

CATS

Partners in Progress Meeting

Results for McHenry County Chambers of Commerce

May, 2005



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Public Outreach Report

McHenry County Chambers of Commerce Crystal Lake, Illinois

**Prepared by Suzanne Lanzafame
May, 2005**

On January 19, 2005, the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) held a "Partners in Progress" transportation luncheon with several McHenry County chambers of commerce. These included the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce, McHenry Area Chamber of Commerce, Algonquin/Lake-in-the-Hills Chamber of Commerce, Cary-Grove Area Chamber of Commerce, Huntley Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Marengo-Union Chamber of Commerce and Woodstock Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The event was held at The Pointe in Crystal Lake.

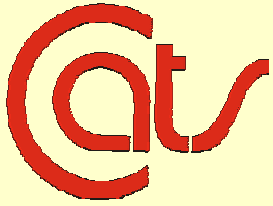
This was the first "Partners in Progress" meeting held in McHenry County and its intention was to educate and gain feedback from local businesses, elected officials and other stakeholders on the transportation planning process.

Featured speakers at the luncheon were Tom Murtha, Chief Transportation Planner for CATS, who discussed the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program; Patricia Schroeder, Planning Liaison for the McHenry County Council of Mayors; Ed Wilson, Area Programmer for District I of the Illinois Department of Transportation; and Tom Zapler, Government Affairs, Central Region with Union Pacific Railroad, speaking on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program.

CATS would like to thank Gail McDonald, Bob Blazier and Casey Voris of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce for reaching out to the McHenry County chambers and all their work in putting this luncheon together.

Each meeting participant was asked to fill out a brief Transportation Opinion Survey designed to identify their transportation concerns and issues. It is our intent to provide each community we visit with this survey to better understand transportation strengths, weaknesses and needs from a local perspective. Surveys were completed by 56 meeting participants. Results can be found on the following pages.





McHenry County Transportation Opinion Survey Results

The following conclusions are to be regarded as general in nature. The results are not a product of rigorous quantitative or qualitative analysis. In several instances, the survey offered multiple options for answers, and as expected most respondents chose more than one option. Therefore, the responses to some questions add up to more than 100 percent.

The number of people completing the Transportation Opinion Survey in McHenry County was 56: 29 males, 26 females and one with gender unspecified. All 56 respondents reported being employed. The average age of the respondents is 48 years, with the youngest being 31 and the oldest 72.

The primary means of transportation for a whopping 98 percent of the respondents is driving an auto/van/pickup/SUV, with 34 percent saying they also travel as passengers in autos/vans/pickups/SUVs. While 39 percent are Metra riders, only seven percent use CTA Els or subways, and even fewer (5%) ride CTA, Pace or paratransit buses. Even taxis, at nine percent, were used more often than Pace or CTA services. The survey showed a health-conscious group, as 36 percent walk and 25 percent ride bicycles to their destinations.

Survey respondents cited three main reasons for not using public transportation: lack of service where they need to travel (55%), lack of service where they live (45%), and infrequent service (43%). Sixteen percent said service is too slow and 13 percent said they don't have enough information about transit services. Expense and safety issues were negligible (7% and 4%, respectively).



Every respondent cited traffic congestion as a problem experienced in their daily travels. Intersection delays (64%) and poor road conditions (46%) were reported as significant traffic problems, with railroad crossing delays (23%) and poor or lack of signage (20%) secondary traffic-related problems.

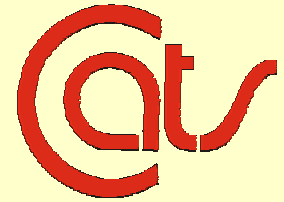
Radio (61%) and television (46%) were the primary sources of transportation information for survey respondents. Newspapers (38%), the Internet (36%) and the RTA/CTA/Metra/Pace (27%) were other sources of information, with four percent saying they receive no information whatsoever.



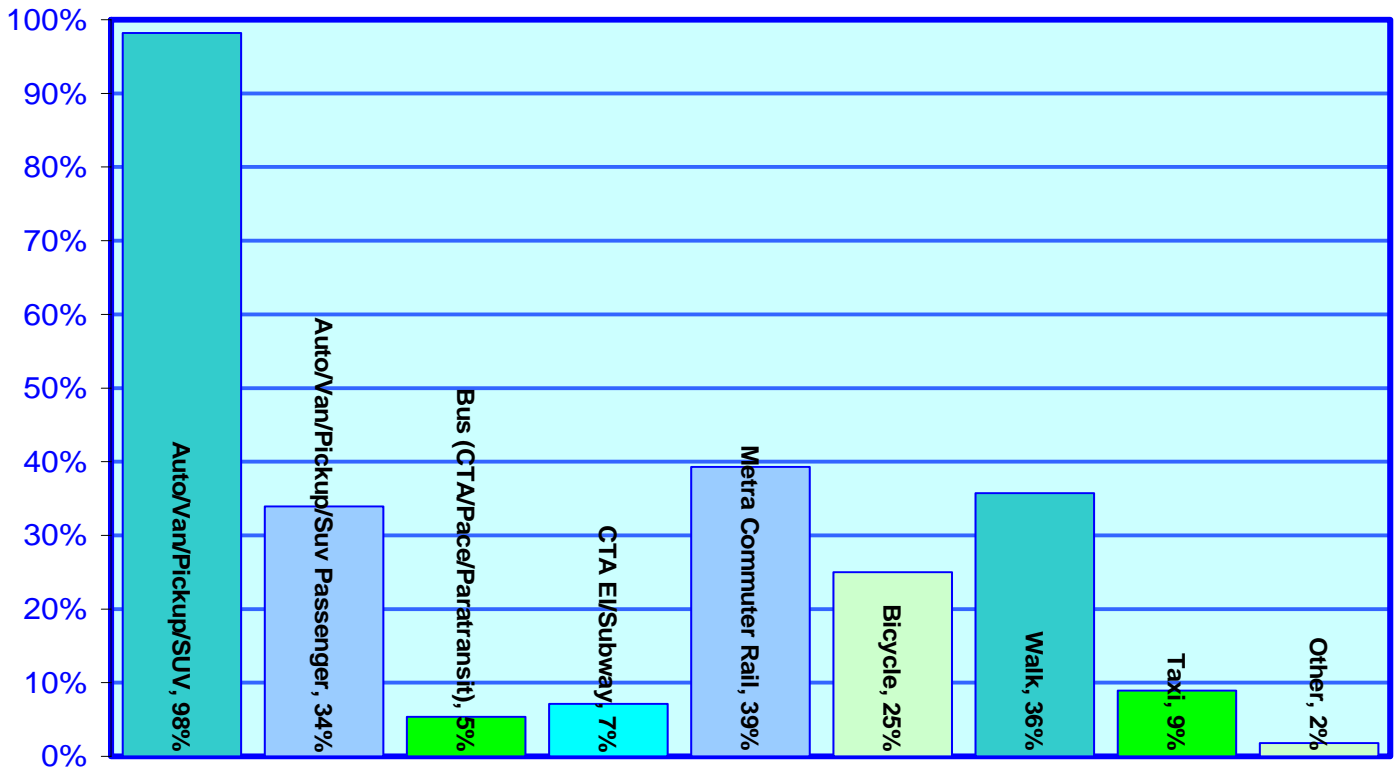
When asked to comment on what could be done to improve the transportation system in northeastern Illinois, the respondents indicated the following categories where improvements are needed:

- More roads;
- Wider roads;
- Intersection improvements;
- More public transportation;
- More bike paths and pedestrian walks.

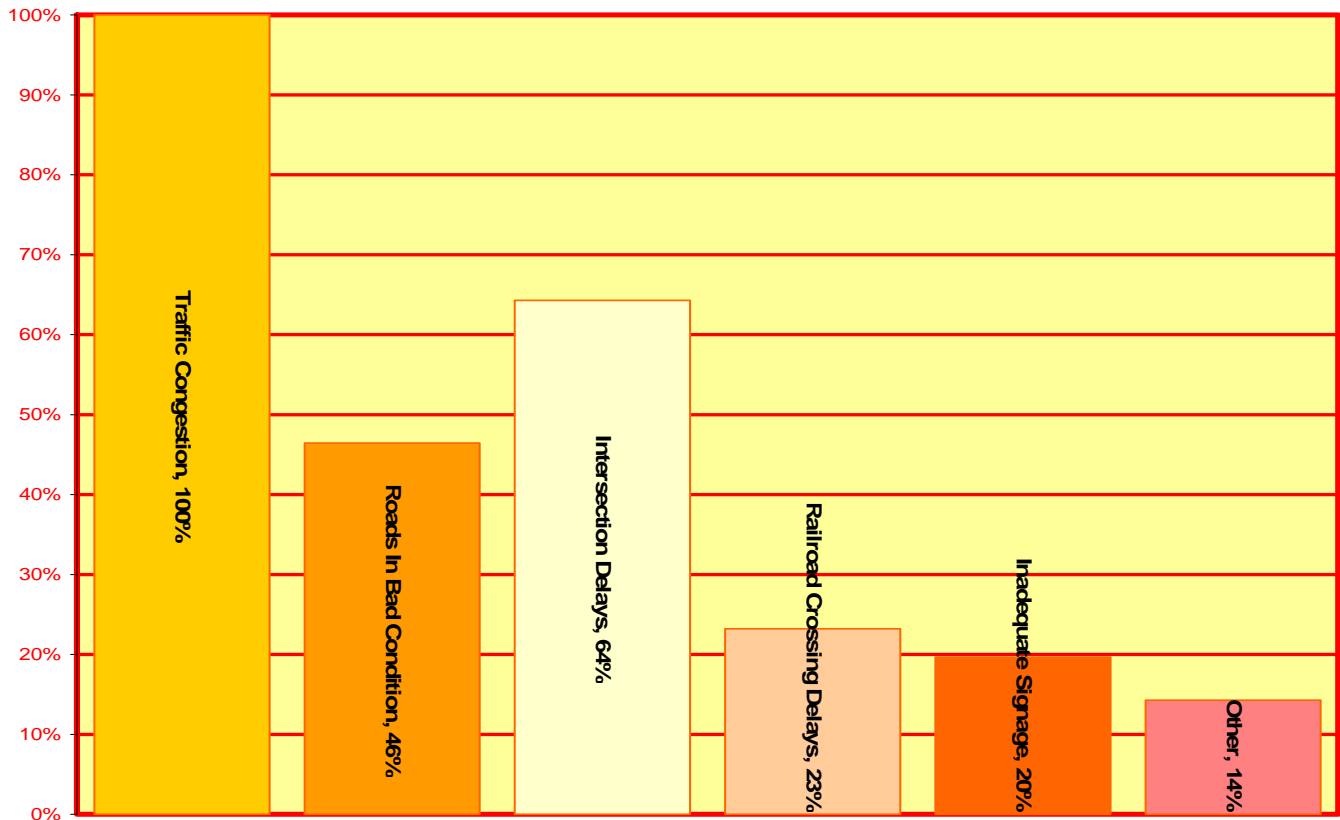
The charts on the following pages give breakdowns on responses CATS received from participants at the Crystal Lake meeting.



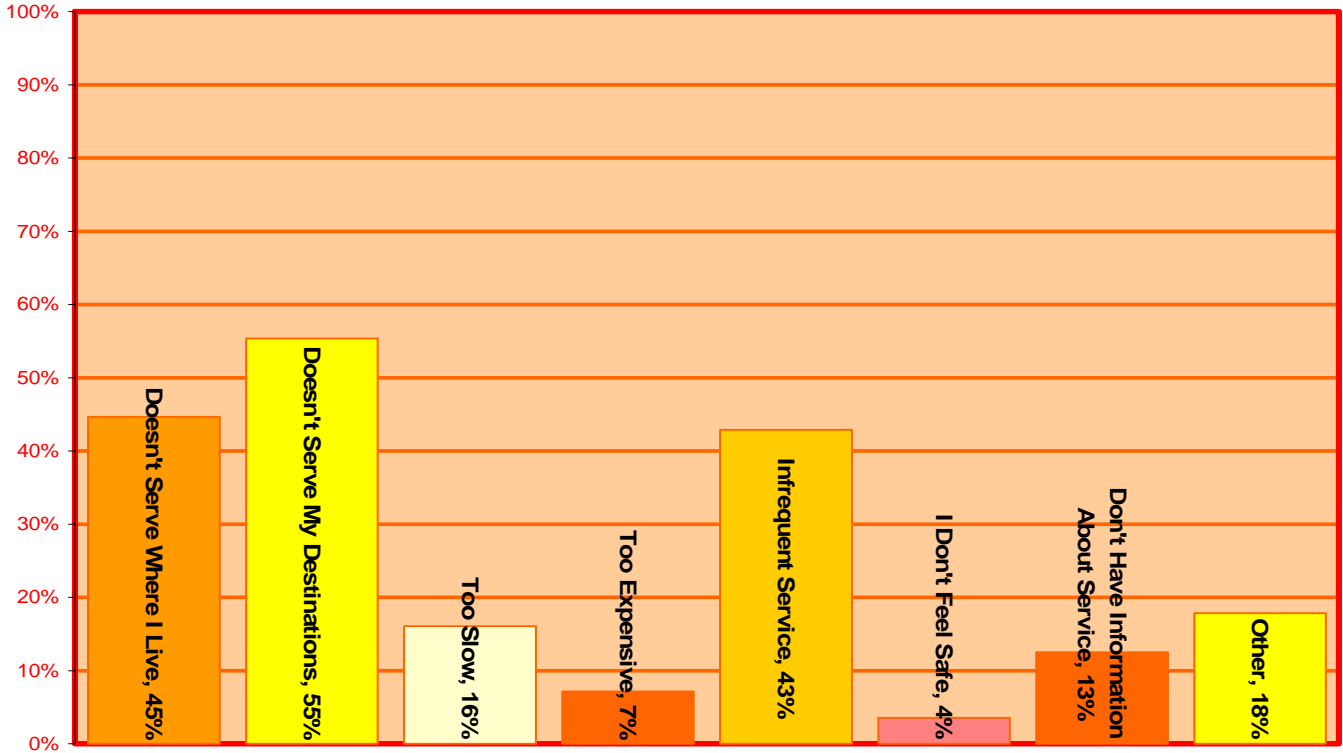
Question: What types of transportation do you typically use?



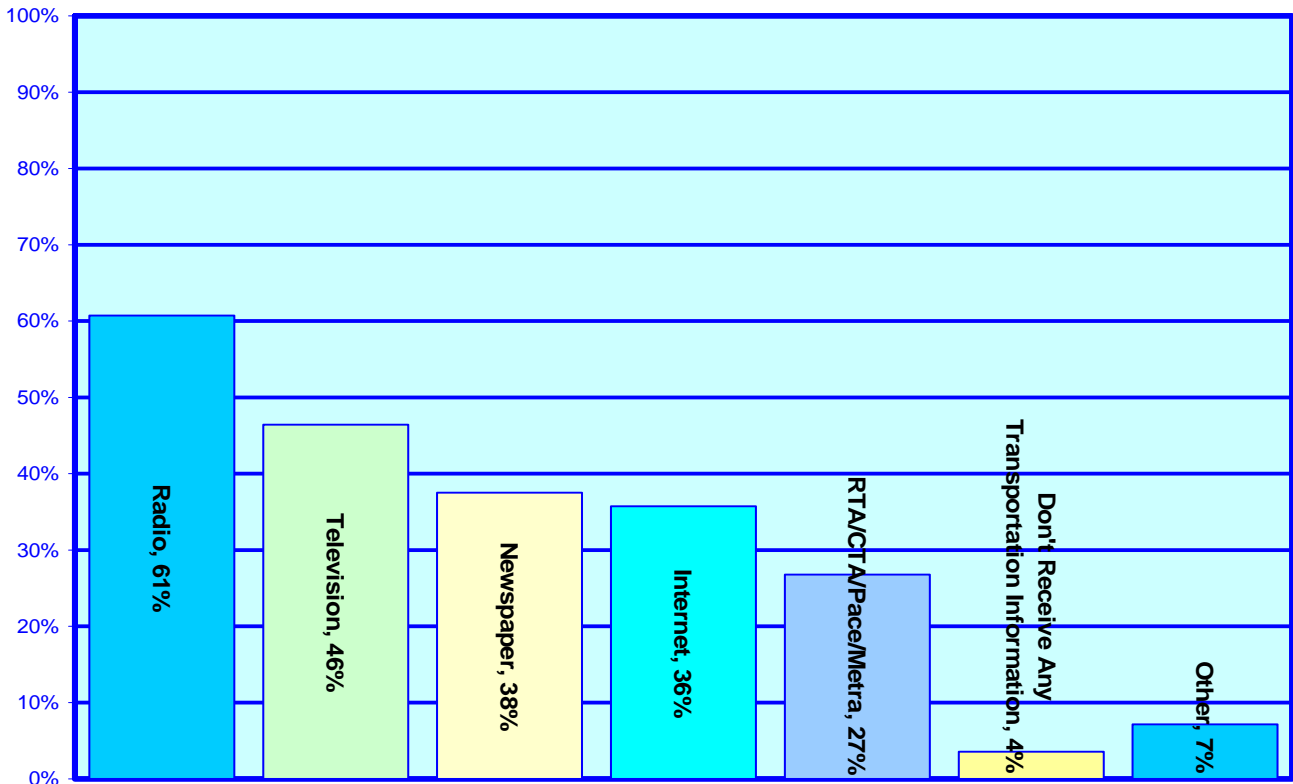
Question: What types of problems have you experienced in your daily travel?

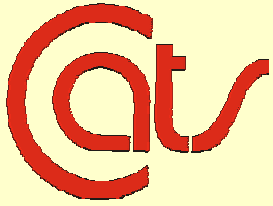


Question: Public transportation problems?



Question: How do you receive transportation information?





Written Responses To Survey Questions

Question 2A: What types of problems have you observed or experienced in your daily travels? Other (please specify):

Not enough lanes to accommodate traffic due to fast growth.

One-lane traffic; need two lanes.

Lights are badly timed in Fox River Grove since the train/bus crash.

Streets (expressways) being fixed every two-three years. Why?

Not enough lanes on IL 62, IL 58, IL 31, IL 47, IL 59.

Lack of signs at dangerous intersections (lights/signals).

Traffic congestion is extremely bad in Algonquin and on Randall, Route 47 in Huntley and Woodstock.

Lack of turn lanes to the left going into big subdivisions is causing traffic backups. You can't pass a turning car from behind on the right. A lot of two-lane highway problems and many areas need to be widened.

Road construction.



Question 2B: Public transportation related problems. Other (please specify):

I don't use public transportation.

Metra is generally great.

There is not enough direct service to Chicago on Metra. Midday rides stop at every stop along the way – not enough express routes.

Does not go through Huntley yet.

Not at all times.

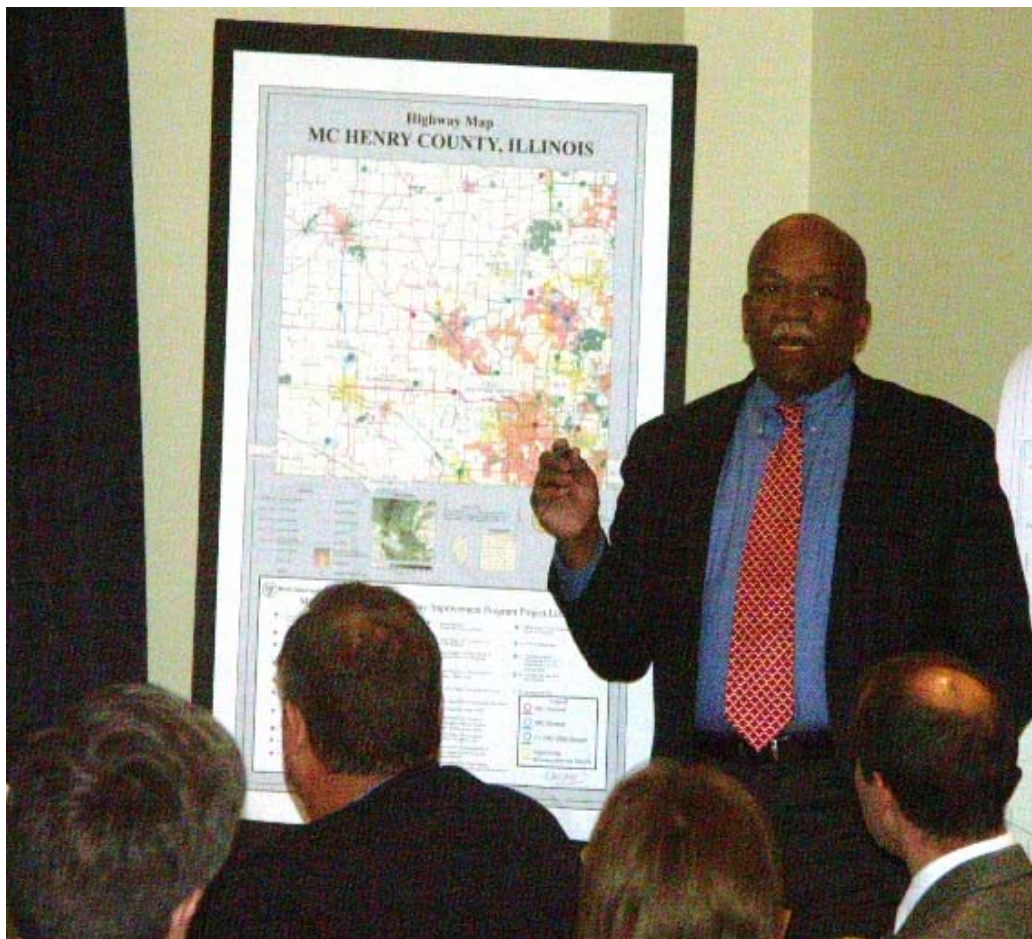
I prefer private bus schedules and frequency as compared to Pace/RTA.

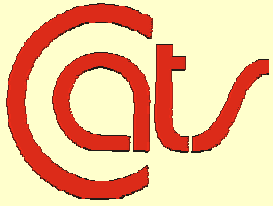
Need more public transportation options (bus, light rail to other suburbs, etc.).

Too soon to be considered – concentrate on the roads.

No regular routes.

Most of McHenry County does not have a public transportation service. Dial-A-Ride is only available, but you have to call 24 hours in advance.





Question 2C: Problems with other types of transportation:

Traffic into and out of McHenry County restricted by lack and size of roads, especially through Cary and Algonquin.

Need scheduled bus service, more taxis.

Bike riders blocking traffic flow.

Our community suffers from through traffic that congests our local streets and intersections.

Infrequent, no information available.



People need public transportation to get to work in McHenry County; they need a schedule they can follow, and it needs to meet all three shifts. Right now the only sure way to get to work is with a car.

Inadequate number of bike paths in convenient locations. No local bus service.

We need to study and coordinate traffic signals on Randall Rd., Rte. 14 and Rte. 47.

Public transportation needs to be more suburb-to-suburb focused vs. suburb-to-Chicago.

Not available.

Busing: I know it's there, just don't know where it goes. I use commuter trains into Chicago – easier than driving.

Question 3: Please tell us what you like about the transportation system in northeastern Illinois. Feel free to comment on all types of transportation.

It was adequate 20-30 years ago.

Planning is good. Need new roads.

At least we have one.

Great rail system.

Driving on Randall Rd. between 62 and 90 is too fast. Algonquin Rd. 62 has been significantly improved.

When you travel off peak you can move fast.

Metra needs to keep up with growth.

Elgin Metra – good parking.

Metra is always on time. I-294 has more lanes than I-90. Why?

Overall good public transportation, but hard to move between areas.

It is easy and convenient to drive to Chicago from NW suburbs. Also, Metra service to NW suburbs.

Bike paths. Train service to Chicago. Private bus to airport (Vangalder).

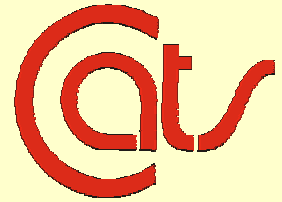
I like the option of taking Vangalder bus to airport and expanded schedule. I like Metra service to Chicago – need more weekend/evening trains.

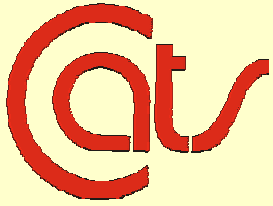
Chicago is great! The suburbs are trouble. How about a different population/toll both ratio? How about keeping transportation tax dollars in McHenry County?

Senior services. Transportation for seniors.

Does not keep up with the expansion in this area.

It is not accessible to all in McHenry County. The education process needs to be done so residents know how to use the system more effectively.





Question 16: In your opinion, what can be done to improve the transportation system in northeastern Illinois? (Please consider improvements to all types of transportation.)

Additional stops at the Harvard Metra. Easier bus routes and more frequent runs in Crystal Lake.

I do not know, except lots of money.

Emphasis on mass transit.

More funding. Less review time to get projects completed more quickly.

Money.

More money from the federal government.



More parking for train travel.

Add roads and lanes.

Enlarge major roads.

More bike paths; better and more frequent bus service; encourage better planning for local businesses in neighborhoods.

Marengo has terrible congestion due to trucks using Rte. 20 and Rte. 23 as an alternative to I-90. Safety has become an issue, as the number of pedestrian and vehicular incidents is increasing.

Huntley needs access to Hwy. 47 and I-90 east. Also, an exit from Hwy. 47 to I-90 west. Really needed!

1. Fix Tollway (90) Intersection at Rte. 47 (eastbound exit from Rockford, westbound entrance to Rockford). 2. Put Metra into Huntley.

We need to have off ramps from I-90 onto 47 going east. We need buses in Huntley.

Widen Rt. 31 from 176-120 (very important for our business).

Metra/Pace accessibility in Marengo and related areas.

Expand road size; Extend Rt. 53; Add more rails; More bike paths and better interconnections.

Reduce congestion.

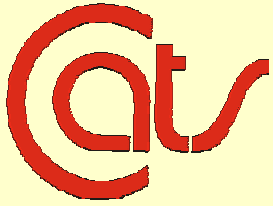
I would ride my bike to work (12 miles) one way if it were safer.

Train and/or bus direct to O'Hare, Midway with frequent times. Also weekends too.

Planning on the parts of all involved. I think communities need to think of everything that will be affected by allowing growth. There needs to be more public transportation available out here.

Availability of public transportation from McHenry County to large corporate facilities such as Motorola, Northrup. This was very informative. Thanks!





More lanes for I-90.

Many busy roads are still one lane in each direction. Need to improve traffic flow.

Widen the roads. Stop taking surveys when you know all roads must be taken care of. Algonquin by-pass has been under studies for 30-40 years. Still nothing happens. Rt. 31 from Spring Hill mall to McHenry is terrible. I have been involved in surveys of traffic problems in the area for many years. Still, nothing ever happens. Everyone is all talk. Maybe if the federal money didn't all go to Cook County, we could have some better roads.

More bike and pedestrian paths to commercial areas and schools. Bus service or dramatically expand Dial A Ride.

Bus service between communities. Increased commuter train service out to Woodstock. Bike trails/lanes increased and made safe. Sidewalks required in communities.

Placing signals at dangerous intersections. Better timing of existing signals (Randall Rd.). Place signals at 176 and Briarwood.

There needs to be emphasis placed on increasing public transportation options within McHenry County. This includes more options and increasing the availability of existing options. Emphasis should be placed on road enhancements and improvements vs. new roads.

Rt. 47 – 4-way; Rt. 47 improvement; McHenry-Kane County Line extension; widening 62 between Rt. 25 and Rt. 59; bike access on roads; Fox River crossings; traffic in McHenry County; money mostly going to Chicago and Cook County.

Allocate interstate road improvement funds to new interstate construction. We will never get new roads if the funds are not used for new interstate roads and alleviate congestion on the old roads. The new interstate should be the northern extension of Rte. 53 to link up on the east with I-94 and then a new interstate through McHenry County to either a north-south interstate near Rte. 47 or to Rockford.

Widen existing roads with heavy traffic, 5 lanes for most major roads. Extend Algonquin Road.

Add more public transportation. Upgrade roads to keep up with growth.

Widen Randall, Rt. 47, Rt. 23 and Rt. 14 from Crystal Lake to Woodstock. We need it now, not after it gets worse. Build I-355 south to I-80.

As indicated in my statement regarding public transportation, regular bus routes with pick-up/drop-off areas would be used by many individuals in

McHenry County. Our county is highly populated, with too much traffic congestion and many places to shop. But in order to get there, you have to drive.

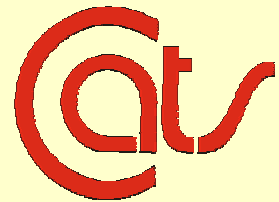
Central clearing(house) for transportation services for senior citizens that can not or would rather not drive.

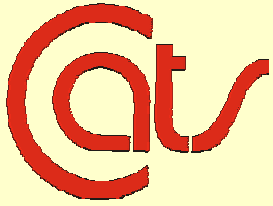
Rtes. 14 and 47 need to be widened to four lanes, plus turn lanes between Crystal Lake to north of Woodstock. RR bridge over Rte. 47 in Woodstock must be changed to accommodate the widening of Rte. 47. Rte.120 between McHenry and Woodstock needs to be four lanes. Rte. 176 between Crystal Lake and Woodstock need four lanes.

Widening two-lane roads in congested areas. Need for turn lanes in busy areas on two-lane highways to help the traffic backups. I live in Wisconsin on the state line.

Transportation seems to be the last phase of expansion. CATS should be working with the developers (housing, retail and commercial) so there are adequate roads to help the expansion before it becomes a congestion problem for local residents. Why does it cost \$1 million per lane mile to build a road?

We need an upgrade in our choices of roads. There are only a few to get us to and from major arteries. The amount of traffic has increased. To get to a place that only may be seven miles away could take 20 minutes to get there.





Media Coverage

Transportation briefing coming

Publication: Northwest Herald
Date: January 11, 2005
Section(s): Business Page

The Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce is teaming up with several other chambers to present an update on transportation.

The meeting, part of the chamber's Box Lunch Briefing presentations, will begin at noon Jan. 19 at The Pointe community center, near the Target store in the Bohl Farm Marketplace shopping center along Route 14.

This briefing will be a countywide event and open to chamber members and nonmembers. It will feature a presentation focusing on the **Chicago Area Transportation Study**.

It will offer an opportunity to hear about long-range plans affecting McHenry County.

The cost is \$8. For reservations and further information, call Gail at the chamber office at (815) 459-1300, ext. 16, send an e-mail to gmcDonald@clchamber.com or go to www.clchamber.com and click on "January Box Lunch Briefing-CATS."

The Algonquin-Lake in the Hills, Cary-Grove, Huntley, Marengo-Union, McHenry Area and Woodstock chambers are participating in this briefing.

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Road funds will not parallel growth

Publication: Northwest Herald
Date: January 20, 2005
Section(s): Local News Page

By OWEN R. BRUGH
obrugh@nwherald.com

CRYSTAL LAKE - The money to solve the area's transportation issues simply does not exist, chamber of commerce members learned Wednesday.

More than 100 chamber members from Crystal Lake, Woodstock, Marengo, McHenry, Algonquin and Cary attended an informational meeting at The Pointe, an outreach center of Immanuel Lutheran Church.

They learned from **Chicago Area Transportation Study** officials that McHenry County's population will increase from 262,000 in 2000 to 452,000 in 2030.

To handle the growth, there are plans for Metra extensions to Huntley, Marengo, Richmond and Johnsburg and road projects slated for much of the county, study Chief Transportation Planner Tom Murtha said.

However, transportation officials are already behind in providing adequate roads, Murtha said.

"We haven't been keeping up with the population growth," Murtha said.

"We know we have a system of rural roads in McHenry County, and we haven't been keeping up with converting those to urban roads."

McHenry County has not seen a major road built since 1929, with the exception of Rakow Road on Crystal Lake's south side.

But Illinois Department of Transportation Area Programmer Ed Wilson held out little hope that the state ever would catch up with transportation needs.

Two years ago, IDOT's road project budget was about \$1 billion because of Gov. George Ryan's Illinois FIRST infrastructure initiative, Wilson said. In 2006, it is expected to be \$500 million, and it could further decrease in later years, Wilson said.

"I don't think the state legislature is going to provide additional taxation and highway money," he said.

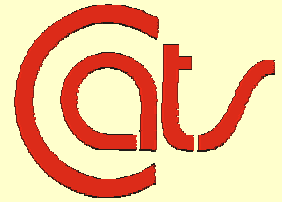
McHenry County Planning Liaison Pat Schroeder suggested commuters should try to find new ways to get around now.

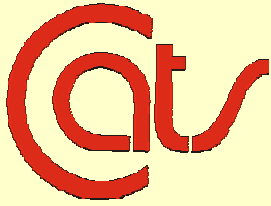
"People need to be more aware of transit and transit options," she said. "People need to start seriously thinking about carpooling more."

Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce President Bob Blazier said he understands that efforts are being made to fix the area's transportation problems.

"This is a very frustrating thing. It's the same thing it's always been. It's a funding issue," Blazier said. "But I don't think McHenry County has always been on the front burner."

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So, how about those 'bellyhopper' roads you're driving on?

Daily Herald Reports
Posted 1/21/2005

Tired of all those bumper-to-bumper treks we northern Kane County and McHenry County residents make daily?

Transportation planners say they are, too.

State transportation guru Ed Wilson called Algonquin's notorious intersection of Route 31 and Route 62 a "bellyhopper" this week as he and other transportation planners told McHenry County business leaders what is not on the table.

There are lots of plans, but simply not enough money, said Wilson and others. At about \$1 million per lane per mile, it will take a lot of cash to make the sort of improvements we need.

Even without money, they're still planning. And, believe it or not, those planners would like to hear from us.

They want to know what we see as the problem and what we want for solutions.

Go to www.catsmpo.com and look for information on the "transportation opinion survey," says Jock L. Hardy, spokesman for the Chicago Area Transportation Study. Tell 'em like it is.

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Future bleak for county transit

By Charles Keeshan Daily Herald Staff Writer
Posted 1/20/2005

McHenry County's transportation system is far behind its population growth, and with deep funding cuts in Springfield it is likely to stay that way for the foreseeable future.

That was the bad news delivered to county business leaders Wednesday by state officials and the Chicago Area Transportation Study, the primary highway and rail planners for northeastern Illinois.

"Without any additional funding the picture is grim," Tom Murtha, the chief transportation planner for the organization. "The money is just not out there."

If it were, Murtha said at a joint meeting of the county's chambers of commerce, McHenry County would reap huge benefits, including several new Metra commuter rail stations and several road expansions.

Those projects are part of CATS 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, an \$80 billion blueprint for addressing the Chicago region's road and rail needs for the next three decades.

Among the plan's chief goals for McHenry County, Murtha said, is catching up with the county's fast-growing population and the demands it places on local transportation systems. By 2030, according to CATS, McHenry County will grow to more than 451,000 residents, a 72-percent leap from the 2000 census figure.

"We haven't been keeping up with the population and we know that," Murtha said. "We have a system here of rural roads and we have to make a more urban road system."

But that might be mission impossible given today's financial realities. The best estimates project funding for only about \$62 billion of the plan's \$80 billion cost, and that could get worse if state road funding continues to decline.

Just five years ago, Illinois Department of Transportation planner Ed Wilson said Wednesday, the Chicago region received about \$1 billion in road funding from the state. Next year, that figure will be closer to \$500 million.

"Right now we need more money, a whole lot more money," Wilson said.

McHenry County Board Vice Chairman John Jung said the grim news Wednesday means his board, local legislators and county municipalities are going to have to work harder to ensure they get their share of money from the state and federal government.

The county and municipalities - often at odds over road projects - also must band together if they expect to get any help from the state.

"You've got to have the political will to do it and present a unified front," he said.

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