

# ACTIVETRANS

UPDATE

## Better bus service

Learn about our plan to speed up Chicago's buses. [PAGE 6](#)



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Read the Active Trans blog at [activetrans.org/blog](https://activetrans.org/blog) for the latest about better walking, biking and transit in Chicagoland.

## Leave a legacy of safer streets.

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ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION  
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Sunday, May 28, 2017

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## Releasing buses from the gridlock

In a time of unbridled hype about ride hailing apps and the coming era of autonomous cars, the importance of the bus often gets lost in the shuffle. Underappreciated, often disregarded and even scorned, the humble bus clearly has a problem. While L ridership has shot up, bus ridership in Chicago has suffered.

So why do buses have a big black eye?

Because buses are continually caught in traffic, waiting for the next opportunity to briefly lurch forward. They bunch up — at times three of them following one another down the street. And people sometimes must wait for them longer than they should.

Despite all these problems, the bus remains the workhorse of our public transportation system, boasting a greater daily ridership than the L. Unlike the L, buses serve every neighborhood, every corner of the city and just about every major street. Buses are versatile, ADA compliant and they allow passengers to bring their bikes on board at any time of the day.

Unfortunately, this key part of our transportation system has been underachieving for far too long. Buses need to be on the forefront of improving Chicago's public transportation. Enhancements like pre-paid boarding, dedicated bus lanes and traffic signal improvements can speed up buses throughout the city. And, as you might guess, we can boost the speed of buses at a fraction of the cost of building new L lines and new train stations.

To help buses live up to their potential, Active Trans is embarking on a project that will focus on speeding up several heavily used bus routes in the city. We've already been canvassing riders, collecting survey results and hashing out ideas on how to do this with neighborhood groups and with the CTA. We hope that you're as eager as we are to see this project succeed and then have it spread throughout the city. Learn more about it on page 6.

Ted Villaire, editor | [ted@activetrans.org](mailto:ted@activetrans.org)



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The Active Transportation Alliance | 9 W. Hubbard St., Suite 402  
Chicago, IL 60654 | 312.427.3325 | [www.activetrans.org](http://www.activetrans.org)

Editor: Ted Villaire | Designer: Sirita Render  
Contributors: Jackie Blair, Daniel Kay Hertz,  
Maya Norris, Amy L. Roy and Kyle Whitehead

# Quick Releases

## ***Make Milwaukee Ave. in Wicker Park bike friendly***

Despite North Milwaukee Avenue on Chicago's Northwest Side being one of the busiest streets for biking in the entire country, conditions through the heavily trafficked Wicker Park stretch are still abysmal for people on two wheels. Fortunately, a new neighborhood master plan, released by Wicker Park Bucktown Special Service Area (WPB SSA), includes a proposal to improve Milwaukee by relocating on-street parking to create space for buffered bike lanes. Way to go, WPB SSA!



## ***IDOT's Eisenhower plan: big price tag, little congestion relief***

If the main goal of the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway project is to reduce congestion, the currently favored plan likely won't do the trick. The Illinois Department of Transportation's has proposed adding one lane in each direction west of 25th Avenue and east of Austin Boulevard. People driving alone or with one or two passengers would have to pay a variable toll to enter the lane, while cars with three people or more and buses could use the lane for free. Research shows adding more lanes for cars — be they conventional, car pool or tolled lanes — only exacerbates traffic congestion in the long run while making non-driving options less viable. Active Trans supports an alternative that would be far less expensive and equally effective at reducing congestion. It involves converting existing lanes to carpool, shifting people from the overcrowded highway to nearby CTA and Metra train lines, and pursuing transportation demand management strategies. To learn more about this project and our proposal, visit <http://bit.ly/2ortLeV>.



## ***See our suburban pop-up events in action***

Did you know that temporary crosswalks, bicycle lanes and roundabouts made from everyday materials like duct tape, tar paper, plants and house paint could slow down motorists? Well, that's what we saw this past year when we partnered up with a handful of suburban Cook County municipalities to create a series of pop-up complete streets events intended to improve safety for people walking and bicycling. We recently released a series of videos that delightfully document the events with interviews, aerial views and footage of the community using and commenting on the temporary infrastructure. Check them out at [bit.ly/2ojrjtP](http://bit.ly/2ojrjtP).



## ***Blocked bike lanes now easier to report***

Helping the city identify hotspots for blocked bike lanes just got easier with an update to Chicago's 311 system. Last fall, Active Trans' Clear the Way campaign asked our supporters to help call attention to the need for improved enforcement around blocked bike lanes. Hundreds of you acted by documenting these types of infractions around the city. Thanks to this effort, the city recently took steps to make it easier for residents to flag problem areas. Read more about this change at [bit.ly/2pB1vpM](https://bit.ly/2pB1vpM) or go to the city's 311 webpage for reporting blocked bike lanes: [blocked.bike](https://blocked.bike).



## ***Lakefront Trail separation gaining steam***

With Ken Griffin's \$12 million donation secured, the Chicago Park District plans to create separated Lakefront Trail space for people biking and people walking between West Fullerton Street and East Ohio Street this spring. The North Side segment is part of a larger project to create separate paths along the full length of the 18-mile Lakefront Trail by the end of 2018, as Mayor Emanuel announced last December. The public recently had a chance to review draft plans. Construction started last fall on trail separation from East 31st Street to East 51st Street on the South Side and that segment is expected to be finished very soon. Active Trans and the Chicago Area Runners Association are advising the park district throughout the planning process for trail separation. Follow @activetransLFT on Twitter and #chiLFT for updates, and visit the park district's webpage that tracks the progress: [chicagoparkdistrict.com/facilities/lakefront-trail](https://chicagoparkdistrict.com/facilities/lakefront-trail).

## Safety benefits of red light cameras

A new study from the Northwestern University Transportation Center found Chicago's red light camera program delivers significant safety benefits. Researchers found serious right-angle and turning crashes decreased by 19 percent at intersections with cameras, and injury-producing crashes dropped by 10 percent. They also found evidence of a "spillover effect" leading to safety benefits and crash reduction at intersections without cameras. The City of Chicago commissioned the study to evaluate its program and maximize the safety benefits. Active Trans has consistently highlighted photo enforcement as a critical piece of a comprehensive Vision Zero approach to traffic safety.

Reckless driving is rampant in the city and there aren't enough police officers to combat the problem. Better enforcement makes our roads safer for everyone, particularly for people walking and riding bikes who are most vulnerable.



### Trail improvements for South Chicagoland

In the future, look for a new 14-mile multi-use trail along Sauk Trail in the South Suburbs. The communities that the trail will run through — Lynwood, Sauk Village, South Chicago Heights, Park Forest, Richton Park and Steger — are all working with the Cook County Forest Preserve District and Active Trans to create a development plan that will include safe road crossings and connectivity between neighborhoods. And further to the south, biking and walking are getting an upgrade in Northwest Indiana thanks to a plan to improve signage and wayfinding along Northwest Indiana's trail network. Among other goals, the sign system will direct trail users to local businesses and cultural destinations.

### Suburban candidates share views in voter guide

In advance of the recent suburban Chicago elections, Active Trans asked candidates for mayor and village president from municipalities across the region to complete our Suburban Municipal Candidate Questionnaire. More than 40 candidates responded and we shared the results with our supporters so they could make better informed voting decisions. The questionnaire was based on our policy priorities for the suburbs. Because Active Trans is a non-partisan 501(c)3 non-profit organization, we do not endorse candidates, and our voting guides serve only as an educational resource to inform voters about candidates' priorities.



# Tell Congress to reject president's proposed cuts

By Kyle Whitehead

President Trump recently released his first federal budget proposal, and, if passed, it would be devastating for people who ride transit, bike and walk in the Chicago region.



Pictured from left, Active Trans staffers Kyle Whitehead and Nancy Wagner, Active Trans board member Elliot Rossen, US Rep. Brad Schneider, Active Trans board member Jay Goldstein, Highland Park Councilwoman Kim Stone, and Ride Illinois Chief Programs Officer Ed Barsotti. The congressman represents Illinois' 10th district, which comprises much of Chicago's North Shore.

The president wants to eliminate funding for the popular TIGER grant program, which has funded a number of local projects, including the Lakefront Trail bridges at 35th and 41st Streets, upgrades at the 95th Street Terminal and new bridges and tracks for Metra trains. President Trump also proposes eliminating the New Starts program, which cities rely on to build new transit lines. It accounts for only five percent of federal transportation spending and funded the reconstruction of the Brown and Pink Lines, and added stations and tracks on Metra's North Central, Southwest and Union Pacific West lines. These threatened programs have been central to our progress as a region in recent decades and we can't afford to go in reverse.

At various times during the past several years, members of Congress have proposed cutting most or all federal spending on biking, walking and transit

projects. While we've consistently defeated these proposals with bipartisan support, there's no certainty that will be the case again in 2017 and beyond.

To shore up local support, Active Trans started meeting with members of the Chicagoland Congressional delegation soon after the election to talk about the impact of federal transportation spending in their districts. Each meeting was led by local advocates who live in the district and are experts on community needs. To date, we've met with Rep. Peter Roskam (6th), Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (8th), Rep. Brad Schneider (10th), Rep. Randy Hultgren (14th) and Sen. Tammy Duckworth. We also touched base with several other offices we're in contact with regularly, and followed up with staff in D.C. as part of the Illinois delegation at the National Bike Summit.

Congressional representatives need to hear from constituents like you who value biking, walking and transit — and they need to hear from you before budget talks begin. Act today by signing a letter that will go to your members of Congress. Visit [bit.ly/2p3ul5S](http://bit.ly/2p3ul5S) to learn more. If you'd like to help organize a meeting with your member of Congress, contact [kyle@activetrans.org](mailto:kyle@activetrans.org).

Ultimately it's Congress' responsibility to develop and pass a budget. They need to hear from constituents who value biking, walking and public transit before budget talks begin. Locally and across the country, these investments have boosted economic development, connected people to jobs, and anchored more

walkable and livable communities. Please stand up for better transportation and contact your congressmen and senators today.

Kyle Whitehead is the government affairs director at the Active Transportation Alliance.

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# Regional news roundup

By Jackie Blair

Our local e-newsletters and In Your Community webpages bring you the latest in active transportation news from around the region. You can learn about pertinent local projects and find new ways to get involved. To sign up for the local e-newsletters, go to [activetrans.org/advocacysignup](http://activetrans.org/advocacysignup).

## City of Chicago

### South Side

Active Trans recently met with the local staff of U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly to talk about our advocacy for a new trail connection between the Pullman neighborhood and the new bike park at Big Marsh.

Full trail separation is coming to the Chicago lakefront! Phase 1 of the project, from 31st Street to 51st Street, is expected to be complete in early spring.

### West Side

The Blue Line Forest Park Branch study is nearing completion. The project will include much needed track repairs, station upgrades and improved accessibility for people who bike and walk. Share thoughts and ideas with CTA at [BlueWestStudy@transitchicago.com](mailto:BlueWestStudy@transitchicago.com) or call 1-888-YOUR-CTA.



The North Lawndale community is developing a new community master plan. Active Trans has been participating in meetings related to developing recommendations for improvements to the local transportation infrastructure. Learn more and see how to get involved on the project website: <http://bit.ly/2oGGD2t>.

### North Side

This spring a new contra-flow bike lane will be built in the 48th Ward on Glenwood Avenue, creating a route from Rogers Park south to Uptown and the Lakefront Trail. Additionally, the ward now has a Cyclist and Pedestrian Working Group for ward residents. If you are interested in joining the group, please email [ally@48thward.org](mailto:ally@48thward.org).

More groundwork is getting laid for the development of the Chicago River Trail thanks to the recently unveiled Goose Island redevelopment plan and Weber Spur Trail completion.

## Chicagoland Suburbs

### South Suburbs

Will County's new Bikeway Plan has the potential to make its bike network more connected and accessible. The plan envisions a future network of bikeways and trails with 14 new routes that provide improved biking and walking connections to major destinations.

Our regional commuter rail network is getting a major expansion in Northwest Indiana. The West Lake Corridor Project will extend the South Shore line by nine miles,

running roughly from the south end of Wolf Lake south to the community of Dyer.

### West Suburbs

Plans to make Brookfield more walkable and bikeable are under development.

After more than 10 years of planning and discussions, Oak Park is poised to start a long overdue makeover of Madison Street. Overall, the plan will make Madison more like a Main Street and less like a highway. We urge Oak Park residents to sign our petition asking village trustees to move forward with improvements: <http://bit.ly/2pb3lfe>.

### North Suburbs

Two major developments around the extension of the Skokie Valley Trail are underway. These include a biking and walking bridge over congested Lake Cook Road and an extension of the trail from Lake Cook Road to Voltz Road through Northbrook.

Do you use Deerfield Road from Milwaukee Avenue to Saunders/Riverwoods Road and have thoughts about how it could be safer and more appealing to people who walk and bike? The Lake County Division of Transportation is looking for input: [deerfieldroadcorridor.com](http://deerfieldroadcorridor.com).

*Learn more about these projects and others on Active Trans' In Your Community webpages: [activetrans.org/our-work/your-community](http://activetrans.org/our-work/your-community).*

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Jackie Blair is the former advocacy manager for Active Trans.

# Let's get CTA buses moving

By Maya Norris



Photo: Streets Blog Chicago

Anyone who rides Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) buses has experienced one or more of the following frustrating scenarios: Buses bunched together. Customers waiting longer than they should. Overcrowded buses. Delays in passenger boarding. Buses getting stuck in traffic.

Bus riders in Chicago face these issues all too often. Most people would agree our bus service needs to improve by moving faster, becoming less crowded and being more reliable. We agree and that's why we launched a new campaign to boost Chicago bus service and increase ridership.

Active Trans is working with the CTA to carry out the Speeding Up Buses campaign with funding from a grant from TransitCenter, a New York-based foundation dedicated to improving urban mobility. The goal is to develop cost-effective solutions that will help CTA buses operate efficiently on some of the city's busiest routes and reverse declining bus ridership. In 2015, bus ridership in Chicago fell by 1.6 million rides while rail ridership hit a record high — increasing by 3.5 million rides.

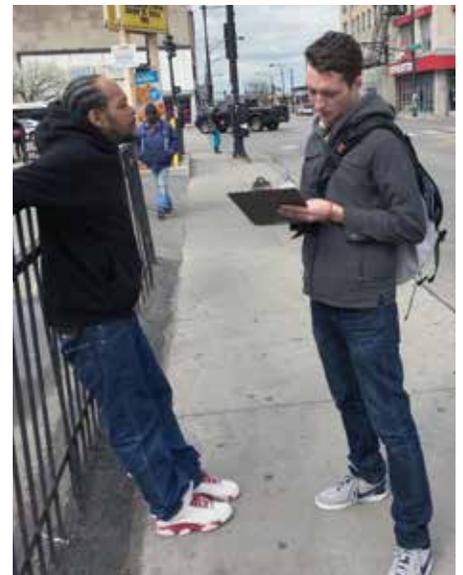
"Rail ridership shows there's a demand for public transit and increasing demand in many neighborhoods," explains Kyle Whitehead, government affairs director at Active Trans.

"So we want to be able to meet that demand by upgrading the transit system, and the bus is a big part of that system."

## All in

The centerpiece of the campaign is a report that Active Trans is developing. It will examine bus service in Chicago and look at research, analysis and best practices from other large cities that have improved their bus services. The report will feature recommendations for low-cost, easy-to-implement upgrades to the Chicago bus system.

In addition to working with the CTA, Active Trans is collaborating with the Chicago Department of Transportation and other government agencies, local community organizations, and local and national transit advocates and experts for input on the report. Active Trans is also seeking input from transit riders by having them fill out an online survey about their experiences



riding CTA buses and canvassing neighborhoods that have bus routes with high ridership and slow, unreliable service.

For example, Active Trans is working with the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation, a nonprofit that seeks to revitalize low- and moderate-income communities on the South Side, to find out from residents who ride the #79 bus how service on that bus line can be improved. Many South Side residents depend on that bus route to get to the Red Line L station.

On the Northwest Side of Chicago, Active Trans is collaborating with the Portage Park Neighborhood Association and Six Corners Association, both of which are business and community development organizations, to speed up service on the #80 Irving Park bus line.

“Many Northwest Side residents need the #80 bus to connect to the Blue Line L stations at Irving Park Road, Montrose or Jefferson Park,” says Kelli Wefenstette, executive director of the Six Corners Association. “Bus service to these stations is often slower than driving to the Blue Line and parking nearby or taking a ride-sharing service.”

### Valuable investments

Although Active Trans is still working on the report, we expect the report will feature at least three solutions that have proven to work in improving bus service in other cities: dedicated bus lanes, prepaid boarding and traffic signal prioritization for buses. (See right.) Because these tactics are cost effective

and fairly easy to execute, Whitehead hopes officials will pursue these improvements at scale so communities across the city will be able to reap the benefits of improved speed and reliability of Chicago’s bus system.

“We chose to pursue this campaign because the bus upgrades are relatively affordable when you compare those investments to modernizing, expanding or adding a new rail line,” he says. “They’re cost-effective investments that could make a difference, and they can also be implemented right away unlike some of the rail upgrades, which are more costly and can take several years to implement. So the affordability of bus investments is one of the reasons we decided to work on this campaign.”

Once the report is ready, Active Trans will promote the report and its recommendations with elected officials, community organizations, news reporters and the public to build support for it. “We’re hoping that the report will set a precedent and develop some processes within the CTA and the city for this stuff to happen,” Whitehead says. “And by drawing attention to the issues and getting more people interested and invested and getting elected officials talking about these issues, that will help build political will and public will to make that happen.”

Maya Norris is the Active Trans writer/editor.

## Getting CTA buses to move better

Bus ridership in Chicago has been declining significantly over the last several years. Buses are often slow and unreliable. Many local buses frequently get stuck in traffic (especially during rush hour) while riders face long wait times and delays while boarding.

Active Trans is working to speed up Chicago’s buses by partnering with community organizations to advocate for low-cost, near-term improvements to some of the city’s busiest routes.

Bus service improvements could include:



### Faster boarding

Allow riders to pay their fare at the bus stop before boarding and enter the bus through the front or rear doors.



### Dedicated bus lanes

Give crowded buses priority on Chicago’s congested streets with dedicated lanes.



### Traffic signal improvements

Move buses more smoothly through congested intersections with changes to signal timing or using technology to connect the bus to the signal.



# Celebrating local champions



You could hear a pin drop when Megan Williams spoke at the recent Active Trans Awards Reception. A couple hundred people listened intently as Williams (pictured left) recounted her story of recovering from a horrific crash on the Lakefront Trail and then successfully working with Active Trans to make the Lakefront Trail safer for people walking and biking (see page 2). It's a moving story that fortunately has a good ending.

The event was held at the historic Germania Place ballroom in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood. In addition to highlighting Williams' story, Active Trans handed awards to three sustainable transportation champions from Chicagoland: Christopher Burke Engineering, MB Financial Bank and Slow Roll Chicago.

Thanks to everyone who joined us and congratulations to our award winners!



Photos courtesy of Steven Gross

# Bicycling serves as a transformative force for Slow Roll Chicago

By Maya Norris

At our recent 2017 Awards Reception (see opposite page), Active Trans gave our Community Service Award to Slow Roll Chicago for the group's efforts to bring bicycling to more Chicago neighborhoods, particularly the city's South and West Sides. Since it was founded in 2014, Slow Roll Chicago has been dedicated to developing bicycling infrastructure and culture in these communities, while also advocating for the transformative power of cycling to reduce violence, improve health and create jobs.

Every week from May to October about 20 to 70 people join Slow Roll Chicago for a leisurely ride that gives participants the chance to learn more about the community and its history and get to know their fellow riders in a safe, comfortable environment. Since its founding, Slow Roll Chicago has emerged as a respected advocate for bicycling and community development. In 2015, the White House recognized Olatunji Oboi Reed, Slow Roll Chicago's co-founder, as a Champion of Change for "innovating in transportation and growing the American economy."

We spoke with Romina Castillo, Slow Roll Chicago's ride and outreach coordinator, about the nonprofit's strategies for boosting bicycling in low-income communities on the South and West Sides.

**Active Trans: How does bicycling help transform lives and create liveable, vibrant communities?**

**Castillo:** We understand that one bike ride or even a few bike rides won't change the community. But we see bicycling as a way to improve the quality of life in our communities. We advocate for more biking infrastructure, but we're also advocating for better connections to active transportation in general, especially on the South and West Sides. Transportation is going to connect the people from our communities to jobs, education, services, recreation, businesses, food. We see biking and bike infrastructure as a way to connect people to those things that they need.

Biking also highlights the assets of the communities — not necessarily the hard infrastructure but also what I call the soft, fleshy infrastructure, which is people. We always partner with community-based organizations for our bike rides because we like to highlight the work that they're doing, and we classify them as assets.



Photo courtesy of Slow Roll Chicago.

From left: Dan Black, Slow Roll Chicago project coordinator; Romina Castillo, outreach coordinator; and Jamal Julien, co-founder.

We want to connect people of the community to these organizations and their work.

**What does Slow Roll Chicago believe needs to be done to improve bicycling infrastructure in the South and West Sides of Chicago?**

**Castillo:** When it comes to infrastructure, we advocate for open conversations between the city and the residents of the communities. We want infrastructure that works from an engineering and logistical point of view, but we want the city to create a network that works for the needs of the people in that community. The infrastructure and the network really has to connect and resonate with the people, and they have to feel like it's theirs — not just the city's idea of an inclusive network.

**What kind of feedback do you get from participants about the bike rides?**

**Castillo:** People want to bike in the city more, but they don't feel comfortable doing it by themselves. So they find it really refreshing and safe to be able to bike with a group of people because we're not going fast, and we're just trying to keep everyone safe. So the feedback we get constantly is that people enjoy it so much because they're able to have conversations with other people and feel comfortable riding.

People also enjoy being able to experience the neighborhood. Some people may have been to this neighborhood before, but we try to choose a ride that tells more of the story of the neighborhood. At the end of the ride, they are always grateful and happy that they got to experience this neighborhood differently.

*Read a longer version of this interview at <http://bit.ly/2oYK1WK>.*

Maya Norris is a writer/editor for Active Trans.

# Bike commuting 101: Tips for new riders

By Maya Norris

With the arrival of warmer weather and our Bike Commuter Challenge event just around the corner, now is the perfect time for beginners to give bicycle commuting a try. As you probably know, pedaling to work will burn calories, save on gas money, reduce your environmental footprint and allow you to explore your community in a way you've never done before.

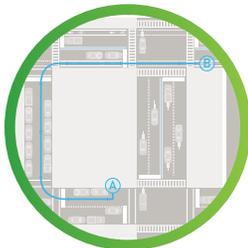
## The basics

First-time commuters don't need to purchase hundreds of dollars of bike accessories and clothing, according to Doug Burk, service manager at Boulevard Bikes in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood. Beginners only need a few pieces of equipment. Burk recommends bikes that can accommodate wider tires to soak up the bumps of the streets and fenders to protect the tires and riders from dirt and debris. He also suggests riding bikes with racks so commuters don't have to carry their bags on their backs. In addition, riders should wear helmets and attach lights to their bikes.



## Planning ahead

Before first-time commuters ride their bikes to work, Burk recommends that they obtain a local bike map and plot their routes. New riders should stick to streets with bike lanes,



if possible, and residential streets. They should also do practice runs of their routes.

As riders plan and test their routes, Burk advises them to start small and set achievable goals in their bike commuting journey. For example, new commuters should consider biking to work only one or two days a week initially. Or instead of cycling the entire route to work, a beginner may want to ride to the nearest train station or bus stop and take public transportation the rest of the way.

"With any exercise program, get your conditioning in and work your way up," Burk says.

## Road rules

Before hitting the road, cyclists should check their bikes daily. Check the air in the tires. Make sure the breaks stop the bike when pushed forward. And the chain should move freely. (Watch a video on conducting

what's called an ABC Quick Check online at [youtu.be/xGorQe\\_vW-0](https://youtu.be/xGorQe_vW-0).)

Once they are riding, people should behave safely and responsibly and ride with traffic, rather than against it. And they should communicate with motorists, and signal their intentions using hand signals.

"When you act like a pro, you get treated like a pro," Burk says. "Most drivers are receptive to cyclists when they see them riding responsibly."

Making smart choices like these are key to a safe and enjoyable bike commute, according to Burk. "Just get out there and do it," he adds. "Give it a try. It's much easier than you think, and you won't regret it."

Maya Norris is the writer/editor at Active Trans.



The Bike Commuter Challenge is a two-week long bike commuting competition held June 16-30 that allows workplaces throughout region to compete for bike-to-work preeminence. The event is open to people all skill levels; prizes are awarded. The Bike Commuter Challenge takes place during Bike Week. Learn more at [activetrans.org/bikeweek](https://activetrans.org/bikeweek). For more biking tips, check out Active Trans' Everyday Biking guide at [http://activetrans.org/sites/files/Everyday\\_Biking.pdf](http://activetrans.org/sites/files/Everyday_Biking.pdf).

# First-time winter rider dominates the Winter Bike Challenge

By Maya Norris



Dan Schreiner pictured with his kids on the cargo bike he won.

Photo courtesy of Dan Schreiner.

Dan Schreiner didn't just win the 2017 Winter Bike Challenge. He crushed it. The 34-year-old husband and father of two rode more than 1,000 miles over two weeks to win the 3rd annual event hosted by the Active Transportation Alliance — converting him into a winter cyclist in the process.

Schreiner racked up an impressive 48 trips and cycled 1,001.62 miles — an extraordinary feat for even the most seasoned winter rider. But it's even more remarkable given that this was the first time Schreiner had competed in the Winter Bike Challenge and rode in the winter. The Winter Bike Challenge encourages intrepid cyclists like Schreiner to brave the winter elements and ride their bikes for two weeks in January. This year 505 cyclists hopped on two wheels from Jan. 13-25, pedaling 33,137 miles in 4,362 trips. Participants won prizes such as free coffee, bike locks, Clif bars and bike tires.

But the top prize went to Schreiner, whose closest competitor logged nearly 300 fewer miles than him. In addition to winning bragging rights as king of the 2017 Winter Bike Challenge, Schreiner won a bicycle from Kozy's Cyclery.

The prize for winning the event was a fat tire bike, but Schreiner thought he'd use a cargo bike more often so he put the bike credit toward a Surly Big Dummy cargo bike. "My kids love it! My wife is planning on riding them to school," he says. "I like being mindful of the environment. So grocery and other short trips are now exclusively by bike."

## Game plan

To win the competition, Schreiner intended to ride 1,000 miles in two weeks. During the weekdays, he cycled at least 65 miles per day. He rode from his home in Chicago's Old Irving neighborhood to his job in the Loop in the morning. On his return trip, he cycled from the Loop to Indiana via the lakefront and South Shore path and then rode back up the lakefront to Lawrence Avenue and headed west to his home.

On the weekends, Schreiner logged even more miles. He rode to Indiana as well as the northern suburbs on the North Branch Trail.

Schreiner even got a close-up look at some of animals that call Chicago home. "While I was riding the lakefront path, I saw a rat fall out of the sky! An owl had dropped it. He ended up getting away," he says. "There's more wildlife in the city than a

lot of people probably think. I saw a lot of deer in people's front yards, a few coyotes, and lots of raccoons and opossums. And a ton of rats!"

## Unexpected benefits

Schreiner says he enjoyed the Winter Bike Challenge because it allowed him to escape cabin fever, unwind and get some exercise. He now considers himself a winter cyclist.

"The long mileage was really enjoyable to me. Riding 70-plus miles a day sounds kind of intense, but being out in nature with few distractions and lots of time for your mind to wander is very relaxing," he says. "It was hard to stay relaxed on some of the bitter cold days during the challenge, but honestly, the long, cold days really became second nature, a part of my daily routine."

Maya Norris is the writer/editor at Active Trans.

### Don't miss Chicago Bike Week, June 16-30

- Bike Commuter Challenge
- Bike to Work Rally on June 16
- Slow Roll Chicago ride
- Wrap party

Learn more at [activetrans.org/bikeweek](http://activetrans.org/bikeweek)

# Why Uber won't replace public transit

By Daniel Kay Hertz

Uber hasn't had a great 2017 so far — what with employee allegations of a culture of sexual harassment, evidence that the company has been systematically deceiving government inspectors, and a lawsuit claiming that it stole autonomous vehicle technology from Google. Nevertheless, the company remains the most celebrated tech disruptor du jour, and its seemingly ever-growing customer base has convinced many people that it represents the future of urban transportation.



Photo Salaris Bus and Coach

And in fact, it (or something like it) may have a large role to play for years to come. But it will be as a partner to traditional transit services like buses and rail — not a replacement, as some have predicted.

Why? Three reasons: Equity, money and geometry.

Perhaps the most obvious objection to eliminating your local transit service and telling people to just whip out their smartphones is that not everyone has a smartphone. And even those who do are not necessarily in the position to pay for a daily Uber commute: while the company's prices are usually below those of traditional taxis (more on that in a second), a trip of a couple miles might easily put you back \$10, several times more than bus fare. Beyond the issue of income, Uber's vehicles aren't necessarily accessible to people

in wheelchairs. And while not all of the Chicago area's legacy rail stations are accessible, all buses operated by the CTA and Pace are.

Second, despite its apparent success, Uber is losing money hand over fist: nearly a billion dollars in the fourth quarter of 2016 alone. Why? Because it's using venture capital funds to keep its prices artificially low. At some point, those investors are going to expect a return on their investment, and Uber will have to either raise prices substantially, cut back its service areas to the absolute densest trip-generating neighborhoods or some combination of both. At that point, many of the people who have been relying on Uber to get around will discover they've suddenly been marooned by a private company that — unlike a government — won't respond to public pressure by reinstating money-losing services.

But perhaps Uber will slip out of this conundrum. Maybe truly self-driving cars — ones that don't require any human oversight — are closer than most experts expect, and Uber can fire all its drivers, save a boatload of money and keep prices down. Or maybe, as legal scholars like Yale's David Schleicher expect, public opinion will lead governments to subsidize ride-hailing services as a kind of public-private paratransit. In fact, in a few places like Altamonte, Florida, that's already beginning to happen.

But even in those scenarios, Uber still can't replace the bulk of traditional transit rides for one unavoidable reason: Geometry. Simply put, Uber's vehicles are still automobiles, and they require massively more space per person than buses or trains. A packed L train can hold 123 people in one 48-foot car: even if they could somehow drive without any buffer space in between, you could only fit about

three Honda Civics in the same amount of space. Assuming one driver and three passengers — a very generous assumption — that makes the L roughly 14 times more space-efficient. A standard 40-foot bus is about 10 times more efficient. With two passengers per Uber, a full rush hour bus would require 40 Honda Civics to replace it — stretching down the street, bumper-to-bumper, for over 600 feet.

So even setting aside equity and the fact that Uber is enormously unprofitable, shifting people from high-capacity transit to ride-hailing services is a recipe for unimaginable gridlock. Our streets and highways simply don't have the room. For the foreseeable future, public transit is here to stay.

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Daniel Kay Hertz writes about urban issues for various national and local publications.

# Giving AND receiving at tax time

By Amy L. Roy



Along with April showers and May flowers, spring also means tax time, which could bring a refund to you.

If you didn't expect a refund or perhaps received a refund larger than you anticipated, it's likely you don't already have plans for this money. Why not consider paying it forward and putting it towards helping others?

## Benefiting others

If you're faced with the prospect of planning how to spend this newfound money, consider how a charitable donation is a chance to benefit others. Active Trans has many great initiatives that are getting thousands of people out on trails for transportation and exercise, improving their health and helping the environment all at the same time.

## Benefiting yourself

In donating your tax refund, you're lowering your taxable income for 2017,

which translates to less taxes you pay. A gift to a qualified charitable organization is a tax deduction when you itemize your deductions for next year. So while you are giving, you are still receiving.

## Creating a tradition

Since your tax refund may vary from year to year, treating it as an unexpected windfall makes it simple to commit to pass it on. Create a new plan to use your refund each year to make a difference. Please consider paying forward your refund to Active Trans and see real change happen as we continue to work with lawmakers, partners and advocates to support better options for biking, walking and transit.

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Amy L. Roy is a Charitable Catalyst, Managing Partner for The Advise Us Fund.



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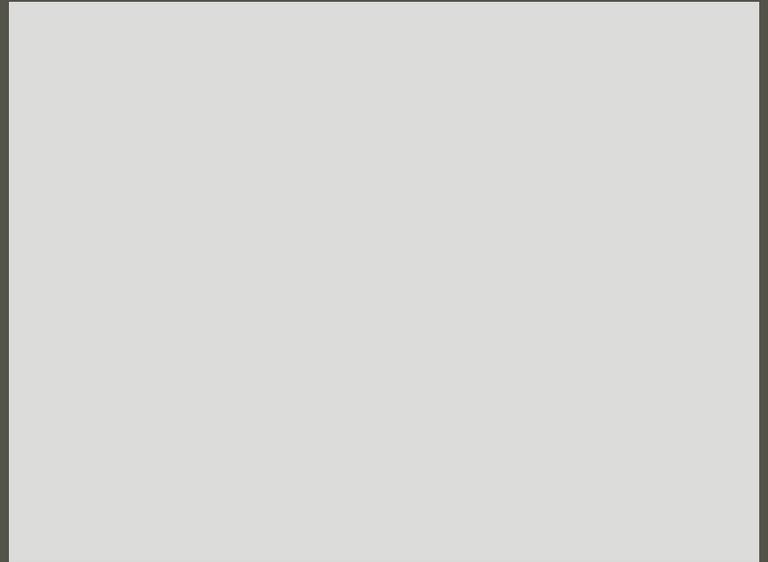
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