



Chapter 2: Existing Conditions and Issue Areas

The first phase of the Study included a comprehensive review of existing conditions in the Corridor, including demographics, physical and land use characteristics, and transportation conditions. Highlights of the **Existing Conditions Report** are presented in this section.

Corridor Communities

The Cicero Avenue Corridor runs through six municipalities along its extent between 55th Street on the north and 127th Street on the south: Chicago, Bedford Park, Burbank, Hometown, Oak Lawn and Alsip. A brief description of each community are presented below.

City of Chicago

The Corridor has Chicago frontage on both sides of the roadway from the Corridor's starting point at 55th Street and the Midway International Airport (Midway Airport) complex south to 65th Street, through the Garfield Ridge and Clearing community areas. South of 65th Street to 87th Street in the West Lawn and Ashburn communities areas, Cicero Avenue forms a western border to the City. The St. Casimir Lithuanian Cemetery in the Mt. Greenwood community area also fronts on Cicero Avenue. Land uses along the Corridor are primarily airport and transportation-related, with commercial and industrial uses. Major anchors in the Chicago portion of the Corridor area are Midway Airport and its associated infrastructure; the railroad tracks leading to Clearing Yards, Ford City Mall, and St. Casimir Lithuanian Cemetery. Priorities for the City of Chicago in this study area are to maintain the safe function and quality service of Midway Airport, reinforce the vitality of local industrial tenants and retail nodes, and support multi-modal transportation mobility and efficiency.

Village of Bedford Park

The Corridor serves as the eastern border for the Village of Bedford Park, from its northern border of 65th Street to its southern border at 75th Street. The uses along the Corridor and in the study area are reflective of the Village's predominant industrial and commercial makeup. Major anchors are the Midway Hotel Center at 65th Street, new industrial facilities south of Clearing Yards, and big box retail. Priorities for the Villages in the Corridor Area are to complete the buildout of the Hotel Center, improve traffic flow and safety for employees and shippers from their industrial neighborhoods, and maintain low vacancy rates for their retail districts.

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City of Burbank

The Corridor serves as the eastern border for the City of Burbank, from its northern border at 75th Street to its southern border at 87th Street. Cicero Avenue is Burbank's major commercial and retail thoroughfare, with numerous big box and power center shopping centers fronting the Corridor. The tidy single-family residential neighborhoods that characterize the City begin just behind the commercial parcels at LaCrosse Avenue or Lamon Avenue. Priorities for the City for the Cicero Corridor are to maintain vitality and high occupancy in its retail districts, and to improve transportation safety for all users of the Corridor.

City of Hometown

Cicero Avenue is the western border for the City of Hometown, from its northern border at 87th Street south to 90th Street. A predominantly residential community, Hometown's main commercial districts are located along Pulaski Avenue and Southwest Highway, to the east of the Corridor Study area. The uses along Cicero include a small retail center at the southeast corner of 87th, a multi-family complex, and single family homes with rear yard fences backing up to Cicero Avenue. For this study, due to its small amount of frontage on the Corridor, the City's main concern is supporting the vitality of its retail shops.

Village of Oak Lawn

The Corridor runs through Oak Lawn from its northern border at 87th Street south to 111th Street. Much of Oak Lawn in the Corridor is commercial (retail and office), although residential is present between of 99th Street and 102nd Street, with multi-family on the east side of the street, and single-family homes buffered by a service drive on the west side of the street. The commercial "crossroads" of the Village are located at the intersection of 95th and Cicero Avenue, with additional major retail nodes at 103rd and 111th.

The Village has a major priority mixed-use, multi-phase redevelopment project at 111th Street and Cicero Avenue. It is currently undertaking a complementary corridor planning study for 95th Street, with a focus on economic vitality and streetscape enhancement. It continues to actively support economic development elsewhere in the Village with a focus on the Metra Station area, along Pulaski, and Ridgeland Avenue.

Village of Alsip

Alsip is the southernmost community in the Corridor, with the study area encompassing the stretch of Cicero Avenue from the Village's northern boundary at 111th Street south to 127th Street and the entrance to I-294. Current uses on Cicero Avenue are primarily commercial and industrial, although a significant stretch of the roadway is flanked by transportation infrastructure uses. Significant landmarks include the Chateau Bu-Sché banquet hall, a new Home Depot, and Burr Oak cemetery. The Village's southern border is located a few blocks south of the study terminus at the Calumet-Sag Channel.

The Village's priorities for the Corridor are business development and diversifying the economic base, improving transportation safety and mobility, and enhancing aesthetics and appearance of both the public way and private properties fronting the Corridor.

Demographic Overview

Population

The 2010 population in the Corridor study area is just over 52,000. The total for the six corridor communities is almost 242,000. A comparison of Census population figures from 2000 and 2010, estimates for 2013, and 2018 all points to modest growth in each community except for minor declines in Alsip, which are anticipated to reverse by 2040.



**Table 1-1
Population, 2010-2018**

	2000	2010	2013 Estimate	2018 Projection	2040 Projection
Corridor, 1/2 Mile Buffer	50,392	52,973	53,196	53,550	
Corridor Communities	234,899	241,909	243,543	245,919	
Chicago (Garfield Ridge, Clearing, West Lawn and Ashburn)	127,251	132,088	133,931	136,022	
Bedford Park	574	578	581	587	606*
Burbank	27,801	28,925	29,010	29,216	27,612
Hometown	4,467	4,349	4,288	4,281	4,990
Oak Lawn	55,268	56,690	56,695	56,881	58,790
Alsip	19,525	19,277	19,038	18,932	24,752*

*2040 Projection for Bedford Park estimated by growth in nearby communities.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, CMAP

Household Characteristics

As with population numbers, household numbers in the Corridor study area and in the corridor communities exhibited modest growth between 2000 and 2010. Average household size in 2010 in the Corridor study area was 2.8 persons, with variations ranging from 2.35 persons to 3.15 persons.

**Table 1-2
Households, 2000-2018**

	2000	2010	2013 Estimate	2018 Projection	2040 Projection
Corridor, 1/2 Mile Buffer	18,821	18,883	18,850	18,985	
Corridor Communities	84,450	82,828	82,980	83,905	
Chicago (Garfield Ridge, Clearing, West Lawn and Ashburn)	43,321	41,611	41,899	42,585	
Bedford Park	216	210	211	213	2,184
Burbank	9,290	9,287	9,290	9,380	9,374
Hometown	1,895	1,848	1,828	1,837	2,284
Oak Lawn	22,282	22,361	22,328	22,477	24,270
Alsip	7,446	7,511	7,424	7,413	9,459

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, CMAP

All other socio-economic highlights of the Study Area from 2010 data include:



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- The median age for residents is 36.2 years (2010).
- The Study Area, as well as the individual member communities, is majority white (2010).
- The ratio of persons of Hispanic origin, a growing population segment across the Chicago metropolitan region, varies markedly across the Study Area (2010).
- There were nearly 20,000 housing units in the Study Area, and close to 88,000 units among the six Corridor Communities. Occupancy rates across the Study Area were 93%-96%. Of occupied housing units, 21.5% were occupied by renters, and 78.5% by owners (2010).
- Estimates for median and average household incomes in the Study Area were \$52,493 and \$66,140 respectively, with most corridor communities tracking closely (2013).

Transportation characteristics of Study Area residents, based on 2010 data, include:

- Most households in the Corridor have access to at least one vehicle; car-less households compose only 5.4% to 7.4% of households.
- Most employed residents of the Study Area report driving to work alone. The mode share for single-occupant vehicles ranges from 77% to 89% among the corridor communities.
- Burbank has the highest proportion of carpoolers, and Alsip has the highest share of transit users.

Employment Base

The Cicero Avenue Corridor contains a diverse mix of land uses, and is an active location for commercial and industrial businesses. Dun & Bradstreet estimates the presence of 2,436 businesses in the Study Area, employing over 23,000 people. Employment along Cicero Avenue in the Study Area and in the Corridor Communities is concentrated in several sectors, summarized below.

- **Retail** centers of all types are found all along the Corridor, in all formats: regional mall, community center, power center, neighborhood centers, and stand-alone shops. The retail centers draw customers from within the Study Area

and Corridor Communities, as well as from a broader region.

- **Manufacturing** employment is concentrated at the poles of the Corridor in Chicago and Bedford Park at the north end of the Corridor, and Alsip at the south end. Chicago and Bedford Park have numerous long-standing businesses that are oriented to the Belt Railway of Chicago's Clearing Yard and CSX Intermodal Terminal, both in Bedford Park, as well as to I-55. Alsip offers easy access to I-294.
- With Midway Airport and proximal access to interstate I-55 at the north end of the Corridor, and connectivity to I-294 at the south end of the Corridor, **accommodation & food services** businesses are natural developments, serving airport customers and employees, as well as interstate travelers.
- The most significant accommodations complex is the Bedford Park Hotel Center at 65th Street, with other stand-alone hotels supporting Midway Airport in Chicago and Burbank, and an iconic Hilton in Oak Lawn.
- A full variety of dining venues are available on Cicero Avenue and in the Corridor, from full-service restaurants, to fast casual dining and fast food outlets.
- There are also a range of banquet facilities, such as the Crystal Light Banquets, Martinique Banquet Complex, Chateau Bu-Sché, and Condense Del Mar.
- The **health care** sector is a large and growing segment of the job base within the Corridor and in the corridor communities. Local businesses include hospitals located near Cicero Avenue, such as Advocate Christ Medical Center on 95th Street in Oak Lawn, related supporting medical clinics and offices, and stand-alone doctors' offices.



Transportation Infrastructure

Cicero Avenue functions as an Urban Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA) route designated as Illinois Route 50 and falls under the jurisdiction of the IDOT. As a state route, Cicero Avenue serves a regional travel function and facilitates the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. The Corridor also provides access to a diverse mix of land uses across the six corridor Communities. Direct access to Midway International Airport and the Cicero Avenue commercial centers and businesses is vital to the long-term success of the regional economy. Cicero Avenue is also an important multi-modal regional corridor and includes Pace, CTA, and Metra services. In recent years, several of the study communities have placed an increased emphasis on enhancing safe multi-model travel within the Corridor.



Vehicles

The Corridor consists of a minimum of four through travel lanes with some segments expanding to six lanes to accommodate higher traffic volumes. Several intersection approaches expand the roadway to six lanes to provide additional intersection capacity. Major intersections along Cicero Avenue also include exclusive left-turn and/or right-turn lanes to accommodate heavy turning movements between the intersecting east-west roadways. As an SRA, traffic volumes on Cicero Avenue are very high, including both passenger vehicles and trucks. Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes within the Study Area range from 63,400 vehicles per day (vpd) between 55th and 59th Streets to 34,600 vpd between 103rd and 111th Streets.

The study identified twenty-one high accident locations (intersection and roadway segments) within the Corridor. Nearly every major intersection in the Corridor is noted as a high accident location, as are a number of mid-block areas where there are access points to businesses or intersecting roadways. These access points, or potential points of conflict between vehicles or between vehicles and non-motorized travelers, include: driveways, right-in turns from Cicero Avenue, right-out turns onto Cicero Avenue, right-in/right-

out driveways, and side streets (signalized and unsignalized). In addition to representing points of conflict, access points also reduce the free flow of traffic as a result of vehicles turning on and off the roadway, slowing their own movements as well as following vehicles to also reduce their speed.

Trucks

Truck traffic, or heavy commercial vehicles (HCV), can significantly impact intersection and roadway traffic operations within the Corridor. The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) estimates that one truck is equivalent to at least three passenger vehicles and sometimes more depending on specific roadway conditions. In addition to impacting overall Corridor traffic flow, high truck traffic can also negatively impact transit operations and non-motorized travel. In the Corridor, intersection operations continue to be impacted by heavy truck traffic. Bedford Park and Burbank have raised concerns regarding traffic congestion, in particular truck traffic, at the intersections of 73rd Street and State Road. These east-west roads connect to thriving manufacturing and distribution/light industrial facilities, as well as regional big-box and retail power centers. Other areas with significant truck traffic include the stretch of Cicero Avenue between 59th Street and 79th Street, and between 87th Street and Southwest Highway.

Non-Motorized Travel

Pedestrians and bicyclists face numerous challenges within the Corridor. The heavy traffic volumes and high truck percentages, in particular in Bedford Park, Burbank and Alsip, are also not conducive to walking or biking. However, recent access management and sidewalk improvements in Oak Lawn and Alsip have benefited pedestrians and bicyclists.

Gaps in the existing sidewalk network make walking and bicycling difficult at many locations. In some cases, even where sidewalks exist, walking can still be a challenge as the sidewalks are often narrow, have obstructions (i.e., utility poles, signs, etc.), or are located next to the Cicero Avenue travel lanes which have heavy

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traffic volumes and high travel speeds. In many cases, the Corridor right-of-way restricts, or prohibits, any significant improvements that would enhance walking and bicycling because of their proximity to existing property lines.

As an SRA with high volumes of vehicular traffic, bicycling along Cicero Avenue is often very difficult. The previously mentioned sidewalk improvements along Cicero Avenue do not offer benefits to bicyclists, as these facilities are designed to accommodate pedestrians and are not designed as multi-use paths. There are some regional trails that intersect Cicero Avenue, and may provide connections to alternate routes on less-busy streets.

Another significant challenge to accommodating for pedestrians and cyclists at major corridor intersections is that most of the major intersections within the Corridor widen to six through lanes, many with exclusive turn-lanes, to accommodate heavy traffic volumes. These intersections are especially problematic for pedestrians because of the numerous travel lanes to cross. Many of these crossing locations have heavy conflicting left-turn movements, and are perceived to have a short amount of time for pedestrians to cross, and often do not have sufficient median refuge if pedestrians are unable to cross the street during the appropriate signal timing phase.

The study analyzed select traffic and transit data to identify areas that have a high probability of experiencing multi-modal conflicts. The multi-modal conflicts analysis included the following variables:

- Daily Traffic Volumes
- Truck Percentages
- Number of Transit Routes
- Access Points
- Number/Type of Crashes (Property Damage Only, Injury, and Fatality)

As a result of this analysis, the following areas were identified for enhancements that could improve the pedestrian environment:

- 73rd Street to 79th Street
- Southwest Highway to 93rd Street
- I-294 Interchange

Transit

The Cicero Avenue Corridor includes several public transportation services and facilities. Pace, CTA, and Metra all provide service within, or in close proximity to the Corridor.

CTA provides fixed route transit service along much of the Corridor directly and at intersecting streets via eleven routes with two routes servicing major employment centers. All of the buses servicing Cicero Avenue Corridor either have origination points or terminal points at the Midway Transit Center (MTC) or Ford City Mall with 10 minute peak/15 minute off-peak headways. Key CTA routes with Average Weekday Ridership servicing the corridor include 54B (3,632); 55 (12,405); 63 (17,118); 79 (26,615); and 87 (13,944).

The Midway Station of the CTA Orange rapid transit Line provides service from downtown Chicago to Midway Airport, serving the southwest side of Chicago with 9,728 boardings a day. The station features 299 daily rate parking spaces at a 123% utilization rate. The Midway Station also functions as the transit terminal for eight CTA Bus routes creating the Midway Transit Center (MTC).

Pace provides a grid of bus transit service throughout the Corridor via 14 regular service fixed routes with 30 minute headways. Pace service lines along the Corridor operate Monday through Sunday, with the exception of Route 385, 390, and 395 which operate Monday through Friday. Routes 383 travels the full length of the Corridor with an average weekday ridership 1,515. Other routes are generally east-west routes that intersect Cicero Avenue at a few locations. Most of the Pace service along the Corridor originates or



terminates at the Midway Transit Center. Other stop locations for most of these routes are considered “Flag Stops”, where the vehicles will stop at any intersection deemed safe with posted stops of connecting routes.

Metra service is provided within the Cicero Avenue Corridor by Oak Lawn station along the SouthWest Service (SWS) Lines. The Ashburn Station of the SWS Line located 1.5 miles away from the Corridor is included due to ridership from the City of Chicago and the City of Hometown. There are 18.7 trips completed by Metra with average boardings of 1,157 and alightings of 1,113 for Oak Lawn station; and (321 boardings and 339 alightings) for the Ashburn station.

In general, the Oak Lawn Station is considered a regional commuter station with 66% of its commuters driving to the station, while 49% drive to the Ashburn station. Other prominent modes of access include walking and kiss-n-ride (drop off). While 16% of commuters walk to the Oak Lawn station, 30% choose to walk to the Ashburn station. When considering drop-off service 14% of commuters choose the Ashburn Station while 13% choose the Oak Lawn Station.

Other considerations taken while evaluating Metra transit service along the Corridor included origin points and parking availability. While the Oak Lawn Station is not directly located in the Corridor, it draws a heavy commuter patronage from the Corridor via the Village of Oak Lawn (70%) and Village of Evergreen Park (5%). The Ashburn station is considered the station of choice for the City of Hometown and City of Chicago, and Ashburn community residents. The majority of commuters board at both stations before 8:30 a.m. and alight after 5 p.m.

In general the Corridor is well served with variety of public transit options but could be improved by implementing some pedestrian environment and transit stop enhancements. including:

- Far-side posted bus stops;
- Realtime transit information at sheltered bus stops; and
- Providing street furnishings such benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, and trash receptacles at high traffic bus stops.



