

## TESTIMONY

### Testimony to Illinois Blue Ribbon Commission

August 19, 2025

Hi, I am Audrey Wennink, Senior Director at the Metropolitan Planning Council, a nonprofit urban planning and policy organization that seeks to build equity in the built environment. Today I would like to emphasize the importance of the Illinois Department of Transportation taking a holistic approach to transportation to provide safe, affordable and sustainable transportation choices that all Illinois residents can use. Over a third of Illinois residents do not have a driver's license. In fact, 13% of households in the Chicago region have no vehicles. And 36% of households have only one vehicle, which is often shared among multiple people. Therefore, we must accelerate providing multimodal choices.

The cost of living is an increasing challenge for many households in IL. One of the best things we can do for residents is provide affordable transportation. That means prioritizing public transit, which is a fraction of the cost of driving. This means supporting biking facilities that connect to community downtowns, jobs, recreation, and schools. This means accelerating construction of safe, accessible sidewalks and crosswalks. Walking is not only free and climate-friendly, but a new study showed that walking 7,000 steps a day reduces the chance of death from all causes by 47%. When people can get exercise as part of their travel, it's a win-win.

As noted earlier in this meeting, climate change is resulting in lots more severe weather like flooding impacting our transportation system. The EPA is expected to abandon the endangerment finding w/respect to GHGs and exit from regulation of GHGs. This means responsibility shifts to states. We were very pleased to hear Commissioner Love state that targets will be set as part of this plan. IDOT should follow the lead of CO, MN, and other states that have also set targets to actively reduce the GHG footprint of the transportation section.

Therefore, we are asking that the Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations focus on the agency approaching transportation from a fully integrated, multimodal perspective with climate as an important lens. That means roadway designs that prioritize transit vehicles and provide safe places for people to get on and off the bus, and roadways that provide safe passage for bicyclists and pedestrians. In urban areas, that means a shift from "moving the most vehicles" model to streets as multi-use, human-scale corridors that are platforms for businesses and community. We have a huge opportunity ahead of us to transform how we design our transportation system because this can transform the quality of life for the residents of Illinois.