing a safe, reliable, and accessible multimodal transportation system to move more people and goods.
- **Improve Freight Movement:** Provide access to local, regional, national, and international markets while preserving people's quality of life and protecting the environment.
- **Expand Sustainable Transportation Options:** Increase the availability and usability of multiple sustainable transportation options — such as transit, walking, biking, and alternative fuel vehicles — for residents, employees, visitors and commerce.
- **Improve Access and Connectivity:** Increase the number and types of Will County and regional destinations accessible throughout the day by all residents, employees, and visitors.

*Our Way Forward 2050* understands that the pace of technological advancements is ever increasing, and the emerging technologies in transportation are no exception. WCDOT will continue to be involved with interagency forums that discuss the potential impacts of emerging transportation-related technologies.

Together, we can establish a transportation system that promotes development, movement, and environmental sustainability for the future. By coordinating our objectives, resources, and collaborations, this strategy acts as a guide to guarantee that the transportation system addresses the changing requirements of those living in Will County.

Sincerely,

**Jeff L. Ronaldson, P.E.**

*DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION, COUNTY ENGINEER*

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# Plan Overview

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WELCOME TO

# Our Way Forward 2050!

***From busy northern suburbs to peaceful southern farmlands, Will County offers diverse communities connected by roads, trails, and transit. Will County's transportation system also supports North America's largest inland port.***

Will County is uniquely situated between two iconic Illinois landscapes — the City of Chicago and vast agricultural lands. The northern portion of the county reflects its close proximity to Chicago with a tapestry of suburban municipalities interwoven by a robust transportation network. The southern portion of the county resembles the natural and agricultural areas typical in neighboring Grundy and Kankakee Counties.

In Will County, townships have jurisdiction over a larger portion of the transportation network, where a grid of roadways provides the primary corridors that connect farms and rural communities. North or south, the influence of freight-oriented land uses and traffic can be felt throughout, as Will County is home to the largest inland port in North America, various other intermodal facilities, and an increasing number of freight- and logistics-focused facilities. Together, these factors present a unique set of conditions and considerations for moving people and goods within and through the county.

*Joliet Union Station*


*Sidewalk Improvements, Joliet*

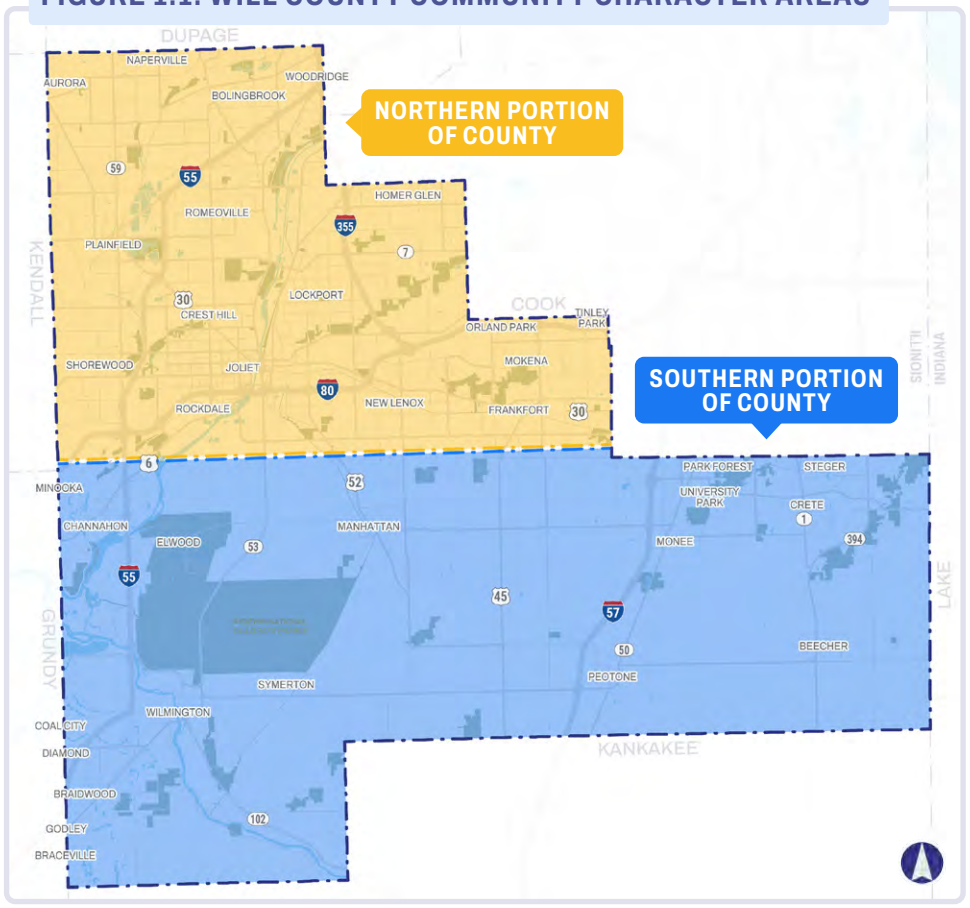

*Des Plaines River Valley, Lockport*

As Will County's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), *Our Way Forward 2050* provides a comprehensive framework for addressing Will County's transportation needs over the next 25 years. This Plan describes the county's transportation system, residents' and stakeholders' goals for transportation, current and projected demand and needs of the system, projects and policies to address those needs, funding available for implementing those projects and policies, and potential strategies for implementation. The plan is data-driven and performance-based, as well as heavily informed by community input.

*Our Way Forward 2050* serves as an update to the 2017 LRTP, *Will Connects 2040*, accounting for the typical evolution of transportation needs over time as well as more acute and abrupt changes in transportation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in socioeconomic conditions, transportation funding sources, and the ever-increasing rate at which transportation technologies are evolving make it challenging to predict every possible change in transportation needs over a 25-year period. Therefore, the county refreshes the LRTP every 8 to 10 years to keep it current. This update frequency also keeps the LRTP aligned with the regional transportation plan and planning horizons developed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), which updates its plan every 4 years based on state and federal statutes.

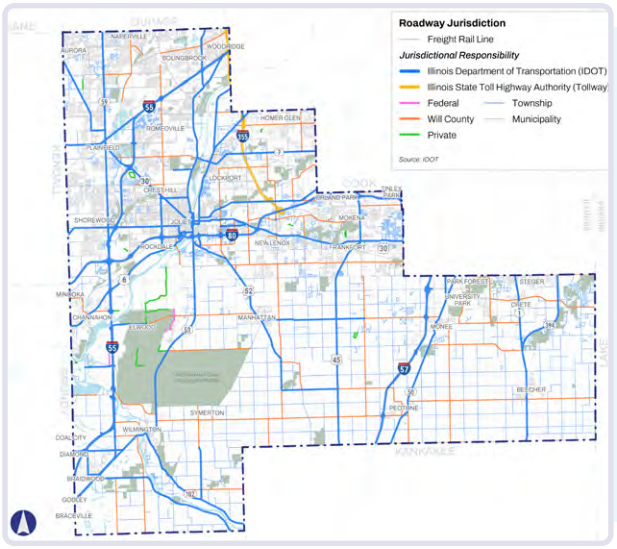
The projects, priorities, and policies recommended in this plan encompass all modes of transportation across the entirety of the transportation network within Will County, including roadways, grade crossings, non-motorized (bicycle and pedestrian) facilities, and transit. While these recommendations have been considered alongside projected available funding, *Our Way Forward 2050* is not a programming document. Rather, this plan is meant to guide future transportation investments which will be formalized through the county's multi-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).

**FIGURE 1.1. WILL COUNTY COMMUNITY CHARACTER AREAS**



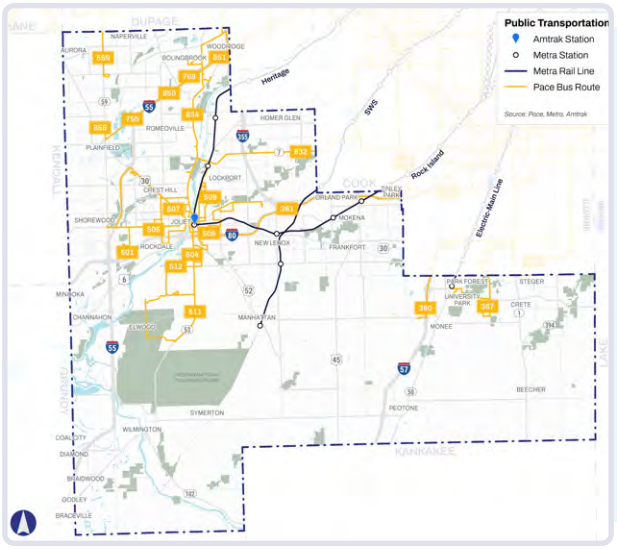
# Transportation Assets in Will County

*The county-owned and -maintained network is just a portion of the overall transportation network. More detail can be reviewed in the Existing Conditions Report in* **Appendix A.**



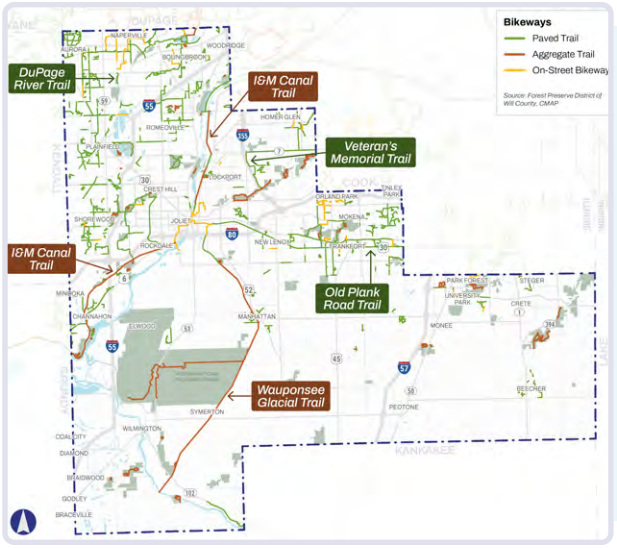

## Roadways

*Will County's roadway network encompasses multiple jurisdictions, with IDOT, the Illinois Tollway, Will County, municipalities, and townships each maintaining different portions*



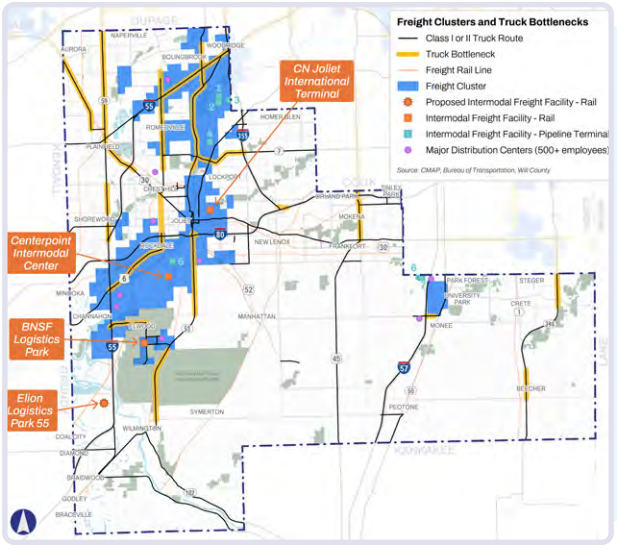

## Transit

*Public transit in Will County includes four Metra commuter rail lines with nine stations, Pace bus routes primarily serving the northern communities, and Amtrak service at Joliet Union Station*




## Pedestrian and Bicycle

*The county's non-motorized transportation network features several major trails including the I&M Canal Trail, Old Plank Road Trail, Wauponsee Glacial Trail, and Veterans Memorial Trail*




## Freight

*Will County is a major shipping hub where trucks, trains, and waterways move goods between warehouses, factories, markets locally and across the country, and to ports around the world*

# Developing the Plan

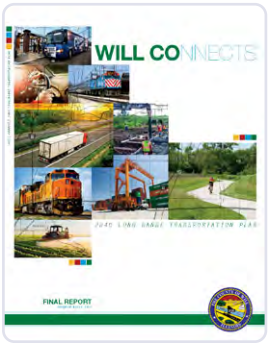
*Our Way Forward 2050* is intended to integrate with a suite of current transportation planning efforts specific to Will County and county roadways that have been completed since *Will Connects 2040*. This Plan is also designed as a tool for collaboration and coordination with partner agencies as they undergo their own planning efforts.

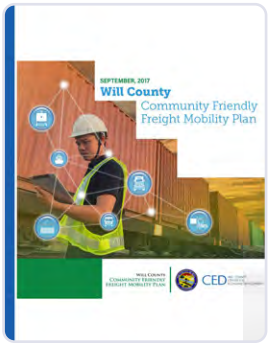
## Partner Transportation Agencies

- *Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)*
- *Illinois Tollway*
- *Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)*
- *CMAP*
- *Metra*
- *Pace*
- *Forest Preserve District of Will County (Forest Preserve)*
- *Townships*
- *Local Municipalities*

## Supporting Plans

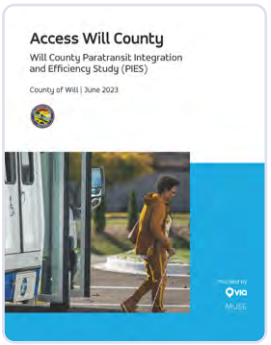
- *Will County Bikeway Plan (2016)*
- *Will County Community Friendly Freight Mobility Plan* (2017)
- *Moving Will County* (2022)
- *Will County Joliet Intermodal Transportation Master Plan* (2022)
- *Access Will County* (2023)
- *Alternative Fuels Readiness Plan* (2024)

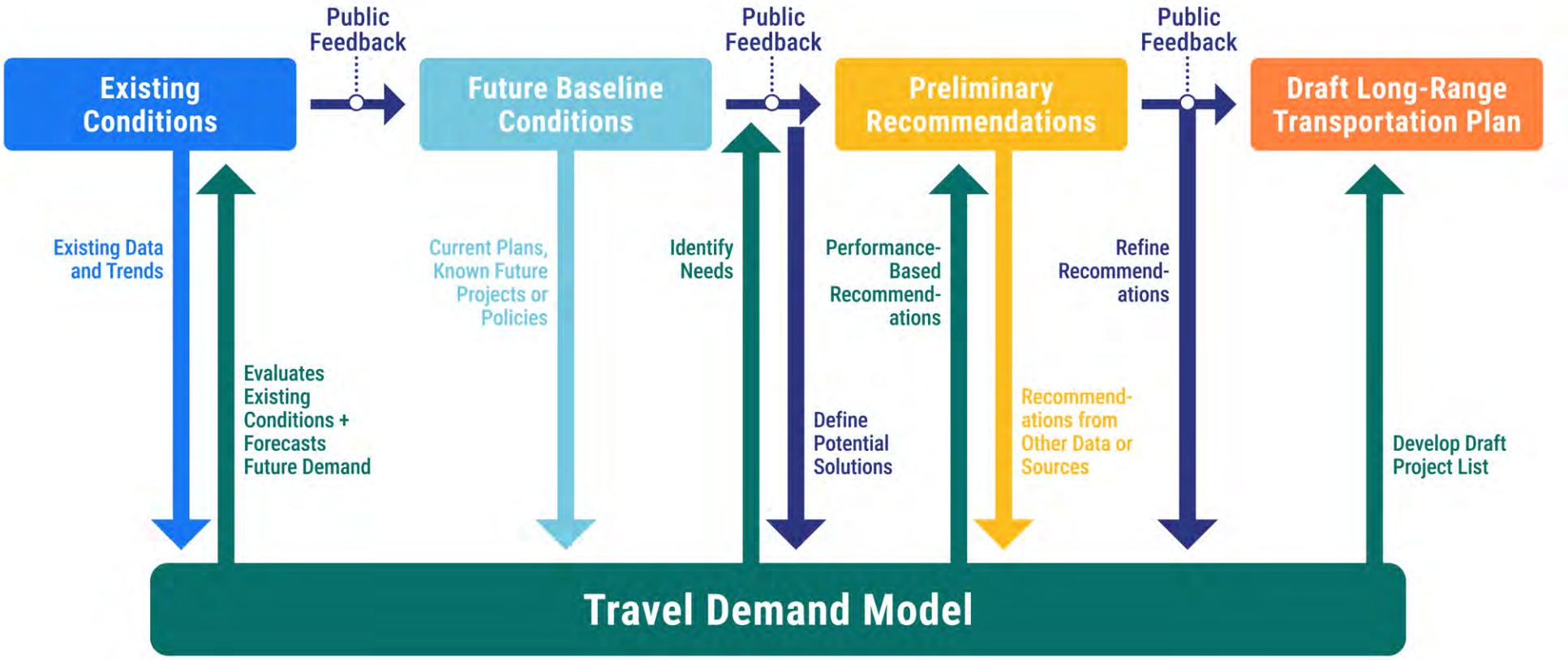







# Our Planning Process

The foundation of *Our Way Forward 2050* is an analysis of local, regional, state, and national socioeconomic and transportation datasets, as well as a review of known future projects or policies. These data provide the inputs for the travel demand model (TDM). The TDM, combined with the analyzed data and stakeholder and public input, identifies transportation needs and guides performance-based recommendations. This information provides the basis for preliminary recommendations, which are then refined and compared against a conservative estimate of projected county revenues. Stakeholder input and public feedback is gathered and considered at each step along the way.



# Demographic Trends Shaping the Future

02

***By 2050, Will County's population is anticipated to grow nearly 30%, adding over 200,000 residents.***

While some counties in Northeastern Illinois have experienced population decline, the population in Will County continues to rise. After Kendall County, the fastest-growing county in Illinois, Will County saw the largest percent population growth in the region from 2014 to 2022. There are approximately 700,000 residents and 239,000 households in the county, with the median age at 38.7 years old. Approximately 31% of residents are under the age of 20, and 15% of residents are over the age of 65.

Most commuters (76%) report traveling to work by single-occupancy vehicle. Of the remaining workers, 7% travel by carpool, 3% take public transportation, and less than 1% walk or bike. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home has increased in popularity.

Regional socioeconomic forecasts provided by CMAP indicate growth in the county over the next 25 years, with the county's population projected to grow nearly 30% by 2050. This growth — a rate of 0.9% per year — would result in approximately 215,000 new residents, bringing the total population to over 900,000.

The number of households is projected to climb nearly 50% to 371,000. The population as a whole is expected to age, with approximately 22% of residents being age 65 or older by 2050.

### TABLE 2.1. POPULATION GROWTH WITHIN THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS COUNTIES

| | Population | | | 2014-22 % Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| County | 2014 | 2019 | 2022 | |
| Will | 685,419 | 690,743 | 696,757 | 1.65 |
| Cook | 5,246,456 | 5,150,233 | 5,109,292 | -2.61 |
| DuPage | 932,708 | 922,921 | 920,901 | -1.27 |
| Kane | 527,306 | 532,403 | 514,182 | -2.49 |
| Lake | 705,186 | 696,535 | 709,150 | 0.56 |
| McHenry | 307,283 | 307,774 | 311,747 | 1.45 |
| Kendall | 121,350 | 128,990 | 137,254 | 13.11 |

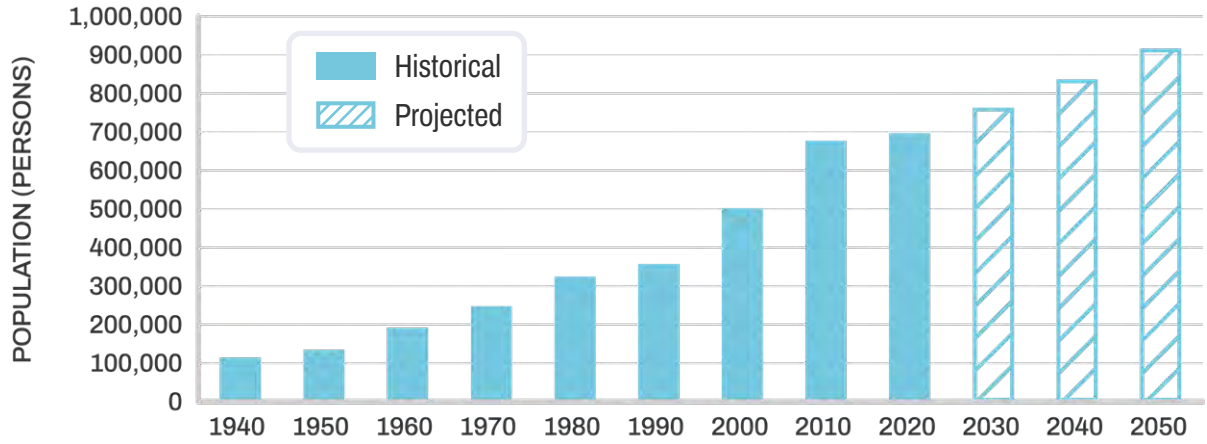
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

### TABLE 2.2. HOW WILL COUNTY RESIDENTS GET TO WORK

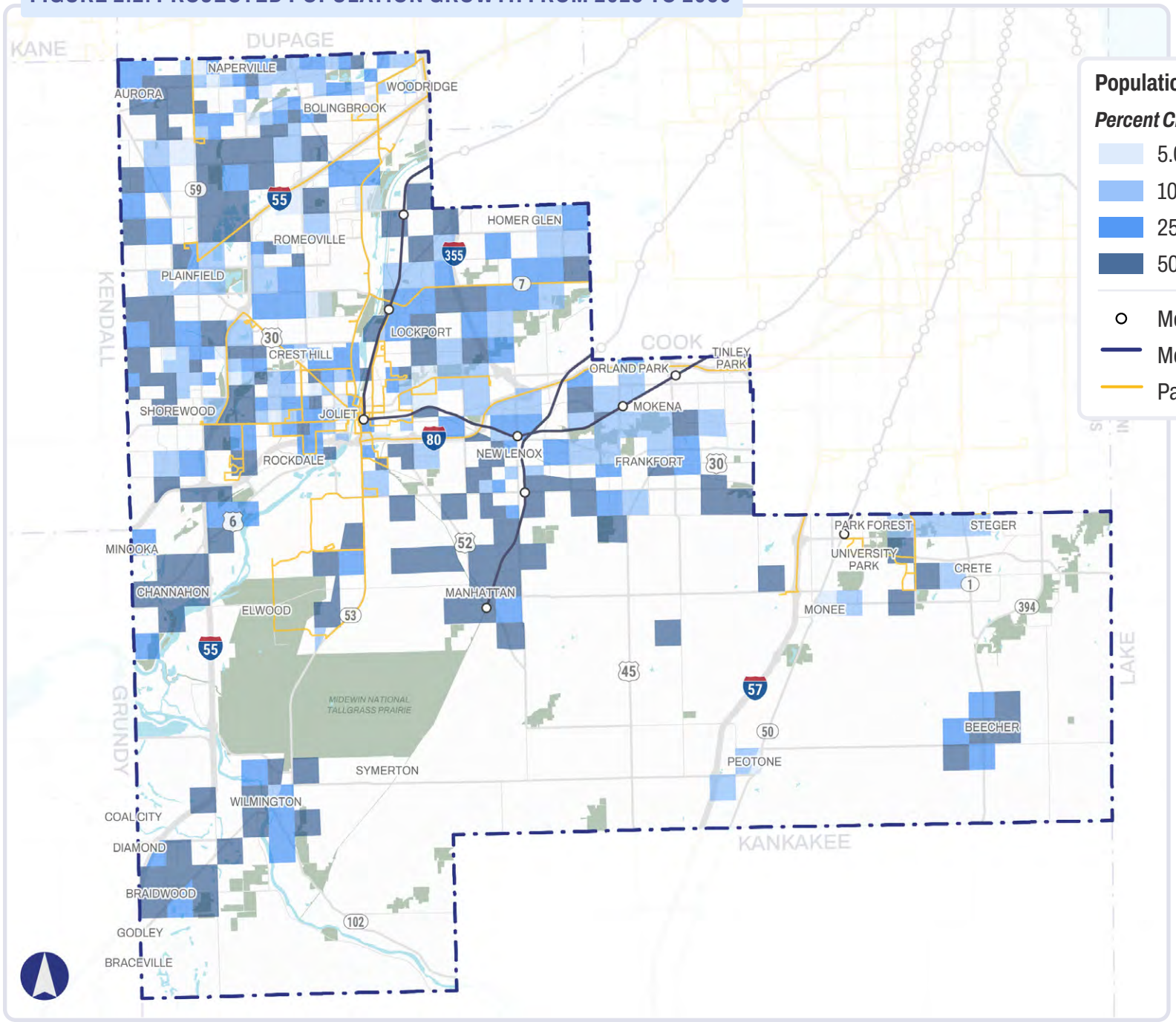
| Commute Mode | 2010-2014 | 2015-2019 | 2018-2022 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Drove Alone | 83% | 83% | 76% |
| Carpool | 7% | 6% | 7% |
| Transit | 4% | 4% | 3% |
| Walk | 1% | < 1% | < 1% |
| Other | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| Work from Home | 4% | 5% | 12% |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year ACS Estimates*

### FIGURE 2.1. WILL COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH FROM 1940 TO 2050



## FIGURE 2.2. PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH FROM 2023 TO 2050




*The county's population is forecast to grow more rapidly in the north near established urban areas, though Wilmington, Channahon, Manhattan, Peotone, and Beecher are also expected to experience high population growth rates.*

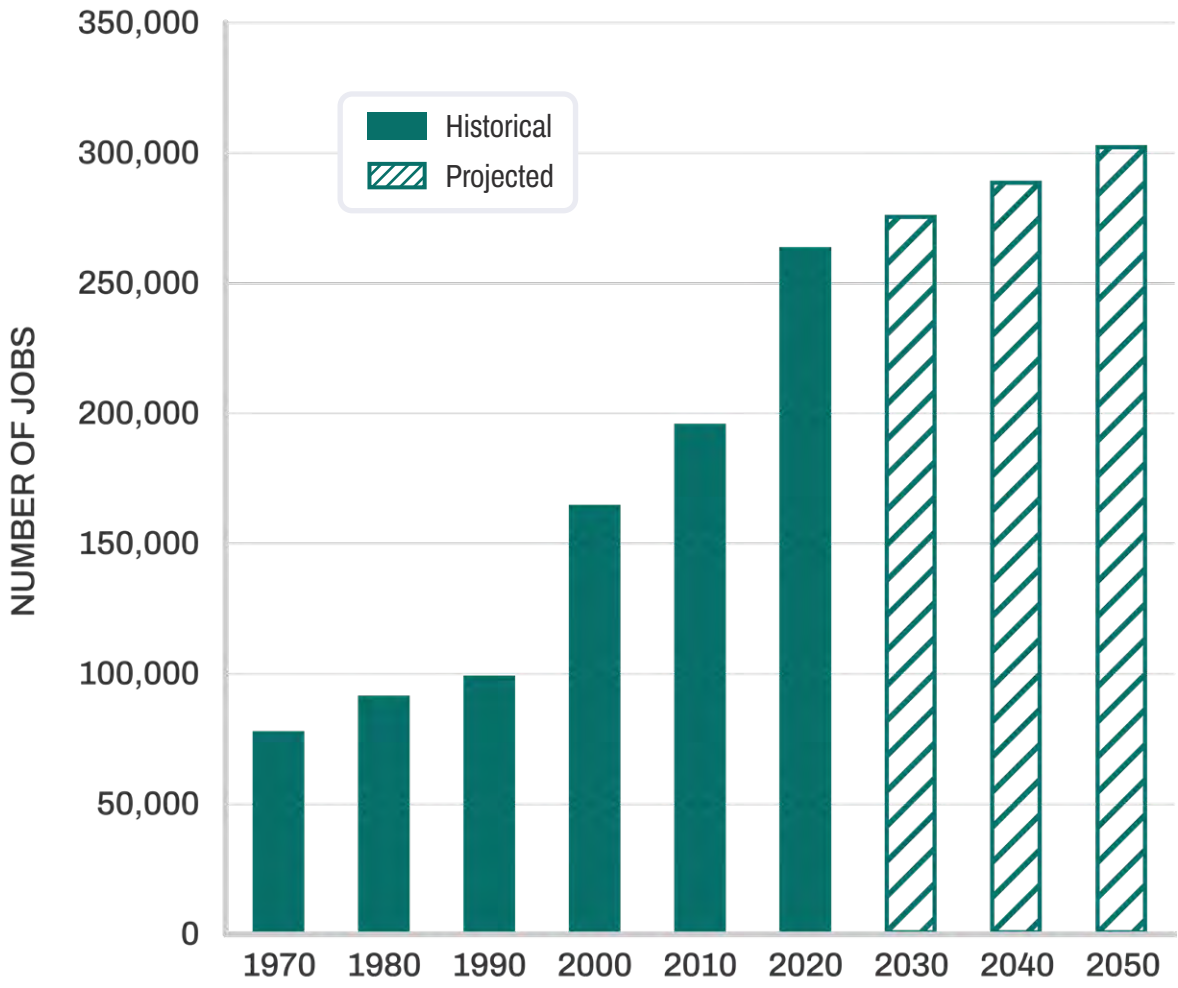
*Source: CMAP, Metra, Pace, Will County*

## Employment

As of 2023, there were an estimated 263,000 jobs within Will County. Job growth was robust over the preceding ten years. Estimates suggest employment growth was over 30% between 2013 and 2023, much higher than the 7.4% job growth in Northeastern Illinois overall. The top industry sectors for workers living in Will County were health care, retail trade, and education. Transportation, warehousing, and distribution are important sectors for employment and economic activity, underscoring the significance of the county's strategic location and highlighting the need for proactive planning of its transportation network.

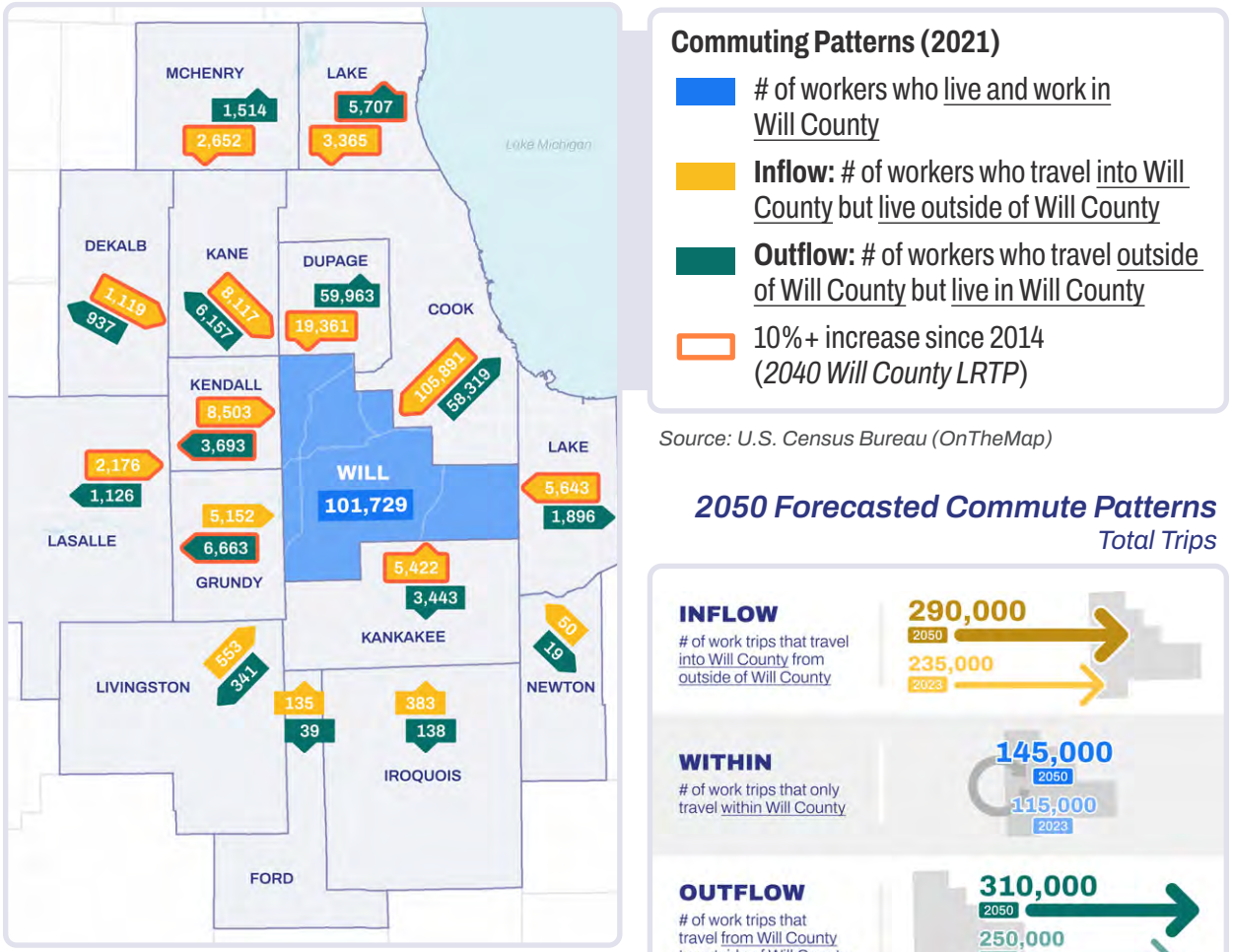
Employment projections estimate an additional 39,000 jobs in Will County by 2050, representing a 15% increase from 2023. The total number of jobs is expected to exceed 300,000. Ensuring that workers are able to access jobs is critical for employment growth. Will County's location within the CMAP region and the county's existing intermodal assets mean that transportation and distribution will likely remain important components of the county's economy. Effective planning and targeted infrastructure improvements would be advantageous for the continued success and growth of these freight-intensive sectors.

**FIGURE 2.3. WILL COUNTY EMPLOYMENT GROWTH FROM 1970 TO 2050**



## FIGURE 2.4. WILL COUNTY COMMUTING PATTERNS

### *2021 Commuting Patterns by County*



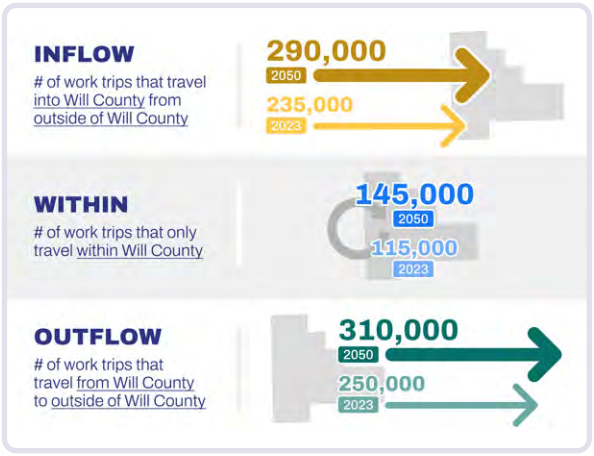

**Commuting Patterns (2021)**

- # of workers who live and work in Will County
- **Inflow:** # of workers who travel into Will County but live outside of Will County
- **Outflow:** # of workers who travel outside of Will County but live in Will County
- 10%+ increase since 2014 (*2040 Will County LRTP*)

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau (OnTheMap)*

### *2050 Forecasted Commute Patterns*

*Total Trips*




## Commute Trips

In a typical workday, there are more than 400,000 commute trips into, within, out of, and through Will County. The majority of commute trips are completed in single-occupancy vehicles and are generally concentrated in the mornings and evenings, corresponding to the highest levels of roadway congestion. There is a significant regional inflow and outflow of workers, particularly between Cook, DuPage, and Will Counties. Over two-thirds of workers living in Will County work outside of the county. Conversely, more jobs in Will County are held by residents of other counties than by Will County residents.

A slightly higher proportion of commute trips flow out of Will County (42%) than into it (39%). DuPage County receives the most trips by outbound workers residing in Will County, while Cook County generates the most inflow into the county. About 19% of commute trips are made by people who both live and work within Will County. 2050 projections indicate these numbers will grow, but the proportion of commute trips will remain similar.

# 2050 Travel Forecast

The 2050 travel forecast indicates substantial increases in roadway use. Vehicular traffic on Will County's roadways is projected to grow in line with its population, with an anticipated 30% growth in vehicle-miles traveled (VMT). Freight traffic is expected to outpace this growth, with truck VMT expected to grow 57%. While all roadway users will experience roadway congestion, minor collector roads and local roads, which typically provide access to homes and businesses and under township or municipal jurisdiction, will be particularly burdened. Minor collector roads and local roads will see a 72% and 45% increase in VMT, respectively.

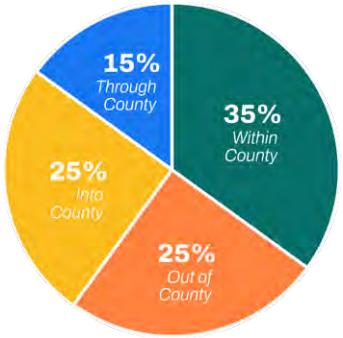
## FIGURE 2.5. WILL COUNTY 2050 TRAVEL FORECAST

### *2050 Travel Forecast Impacts*

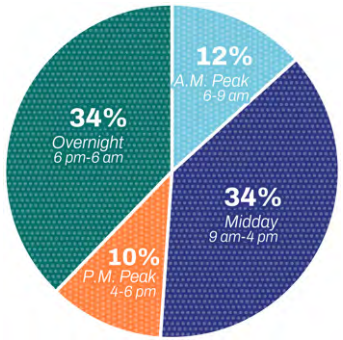
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **30%** | **increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT)** | 25% *increase in miles traveled by passenger vehicles*<br>57% *increase in miles traveled by trucks* |
| **39%** | **increase in travel on local and collector roads** | 25% *increase in travel on arterials*<br>28% *increase in travel on interstates* |
| **16%** | **average increase in travel time per trip** | 15% *increase in auto travel time (average trip 13 minutes)*<br>25% *increase in truck travel time (average trip 19 minutes)* |
| **38%** | **of all trips will begin and end in Will County** *(internal trips)* | 25% *of all trips will be "pass-through" trips*<br>37% *of trips will either begin or end outside Will County* |
| **9%** | **of internal trips are commute trips** | 18% *internal trips to/from home are shopping-related*<br>34% *of internal trips do not begin or end at a person's home* |

### *2050 Forecasted Truck Travel*

*Truck Trip Routings*




*Truck Trips by Time of Day*



# Engagement Overview

03

*The Will County LRTP,* Our Way Forward 2050*, is a community-driven initiative designed to guide transportation policies and investments through the year 2050. Public engagement has been a central pillar of the planning process, ensuring that resident and stakeholder input informs transportation priorities. This chapter combines findings from all engagement waves conducted throughout the development of the plan, summarizing key activities, outreach efforts, and feedback.*

## Engagement Approach

The engagement process was structured into three waves:

- **Wave 1 (November 2023 - March 2024):** Focused on gathering initial input regarding transportation needs, challenges, and priorities.
- **Wave 2 (July 2024 - December 2024):** Built upon Wave 1 findings by presenting potential solutions and gathering feedback on recommendations.
- **Wave 3 (March 2025-June 2025):** Held community open houses across the county to collect final feedback on the draft plan before presenting it to the County Public Works Committee and County Board for approval.

The engagement strategy utilized multiple outreach methods to ensure broad representation and participation, including in-person events, online surveys, virtual meetings, stakeholder discussions, and interactive mapping activities.


*Pop-up in Plainfield*

*Fall Workshop in Manhattan*


*Fall Workshop in Wilmington*

*Pop-up in Joliet*

# Engagement Activities

Community engagement took place at various county-wide events, allowing residents to provide feedback in informal settings. These events were designed to meet people where they are, ensuring geographic diversity and reaching residents who might not otherwise participate in traditional planning meetings.

To make engagement fun and accessible, interactive exercises such as priority voting, sticker-based preference polling, and discussions were incorporated. Games, prizes, and candy encouraged participation across all age groups.

The final phase of public engagement, Wave 3, involved county-wide community open houses. These hearings provided residents with an opportunity to review the draft plan, ask questions of the project team, and gather public comments.

### *WAVE 1 EVENTS (NOV 2023 - FEB 2024):*

- Joliet Light Up the Holidays
- Channaholidays
- Peotone Craft + Vendor Fair
- Plainfield President's Day Event

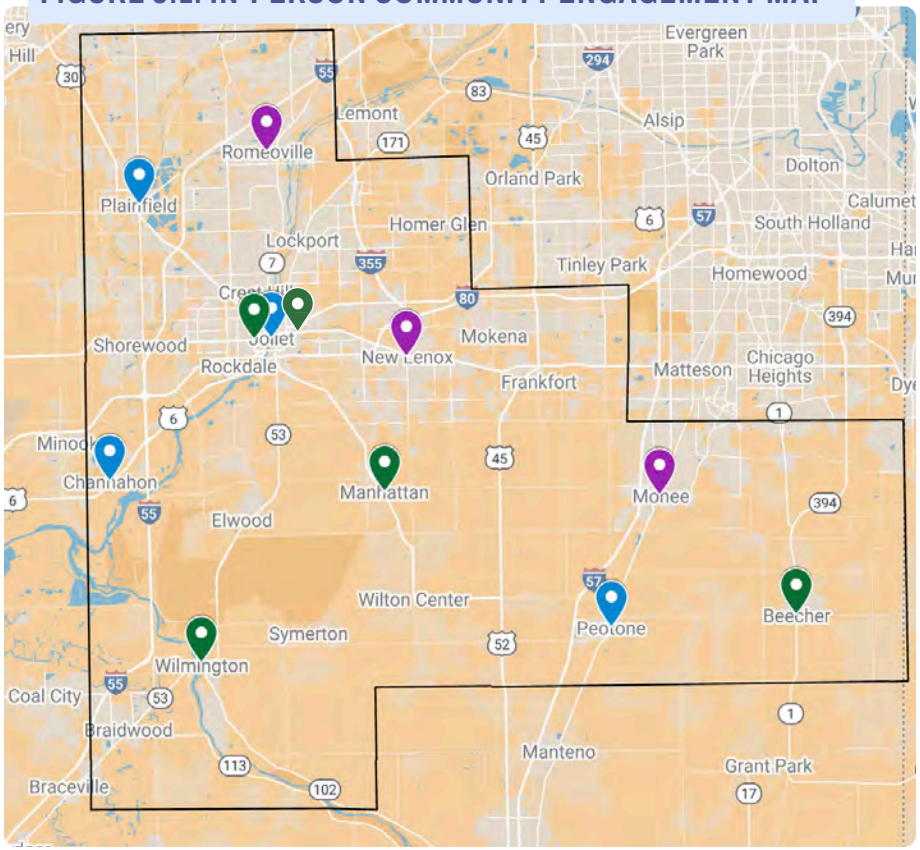
### *WAVE 2 EVENTS (AUG - NOV 2024):*

- Kidz Fest, Joliet
- Beecher Workshop
- Manhattan Workshop
- Wilmington Workshop
- Joliet Workshop

### *WAVE 3 EVENTS (MAY - JUNE 2025):*

- Romeoville Community Open House
- New Lenox Community Open House
- Monee Community Open House

**FIGURE 3.1. IN-PERSON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MAP**




**WAVE #1:** POP-UP LOCATION

**WAVE #2:** WORKSHOP LOCATION

**WAVE #3:** COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE LOCATION

# Stakeholder Conversations

In-depth discussions with municipalities, transportation organizations, and other industry representatives were key throughout the waves of engagement.

## Wave 1 Stakeholder Discussions

Discussions were held with key stakeholders to identify shared transportation goals and challenges. These conversations provided insight into regional priorities, helping to balance mobility, economic development, and quality of life.

- Municipalities and townships: Identified common transportation goals and coordination needs.
- Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie: Discussed balancing transportation infrastructure with environmental conservation.
- Trucking associations and regional freight stakeholders: Addressed freight movement challenges, congestion, and industrial growth impacts.
- Pace, Metra, IDOT, and INDOT: Examined transit connectivity, service expansion, and multimodal integration.

### KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

- **Bike and pedestrian safety:** Need for enhanced infrastructure and safer crossings.
- **Truck traffic management:** Strategies to reduce congestion and minimize conflicts with residential areas.
- **Multimodal expansion:** Improved transit options and integration with existing infrastructure.
- **East-west connectivity:** Addressing gaps in the transportation network to improve mobility.
- **Freight and community balance:** Ensuring industrial growth does not negatively impact environmental and residential areas.
- **First- and last-mile connectivity**: Enhancing access to transit and freight hubs for efficiency and convenience.

## Wave 2 Stakeholder Discussions

The second round of stakeholder discussions focused on refining plan recommendations and alignment with regional priorities. They provided an opportunity for stakeholders to review the draft project list, ensuring that the final plan reflects local needs and long-term transportation goals.

- **Will County Governmental League, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, and County Roadway Commissioners:** Presented the draft project list and key recommendations, inviting feedback on priorities, feasibility, and potential funding strategies.
- **Municipal and regional leaders:** Provided input on infrastructure needs, regional coordination challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Freight and transit stakeholders:** Reviewed proposed projects affecting freight movement, public transit, and multimodal connectivity.

### KEY DISCUSSION TOPICS

- **Review of the draft project list:** Stakeholders evaluated proposed projects, suggested additions, and identified gaps. Feedback helped refine the prioritization of transportation improvements.
- **Freight movement strategies:** Discussions focused on mitigating congestion and truck traffic, and addressing industrial growth impacts.
- **Road funding and investment:** Stakeholders explored funding opportunities as well as strategies for securing state and federal support.
- **Regional coordination:** Emphasis on cross-jurisdictional collaboration to align transportation efforts across municipalities and agencies.

## Advisory Committee Meetings

An Advisory Committee was established to provide ongoing feedback and to ensure the Plan reflects the diverse perspectives of Will County. Members represented a broad range of municipalities, townships, and organizations, ensuring balanced input. The committee played a critical role in guiding the process, reviewing key findings and shaping recommendations at every stage.

- **AC1 (November 8, 2023):** ***Project Introduction and Vision, Goals, and Objectives***
  Members were introduced to the planning process, key objectives, and initial data collection efforts. They provided insights on priority issues and opportunities for community engagement.
- **AC2 (April 22, 2024):** ***Findings from Wave 1 Engagement***
  The committee reviewed public input gathered during the first phase of engagement, identifying major themes and refining focus areas for the plan.
- **AC3 (October 9, 2024):** ***Preliminary Recommendations Review***
  Committee members discussed draft recommendations, ensuring alignment with community priorities and feasibility for implementation, which helped refine strategies before broader public review.
- **AC4 (March 12, 2025):** ***Project List Review***
  The committee reviewed a draft list of transportation projects, evaluating their alignment with the plan's goals and county priorities.
- **AC5 (May 20, 2025):** ***Draft Plan Review***
  Members reviewed the near-final plan, offering final refinements and preparation for the public hearing process.


*Fall Workshop in Manhattan*

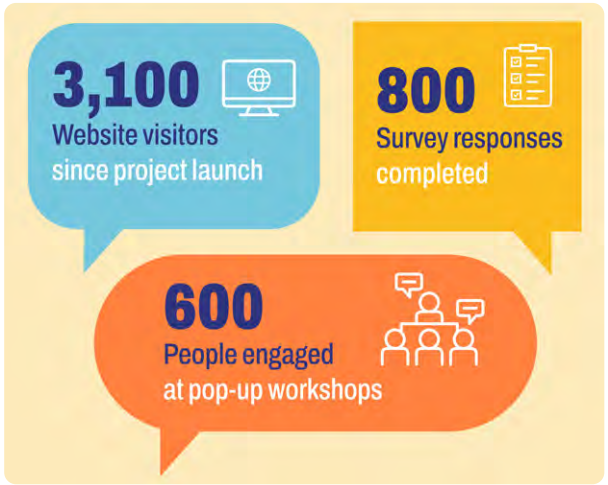
## Community Surveys

Three community surveys were conducted to gather broad public input, engaging a total of 1,696 respondents. Each survey focused on different phases of the project, helping to identify priorities, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in quality of life.

- **Wave 1 Survey (Nov 2023 - Feb 2024):**
  This survey received 878 responses and asked community members about their biggest challenges and needs surrounding transportation across the county. All modes of transportation were included, such as walking, biking, driving, taking public transportation, and using ride share.
- **Trails Survey (July 2024 - Aug 2024):**
  This survey received 199 responses and specifically assessed community preferences for trail connectivity, access, and amenities. Respondents highlighted gaps in the existing trail network and expressed interest in safer bike and pedestrian connections.
- **Wave 2 Survey (Nov 2024 - Dec 2024):**
  This survey received 619 responses and asked survey-takers to rate the urgency of solutions to the issues raised in the Wave 1 Survey. Popular solutions included creating new dedicated truck corridors, increasing transit service and access, and reconstructing and widening roads.

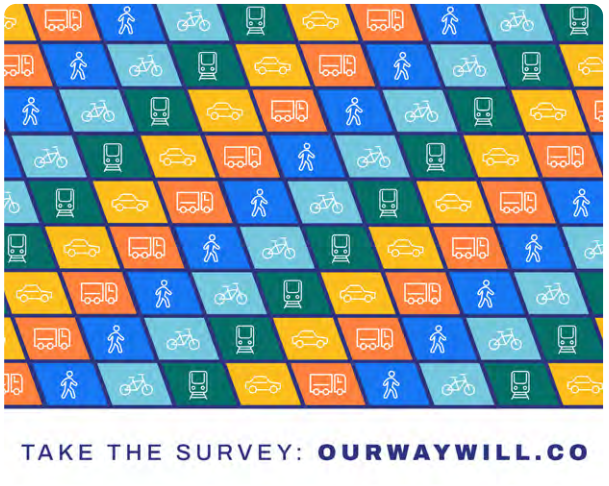
# Project Communications

*Throughout the process, communication materials were designed to promote engagement opportunities. Communication packets were shared with stakeholders across the county to include in their digital and print communications. Banners were also placed on Pace Bus routes.*

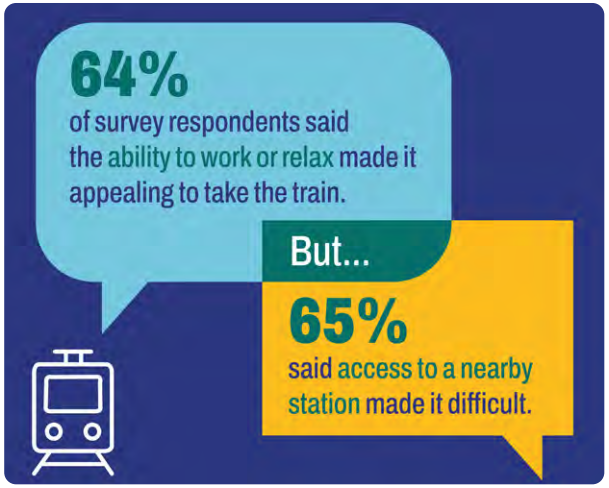



*Post-Wave #1 communications push*


*Wave #2 communications push*




*Wave #1 Survey communications push*




*Post-survey communications push*


*Wave #2 Survey communications push*


*Fall workshops communications push*

## Virtual Open Houses

Two rounds of virtual meetings provided additional opportunities for in-depth discussions.

- **Wave 1 Virtual Open House (Feb 2024):** 53 attendees, 155 comments on Miro Board
- **Wave 2 Virtual Open House (Dec 2024):** 23 attendees, 29 comments recorded

Topics included improving east-west transportation connections, enhancing bike/pedestrian safety, and exploring multimodal transportation options.

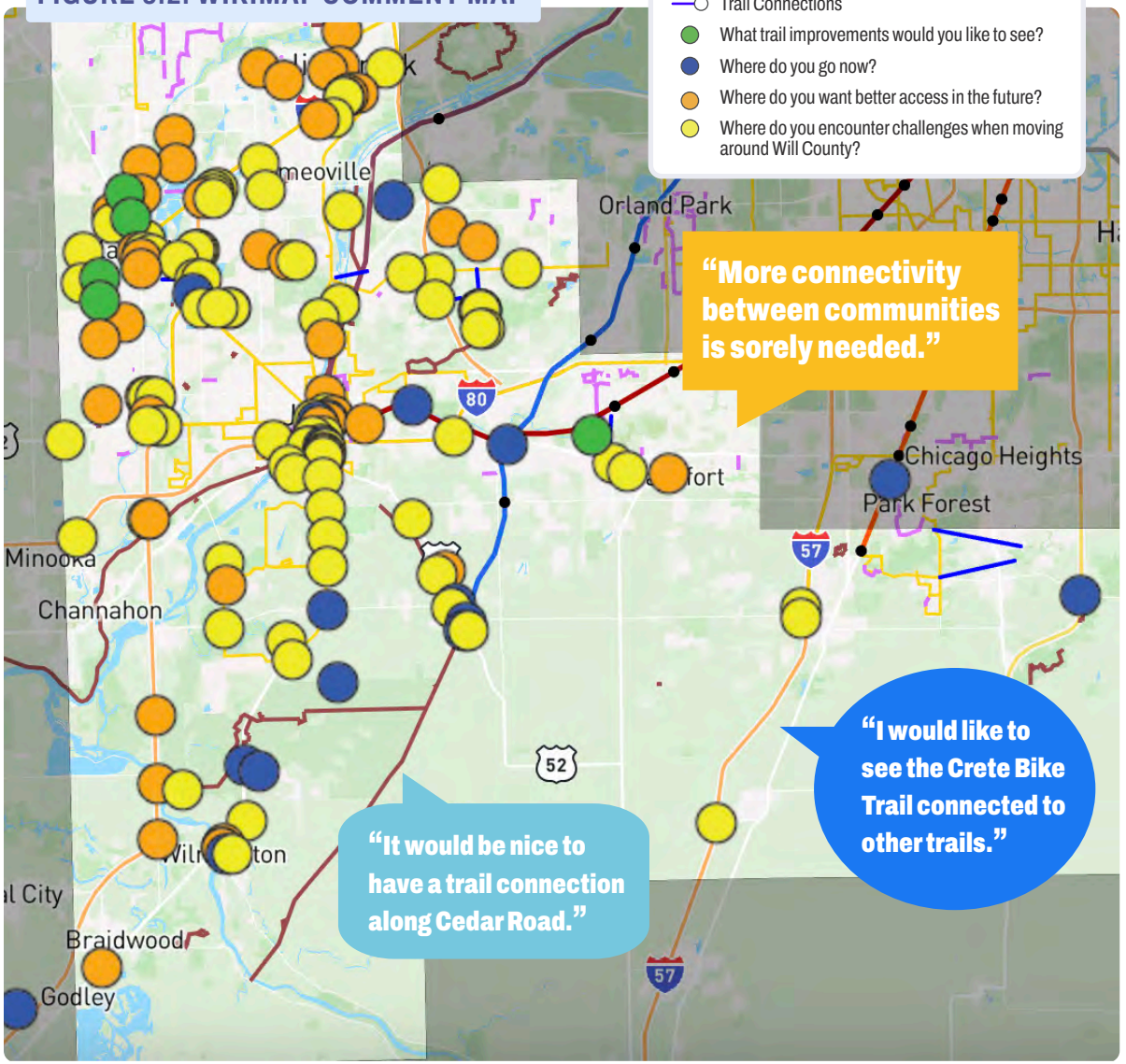
## Wikimapping Activity

An interactive online map collected geospatial feedback from the community:

- **Wave 1 (Nov 2023 - Mar 2024):** 40 location-specific suggestions
- **Wave 2 (July 2024 - Dec 2024):** 163 additional responses focusing on trail connectivity and road safety concerns.

The Wikimapping activity asked four (4) questions: "**What trail improvements would you like to see?**","**Where do you go now?**", and "**Where do you want better access in the future?**", and "**Where do you encounter challenges when moving around Will County?**" Click here to see all input received.

FIGURE 3.2. WIKIMAP COMMENT MAP



# Engagement Findings

Through the extensive public engagement process, several key transportation priorities emerged. Across community surveys, stakeholder discussions, and public meetings, residents and stakeholders consistently emphasized the need for safer streets, improved multimodal options, better freight management, and sustainable transportation investments. These priorities reflect a strong desire for a transportation system that supports mobility and quality of life while balancing economic growth and environmental preservation.

## Safety and Accessibility

Throughout the engagement process, people consistently emphasized the need for safer streets, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. Many voiced concerns about poorly maintained sidewalks, a lack of designated bike lanes, and dangerous intersections that make walking and biking less accessible. High-traffic areas near schools, parks, and commercial areas were identified as particular problem spots, with calls for improved lighting, added crosswalks, and traffic-calming measures such as speed humps and curb extensions.

Additionally, truck traffic in residential neighborhoods was frequently cited as a safety issue, with many residents advocating for truck restrictions on local streets. Speeding and cut-through traffic were also common concerns, with participants requesting better enforcement of speed limits and consideration of road design changes to slow down vehicles. Improving safety in these areas would not only enhance mobility but also contribute to a higher quality of life by making public spaces more welcoming and walkable.

*Fall workshop in Wilmington*

**75%** **OF RESPONDENTS**

**identified lack of infrastructure (e.g., bike lanes, adequate bike parking) as a major barrier to biking**

*“We need more safety measures when walking, biking, and riding through intersections.”*

POP-UP COMMENT

## Public Transit and Multimodal Connectivity

Public feedback reflected a strong desire for more accessible and reliable public transit options. Many residents expressed frustration with the infrequency of bus and train services, particularly outside of peak commuting hours, making it difficult for those who rely on transit for work, school, or errands. Expanding Metra and Pace services, including increasing frequency and providing better route coverage, was a top priority for many survey respondents.

Another major challenge identified was first-mile/last-mile connectivity, with limited options for getting to and from transit hubs. Residents suggested solutions such as improved pedestrian infrastructure near transit stops, additional bike storage facilities, and transit services to help bridge these gaps. Additionally, many supported partnerships with ride share services or local shuttle programs to enhance access in areas with limited public transit coverage. These improvements would help make public transportation a more viable alternative to driving, ultimately reducing congestion and supporting more sustainable travel choices.

## Freight and Roadway Infrastructure

Concerns about increasing truck traffic, particularly in residential areas, were a recurring theme in community discussions. Many residents noted the impact of freight movement on neighborhood safety, air quality, and roadway conditions, with particular concerns about trucks using local streets as shortcuts. There was strong interest in the creation of designated truck routes that would direct freight traffic away from residential areas while ensuring efficient goods movement for businesses.

Additionally, congestion on major roadways was identified as a growing issue, with calls for modernized intersections and roadway capacity improvements. Many residents suggested signal timing adjustments, intersection redesigns, and strategic road widening to help ease traffic bottlenecks. In addition to infrastructure improvements, stronger enforcement of truck weight limits and roadway regulations was recommended to prevent excessive wear and tear on local roads. Participants felt investing in these solutions would help balance economic growth with community livability.

**42%** **OF RESPONDENTS**

**supported increased transit service and access**

*"It's hard to get around Will County, would love improved public transit."*

POP-UP COMMENT

**45%** **OF RESPONDENTS**

**supported limiting or redirecting truck traffic to reduce congestion, and truck restrictions to enhance safety, and protect residential areas**

## Environmental and Economic Considerations

The engagement process revealed widespread support for sustainable transportation investments, with many residents advocating for expanded electric vehicle infrastructure, multimodal corridors, and better connections between transit and green spaces. There was particular concern about freight traffic impacting environmentally sensitive areas, such as Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, with calls for better planning to mitigate negative effects on local ecosystems.

At the same time, many participants recognized the link between transportation investments and economic development. Improved transit, walkability, and multimodal connectivity were seen as key drivers for attracting businesses, residents, and tourism. Strengthening connections between trails, transit hubs, and commercial centers was identified as a strategy to support both economic vitality and environmental sustainability. By prioritizing projects that align with these dual goals, the county can foster growth while preserving its natural and cultural assets.

*"We need a car to go anywhere, I wish that wasn't the case."*

POP-UP COMMENT

## Trail Connections

A major theme throughout public engagement was the desire for a seamless and connected trail network that links neighborhoods, parks, transit hubs, and key destinations. Many residents highlighted the importance of trails not just for recreation, but also as viable transportation routes for walking and biking. A more cohesive trail system would allow for safer, more convenient non-motorized travel, reducing reliance on cars while promoting health and well-being.

Safety at trail crossings was another key concern, particularly where trails intersect with busy roadways. Many participants noted the need for enhanced signage, lighting, and traffic control measures at these points to reduce conflicts between drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Suggestions included flashing beacons, pedestrian islands and signalized crossings to make trail users more visible and improve overall safety.

There was also interest in expanding the trail network to reach under-served areas and creating better connections between trails and local roads. This would provide better access to outdoor recreation and transportation, particularly for communities with limited green space, limited mobility options, and high instances of bicycle and pedestrian crashes. Additionally, many residents requested better wayfinding signage to make the trail system easier to navigate, along with amenities such as seating, bike parking, and lighting to enhance comfort and usability. These improvements would make trails more accessible and appealing to a wider range of users, supporting both community well-being and local tourism.

**52%** **OF RESPONDENTS**

**identified lack of connectivity as a major barrier to moving around the county's trails systems**

*"I would like better, interactive [trail] maps so I can plan my route proactively. Sometimes the existing maps are hard to make out — I need streets included so I have more to reference."*

POP-UP COMMENT

# Public Support for Proposed Solutions

*In Wave 2, the public was presented with potential solutions and asked to rank them. Preferred solutions included the following:*



## Roadway Improvements

The community expressed strong support for the reconstruction and widening of key corridors to alleviate congestion, improve traffic flow, and accommodate future growth. These roadway improvements aim to enhance accessibility while reducing travel times and increasing safety for all road users.

## Safety Enhancements

There was widespread backing for Complete Streets designs, which focus on creating safer, more inclusive roadways for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. Additionally, speed management measures were recommended to reduce traffic-related accidents and improve safety, particularly in residential areas and near schools.

## Transit Expansion

Public input highlighted a desire for more frequent Metra service and additional Pace routes, which would improve access to public transit and make it more reliable for riders. This would enhance regional connectivity and support those who rely on transit for daily transportation while encouraging others to use transit.

## Active Transportation

Residents supported expanding infrastructure to encourage walking and biking. Proposed investments included new sidewalks, bike facilities, and key intersection improvements, all designed to provide safer, more accessible options for active transportation, promoting a healthier and more sustainable transportation network.

# Feedback on the Draft Plan

The final phase of engagement featured three county-wide community open houses in Romeoville, New Lenox, and Monee. They gave the public an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Plan before it was finalized and brought to the County Public Works Committee and County Board for adoption.

At each open house, attendees were presented with key elements of the Plan, including the project list, priorities, and guiding strategies. Participants asked questions, provided written and verbal comments, and spoke directly with project staff. Informational displays and printed materials were available in accessible language to make planning concepts easy to understand and support meaningful dialogue.

In addition to gathering input, the open houses served as an important educational opportunity. Conversations helped clarify the purpose and scope of a Long Range Transportation Plan, including what the county has direct control over—such as county roadways and local investments—and what it can influence or advocate for in coordination with other agencies like IDOT, Pace, and Metra.

The feedback received at these open houses validated the priorities outlined in the draft Plan and reaffirmed community interest in safer, more connected, and more sustainable transportation options. Many participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage in the process and influence final decisions.

## KEY PUBLIC COMMENT TAKEAWAYS

- **Safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists:** Participants emphasized the need for continuous sidewalks, bike paths, and safe crossings—especially near schools, parks, and residential areas.
- **Truck traffic management and bypass routes:** Residents advocated for designated truck routes and bypasses to keep freight traffic out of village centers and residential neighborhoods.
- **Fiscal responsibility and long-term maintenance:** There was concern about the long-term cost of new infrastructure and a call for more compact, cost-effective solutions that prioritize sustainability.
- **Desire for equitable investment across the county:** Residents want to make sure that investments in transit and active transportation stay top of mind for the future.
- **Desire for neighborhood traffic calming:** Residents requested speed reductions, speed bumps, and other measures to slow vehicles in residential areas.

> *"Please consider ways to derive money from logistic hubs and businesses to complete road projects. Taxpayers shouldn't be the only one paying for improvements to infrastructure."*
>
> COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE COMMENT

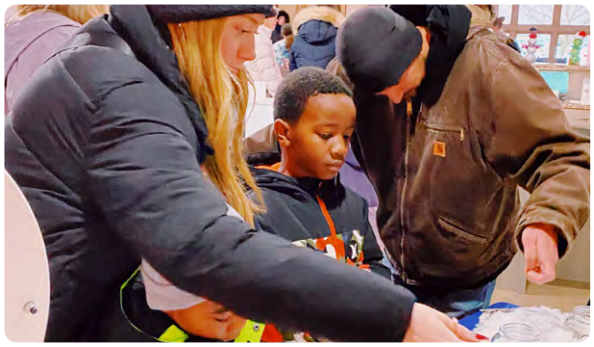

*Community Open House in Romeoville*

# Conclusion

The engagement process for *Our Way Forward 2050* informed the transportation planning process by capturing diverse community perspectives. The identified priorities will guide investment and policy decisions, ensuring Will County's transportation system remains safe, resilient, accessible, in good repair, and supportive of the economy and quality of life.

This comprehensive engagement process also established a framework for inclusive, transparent decision-making that can serve Will County well beyond the life of this Plan. By elevating the voices of residents, municipalities, and industry stakeholders, the county has laid the groundwork for a transportation future rooted in collaboration and shared values. As the Plan moves toward adoption and implementation, continued dialogue and partnership will be essential to turning these goals into real, impactful change for the communities of Will County.

For more details on community and stakeholder engagement, see **Appendix B**.



*Pop-up in Channahon*

*Fall workshop in Wilmington*


*Pop-up in Joliet*

*Pop-up in Peotone*

*Fall workshop in Wilmington*

*Pop-up in Joliet*

# Vision, Goals, and Objectives

04

## Vision

***Enhance the quality of life for county residents, workers, and visitors by providing a safe, affordable, healthy, reliable, and economically supportive transportation system.***

## Goals and Objectives

This Plan's vision is supported by the county's goals and objectives, which are rooted in data-driven analysis of current transportation conditions, public and stakeholder feedback, and review of other County, state, regional, and Federal plans. Several objectives apply to more than one goal. The goals and objectives provide a strategic framework for evaluating transportation outcomes over the next 25 years.

*GOAL*

### Ensure Safety for All Travelers

Provide a safe transportation system for any means of travel, accommodating motorized and nonmotorized (e.g., walking and biking) trips.

#### *Objectives*

- Reduce fatalities and injuries for all travelers, no matter how they travel.
- Expand opportunities for safely walking and biking to destinations.
- Partner with all relevant agencies and departments to improve safety through education, engineering, enforcement, emergency response, and equity.

*GOAL*

### Maintain and Modernize Existing Transportation Conditions

Preserve and maintain transportation assets and manage their operations using a range of strategies, tools, and technologies; modernize infrastructure to latest standards when possible.

#### *Objectives*

- Maintain the county's transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair, ensuring safe conditions for travelers.
- Improve the condition of township and municipal transportation assets through partnerships.
- Strengthen transportation systems (infrastructure and operations) to be more resilient to various challenges and risks.
- Plan for and extend the longevity of infrastructure.
- Upgrade transportation infrastructure to meet modern design standards when opportunities arise.

*GOAL*

### Support Economic Development

Foster economic development and competitiveness by providing a safe, reliable, and accessible multimodal transportation system to move more people and goods.

#### *Objectives*

- Improve economic opportunities for all county residents and workers, ensuring underserved populations are included.
- Coordinate land use/development and transportation decisions to accommodate growth in a cost-effective way.
- Improve the efficiency and reliability of the existing transportation system to do more with what Will County has available.
- Design infrastructure that can accommodate changing demands over time.
- Support recreational opportunities to enhance the local economy.
- Reduce the cost of transportation for County residents.

GOAL

## Improve Freight Movement

Provide access to local, regional, national, and international markets while preserving residents' quality of life and protecting the environment.

### *Objectives*

- Ensure access to local, regional, national, and international markets.
- Increase supply chain reliability by modernizing freight and intermodal (e.g., rail/truck transfer) facilities.
- Reduce the negative impacts of truck traffic for residents, such as noise, pollution, safety concerns, and road damage.
- Plan and design transportation infrastructure to accommodate freight movement in coordination with all partners.
- Encourage the shift from freight transport by truck to other transportation options (e.g., rail or barge).

GOAL

## Expand Sustainable Transportation Options

Increase the availability and usability of multiple sustainable transportation options — such as transit, walking, biking, and alternative fuel vehicles — for residents, employees, visitors and commerce.

### *Objectives*

- Improve connections between transit stops and travelers' final destinations.
- Support recreational opportunities for residents to improve quality of life.
- Reduce emissions and improve air quality.
- Expand destinations reasonably accessible by transit, bike, and walking.
- Encourage the shift from freight transport by truck to other transportation options (e.g., rail or barge).

GOAL

## Improve Access and Connectivity

Increase the number and types of Will County and regional destinations accessible throughout the day by all residents, employees, and visitors.

### *Objectives*

- Improve connections between transit stops and travelers' final destinations.
- Increase east-west travel options and reduce east-west travel times within the county and to and from neighboring communities.
- Increase destinations accessible throughout the day for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Expand county and regional destinations accessible by transit, bike, and walking.
- Reduce the distance and time residents spend traveling.

# Existing & Future Transportation Needs

05

***Over the past decade, changes both anticipated and unanticipated have shaped the growth and evolution of transportation needs within Will County.***

Changes to the state gas tax law provided increased revenue, enabling the county to complete many of the key roadway projects identified in the previous *Will Connects 2040* plan more rapidly than originally anticipated. For example, projects along various segments of Laraway Road have advanced through the engineering process or been constructed. Transit within the county also saw big changes: a new Metra stop was added in Romeoville along the Heritage Corridor Line, the state-of-the-art Joliet Transportation Center opened, and Pace bus routes provided bus transit to key destinations throughout the county. The growing prominence of Will County's inland port spurred construction or expansion of warehousing and intermodal facilities, drawing workers from within and outside of the county and increasing freight demand by road and rail.

*West 9th Street, Lockport*

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly changed local transportation needs, nearly eliminating trips by automobile and transit while highlighting the importance of connected bicycle and pedestrian networks for recreation and travel. Demand for e-commerce boomed as consumers looked for COVID-safe ways to buy goods, further fueling the warehousing and intermodal growth in Will County. This behavior change caused a rapid increase in freight movement with corresponding congestion, safety, and maintenance needs on the county roadway network.

While the rapid changes at the beginning of COVID-19 have stabilized, freight facilities and related demand continue to grow. Each day, the county's roadway network accommodates as many or more motorists than it did prior to the pandemic, but they are distributed differently throughout the day: fewer people are traveling to work during traditional "peak hours," and more people are taking shopping and leisure trips throughout the day. While transit ridership has rebounded significantly since COVID-19, it still is short of pre-pandemic levels as transit agencies examine how best to accommodate current travel needs. The desire for more bikeable and walkable communities has not faded, especially as new modes of transportation (such as e-bikes and e-scooters) become more prominent modes of travel.

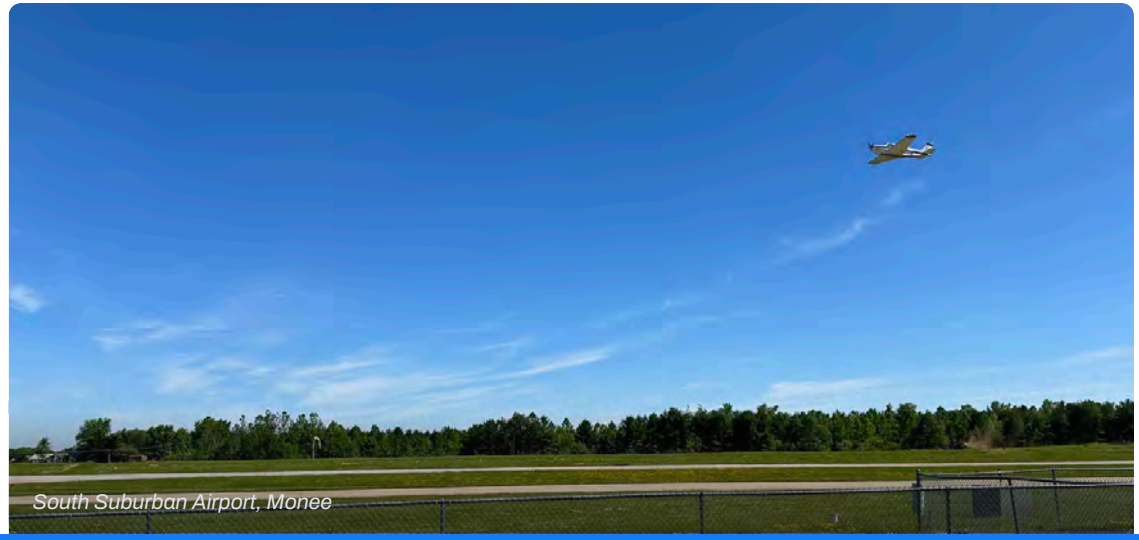
# Keeping the Plan Flexible

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how quickly and unexpectedly transportation demand can change, resulting in the need to reexamine and balance the needs of motorists, freight mobility, transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians. It is important that any long range plan try to anticipate ways in which the county, the region, the nation, and the world will change, as these changes will impact transportation needs in the county. The way these needs are met will determine how the transportation system will look and function in the future. The needs themselves should reflect the outcomes desired by county residents. Ultimately, the Plan should be flexible enough to respond to rapidly changing conditions while providing a clear direction toward those outcomes. *Our Way Forward 2050* looks at the existing and anticipated needs of the transportation system as Will County continues to grow and evolve.

## Navigating the Impact of the South Suburban Airport (SSA)

*For the past several decades, the potential for a third major airport in Northeastern Illinois, located between I-57 and IL Route 1/IL Route 394, has been influencing land use and transportation planning in the county. The Illinois Legislature passed bills in 2023 and 2024 directing IDOT to begin developing processes to prequalify vendors to work on the development of the SSA project, the focus of which has been shifted from a commercial passenger aviation airport to an air cargo facility. IDOT is currently studying access to I-57 within the area between Monee and Peotone, which could ultimately aid in providing access to any proposed airport development plan.*

*However, IDOT is only in the very early planning stages of the re-envisioned airport project, and no detailed access plans or projections of cargo or vehicle demand have been prepared to date. Without this information, it is difficult to model the impact on the transportation network of a freight aviation facility of this scope. As a result, the Will County Travel Demand Model (TDM) has been structured to allow for the addition of the airport and associated development later as details emerge, allowing the Will County Division of Transportation (WCDOT) to adapt and update this Plan accordingly.*



*South Suburban Airport, Monee*

## Identifying the Needs

Will County's existing and future transportation needs were identified using the following data sources:

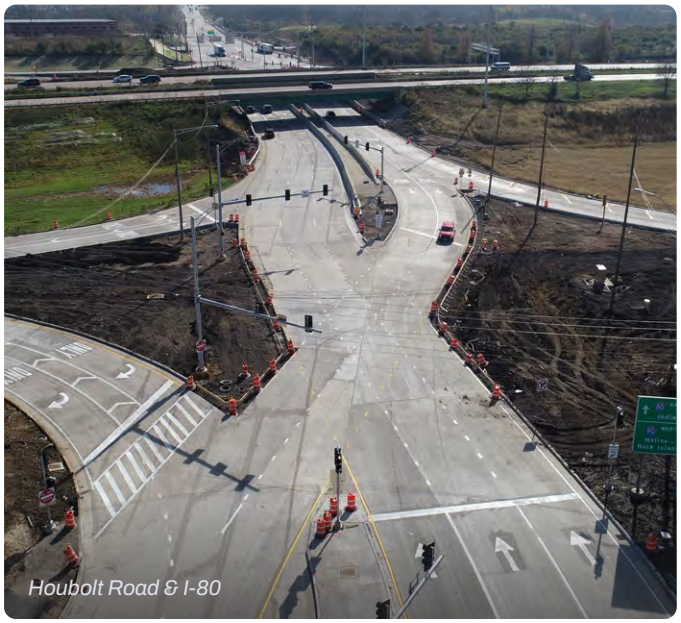
- *CMAP ON TO 2050* Regional Transportation Plan
- Our Way Forward 2050 Existing Conditions Report (**Appendix A**)
- Will County Travel Demand Model (**Appendix C**)
- Other state, regional, county, and local plans
- Stakeholder and community input

These data were viewed through the lens of the *Our Way Forward 2050* goals and objectives (described in **Chapter 4**) to classify the county's transportation needs into seven categories:

- Safety
- Roadway Improvements
- Freight Movement
- Mobility
- Transit
- Bicycling Access
- Pedestrian Access

These categories are used for ease of analysis and presentation; however, most transportation needs are cross-cutting and could be grouped into multiple categories.

The summary of each reviewed transportation need category is detailed in subsequent chapters. These findings led to the development of a range of potential transportation projects, studies, and policies that could address the identified transportation needs of the county. The processes used to narrow this larger list of potential projects, studies, and policies into Plan recommendations are discussed in this chapter.



*Houbolt Road & I-80*

*Downtown Lockport*

### A Note About Existing Data

*The existing datasets used to determine areas of need in the county transportation network are collected from multiple sources, namely IDOT, Will County DOT, other county agencies, municipal agencies, CMAP, and others. Any references to existing and planned projects within this section are based on the data available at the time of publication of this report.*

# Safety

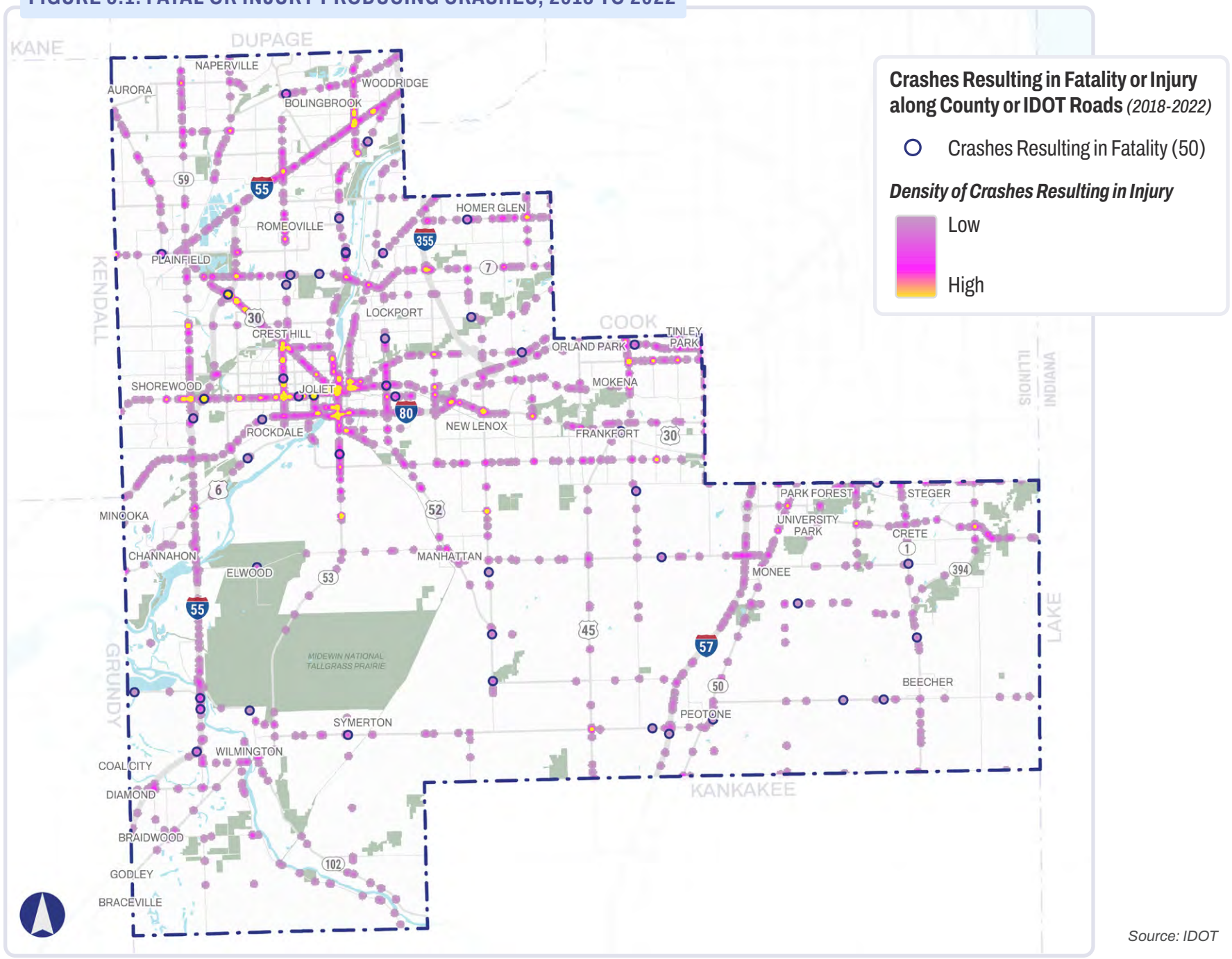
Safety for all users of the transportation system remains a high priority for WCDOT. Transportation safety is crucial for protecting people, preventing injuries, mitigating economic losses, and maintaining mobility. **Figure 5.1** highlights where crashes resulting in injuries or fatalities have occurred over a five-year period ending in 2022. Areas in yellow indicate a high density of crashes resulting in injury, and open blue circles indicate locations where at least one fatality has occurred during the five-year analysis period. The safety needs analysis shows:

- Crashes are concentrated in the higher-population centers of northern Will County, especially Joliet, Plainfield, Shorewood, and Bolingbrook.
- Fewer crashes tend to occur on interstate highways and major arterials where access is more restricted and opposing travel lanes are divided, but when they do occur, they are usually more severe because of higher speeds, heavier traffic, and higher truck volumes.
- Severe crashes occur in corridors where the roadway design can no longer safely manage the traffic volumes on the roadway. Cedar Road, 143rd Street, U.S. Route 52 between Joliet and Shorewood, Laraway Road, the Renwick Road/159th Street corridor, and Exchange Street from IL Route 394 to Indiana are all examples of these corridors.
- Severe crashes can also be concentrated at specific intersections, which may need modernization, capacity improvements, or traffic control changes. Example locations are U.S. Route 45 at Wilmington-Peotone Road, IL Route 1 at Kankakee County Line Road, IL Route 394 at Exchange Street, and IL Route 59 at Caton Farm Road.

*Jackson Township Hall, Elwood*

WCDOT is working with other counties in Northeastern Illinois and CMAP under the Safe Travel for All initiative to develop a regional framework and local action plans to address transportation safety in the region on a systemwide basis. Through this initiative, Will County developed and approved a countywide Safety Action Plan, making Will County a Vision Zero county.

## FIGURE 5.1. FATAL OR INJURY-PRODUCING CRASHES, 2018 TO 2022




*Source: IDOT*

# Roadway Improvements

Will County can create a safer, more efficient, and more resilient transportation system that benefits all users through investment in roadway network improvements. These improvements facilitate the management and maintenance of the county's transportation assets by increasing average infrastructure condition and useful life.

**Figure 5.2** highlights the county highway corridors with the greatest improvement needs. Highlighted corridors are already funded for engineering, construction, or both within the current Will County TIP for the next five years (2025-2030). Improvement needs on IDOT's roadways are not included on this map; however, the county will continue to identify opportunities for partnerships with IDOT that could also address needs on county or local roadways. The following criteria were considered when evaluating roadway improvement needs:

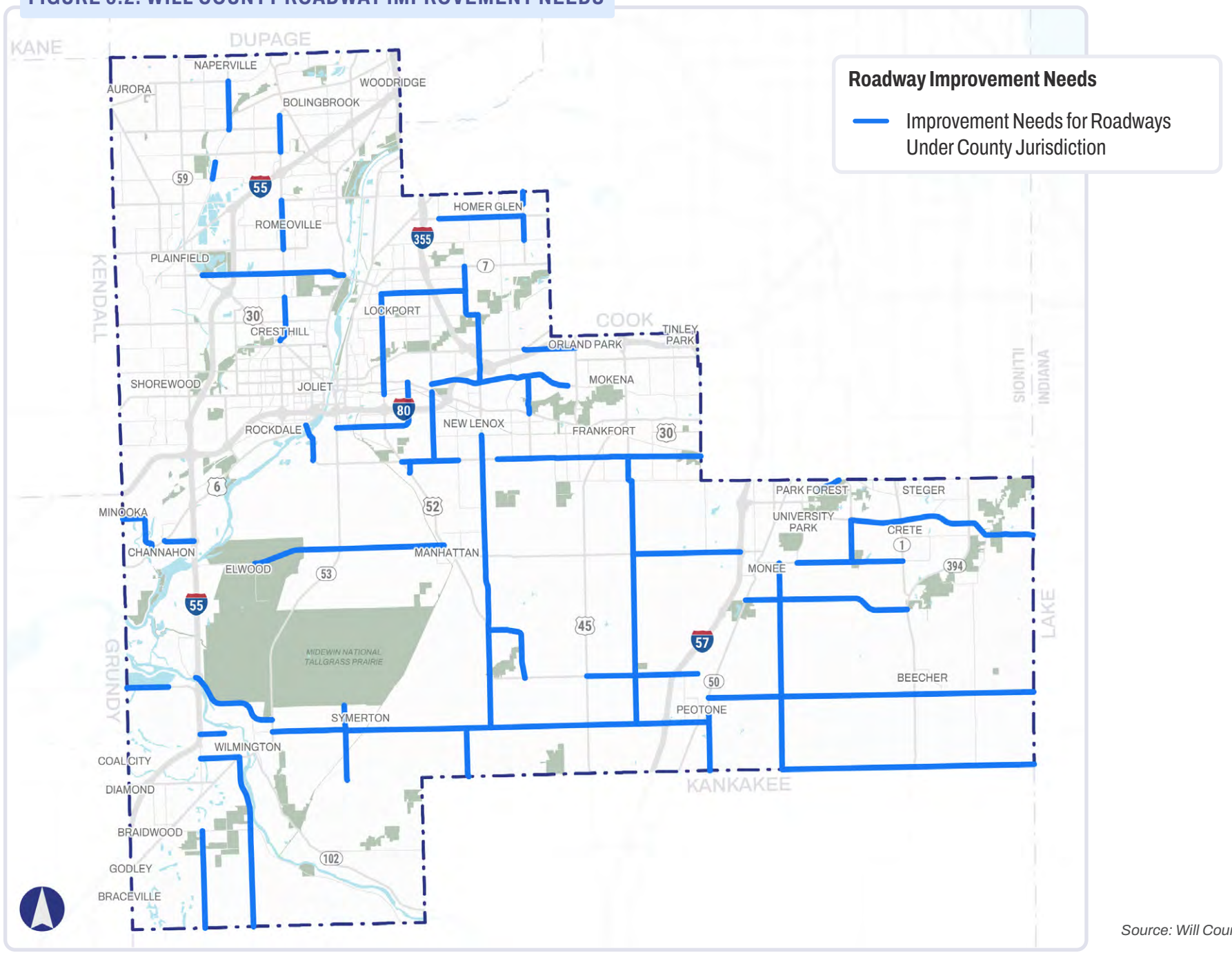
- Does the design of the roadway match its purpose and the traffic it carries?
- Is the roadway in need of reconstruction due to age?

Many county highways — especially those in the southern part of Will County — are rural in nature and do not meet modern design standards for roadway features such as shoulders, lane widths, turn channelization, turning radii, and others. Correcting these deficiencies and updating the county roadway network to modern standards, therefore, has the potential to impact safety, mobility, and freight movement as well as to address several needs identified in this chapter.

The more rural sections of the county highway network in southern Will County have not been fully reconstructed in many years, and the pavement structure may be deteriorated such that the maintenance costs over time exceed the cost of completely reconstructing the roadway. The needs analysis found that in most cases, the highway segments identified for modernization improvements also merited full reconstruction of the roadway due to reaching the end of life of the existing pavement structure.

*Olympic Way, Joliet*

## FIGURE 5.2. WILL COUNTY ROADWAY IMPROVEMENT NEEDS




*Source: Will County, Civiltech*

# Freight Movement

The movement of freight by truck, rail, airplane, and barge is essential to the economy of Northeastern Illinois. Around 25% of all freight trains and 50% of all intermodal trains in the U.S., for example, pass through the region. Over the past few decades, Will County has risen to become the epicenter of freight and logistics for the region, and it is continuing to expand. It is home to the largest inland port in North America, and the county is now home to several intermodal facilities and a growing network of warehouse and distribution facilities.

The movement of freight within the county involves trucks on roadways, trains on Class I and shortline railroads, and the interaction of roadway traffic and railroad traffic at highway-rail grade crossings. All of this traffic continues to grow in the county, while a smaller amount of tonnage passes through via barge and pipeline, and other just-in-time goods travel to airports in the region.

The economically significant industries bring jobs to the county but also create truck and rail traffic. This Plan considers the transportation needs for the county's industrial sector, while also mitigating potential quality-of-life impacts to county residents.

*Wilmington Road, Peotone*

When evaluating candidate projects to improve the movement of freight within the county, the following criteria were considered:

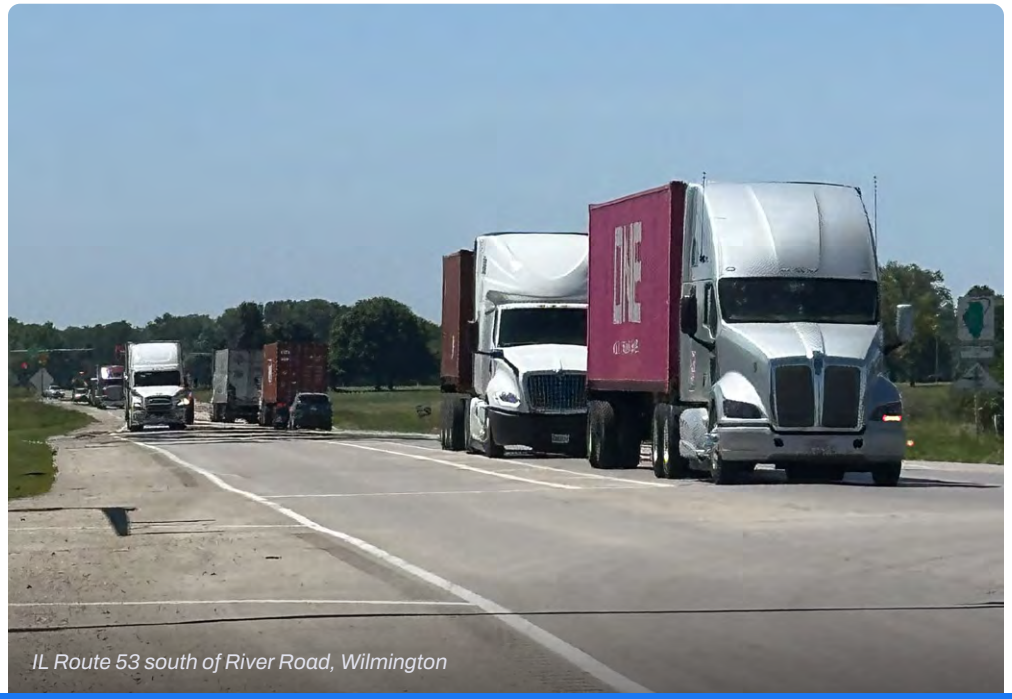
- Areas of inefficient freight movement
- Locations with more truck crashes
- Large numbers of trucks operating on corridors which were not designed to handle truck traffic
- At-grade rail crossings where there is significant delay to vehicles, emergency response is significantly impeded, and/or there are a high number of crashes

Applying these criteria to the roadway network within the county, the following overarching freight movement needs were determined:

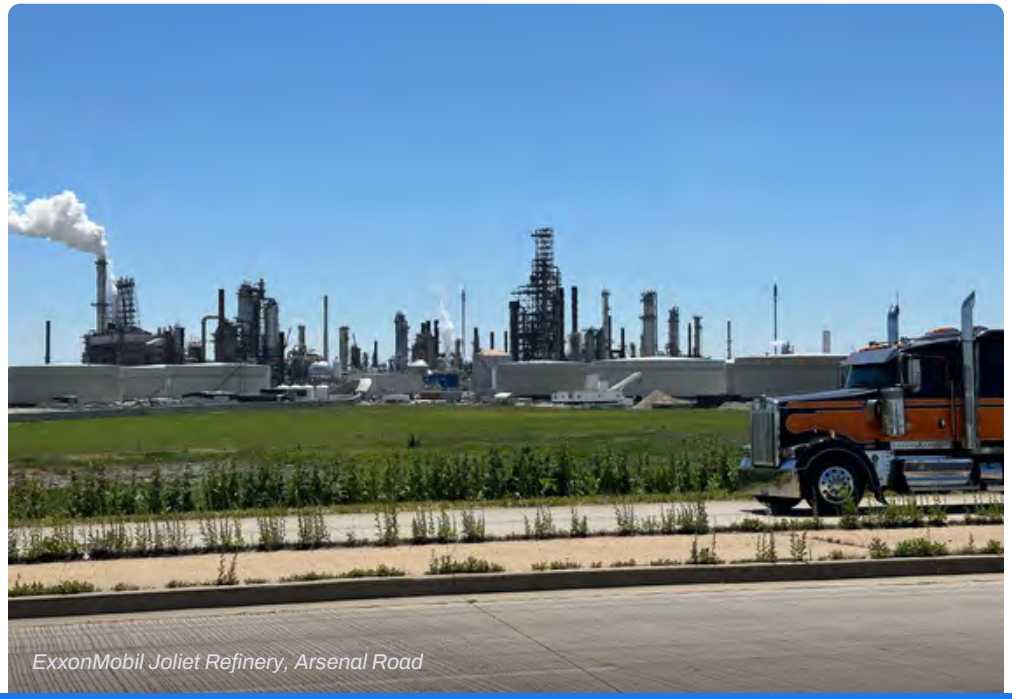
- Throughout southern Will County, there are several emerging freight corridors that are not currently designed for freight traffic, creating congestion, safety, and roadway maintenance concerns

- A dedicated freight corridor is needed east of Interstate 57, as currently freight traffic is dispersed across several corridors, making management of freight movements difficult and creating local congestion and safety challenges
- Interstate highways and major arterial corridors have the highest truck volumes, with several intersections and interchanges that are not currently designed to safely manage freight traffic (**Figure 5.3**)
- West of Interstate 57, parts of Manhattan-Monee Road and Wilmington-Peotone Road are already planned to become the primary freight corridors in the county roadway network through previously planned modernization and widening projects, as reflected in **Figure 5.3**
- Several highway-rail at-grade crossings within the county are candidates for safety improvements or grade separations
- Northern Will County has a need for a dedicated east-west freight corridor and an additional Des Plaines River crossing for freight movement, since the current primary crossing between Joliet and I-355 is at IL Route 7 (Ninth Street) in Lockport which experiences:
  - » High truck-crash frequency at both ends of the river crossing where IL Route 7 intersects with IL Route 53 and IL Route 171
  - » Heavy congestion and interactions with other modes in downtown Lockport

Corridor, intersection, and interchange modernizations can address locations that are not designed to handle freight traffic. Highway-rail at-grade crossings can either be addressed through crossing improvements or grade separations, depending on the local needs for delay reduction or emergency vehicle access. Finally, designation of freight corridors and restricting trucks on other routes can direct trucks onto routes that are most appropriate for moving freight. Identification of freight corridors in areas where they may be needed would require a separate study, similar to the one recently completed for eastern Will County.

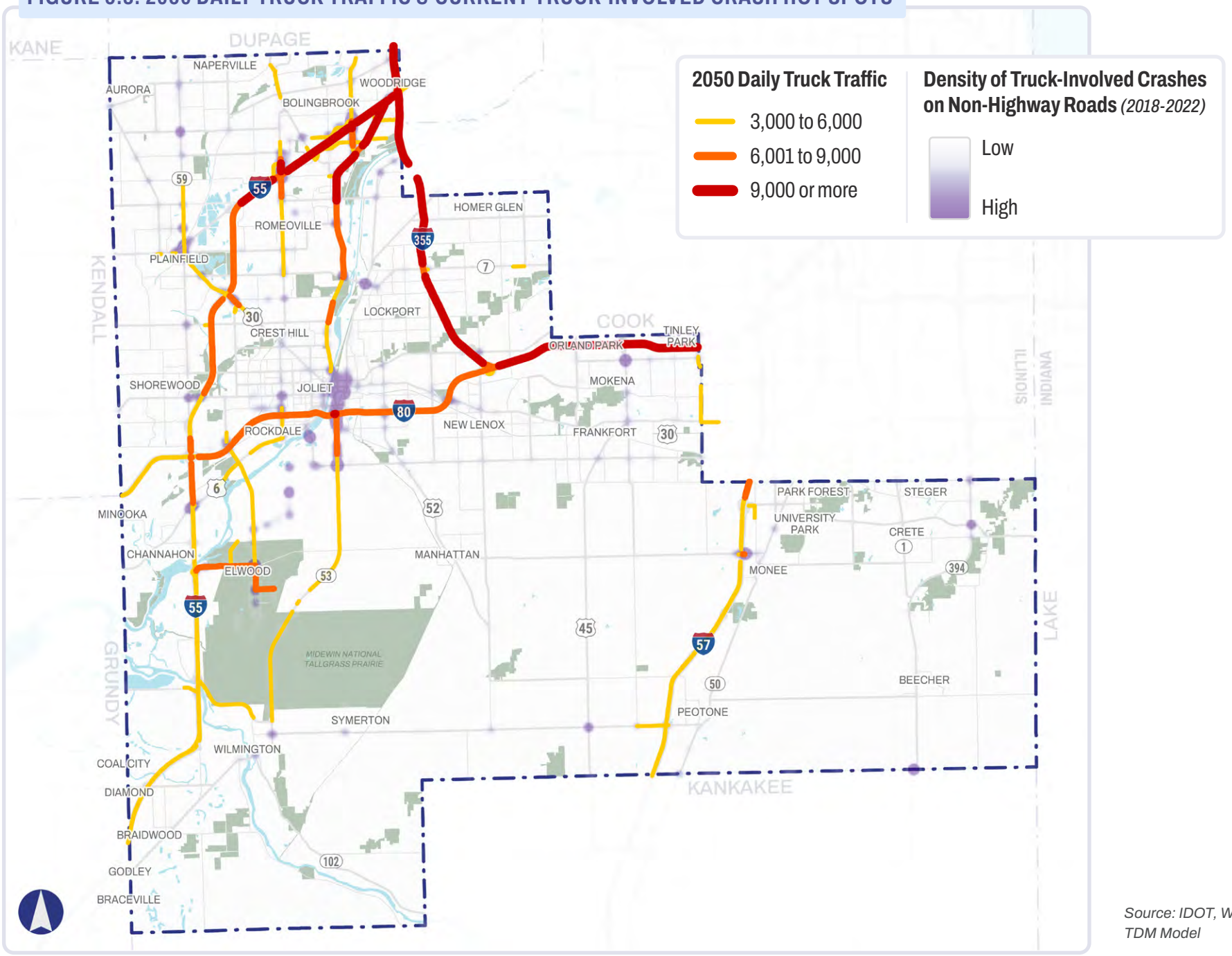


*IL Route 53 south of River Road, Wilmington*



*ExxonMobil Joliet Refinery, Arsenal Road*

## FIGURE 5.3. 2050 DAILY TRUCK TRAFFIC & CURRENT TRUCK-INVOLVED CRASH HOT SPOTS




*Source: IDOT, Will County TDM Model*

# Mobility

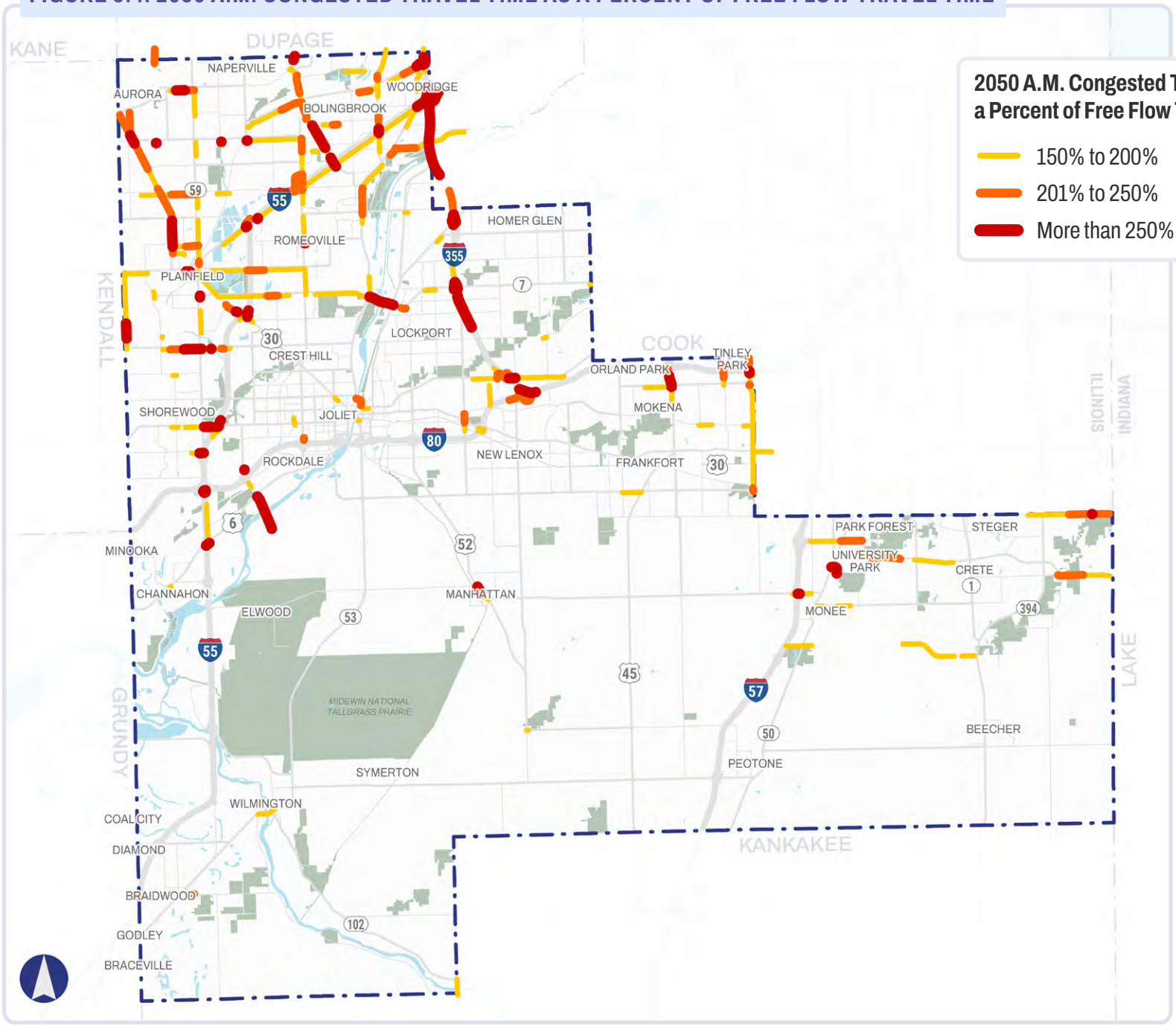
The Will County TDM was used to measure mobility in terms of both travel demand compared to system capacity and travel times between selected origins and destinations for autos, trucks, and transit. These segments are candidates for mobility improvements; however, roadway expansion is not always the ideal solution due to social, cultural, safety, economic, and environmental impacts. In these cases, strategies to reduce the demand in these corridors by shifting it onto other modes or corridors with extra capacity through congestion management strategies may be more beneficial. Throughput can also sometimes be improved through operational changes that do not expand the width of the roadway.

**Figures 5.4** and **5.5** show roadway congestion during A.M. and P.M. peak periods as a percentage of uncongested travel time. Most congestion occurs in the more densely populated areas of northern Will County, with the most significant corridor-wide congestion occurring in the U.S. Route 30, I-355, and Veterans Parkway/North Weber Road corridors. While southern Will County is not anticipated to experience as much corridor-wide congestion, Harlem Avenue south of I-80, University Parkway/Exchange Street, and Steger Road east of IL Route 394 are anticipated to experience peak period congestion on a corridor level. There are also several areas of local segment and intersection/interchange congestion within the county that merit consideration for mobility improvements.

*Laraway Road at Wolf Road*

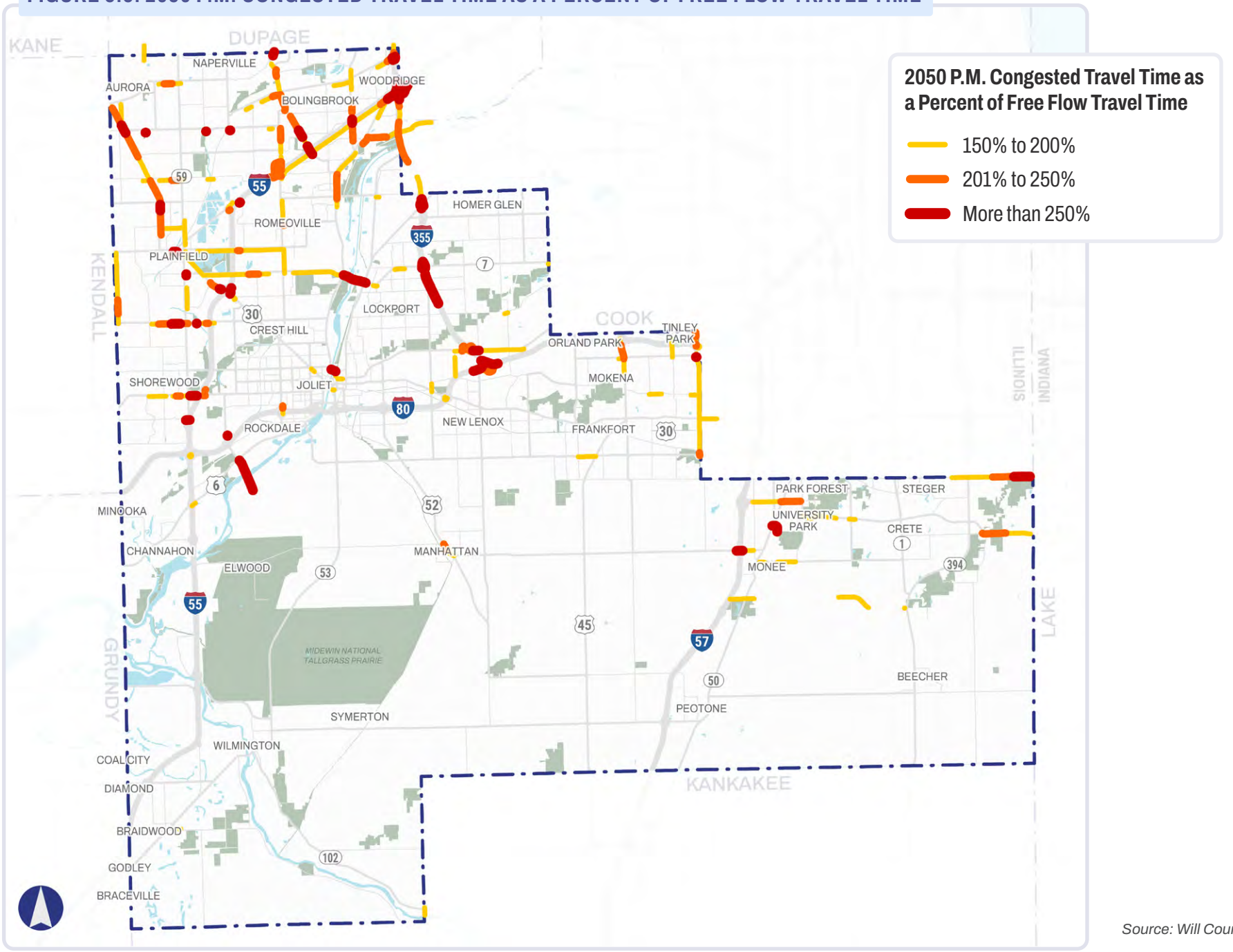
As travel demand and technology change, corridors may emerge that have much more capacity than demand, either due to changes in economic conditions or the presence of a higher-capacity facility nearby. These corridors create opportunities to increase pedestrian and bicycle mobility as well as potential for improving transit service by applying Complete Streets principles to these roadways. Other ways to increase pedestrian and bicycle mobility are to either include pedestrian and bicycle facilities in future roadway reconstruction projects or, if the reconstruction project will take place in an undeveloped area, ensure that sufficient right-of-way is preserved to construct these facilities should surrounding development warrant their construction.

## FIGURE 5.4. 2050 A.M. CONGESTED TRAVEL TIME AS A PERCENT OF FREE FLOW TRAVEL TIME




*Source: Will County TDM Model*

## FIGURE 5.5. 2050 P.M. CONGESTED TRAVEL TIME AS A PERCENT OF FREE FLOW TRAVEL TIME




*Source: Will County TDM Model*

# Transit Access

Transit and rideshare services in Will County improve accessibility, reduce traffic congestion, and promote sustainable transportation. They provide transportation options for those without cars or who wish not to drive, and they enhance economic opportunities. The map in **Figure 5.6** layers projected population density (shown in blue), extensive concentrations of employment (purple and red), existing Pace bus service coverage and frequency (yellow), and existing Metra service coverage (black).

The following criteria were considered to identify opportunities where investments and improvement could be needed:

- Areas of higher population density with limited transit access
- Areas of higher employment density with limited transit access
- Areas that lack connections between various modes of transit (e.g., from Pace to Metra)
- Gaps identified by stakeholders and the public
- Needs identified in other plans, particularly RTA, Pace, and Metra plans

*East Jefferson Street, Joliet*

Applying these criteria, several key transit needs include:

- Transit access in the Frankfort area, including between Frankfort and Metra
- Better access between and within major population centers in western and northern Will County, including Joliet, Plainfield, Naperville, and Bolingbrook
- East-west access around Crete/Monee, including access to Metra stations and to retail and services in Indiana
- Better access to major job centers near Joliet, particularly industrial, warehouse, and logistics jobs south and west of Joliet, including in Elwood and Minooka/ Channahon

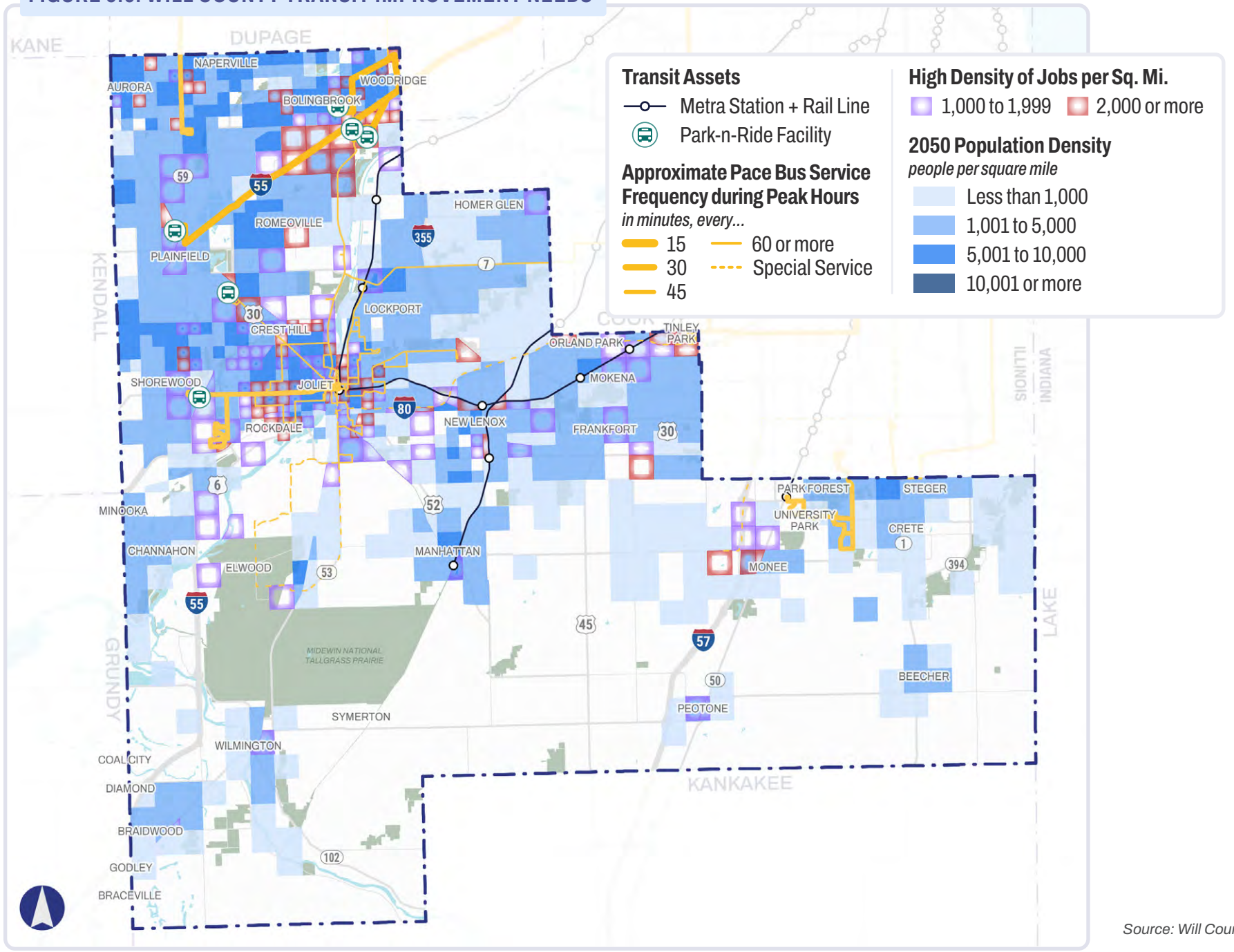
Broadly, even with the existence of transit coverage, a lack of pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure sometimes leads to challenges in safely and securely accessing the stops that currently exist. Types of solutions can include:

- Adding demand-responsive, Dial-a-Ride, or new fixed-route routes and services
- Increasing the frequency and operating hours of existing fixed-route transit service or demand-responsive services
- Coordinating with companies like Lyft and Uber to improve transit connectivity in lower-density areas of Will County and provide first-/last-mile transit solutions
- Designing roadway infrastructure to accommodate the changes described in the other solutions, including facilitating reliable bus movement, providing safe and secure bus stops, and providing safe and secure pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stops; these improvements are consistent with Complete Streets design concepts

*Metra Station, Romeoville*

*Romeoville, Metra Station*

## FIGURE 5.6. WILL COUNTY TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT NEEDS




*Source: Will County, Metra, Pace*

# Bicycling Access

Bicycle infrastructure encourages cycling as a travel option, reducing reliance on cars and contributing to a more sustainable — and healthy — community. Improving the bicycle network is another means of improving access to opportunity. It can serve as a last-mile connection for those commuting to Will County to jobs near transit; alternatively, it is a first-mile connection for county residents wishing to travel elsewhere in the region by transit. It also provides a means for residents to conduct trips to local destinations. Improved infrastructure also increases recreational opportunities for residents, serving as a community amenity.

To be effective and attract riders, however, bike infrastructure must be and feel safe.

The map in **Figure 5.7** shows population density, crashes that involve people biking, Metra lines and stations, and existing and planned bicycle infrastructure. While the bicycle network inventory is meant to be as complete as possible, for the purposes of this plan, the inventory shows the core connectivity of the network, not necessarily every possible connection. The following criteria were considered to identify investment and improvement opportunities:

- Visible gaps in the bike network
- Metra stations without bike access
- Village centers and areas of higher population with limited access to bike lanes or trails
- Recreational areas without bike access
- Schools without bike access
- Areas with high numbers of bike-related crashes
- Gaps identified by stakeholders and the public
- Needs identified in other plans


*Wauponsee Glacial Trail Access, South Symerton Road, Symerton*

Applying these criteria, several key bicycling needs were identified:

- Joliet has a large volume of bicycle crashes and limited bicycle infrastructure relative to the population, employment, and transit stops (Metra and Pace) within the city
- Bolingbrook, similarly, has numerous recorded bicycle crashes and limited bike infrastructure, while also having higher population and employment density

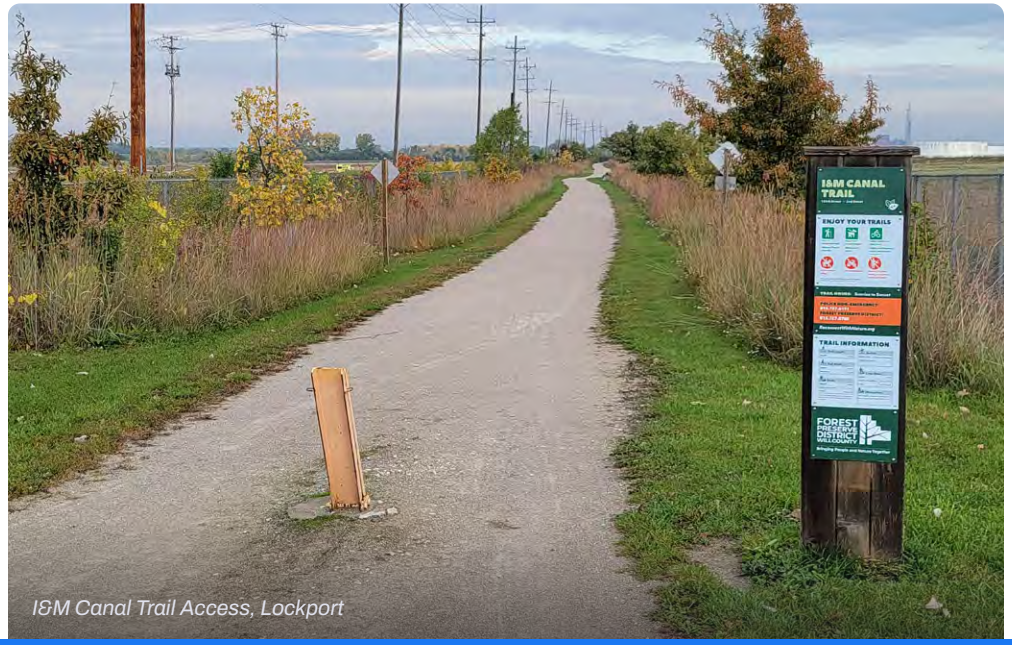
- Lockport lacks east-west bicycle connections linking the I&M Canal Trail and Lockport Metra station to the rest of the community, including to existing bicycle infrastructure on 159th Street; there are also several identified bicycle crashes in this area
- The 135th Street/Romeo Road corridor lacks bicycle facilities, including connections to Metra
- Shorewood has a higher volume of bicycle crashes, along with several remaining gaps in a growing bicycle network and higher population density
- Crete and Monee currently lack a direct Metra connection by bike
- Central Will County lacks a direct trail connection between the Wauponsee Glacial Trail at Manhattan and the Old Plank Road Trail at New Lenox

Many bicycle infrastructure needs are highly localized in nature; at a county level, this results in a large volume of potential opportunities. The needs assessment focused on broader, larger-scale needs.

Bicycle-related crashes in the county often occur at intersections, even when protected bike lanes or trails are present; broadly, there is a need to consider safety of bicyclists and pedestrians at street crossings and intersections.

Depending on the situation, types of solutions can include:

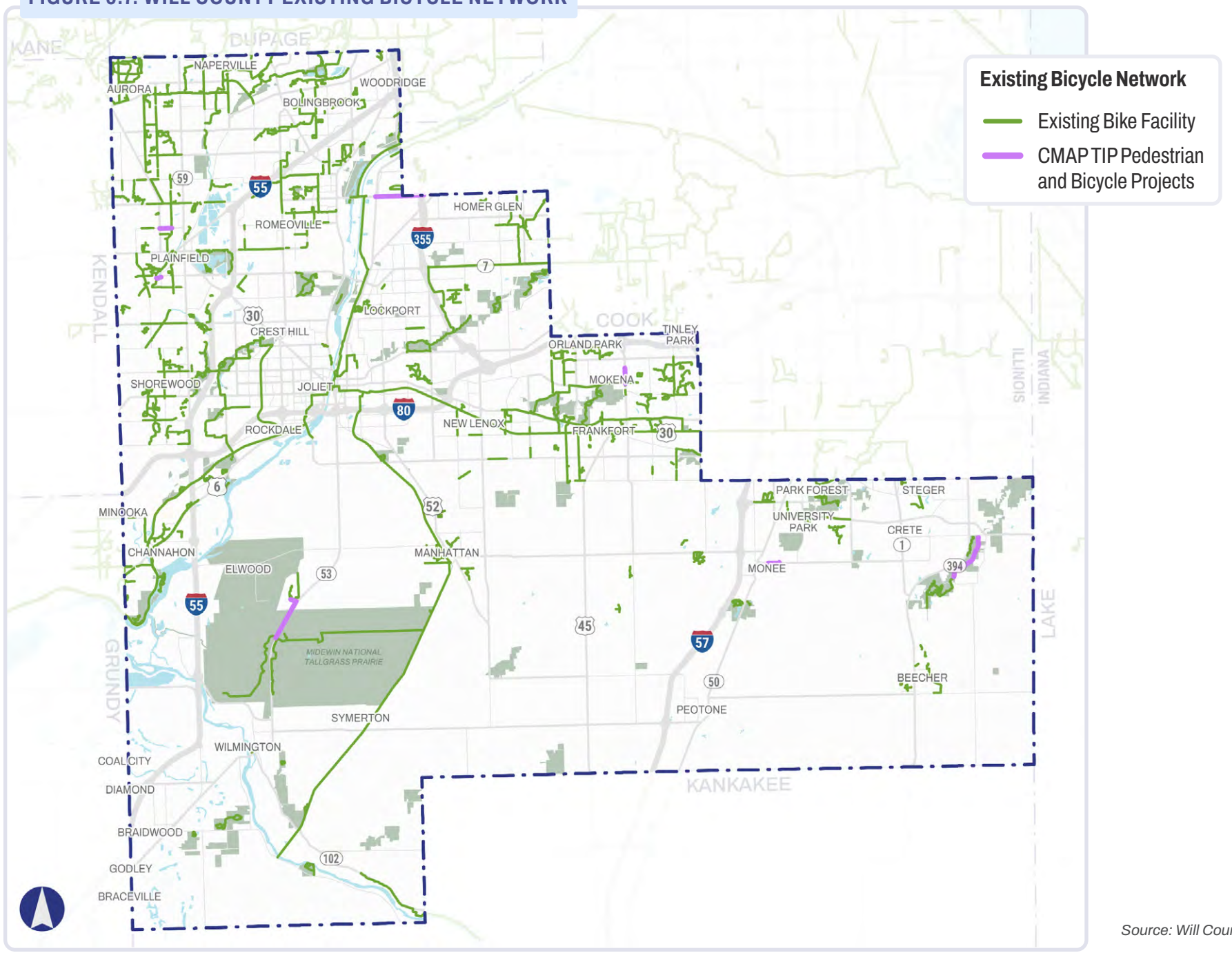
- Creating new bike facilities — including striped lanes, protected bike lanes, and off-street trails — to enhance safety and accessibility for cyclists
- Upgrading existing facilities, including converting shared bike lanes to protected bike lanes or adding bicycle-specific signals at intersections
- Enhancing intersection crossings and adding protected mid-block crossings to improve safety and accessibility for bicyclists
- Designing roadway infrastructure to accommodate the bike-related strategies above; this is consistent with Complete Streets design concepts



*I&M Canal Trail Access, Lockport*


*Olympic Boulevard Bridge, Shorewood*

## FIGURE 5.7. WILL COUNTY EXISTING BICYCLE NETWORK




*Source: Will County, CMAP*

# Pedestrian Access

Many of the needs related to pedestrian access closely align with those related to bicycle access. Well-designed sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails encourage safe and accessible movement, promoting health and quality of life for Will County residents.

The map in **Figure 5.8** shows population density, crashes that involve pedestrians, Metra lines and stations, and existing gaps in pedestrian infrastructure. While the pedestrian network inventory is meant to be as complete as possible, for the purposes of this plan, the inventory shows the core connectivity of the network, not necessarily every possible connection. The following criteria were considered to identify opportunities for investment:

- Visible gaps in the sidewalk network
- Village centers and areas of higher population with limited access to sidewalks
- Metra stations without pedestrian access
- Schools without sidewalk or trail access
- Areas with high numbers of pedestrian-related crashes
- Gaps identified by stakeholders and the public
- Needs identified in other plans


*Lincoln Landing, Lockport*

Several identified areas of need include:

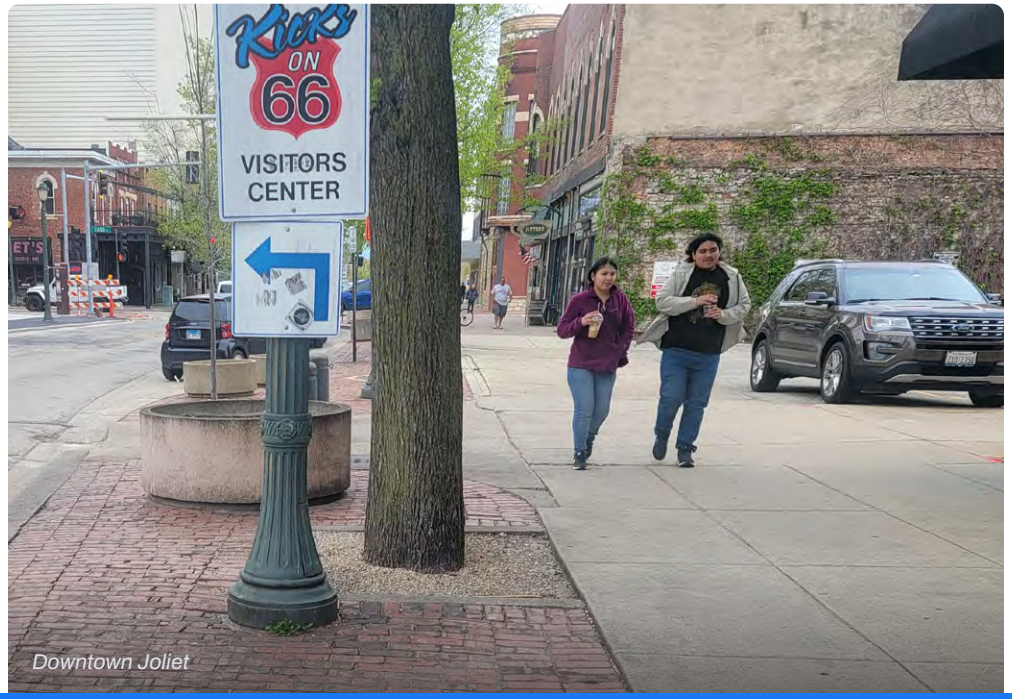
- Joliet, Bolingbrook, and Shorewood, which have higher population densities, higher instances of pedestrian crashes, and some gaps in the sidewalk network
- The pedestrian network lacks access to the Mokena Metra station

Similar to bicycle-related crashes, pedestrian-related crashes in the county often occur at intersections; broadly, there is a need to consider the safety of bicycles and pedestrians at street crossings and intersections. Also, similar to bicycle infrastructure needs, pedestrian access needs are often highly localized, as in the

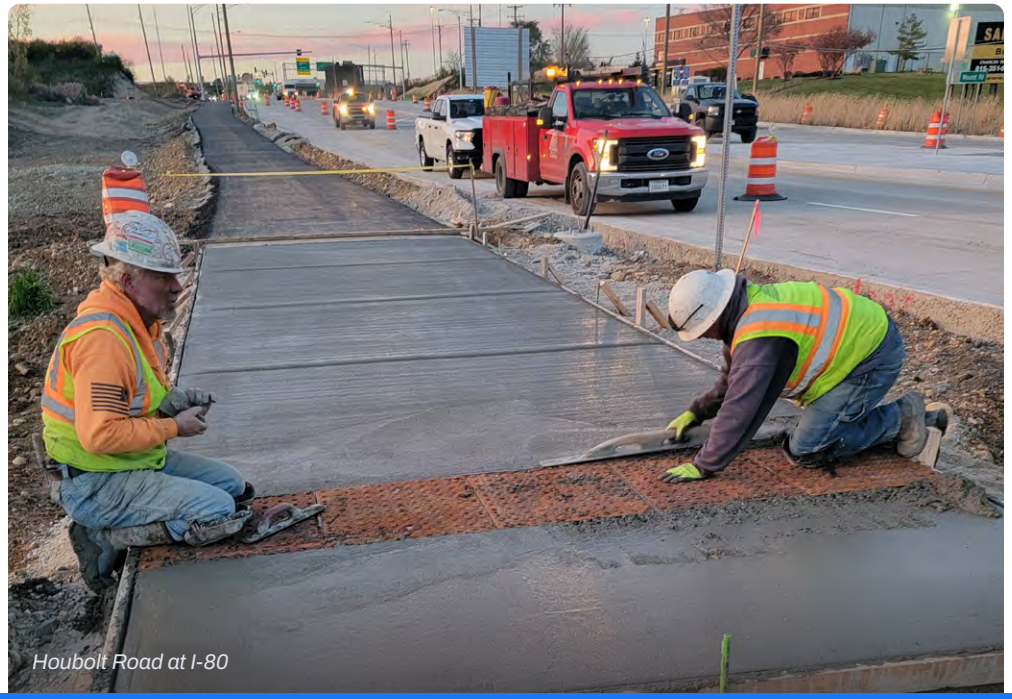
case of block-level sidewalk repairs or improvements. At a county level, this results in a large volume of potential opportunities. The needs assessment focused on broader, larger-scale needs.

Depending on the situation, types of solutions can include:

- Creating additional sidewalks and off-street trails to improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists
- Designing roadway infrastructure to accommodate the solutions above; this is consistent with Complete Streets design concepts
- Maintaining existing facilities to ensure they are functional: Maintenance may involve upgrading the width, safety features, and paving materials of pedestrian infrastructure
- Enhancing intersections, including adding features like curb extensions, pedestrian signals, or protected midblock crossings to increase safety and accessibility for pedestrians



*Downtown Joliet*


*Houbolt Road at I-80*

# Selection of Candidate Projects

With the transportation needs identified, an initial list of potential improvement projects was developed based on the desired outcomes determined during development of the project goals and objectives. The initial project list was not fiscally constrained and was intended to be as inclusive as possible, encompassing a wide range of potential improvements that could address the identified needs. This list was vetted and expanded with input gathered from municipal stakeholders as well as from the public during the Wave 2 public engagement process. Ultimately, candidate projects came from the following sources:

- Projects from *Will Connects 2040* that have not been completed
- Projects currently listed in the Will County and IDOT Multi-Year Improvement Programs
- Projects derived from the needs analysis above, supported by data from the existing conditions and initial TDM analysis
- Projects included in the *CMAP ON TO 2050* regional plan that are listed as fiscally constrained
- Municipal stakeholders, agency stakeholders, and the public

*The initial list was pared down slightly to remove projects that were considered infeasible due to environmental impacts, need for extensive land acquisitions, or lack of stakeholder support. The below graphic summarizes the resulting list.*

**130 Roadway Improvement Projects**

- 48 *County projects*
- 53 *Municipal projects*
- 29 *IDOT/Illinois Tollway projects*

**13 Grade Crossing Improvement Projects**

- *Projects start with a study to determine treatment(s)*
- *Scope of improvement(s) to be based on findings*

**52 Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Projects**

- 48 *Bicycle-focused projects*
- 4 *Pedestrian-focused projects*

**Roadway improvements to incorporate Complete Streets principles*

**12 Transit Improvement Projects**

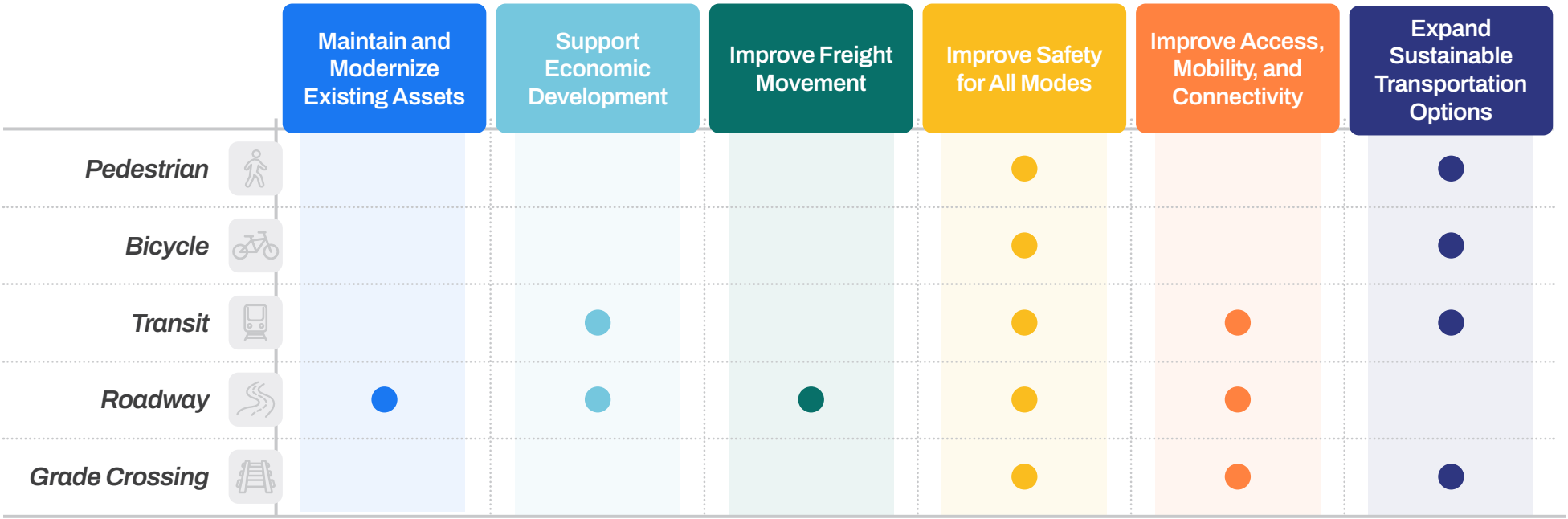
- 10 *Pace bus improvement projects/recommendations*
- 2 *Metra improvement projects/ recommendations*

# Screening of Candidate Projects

Projects under county jurisdiction were screened to prioritize county investments in transportation infrastructure through 2050. Project screening was based on criteria measuring how well the project achieved goals and objectives of *Our Way Forward 2050*.

All projects were screened against all goals using either qualitative or quantitative assessment, depending on available data. The project scoring and prioritization methodology followed a three step process to assess the Criteria Score, Goal Score, and Project Score for each project under county jurisdiction.

**Step 1 (Criteria Scores):** Each project was evaluated based on criteria that relate to how well it achieves each of the Plan's goals, as listed in the following tables. A criteria score of 0 to 3 was assigned to each project based on how well the project addressed the listed criteria, with 3 indicating that the project addressed the criteria significantly, and 0 indicating that the project did not address the criteria at all.



## TABLE 5.1. PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA BASED ON PLAN GOALS

| Goal | Project Type(s) | Criterion | Rating 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Maintain and Modernize Existing Assets** | Roadway | Reduction in miles of substandard roadway | large decrease | moderate decrease | small decrease | no decrease |
| | Roadway | Replacement of bridges rated 'Fair' or 'Poor' structurally | criteria based on number of bridges repaired/replaced | | | |
| **Support Economic Development** | Transit | Percent of population within 1 mile of transit stop | large increase in transit accessibility | moderate increase in transit accessibility | small increase in transit accessibility | no change |
| | Roadway | Vehicle operating costs | large decrease | moderate decrease | small decrease | no decrease |
| **Improve Freight Movement** | Roadway | Decrease in truck travel time | large decrease | moderate decrease | small decrease | no decrease |
| | Grade Crossing | Year 2050 daily truck volume | crossing on a freight corridor *> 6,000 trucks/day or > 25% trucks* | crossing on an emerging freight corridor *3,000 to 6,000 trucks/day or > 20% trucks* | crossing on a freight route *1,000 to 3,000 trucks/day or > 15% trucks* | truck volume *< 1,000 trucks/day* |
| | Roadway | Potential reduction in crashes involving freight | criteria based on number of existing freight-related crashes within project limits | | | |
| **Improve Safety for All Modes** | Roadway, Transit, Bicycle | Potential reduction in crashes by mode | criteria based on number of existing crashes by mode within project limits | | | |
| | Grade Crossing | Potential reduction in crashes at grade crossing locations | criteria based on number of existing crashes at the grade crossing being evaluated | | | |
| **Expand Sustainable Transportation Options** | Transit | Percent of population within 1 mile of transit stop | large decrease | moderate decrease | small decrease | no decrease |
| | Bicycle | Percent of population within 0.5 miles of bike facility | large decrease | moderate decrease | small decrease | no decrease |
| **Improve Access, Mobility, and Connectivity** | Roadway, Grade Crossing | Available capacity on roadway | no build v/c ratio* > 1.0 | no build v/c ratio* 0.85 to 1.0 | no build v/c ratio* 0.75 to 0.85 | no build v/c ratio* < 0.75 |
| | Roadway | Decrease in average travel time for east-west trips | large decrease | moderate decrease | small decrease | no decrease |
| | Transit | Accessibility for senior populations | number of destinations available by transit from areas of high senior populations | | | no change |

**A volume-to-capacity ratio represents the ratio of traffic volume to roadway capacity. A v/c ratio of less than 1.0 indicates that the roadway has sufficient capacity. A ratio at or above 1.0 means the traffic volume is at or exceeding the roadway's capacity, leading to congestion and potential mobility issues.*

**Step 2 (Goal Scores):** Once the projects were evaluated on each of the criteria, a score was assigned to each project. The project score was determined by calculating how well each project addressed each goal. Projects were assigned a goal score ranging 0 to 3, with 3 indicating that the project addressed the goal significantly, and 0 indicating that the project did not address the goal at all. **Step 3 (Project Scores):** For each project, the calculated goal scores were added together to obtain a final project score.

The methodology used to prioritize projects is summarized in the graphic below. The prioritized project list was then used as the foundation for transportation scenario modeling using the TDM along with financial analysis to determine the list of fiscally constrained county transportation projects to be considered. The financial analysis and the methodology used to develop it is presented in **Chapter 7**.

*Project Scoring and Prioritization Methodology*

# Envisioning Our Future

06

***The transportation needs of Will County will continue to evolve over the next 25 years as the population and employment of the county increase and as new transportation technologies are developed that may change how residents move from place to place.***

The recent boom of freight and logistics centers within the county may or may not continue at the pace anticipated by current major existing and proposed land developers. Because of this uncertainty, this Plan investigated different scenarios for the county's future using the Will County TDM to anticipate how each scenario would impact the transportation network within the county and to determine how the projects identified in the needs analysis should be prioritized under each scenario.

## Scenario Development

The development of transportation network scenarios for further evaluation in *Our Way Forward 2050* considered the following:

**Fiscally constrained *CMAP ON TO 2050* Regionally Significant Projects (RSPs) in Will County**

For these projects:

- Will the project result in major shifts in travel patterns on a regional level?
- Is it feasible for the project to be constructed in the next 25 years? If so, is there a need to evaluate conditions both with and without the project in place?

**Are the demographic (population and growth) projections reasonable?**

- What happens if the demographic projections are incorrect?
- Do the demographic projections fully account for realities on the ground?

**What major unknowns exist in land development in the county?**

### Socioeconomic Scenarios

#### *SCENARIO 1*

This scenario assumes that population and employment growth within Will County through 2050 adheres to the population and employment growth projections provided by CMAP.

#### *SCENARIO 2*

This scenario assumes that population and employment within Will County increases at a faster rate due to full occupancy of the major intermodal and warehousing developments currently proposed or under construction. While all of the employment growth would occur within Will County, these developments have historically mostly employed workers who live outside Will County and commute to work. It was assumed that 75% of new workers at these sites would live outside the county, with the other 25% living in areas where there are emerging housing developments within the county.

**Table 6.1** summarizes the additional households, employment, and truck traffic anticipated should these developments maximize their growth prior to 2050.

**TABLE 6.1. ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSEHOLDS IN WILL COUNTY ASSUMING FULL DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR INTERMODAL AND WAREHOUSING PROJECTS**

| Development | Additional Employment | Additional Households | Additional Daily Truck Volume |
|---|---|---|---|
| Northpoint, Joliet | 3,680 | 1,335 | 4,780 |
| Elion / I-55, Wilmington | 965 | 350 | 2,160 |
| CSX, Crete | 525 | 190 | 1,100 |
| **Total Increases** | **5,170** | **1,875** | **8,040** |

## Existing Plus Committed Roadway Network Scenarios

The roadway network was evaluated using the Will County TDM for both socioeconomic scenarios assuming no significant changes to the roadway network other than the completion of previously fiscally committed transportation projects prior to 2050, identified in the TIP. The goal of this evaluation was to determine if the list of projects produced in the needs evaluation in **Chapter 5** should be expanded upon or reprioritized if the population and employment growth are greater than anticipated. The graphic below shows the impacts of maximizing the development potential of the developments listed in **Table 6.1** on socioeconomics and transportation in Will County based on forecasts from the TDM.

Results from the Will County TDM indicate that the list of proposed transportation projects identified from the needs analysis will continue to be sufficient to address the anticipated increase in growth described in Scenario 2 and that no additional projects would need to be considered.

## Impact of Implementing the Proposed Projects in *Our Way Forward 2050*

The Will County TDM was used to forecast how effectively the proposed projects in *Our Way Forward 2050* meet the transportation needs of the county under Scenarios 1 and 2.

The results in **Table 6.2** indicate that the proposed projects will not induce significantly more motorized vehicle travel, despite reducing delay by 20% or more. The projects will also redirect traffic from minor collector roadways and local roads to arterial roadways, which are better designed to handle higher levels of traffic, improving overall mobility. These benefits will be realized even if population and employment grow beyond what is currently forecast in CMAP's regional transportation plan, as the results are nearly identical between Scenarios 1 and 2.

**TABLE 6.2. CHANGES IN THE WILL COUNTY TRANSPORTATION NETWORK IF ALL PROPOSED PROJECTS ARE IMPLEMENTED**

| Criteria | Scenario 1 Existing + Committed with Proposed Build | Scenario 2 Existing + Committed with Proposed Build |
|---|---|---|
| Total Vehicle-Miles Traveled | + 2% | + 2% |
| Truck Vehicle-Miles Traveled | + 1% | + 1% |
| Hours of Delay | - 21% | - 21% |
| Travel on Minor Collectors and Local Roadways | - 6% | - 5% |
| Travel on Arterials | + 4% | + 4% |

*Impacts of increased growth from Scenario 2 for the Existing Plus Committed Roadway Network*

- **2%** increase in employment
- **3%** increase in truck traffic
- **0.5%** increase in population
- **7%** more hours of delay per year

*While not included in the current Plan, any development of the proposed South Suburban Airport (SSA) would be added in a plan amendment and would become an additional TDM model scenario under that amendment. Roadway projects would then be identified and reprioritized at that time to adapt the Plan to any airport development.*

# Emerging Influences on the Way Forward

Additional emerging technologies, practices, and trends are influencing transportation not only in Will County, but in the nation. These influences present both challenges to overcome and opportunities to improve our transportation future. While agencies need to plan several years or even a couple of decades into the future due to the time needed to properly design, plan, fund, and construct infrastructure improvements, changes in technology and travel trends can occur more rapidly. It is important, therefore, to understand these emerging influences and how they could impact transportation in Will County.

This Plan is intended to be flexible to respond to continuously changing conditions. Will County DOT will continue to monitor these advancements, both independently and as part of intergovernmental groups such as CMAP's Transportation Technology and Operations Coalition (TTOC). The Will County TDM is designed for flexibility so that changes in travel behavior resulting from these influences can be incorporated into the planning process. As part of the ongoing update to the Regional Transportation Plan, CMAP is exploring the implications of these emerging influences on regional transportation. The following provides information on emerging transportation technologies and trends most likely to influence county transportation and travel over the next 25 years.

## Alternative Fuel Vehicles

Alternative fuel technology is continuously evolving. While emphasis has been focused on standard battery electric vehicles, other research and development is advancing on hydrogen electric vehicles as well, with such vehicles in operation in the U.S. and other countries.

Other fuel technologies are likely to emerge as the transportation sector looks to cleaner, more environmentally friendly power sources for vehicles.

Alternative fuel vehicles currently exist for autos, trucks, buses, and bicycles. There are several potential opportunities and challenges for the region and Will County as the use of these vehicles expands (see graphic below).

Recent investment from federal and state sources has increased the planning and implementation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, helping to increase the proliferation of electric vehicle usage. However, future variability and uncertainty in such subsidies could cause electric vehicle adoption to stagnate in the near term.

| Impact | Opportunities | Challenges |
|---|---|---|
| **Environmental** | • *reduced emissions, noise, and fuel costs* | • *battery production*<br>• *electrical generation demand*<br>• *electrical fires* |
| **Maintenance** | • *reduced construction emissions, noise, and fuel costs* | • *increased weight of battery-powered vehicles*<br>• *increased stress on pavement from electric-powered trucks* |
| **Financial** | • *development of sustainable alternative funding sources* | • *decreased Motor Fuel Tax revenue* |
| **Travel Behavior** | • *more potential for mode shift and higher-speed connectivity to other modes through electric bike and scooter use* | • *safe bike infrastructure and electric bike/scooter charging station construction* |

## Connected and Autonomous Vehicles

Connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) include vehicles that can communicate with each other and infrastructure, and have various levels of automation – leading up to and including fully self-driving vehicles. Impacts on the future of Will County's transportation system from increased and advanced CAVs include:

**Opportunities**

- *Increased safety*
- *More efficient freight movement*
- *Increased worker productivity*
- *Reduced congestion*
- *Enhanced data collection for planning and operations*

**Challenges**

- *Increased suburban sprawl*
- *Higher vehicle volumes over entire day*
- *Need to maintain secure systems and protect privacy*
- *Decreased incentive to use other modes*
- *Cost of infrastructure upgrades and maintenance needed to support CAVs*

Both retrofitted and purpose-built vehicles are gaining traction, primarily in cities in the West and Southwest of the United States. Companies such as Waymo and Zoox have shown promise that the technology can work. However, the rollout is still too slow to become mainstream any time soon, especially considering legal obstacles. GM also recently stopped funding its autonomous vehicle venture in Cruise and shifted to focus on ADAS driver assistance programs. Nevertheless, agencies are beginning to plan for infrastructure that can communicate with CAVs, particularly in regard to traffic signals.

## Intelligent Transportation Systems and Active Traffic Management

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Active Traffic Management (ATM) allow agencies to do more with what they have, increasing the capacity and safety of existing infrastructure using technology. While these are not new concepts and the technologies are not inherently new, they continue to evolve, and there are many applications that have not yet been tried in Will County. The benefits of these concepts and the technologies that provide them are as follows.

### *DELAY REDUCTION*

Helping monitor and direct traffic, adjusting speeds on facilities and signal timing in real time, controlling lane usage on roadways, and when paired with CAVs, even communicating with vehicles directly. This improves traffic flow and reduces recurring and non-recurring delay (e.g., due to unexpected crashes) within the existing physical infrastructure. Such technologies can also be applied to improving bus speeds.

### *IMPROVED SAFETY*

Enhancing safety by reducing sudden backups on high-speed facilities and managing traffic around incidents.

### *DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING*

Gathering data that can be used to improve transportation planning.

## Artificial Intelligence and Predictive Analytics

Artificial intelligence (AI) continues to quickly evolve. Several potential applications and impact on the future of Will County's transportation system include the functions below.

### *DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS*

AI, along with predictive analytics, can allow agencies to quickly interpret massive amounts of data to identify problems (such as asset deterioration or operations issues) to develop necessary reports, as well as to estimate trends and forecasts. This can therefore impact asset management, traffic operations, and transportation planning.

### *ENFORCEMENT*

AI can support the enforcement of traffic laws, particularly when tied to data collection mechanisms such as speed or red light cameras.

*Red light camera, Source: Chicago Tribune*

# Financial Analysis

07

***The Financial Analysis chapter outlines Will County's projected transportation revenues and expenses through 2050. It demonstrates how the county will fund priority highway projects within fiscal constraints while identifying additional needs that will require alternative funding mechanisms.***

*Our Way Forward 2050* articulates investment priorities for county highways as well as county transportation priorities for partner agency systems. Investment priorities for county highways are "fiscally constrained" — they are based on reasonably anticipated revenues and expenditures through 2050 — while still providing sufficient resources to cover typical operations and maintenance of county roads.

However, some projects in the county transportation needs list cannot be served by the projected funding: these are classified as "unconstrained," but remain part of *Our Way Forward 2050* for future consideration. All projects are intended to be revisited periodically as transportation needs are addressed, new needs emerge, or priorities change.

The Will County TIP FY 2025-2030 is an official programming document for the county (the most current TIP at the time of the drafting of this plan), which commits projected funding to specific projects between 2025 and 2030. It was formally adopted by the County Board in June 2024. Therefore, the financial analysis in *Our Way Forward 2050* estimates revenues and allocates them to recommended projects starting after that period: 2031 through 2050.

This plan, unlike the TIP, is not a formal programming document, rather is intended as a guide for the development of future TIPs.

The sections below describe the process for estimating revenues and costs, provide constrained and unconstrained project lists, and identify potential alternate funding sources to support the unconstrained projects and other county transportation needs.

## Estimating Revenues

Revenue projections are based on actual historic Will County transportation revenues. Many historic data points were used to account for annual variations due to economic upturns and downturns, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other disruptions. These include the following:

- Motor Fuel Tax — State Allocated (MFT-SA) revenues dating back to 2016
- Motor Fuel Tax — Local (MFT-Local) starting in 2020
- Will County portion of the RTA Sales Tax dating back to 2016
- All federal sources, including Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Surface Transportation Program (STP), and other programs dating back to 2001

**TABLE 7.1. SUMMARY OF RECENT HISTORICAL TOTAL TRANSPORTATION REVENUES (MILLIONS)**

| Year | Revenue |
|---|---|
| 2016 | $38.5 |
| 2017 | $34.6 |
| 2018 | $37.2 |
| 2019 | $38.6 |
| 2020 | $52.0 |
| 2021 | $76.8 |
| 2022 | $87.6 |
| 2023 | $79.7 |
| 2024 | $87.9 |

Trend lines were fit to historic data to estimate the next future year, 2025, as the starting point of the forecast. Due to a large and atypical amount of federal funding being received in FY2025, that year was not included as part of historic data. Therefore, for the purposes of forecasting for the LRTP, the total estimated revenues for FY2025 are $82.5 million. This is significantly less than what the county is actually receiving in FY2025, but it is intended to provide a more conservative starting point for the forecast.

The estimated revenues for each funding source are then forecasted from 2025 at different rates based on past historical trends and future risks:

- MFT-SA and MFT-Local: 2.5%
- RTA Sales Tax: 2.0%
- Federal: 1.0%

These rates are all lower than historic growth. The rates weigh these historic trends and projected population and employment growth (see **Chapter 2**) against declining MFT due to increasing fuel efficiency and electric vehicles, inflation, near-term stagnation of federal funds, and tariffs. Federal funds need to be secured on a project-by-project basis and can vary considerably from year to year.

Ultimately, from 2031 through 2050, the projections show $2.49 billion in revenues (**Table 7.2**).

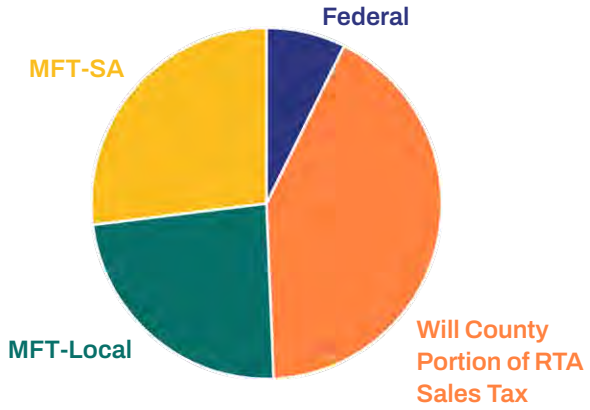
Most funding for transportation comes from MFT, followed closely by the Will County portion of the RTA Sales Tax (**Figure 7.1**). Changes in regional sales tax revenues and MFT collections, therefore, are most likely to impact the future revenue stream for Will County. A 1% decrease in annual growth over next 25 years results in:

- $159 million lost in the Will County portion of the RTA sales tax revenues (-6%)
- $185 million lost in MFT-SA and MFT-Local (-7%)

**TABLE 7.2. PROJECTED COUNTY TRANSPORTATION REVENUES (MILLIONS)**

| Year | Federal | Will County Portion of RTA Sales Tax | MFT-Local | MFT-SA | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2031-2035 | $42.0 | $199.2 | $121.3 | $138.3 | $500.8 |
| 2036-2040 | $44.1 | $251.5 | $137.2 | $156.5 | $589.3 |
| 2041-2045 | $46.4 | $285.4 | $155.2 | $177.1 | $664.1 |
| 2046-2050 | $48.7 | $315.1 | $175.6 | $200.3 | $739.7 |
| **TOTAL** | **$181.2** | **$1,051.2** | **$589.3** | **$672.2** | **$2,493.9** |

**FIGURE 7.1. DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTED REVENUES BY REVENUE TYPE (2031-2050)**




## Operations and Maintenance Costs

Operations and maintenance (O&M) commitments include routine activities such as applying pavement overlays, laying road striping and reflectors, and repairing culverts, as well as completing minor rehabilitation projects like installing traffic signals, upgrading intersections, and repairing bridge decks. Conversely, major rehabilitation and reconstruction are considered capital projects.

Similar to revenues, O&M costs for county roadways are based on over 20 years of historic data. Embedded in these historic data are increasing costs due to aging infrastructure and increasing costs due to expanded infrastructure, which then must be maintained.

From these trends, an estimate of $10.8 million for 2025 is used for the purposes of long-term forecasting of costs. This, in turn, is forecast to increase at a rate of 2.3% per year based on the Federal Reserve's 10-year anticipated average inflation rate. Ultimately, $310 million is projected for county roadway O&M costs (**Table 7.3**) over the life of this Plan.

**TABLE 7.3. COUNTY ROADWAY FORECASTED O&M COSTS (MILLIONS)**

| Year | O&M Costs |
|---|---|
| 2031-2035 | $64.8 |
| 2036-2040 | $72.6 |
| 2041-2045 | $81.4 |
| 2046-2050 | $91.2 |
| **TOTAL** | **$310.0** |

## Project Costs

The project costs estimated for the proposed county projects in *Our Way Forward 2050* are at a planning level and are considered to be preliminary. As projects move through project development and become more fully scoped and designed, project cost estimates will become more refined.

Planning-level cost estimates are developed for all WCDOT projects identified in the recommendations. Costs are built up from unit cost estimates based on recent suburban Chicago projects (**Table 7.4**). Costs for Phase I Preliminary Engineering, which identifies the purpose and need of the project, completes environmental reviews and conducts preliminary design for the project, as well as for Phase II Design Engineering, are included as needed and as a percentage of estimated construction costs.

Projects and costs identified in the FY2025-2030 TIP and listed as "projects and phases in fiscal years outside the adopted TIP" were carried forward to this plan.

Finally, the identified grade crossing needs **(Chapter 5)** were allocated $1 million each for initial planning work, with the first 3 high-priority locations prioritized at the beginning of the project list, and the remaining 10 locations distributed in future years. Due to the large uncertainty in the types of solutions that could be recommended for each of these locations, no specific capital cost estimates are included at this time.

Project costs are inflated to year of expenditure dollars using the Federal Reserve's projected 10-year average inflation as of 2025 Quarter 1 (2.3%) through 2035. After 2035, a long-term average annual inflation of 2.1% is applied.

The projects are sorted according to their overall scores, with project costs matched to revenues until all projected revenues have been expended.

In reality, project costs are spent over multiple years. As funding is available, Phase I and Phase II Engineering work may happen in earlier stages.

## TABLE 7.4. UNIT COSTS FOR PROJECT COST ESTIMATION

| Project Task | Cost | Additional Costs | Cost Units | Comments and Assumptions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Roadway Reconstruction** | $2,600,000 | - | $ / lane-mile | Based on 5-lane highway |
| **Individual Intersection Reconstruction** | $6,000,000 | - | $ / project | Cost includes signal modernization/installation; reconstruction covers 1/4 mile on each intersecting road for 1/2-mile total reconstruction |
| **Interchange Construction/Reconstruction** | $20,000,000 | $50,000,000 | $ / project | Cost only includes pavement of intersection; additional costs take into consideration structures in reconstruction |
| **Roadway Widening** | $2,000,000 | - | $ / lane-mile | No traffic signal work, but could include new or relocated lighting work |
| **Bicycle Lane Construction** | $400,000 | - | $ / mile | Includes markings, colored pavements |
| **Sidewalk Construction** | $300,000 | - | $ / mile | - |
| **Phase 1 Engineering** | 8% | - | % of construction cost | - |
| **Phase 2 Engineering** | 15% | - | % of construction cost | - |

# Fiscally Constrained Projects

**Table 7.5** presents a list of fiscally constrained projects on county facilities. The projected revenues fall more than $250 million short in addressing the identified county roadway needs (**Table 7.6**).

Other recommended projects identified in the plan on roadways owned by other jurisdictions (IDOT, Tollway, municipalities, and townships), or involving other agencies (RTA, Metra, Pace), are planned and programmed in separate processes by those entities. WCDOT has coordinated with all of these entities in the development of this plan.

## TABLE 7.5. FISCALLY CONSTRAINED PROJECTS ON COUNTY FACILITIES

| ID # | Roadway | From | To | Length (miles) | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Wilmington-Peotone Road | IL Route 53 | Drecksler Road | 18.0 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 2 | Exchange Street | IL Route 394 | Stateline Road | 2.8 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 3 | Center Road | Wilmington-Peotone Road | Steger Road | 10.0 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 4 | Crete-Monee Road Extension | IL Route 1 | IL Route 394 | 1.7 | New 3-Lane Roadway |
| 5 | W. River Road | IL Route 113 | IL Route 53 | 3.1 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 6 | Peotone-Beecher Road | IL Route 50 | IL Route 1 | 8.5 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 7 | Pauling-Goodenow Road | IL Route 50 | IL Route 1 | 6.9 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 8 | Marley Road | U.S. Route 6 | Townline Road | 1.1 | 5-Lane Widening |
| 9 | Weber Road | Airport Road | Romeo Road (135th Street) | 2.1 | 6-Lane Reconstruction |
| 10 | Manhattan-Monee Road | U.S. Route 45 | Ridgeland Avenue | 6.1 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 11 | North Peotone Road | U.S. Routes 45-52 | West Street | 5.5 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 12 | Renwick Road | U.S. Route 30 | Weber Road | 3.4 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 13 | Renwick Road | Weber Road | IL Route 53 | 2.5 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 14 | Weber Road | Rodeo Drive | Lily Cache Lane | 1.5 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 15 | 143rd Street | Lemont Road | Bell Road | 3.7 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 16 | Gougar Road Extension | Laraway Road | U.S. Route 52 | 2.0 | New 3-Lane Roadway |
| 17 | North River Road | I-55 | IL Route 53 | 4.0 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 18 | Laraway Road | Calistoga Drive | U.S. Route 45 | 4.3 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |

*TABLE 7.5 CONTINUED*

| ID # | Roadway | From | To | Length (miles) | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | Weber Road | U.S. Route 30 | Division Street | 1.9 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 20 | Manhattan-Monee Road | Ridgeland Avenue | I-57 | 0.5 | Intersection / Interchange Improvement |
| 21 | Cedar Road (South) | Baker Road | Laraway Road | 2.0 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 22 | Laraway Road | U.S. Route 45 | Harlem Avenue | 4.3 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 23 | Laraway Road | U.S. Route 52 | Nelson Road | 2.3 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 24 | 167th Street (Division Street) | Briggs Street | Cedar Road | 3.5 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 25 | Kankakee County Line Road | Will-Center Road | Stateline Road | 10.5 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 26 | Peotone-Beecher Road/303rd | IL Route 1 | Stateline Road | 5.0 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 27 | Crete-Monee Road | I-57 | IL Route 1 | 7.3 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 28 | Gougar Road | Laraway Road | Illinois Hwy (Spencer Road) | 1.0 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 29 | Lorenzo Road | Grundy County Line | Glasskaamp Boulevard | 2.2 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 30 | Cedar Road (North) | Laura Lane | Ashton Lane | 3.1 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 31 | Mills Road | IL Route 53 | Cherry Hill Lane | 3.0 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 32 | Manhattan-Arsenal Road | IL Route 53 | U.S. Route 52 | 7.9 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 33 | Gougar Road | Francis Road | U.S. Route 6 | 1.3 | 3-Lane Widening |
| 34 | Wilton Center Road | Wilmington-Peotone Road | U.S. Route 52 | 2.1 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 35 | Cherry Hill Road | Mills Road | U.S. Route 30 | 1.7 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 36 | River Road-WP Connector | IL Route 53 | Wilmington-Peotone Road | 1.4 | New 3-Lane Roadway |
| 37 | Cedar Road (North) | Victoria Crossing | 163rd St | 0.3 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| N/A | Multiple | N/A | N/A | N/A | Grade Crossing Planning Studies |

## TABLE 7.6. ADDITIONAL FISCALLY UNCONSTRAINED PROJECTS ON COUNTY FACILITIES

| ID # | Roadway | From | To | Length (miles) | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | Naperville-Plainfield Road | 119th Street/Rodeo Drive | Hassert Boulevard | 1.1 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 39 | Western Avenue | Crete-Monee Road | Exchange Street | 1.7 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 40 | Bluff Road | I-55 | U.S. Route 6 | 1.3 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 41 | Bell Road | Glengary Drive | Cook County Line | 0.5 | 5-Lane Reconstruction |
| 42 | Schoolhouse Road | U.S. Route 30 | Francis Road | 1.6 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 43 | Channahon-Minooka Road | Grundy County Line | U.S. Route 6 | 2.3 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 44 | Strip Mine Road | IL Route 129 | IL Route 53 | 1.6 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 45 | Francis Road | Schoolhouse Road | Front Street | 1.8 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 46 | Naperville-Plainfield Road | 127th Street | Plainfield East H.S. South Ent | 0.8 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |
| 47 | Brandon Road | Laraway Road | U.S. Route 6 | 1.5 | 2-Lane Reconstruction |
| 48 | Will-Center Road | Crete-Monee Road | Pauling Road | 1.5 | 3-Lane Reconstruction |

## Other Funding Concepts

During engagement for *Our Way Forward 2050*, stakeholders from local governments including townships and municipalities indicated the need for additional assistance for planning, design, and construction of their transportation improvements and maintenance. This Plan recommends an "Invest in Will" program that mirrors the successful Invest in Cook program started in 2017 in neighboring Cook County. The Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways' (CCDOTH) Invest in Cook program is an annual $8.5 million grant program to "help local governments and agency partners further their transportation projects by covering some of the cost of planning and feasibility studies, engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction associated with transportation improvements."[1]

Any such grant program in Will County would align with the priorities in *Our Way Forward 2050*. With a population that is 14% the size of Cook County, a proportional level of investment would be $1.2 million per year. Such a program would require a new and separate funding stream approved by the County Board.

To cover such a program, satisfy the unfunded transportation needs in the county and on facilities of other jurisdictions, and to mitigate risks of downturns in any singular funding source, a variety of funding mechanisms could be considered at the state, county, or local level:

- Additional sales taxes, including taxes on services
- Additional fuel taxes, either fixed or indexed
- Additional vehicle registration fees
- Bonds and various forms of debt
- Mileage-based user fees
- Tax increment financing and other forms of value capture
- Expansion of CREATE or development of a CREATE-type program for Will County
- Federal grants and loans, such as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program or Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loans
- Impact fees on new development to cover infrastructure improvements to accommodate the development
- Freight-related fees, such as flat fees for all shipping containers transported into or out of a port or inland port

[1] *https://www.cookcountyil.gov/investincook*

# Plan Recommendations and Implementation

08

**Transforming the Plan's vision and recommendations into tangible transportation improvements through strategic funding approaches, interagency collaboration, policy implementation, and adaptive planning.**

# Recommendations

*Our Way Forward 2050* provides a framework for improving transportation in Will County over the next 25 years. This framework was developed with extensive input from Will County residents, elected officials, and key stakeholders and represents a vision for the future of transportation in Will County.

The prior sections described the analysis and input that led to the identification of needs and the screening of potential project and policy solutions to those needs. The projects on County-controlled facilities were further evaluated and compared against projected available funding.

**Figures 8.1 and 8.2**, and **Table 8.1**, summarize these recommendations for each mode.

A full numbered list of project recommendations is provided in **Appendix D**.

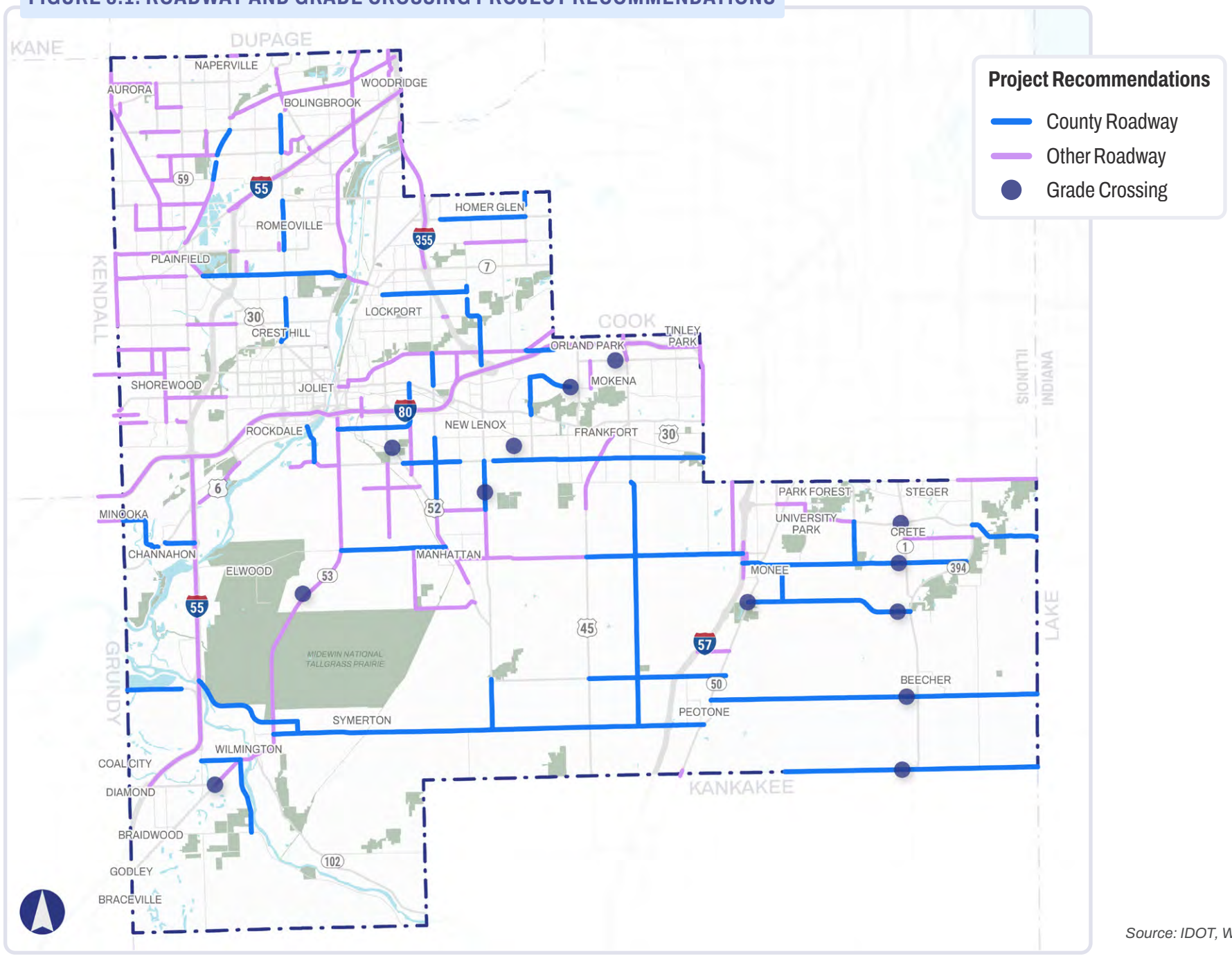
*Downtown Joliet*


*Historic Swing Bridge, Romeoville*


*Historic Swing Bridge, Romeoville*

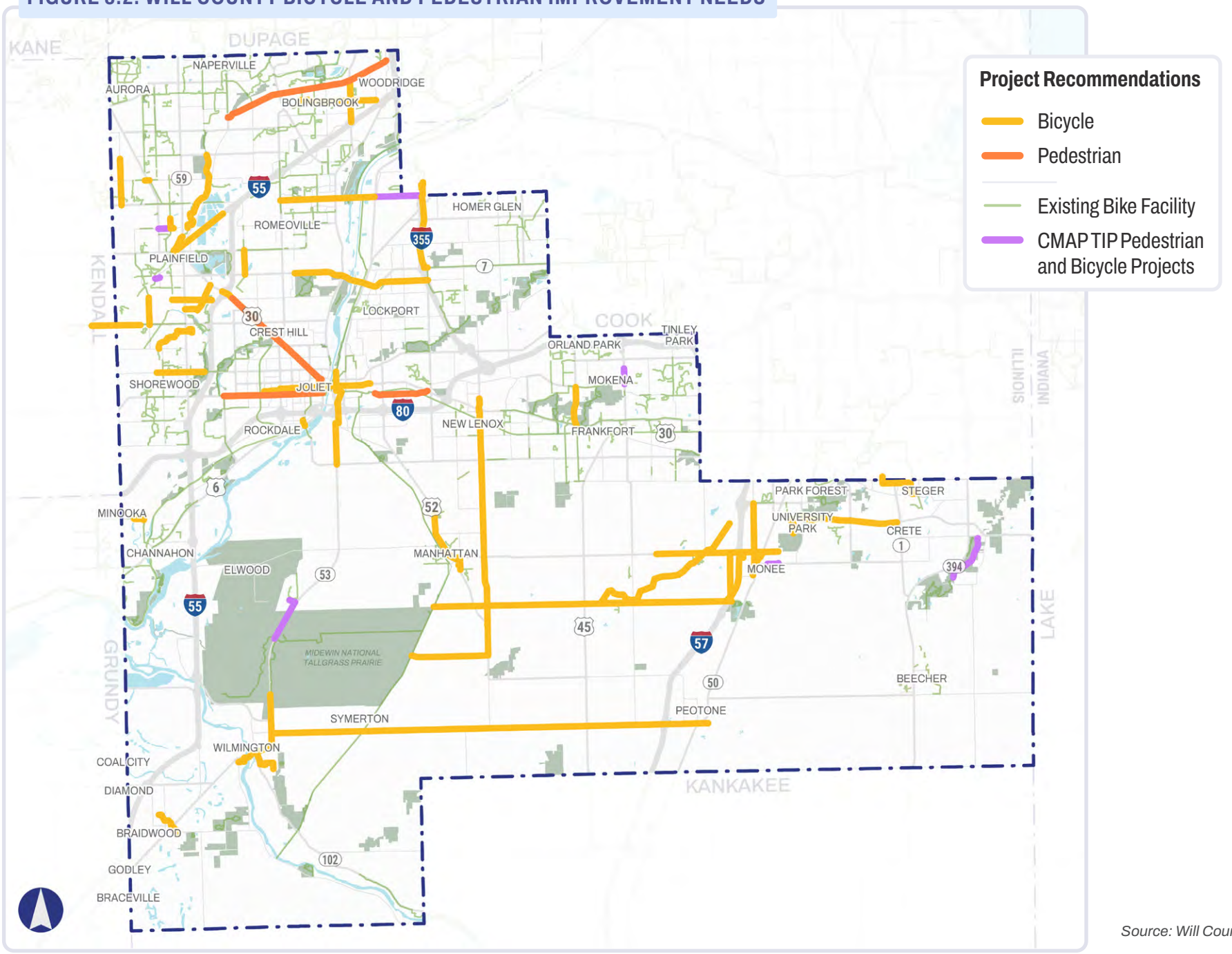

*Centennial Trail, Romeoville*

## FIGURE 8.1. ROADWAY AND GRADE CROSSING PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS




*Source: IDOT, Will County*

## FIGURE 8.2. WILL COUNTY BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT NEEDS




*Source: Will County, CMAP*

## TABLE 8.1. TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

| Location(s) | Service Type | Operator | Improvement Type | Description | Identified By Needs Analysis | Identified During Public Outreach |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frankfort | TBD | Pace, Other | Add | Consider transit connection from Frankfort to Hickory Creek Metra Station | Yes | - |
| Eastern Will County | Dial-a-ride | Pace, Other | Expand/Extend | Improve east-west connectivity in eastern Will County, connecting to shopping and services in Indiana | - | Yes |
| Naperville-Plainfield-Joliet | Fixed Route | Pace | Expand/Extend | Connect existing Routes 507 and 559, linking Naperville, Plainfield, and Joliet, and increase frequency | Yes | Yes |
| Joliet-Shorewood | Fixed Route | Pace | Expand/Extend | Extend service north into Shorewood/West Joliet | Yes | Yes |
| Chicago-Joliet | Fixed Route | Metra | Add Frequency | Increase Metra Heritage Corridor daily frequency and add weekend service, subject to capacity constraints of corridor | Yes | - |
| Chicago-Will County | Fixed Route | Metra | Add Frequency | Increase reverse commute service across all 4 Metra lines in Will County | Yes | - |
| Joliet-Wilmington | TBD | TBD | Add | Consider transit access to Wilmington (mode TBD) | - | Yes |
| Bolingbrook | OnDemand | Pace | Add | Provide flexible transit coverage in Bolingbrook | Yes | Yes |
| Joliet-Elwood | TBD | Pace, Other | Add Frequency | Increase frequency and match work shifts on weekdays and weekends | Yes | Yes |
| I-55 Corridor | Fixed Route | Pace | Various | Bus-on-Shoulder improvements | Yes | - |
| Grundy-Will-Cook Counties | TBD | Pace, Other | Add | Explore options for connecting Cook and Will Counties to Minooka/ Channahon job centers | Yes | Yes |
| Monee-Peotone | TBD | TBD | Add | Consider transit access to Monee and Peotone (mode TBD) | - | Yes |

# Policy Needs

*The identified* Our Way Forward 2050 *policies are designed to guide strategic priorities and ensure investments align with transportation needs. The policies provide a framework to create a resilient, adaptable, and sustainable transportation system that accommodates growth, prioritizes safety, and integrates various transportation modes. Through partnerships and collaboration, the county aims to improve and provide more efficient and accessible mobility solutions for all residents.*

*The policies serve as organizing principles for evaluating and selecting investments in transportation infrastructure through 2050 that support long-term goals and address community needs. They guide the prioritization process by ensuring that investment decisions align with key objectives such as safety, mobility, and sustainability, while also helping to identify opportunities for collaboration with partners.*

## General

***Enhance Will County's transportation network***

- *Improve the condition of township and municipal transportation assets through partnerships*
- *Plan for and extend the longevity of infrastructure: Consider lifecycle cost in project development*
- *Improve the physical and operational , and weather resilience of transportation infrastructure to various risks: Consider resilience elements in project development*
- *Coordinate land use/development and transportation decisions to cost-effectively accommodate growth*
- *Design adaptable infrastructure that accommodates changing demands over time*
- *Accommodate freight movement in infrastructure planning and design*
- *Encourage a shift from freight transport by truck to other freight transportation modes, such as rail or barge*
- *Partner with all relevant agencies and departments to improve safety through education, engineering, enforcement, emergency response, and equity*

## Bicycle and Pedestrian

***Support a more active and sustainable network***

- *Create City of Joliet Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and support implementation*
- *Support communities' efforts to improve bicycle and pedestrian access around their transit stations and stops*
- *Incorporate bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly elements into street design that align with the county's Complete Streets policy*
- *Consider safe bicycle and pedestrian access in land use decisions*
- *Support implementation of municipal bicycle and pedestrian plans*
- *Create Eastern Will County bicycle plan to improve cycling opportunities and connectivity*

## Transit

***Work with public transit partners to improve public transit services***

- *Support Pace ReVision network restructure*
- *Leverage existing Dial-a-Ride services through increased promotion and consolidated trip-planning*
- *Support communities' efforts to improve the area around their transit stations and stops*
- *Incorporate transit-friendly elements into street designs that align with the county's Complete Streets policy*
- *Work with RTA, Pace, Metra, and others to explore microtransit and shared mobility solutions to first-/last-mile connectivity*
- *Consider safe transit access in land-use decisions*

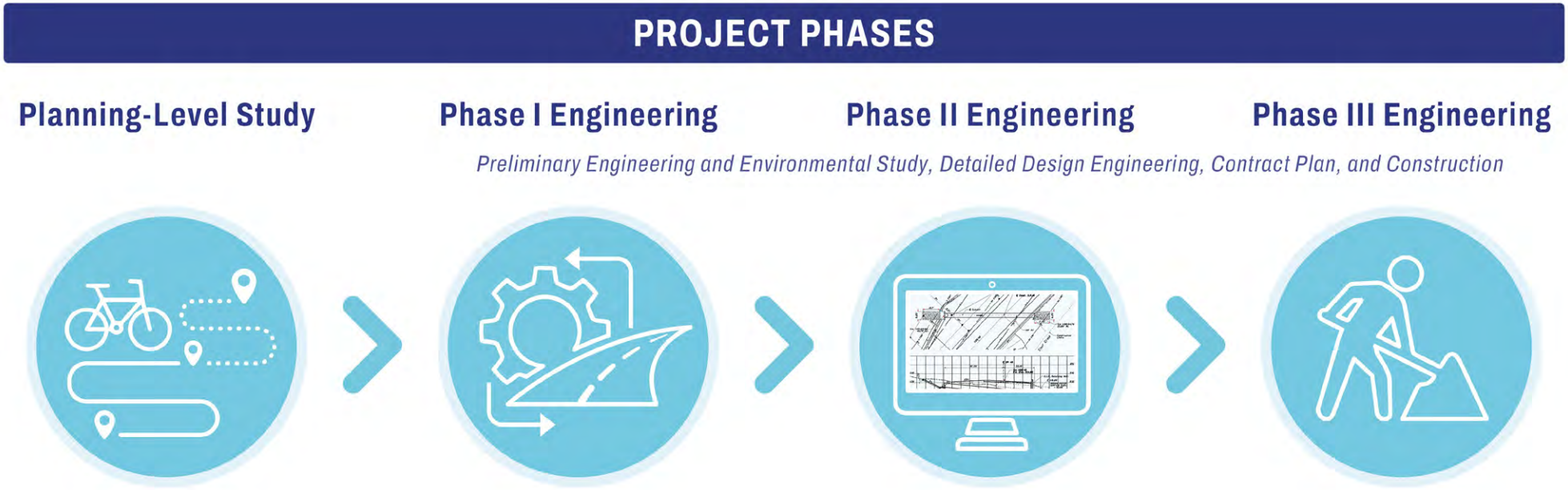
# Implementation

Planning documents such as this serve as a foundation for initiating the project development process. Projects within Will County's jurisdiction, including those on the fiscally constrained project list, can then be prioritized and funded through the county's multi-year capital investment plan, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Projects that do not pertain to county-owned facilities will follow a similar project development process through their respective transportation agencies.

## Project Development

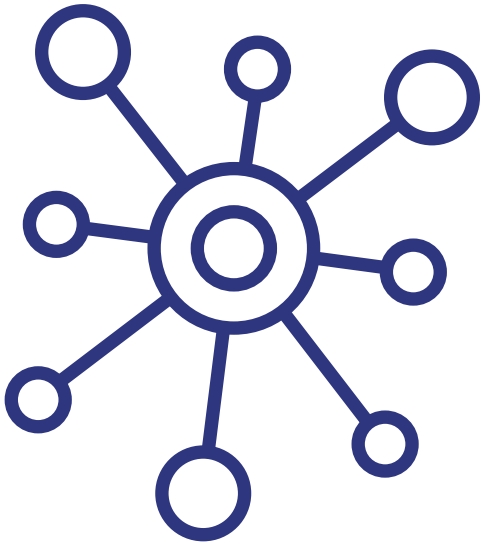
Transportation infrastructure projects take time to complete and are typically funded and implemented through the following phases: planning, preliminary engineering, design engineering, and construction. Depending on the sources of funding for a project, environmental review may also be part of the process.

Implementation strategies in this Plan are used to guide the practical execution of the Plan's strategic priorities and projects. They provide approaches to achieve the county's desired goals.



## Funding

Sustained and diversified funding sources help ensure a resilient and adaptable LRTP. Projects can be funded through a combination of federal, state, regional, local, and private sources. The county will continue to take steps to ensure transportation projects led by Will County are eligible for federal or state funds or grants where applicable and will continue to pursue and apply for funding and grants. Will County will also continue to advocate for increased transportation funding at the state level. See **Chapter 7** for other funding concepts that can be explored to address funding shortfalls in this plan.



## Addressing Specific Modal Challenges

The county will continue policies that support biking, walking, and public transit through the implementation of the "Complete Streets" model, which prioritizes safety and mobility for all roadway users. The county will also continue to implement Complete Streets designs in alignment with the WCDOT Complete Streets Policy.

Additionally, WCDOT will continue to support municipalities in adopting local Complete Streets policies. This will help create a cohesive and region-wide approach to creating safer and more accessible streets for all Will County residents, while maintaining flexibility across jurisdictions to ensure unique transportation needs can be addressed.

In line with Complete Streets policy, the county will continue to support walking, biking, and transit. This includes working with, and supporting, Metra and Pace to provide public transit options for Will County residents. This will improve quality of life, mobility, and air quality, and it can also help reduce traffic congestion. For more about the benefits of Complete Streets and transportation modes beyond automobiles, refer to **Chapter 5**.

## Coordination and Collaboration

Projects within county jurisdiction may require the involvement of several county agencies. For example, the Forest Preserve District is responsible for several bike facilities within Will County. Effective coordination and collaboration across all county agencies, such as the Forest Preserve District and partner agencies like the Will County Center for Economic Development, are critical.

To accomplish this, it is important to maintain communication with county leaders who serve on various agency boards and committees as well as in other relevant bodies. Keeping these leaders informed ensures that decision-making is aligned with this Plan's broader goals. Across Will County, transportation assets may extend beyond the authority of the county government, and multiple governing bodies often play a role in a single project. For example, municipalities own and manage their own roads, and Metra and Pace manage their routes and assets.

Additionally, the federal government may provide funding for certain projects, the county may request federal funds through competitive grants, and CMAP may handle both funding and planning coordination. This coordination and collaboration with CMAP, IDOT, municipalities, and other affected parties is critical in crafting competitive grant applications; it is also critical in successfully executing a received grant.

One of the objectives of this Plan is to develop a connected transportation network. To achieve this objective, Will County will work to define and confirm responsibilities among governing and planning bodies to ensure projects move forward and opportunities for combining efforts are actively utilized and turned into positive outcomes.

In projects that are not led by the county, the county will work to provide support where possible. Clear communication with regional, state, and federal leadership is necessary to ensure that the county's priorities are understood and championed by all levels of government. This communication helps align regional objectives with available funding and project prioritization.

## Promoting Reslience

Our Way Forward 2050 recommends the need for county-wide policies to improve the physical, operational, and weather resiliency of transportationinfrastructure. A resilient transportation network can better adapt to changing conditions.

Project limits are determined during project engineering. As part of the project engineering phase, WCDOT considers existing land use when defining and refining project footprints and will continue, to the extent possible, to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts associated with transportation projects. The county will continue to coordinate with Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, the Forest Preserve District, municipal park districts, and environmental advocacy groups regarding ecological and environmental concerns.

## Leveraging the CREATE Program

The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program is a public-private partnership that uses nationally recognized best practices to improve regional rail infrastructure. All six Class I freight railroads operating in North America are partners in the CREATE Program, along with Amtrak, Metra, the State of Illinois, Cook County, and the City of Chicago. Among the more than 70 projects in the program, 34 have been completed, while others are in the planning, design, or construction phases. Many of the program's rail improvements include grade separations that are critical for the regional economy.

While Will County is not currently a CREATE partner, and while no projects in the original CREATE Program are in Will County, Will County could consider advocating for future expansion and updating the list of projects to include grade crossings of regional significance for counties outside of the existing program. The fiscally constrained project list includes set-aside planning funds for further study of the priority grade crossings.

## Staying Up to Speed

*Our Way Forward 2050* understands that the pace of technological advancements is ever increasing, and the emerging technologies in transportation are no exception. WCDOT will continue to be involved with interagency forums, such as the CMAP Transportation Technology and Operation Coalition, that discuss the potential impacts of emerging transportation-related technologies.

***By aligning our priorities, resources, and partnerships, this Plan serves as a roadmap for the future to ensure that the transportation system meets the evolving needs of Will County residents and businesses.***

*This is a multi-year planning document that is subject to change. Financing for all projects in this planning document must be approved by the Will County Board. Any project may be amended by vote of the Will County Board.*


THE COUNTY OF WILL
1836
ILLINOIS