

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 14, 2014

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Active Trans Releases List of the Most Dangerous Intersections in the Chicago Region

Advocacy group launches Safe Crossings campaign pushing for more funding for improvements at some of the most unsafe places to cross in the city and surrounding suburbs

Chicago, Ill., October 14, 2014 –Crossing a busy street is an everyday activity for most Chicagoans but too often it's also one of the most dangerous things they'll do all day.

Seventy-eight percent of all pedestrian crashes in Chicago occur within 125 feet of an intersection, according to the city. In 2013, there were 29 pedestrian fatalities in Chicago and there have already been 21 this year.

“Our streets are valuable public spaces and crossing them shouldn’t require putting your life at risk,” said Ron Burke, executive director of the Active Transportation Alliance. “With more dedicated funding to improve street design and increase enforcement at major intersections, we can make our streets safer for everyone and our communities more walkable and livable.”

There were more than 4,700 reported pedestrian crashes and 130 fatalities in Illinois in 2012, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation; 84 percent of the crashes and 69 percent of pedestrian fatalities in Illinois occurred in metro Chicago. In Chicago, pedestrian fatalities accounted for one-third of all traffic fatalities in 2012, compared to roughly 14 percent statewide.

Based upon analysis of crash data, staff feedback and more than 800 suggestions from the general public, Active Trans selected the following 10 intersections as focus areas for its Safe Crossings campaign in Chicago.

- [N. Milwaukee Ave/W. North Ave/N. Damen Ave](#)
- [N. Cicero Ave and W. Chicago Ave](#)
- [N. Halsted St/N. Lincoln Ave/W. Fullerton Ave](#)
- [S. Cottage Grove Ave and E. 79th St](#)
- [N. Dearborn St and W. Ontario St](#)

- [S. Ashland Ave and W. 63rd St](#)
- [N. Cicero Ave and W. Madison St](#)
- [N. Ashland Ave and W. Cortland St](#)
- [S. Martin Luther King Dr and E. 63rd St](#)
- [N. Elston Ave/N. Western Ave/W. Diversey Ave](#)

The group also selected 10 dangerous suburban intersections to highlight the regional challenges to increasing intersection safety for people of all ages and abilities using the road.

- [N. McCormick Blvd and W. Touhy Ave](#) (Skokie)
- [S. Cicero Ave and W. Cermak Rd](#) (Cicero)
- [U.S. Route 12 \(Mannheim Road/La Grange Road\) and W. Cermak Rd](#) (Westchester)
- [Shermer Rd and W. Dempster St](#) (Morton Grove)
- [N. La Grange Rd and W. Ogden Ave](#) (La Grange)
- [Harms Rd and Glenview Road](#) (Glenview)
- [1st Ave and Madison St](#) (Maywood)
- [N. Harlem Ave and Madison St](#) (Forest Park/Oak Park)
- [Harlem Ave and 79th St](#) (Burbank)
- [E. 147th St and Halsted St](#) (Harvey)

Active Trans will work with community organizations, businesses and local residents to push for funding for improvements at these and other problem areas throughout the region. These lists represent just a small portion of the many dangerous places to cross in Chicagoland, particularly for our most vulnerable users such as children, people with disabilities and seniors.

“Older persons account for one in every five pedestrian fatalities and have the greatest fatality rate of any population group, said Bob Gallo, AARP Illinois State Director. “Continuing to invest resources in making our streets safe for all users is key to ending these preventable deaths. We must continue to develop new and innovative strategies for ensuring that Chicago roadways are accessible and safe for pedestrians of all ages.”

In its 2012 “Chicago Forward” Action Agenda, the city set a goal of eliminating traffic fatalities within 10 years. The goal is inspired by the internationally acclaimed “Vision Zero” initiative, built on the concept that no loss of life is acceptable and cities should no longer regard traffic crashes as “accidents” but as preventable incidents that can be reduced or eliminated with systemic changes.

Tools to improve intersection safety with varying costs and levels of impact are well known to agencies like the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), as well as municipal governments charged with making decisions about city streets. These include marked crosswalks; stop for pedestrian signs; pedestrian refuge islands; traffic signals and beacons; accessible pedestrian signals; pedestrian countdown timers; leading pedestrian intervals; lagging left turns; road diets; speed feedback signs; and roundabouts.

In addition to intersections with significant pedestrian traffic, there are many spots throughout the region where people do not even attempt to cross because the barriers are so intimidating or infrastructure is lacking. Many of these “barrier crossings” are located near schools, shopping centers or senior living homes, where potential for high levels of pedestrian traffic exists.

On the Far South Side of Chicago, there are no sidewalks on a long stretch of 130th Street in Altgeld Gardens, limiting access to the neighborhood’s only source for fresh produce. In Homewood in south suburban Cook County, children living less than a mile from school ride the bus because they are unable to cross at South Halsted and 183rd St.

Available funding is often one of the most significant barriers to improving intersections and making other pedestrian improvements on our streets. There is currently no dedicated annual funding source for the maintenance of pedestrian facilities in Chicago. Instead, leaders are forced to make changes as part of resurfacing projects or through aldermanic menu money.

“Until we establish a sustainable funding source for pedestrians, we are unlikely to make substantial progress on improving intersection safety and making our streets more livable and walkable,” said Burke. “Everyone is a pedestrian and we can’t afford to ignore these problems and fail to invest in readily available, proven solutions any longer.”

In addition to addressing funding challenges, the campaign has other more broad policy goals. Enhancing infrastructure design and stepping up enforcement at some of the worst intersections in the region alone will not eliminate the risk of crashes and more innovative policy solutions that have had success elsewhere should be considered, such as reducing neighborhood speed limits and improving crash reporting and data collection.

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The Active Transportation Alliance is a non-profit, member-based advocacy organization that works to make bicycling, walking and public transit so safe, convenient and fun that we will achieve a significant shift from environmentally harmful, sedentary travel to clean, active travel. The organization builds a movement around active transportation, encourages physical activity, increases safety and builds a world-class transportation network. Formerly the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, the Active Transportation Alliance is supported by more than 7,000 members and 1,000 volunteers. For more information about the Active Transportation Alliance, visit www.activetrans.org or call 312.427.3325.