



Citizens for Appropriate Transportation (CAT) Issue Brief

Eisenhower Transportation Corridor

LIVABILITY

“Livability in transportation is about using the quality, location, and type of transportation facilities and services available to help achieve broader community goals such as access to good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, and safe streets.”¹ Four concepts define livability.

Mobility is the ability to get to desirable destinations wherever they are located. Having multiple transportation choices (car, transit, bike, and walk) that are safe and economical is better than depending on one mode. Transportation investments that help create communities, promote long-term economic health, and achieve equity goals are better than investments focused just on moving people and goods.

Accessibility is the ability to get to desirable destinations in your neighborhood. In my neighborhood, it is a short walk to two banks, four restaurants, a grocery store, two dry cleaners, two parks, two barbers, and several stores. I only go to some of these places, but they are all accessible.

Walkability is the ability to walk in your neighborhood safely and securely. You may be walking with no specific destination in mind, but having desirable destinations in an attractive environment means you will walk more often.

Sustainability is the ability to meet your needs without hurting the quality of life for future generations. Energy efficient and renewable transportation choices reduce air and noise pollution, promote public health, reduce costs, enhance natural and cultural resources, and help us be more sustainable.

Livable communities focus more on accessibility and walkability than on mobility because transportation is the means towards reaching desirable destinations. Our need to be at destinations creates transportation demand.

Too much focus on mobility leads to evaluating major transportation projects such as widening the Eisenhower Expressway primarily in terms of travel speed and capacity, which ignores the importance of the destinations. Higher density areas such as Chicago, inner suburbs, or outlying cities such as Geneva or Joliet have many origins and destinations relatively close together. Low density suburbs are more spread out. Travel speeds tend to be slower in higher density areas, but travel times can be less than in low density suburbs. Most people are more concerned about the time it takes to reach their destination than their speed in reaching the same destination.

Good project solutions reflect the character of their communities. Targeting major transportation and land use investments in the same place produces better results. Building rail stations where surrounding land use regulations permit moderate to high densities make the stations viable. This can be difficult because local governments control land use while state and regional agencies control major roadway and transit facilities. Collaborative partnerships address this problem.

¹ Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, “Livability in Transportation Guidebook – Planning Approaches that Promote Livability,” Page 4.

Rail transit investments can support existing and planned multi-use centers and encourage private investment that supports livability. Transportation investments make existing communities stronger and support growth. Improving access to rail stations by creating walkable communities, adding bicycle racks, better feeder bus service, and kiss-and-ride locations works. Park-and-ride lots at outlying stations help.

CMAP's Go To 2040 Plan calls for more density in selected corridors. IDOT's need to rebuild the Eisenhower Expressway creates the opportunity to support the adopted Go To 2040 Plan.

IDOT's safety studies show a high crash rate on the Eisenhower Expressway. More than 60 percent are rear-end crashes that occur because vehicles travel too close together. In most years, there are no crashes on the CTA or Metra commuter lines. Getting some motorists to shift from driving to rail transit would reduce the number of crashes on the expressway.

Transit can reduce air pollution. In 2012, there were twelve Air Pollution Action Alert days issued by the Illinois Partners for Clear Air and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. IDOT's planning approach seeks the best roadway solution and then considers environmental impacts later in the process. A better approach is to consider the full range of impacts (transportation, economic, environmental, social, and financial) while developing alternative solutions.

Oak Park succeeds in part because of good access to downtown Chicago, the Near West Side, and western destinations such as Loyola University Medical Center and the Hines VA Hospital. Reducing our transportation accessibility will hurt us. Although widening the expressway from six to eight lanes adds capacity, it is not sufficient to meet the demand, and it will have serious negative impacts on adjacent properties in Oak Park and the other communities in the Corridor. A wider expressway does not bring us together - it separates us.

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