



Introduction

Goal of the Project

The project goal is to develop a comprehensive Plan that unites the Cicero Avenue Corridor, its activities and character to make it a more highly-functioning transportation corridor and activity center for the southwest suburbs. This planning project is designed to complement, not supersede, the existing plans of Corridor Communities.

Sponsorship and Participation

On behalf of its constituent communities, the Southwest Conference of Mayors (SCM) is leading a project to develop a transportation and economic development plan for the Cicero Avenue Corridor. The Conference received grants totaling \$200,000 from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) in 2010 to fund the project. The project is being conducted with active participation from RTA, IDOT, Pace, Metra, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (CCDOH), the City of Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the City of Chicago Department of Aviation (CDOA). A Steering Committee composed of the leadership from the Corridor Communities and SCM will oversee the process and contribute to the definition of improvement projects and implementation priorities, with active input from the noted agencies.

Study Area

The project Study Area— also known as “The Corridor” — is defined as the 9-mile segment of Cicero Avenue from 55th Street on the north to 127th Street on the south. The Corridor runs through the City of Chicago and five southwest suburban communities: Bedford Park, Burbank, Hometown, Oak Lawn and Alsip. The Corridor Study Area is centered narrowly on Cicero Avenue, including the right-of-way and adjoining land or property; with consideration of areas within a one-half mile buffer as areas of influence and impact.

Cicero Avenue is a major transportation corridor in the southwest Cook County suburban area. Daily passenger vehicle traffic on Cicero Avenue averages 35,400 vehicles per day in the Study Area. The Cicero Avenue Corridor is served directly by 27 Pace and CTA bus routes, traveling on Cicero and cross-streets. Chicago Transit Authority’s Orange Line terminal station at Midway Airport serves as the closest heavy-rail station and an important transfer center for bus riders. No Metra commuter rail stations are located directly on Cicero Avenue. However, the Oak Lawn SouthWest Service Station (SWS) is situated ½ mile west on 95th Street in Oak Lawn, and another reasonably close Metra station is located in Chicago in the Ashburn neighborhood. In addition to examining vehicular flow and transit service, this study will address non-motorized amenities and connections along the Corridor as well as sidewalk conditions and streetscape continuity.

There is a diverse mix of land use along the Corridor including retail, residential, industrial, entertainment and open space. A better understanding of market condition and potentials developed through this project will help address employment, housing, shopping and entertainment needs to the full potential of the Corridor. One of the main objectives of this project is to create a comprehensive economic development plan that complements existing community planning and develops a cohesive strategy aimed at revitalization opportunities corridor-wide. The strategies will vary but a unity of vision will be the foundation of this effort’s success.

Project Scope and Schedule

The project kicked off in April 2013, and is expected to run through Fall 2014. This Existing Conditions Report is the first step in the planning process. Subsequent planning analysis will present economic development opportunities, potential improvements to transportation function, urban design and beautification projects. A project website at <http://www.cicero.corridor.com> will serve as the primary vehicle for reporting project findings and soliciting public input via interactive surveys.

Guiding Principles

This Plan is being developed using the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) per IDOT CSS Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) Procedure Memorandum 48 06. CSS is an interdisciplinary approach to a project that seeks effective solutions by working with stakeholders to develop, build, and maintain cost-effective transportation facilities which fit into and reflect project's surroundings – its context. Through early, frequent, and meaningful communication with stakeholders and a flexible and creative approach to design, the final Cicero Avenue Corridor Plan should improve safety and mobility for all of the traveling public, while seeking to preserve and enhance economic vitality of the Corridor.

The principles of Complete Streets are also being applied to the assessment of Corridor conditions in the development of the Plan. According to the National Coalition for Complete Streets, “complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. People of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across streets in a community, regardless of how they are traveling.... By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making your town a better place to live.”

Finally, the Plan will embrace principles of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). TOD is a pattern of development characterized by a mix of land uses and higher than typical suburban densities of residential and employment uses. These patterns serve to bring more people into a neighborhood at levels that support the use of transit. Conversely, the presence of transit functions as a real estate asset, making a neighborhood more valuable and vibrant for property owners, residents, employees and other visitors.

