

Transportation Solutions for Employers and Employees: Transportation Management Association of Lake-Cook

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The TMA of Lake-Cook Program

During the past 25 years, the Lake-Cook Road corridor has seen a dramatic increase in the number and size of corporate campuses along its length. An estimated 95 percent increase in employment between 1979 and 1999 in the corridor has produced severe traffic congestion as employees pour into the area from suburban communities and Chicago. In 1988, in the face of increased congestion and air quality degradation, business leaders in the Lake-Cook corridor began to recognize the need for a more comprehensive approach and formed a transportation management association. Since then, the TMA of Lake-Cook has been instrumental in developing and implementing transit priorities, promoting rideshare, removing the delay-causing Deerfield toll plaza, developing shuttles to rail stations and advocating for intelligent transportation systems.

In 1989, the TMA received a two year grant from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), Chicago's umbrella transit organization, to assist in the association's start-up operations. Member dues currently fund about 75 percent of the TMA's operating budget of \$175,000, with the other 25 percent coming from government program grants. Office space is donated by Baxter International, one of the founding TMA members.

Perhaps the most recognized component of the Lake-Cook TMA's work has been the Lake-Cook Shuttle Bug, started in 1996. In 1991, a new federal funding source, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program (CMAQ), was created with the intent of funding programs that improve mobility and air quality in polluted areas. In 1996, the Lake-Cook TMA received a CMAQ grant to fund its shuttle bus program for three years, with participating firms contributing a 20 percent match. The TMA entered into a partnership with Pace Suburban Bus Service (Pace) and Metra Commuter Rail (Metra) to continue the service, with participating firms paying 36 percent of operating costs. In 1999, the Shuttle Bug was named one of the top ten "Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Success Stories" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In large urban areas, wherever there are concentrated employment centers, there is congestion. Traffic delays are a daily reality for the thousands of commuters who drive to work. This congestion contributes to worker turnover, worsens air pollution and diminishes leisure time. Innovative transportation planning and management tools can provide solutions to congestion.

One successful strategy for reducing congestion problems is the formation of transportation management associations, or TMAs. TMAs vary in organizational structure throughout the country, but all have a common interest: reducing automobile congestion. TMAs are voluntary organizations of employers offering transit incentives, ride-matching services and related benefits to their employees. In our region, the Transportation Management Association of Lake-Cook provides solutions and advocacy aimed at easing traffic congestion in northern Cook and south-east Lake counties. The organization has helped to make car-pooling, vanpools and public transit feasible alternatives in an area traditionally dominated by the automobile. This TMA's innovative approaches have been highly successful and were ultimately expanded to a larger geographic region.

As this profile shows, the TMA of Lake-Cook has been effective in dealing with the impacts of automobile congestion in strong suburban employment centers. As our region grows and congestion increases, TMAs should be one of the solutions supported by Chicagoland business leaders.

This is one in a series of Business Leaders for Transportation member profiles featuring innovative solutions that can be replicated.



Initially, a third party van service provided six vans that connected two Metra stations and several nearby corporate campuses. In 1998, Pace took over its operation. Today, ten shuttle routes carry about 400 riders (800 passenger trips) per day. Surveys have shown that 60 percent of shuttle riders had commuted previously in single-occupancy

vehicles. Employees of TMA members ride for free, while other employees can ride for \$.50 per trip.

With this success, the scope of the work of the TMA of Lake-Cook has grown from addressing congestion in one corridor to working with four different north suburban corridors. The TMA is pursuing three shuttle expansion projects:

- Service to the Route 22 corridor,
- The Route 60/Conway Development corridor, and
- Three shuttles in the Willow Road corridor thanks to a CMAQ grant through Metra. They will serve Andersen Consulting and Allstate Insurance among others.

In 1996, the TMA, working with the Village of Deerfield, was involved in a sidewalk construction program that linked the Lake-Cook Road Metra station to nearby developments. A survey had found that approximately 5,000 employees were within walking distance of the station. Along with a pedestrian overpass over Lake-Cook Road, the sidewalk project increased pedestrian access to the station and community for both residents and commuters.

One of the TMA's newest projects is a RideShare kiosk program in conjunction with the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), the region's metropolitan planning organization. Stand-alone kiosks, placed at member company offices, dispense carpooling information. The program began in April 2000, and currently is in place at five offices. The program, dubbed Rideguide, facilitates commute options for employees who may not have access to transit but who are interested in alternatives to driving alone. In addition to implementing the Shuttle Bug and Rideguide programs, the TMA of Lake-Cook also monitors highway construction in the area, keeping area businesses up-to-date on construction information by publishing construction maps and actively participating in Business Leaders for Transportation.

The TMA is also active in advocating for an Illinois Route 53 extension, and the widening of Illinois Route 22. The TMA was a major proponent of the removal of a toll plaza at Deerfield Road and the addition of a ramp to the northbound Tri-State Tollway at Lake-Cook Road, which reduced congestion and improved tollway access. Lake-Cook TMA members have advocated for implementation of an intelligent transportation system on Lake-Cook Road that would alert motorists of travel times and adverse incidents.

The Benefits

TMA's offer their member companies a stronger voice in local transportation planning through advocacy at local meetings. Corporate members also gain a voice with local elected officials and transportation agencies with which to seek improvements for their immediate area.

For employees, benefits include ride-matching services, the most up-to-date information about highway construction projects and eligibility to participate in the shuttle services that the TMA sponsors. These services help employees by reducing driver stress and automobile operating costs.

Regional benefits include decreased congestion, improved highway conditions and reductions in emissions-related pollution. When the EPA recognized the Shuttle Bug program, they estimated annual pollutant reductions to be six tons of volatile organic compounds (VOC) and four tons per year of nitrous oxide (NOx). Those numbers are for 1999 alone. The implications for long-term environmental improvement are substantial.

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Business Leaders for Transportation is a coalition of approximately 80 businesses and business associations representing more than 10,000 regional employers. Co-led by the Metropolitan Planning Council, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and Chicago Metropolis 2020, the coalition serves as the coordinated voice of businesses on critical regional transportation needs. For more information, please contact Metropolitan Planning Council's Mary DeBacker at (312) 922-5616 or mdebacker@metroplanning.org, or Business Leaders for Transportation Executive Director Jim LaBelle at (312) 922-5616.

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