

# SOUTH LAWDALE NEIGHBORHOOD BIKE NETWORK

Neighborhood Taskforce Meeting #1



## MEETING SUMMARY

### South Lawndale Neighborhood Bike Network

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Wednesday, March 09, 2022

10:00 – 11:30 am

Virtual meeting; Microsoft Teams

### ATTENDEES

#### CDOT Representatives

David Smith, Complete Streets Manager

Brad Huff, TY Lin – Bikeways Program Manager

John Pickering, TY Lin – Bikeways Planner

#### Taskforce Members

Alderman Michael Rodriguez – 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward

Abraham Celio – Universidad Popular

Alex Perez – Active Transportation Alliance

Brian Hacker – Department of Planning and Development

Carlos Gamboa – 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward

Coach Kelly – Chicago Youth Boxing Club

David Babb – La Villita Community Church

Diana Martinez – Community Health Promoter

Edith Tovar – Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

Elianne Bahena – 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward

Epi Diaz – New Life Centers of Chicagoland

Jose Acosta - Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

Rob Castaneda – Beyond the Ball

Ruth Rosa – Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children

Trevor Clark – Working Bikes

## INTRODUCTION TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD BIKE NETWORK

David Smith, Complete Streets Manager, from the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) introduced the South Lawndale Neighborhood Bike Network initiative to the Taskforce and provided an overview of the state of bicycling in Chicago. In 2021, the city's bikeshare program, Divvy, expanded into South Lawndale and there is a need to provide people with dedicated places to ride a bicycle. David stressed the importance and benefits of biking, and how a connected network of bike routes will help make biking a convenient option for people to get around in South Lawndale.

### Outcomes

With help from the Taskforce, CDOT is looking to identify and design approximately 10 miles of bike routes to be installed in South Lawndale in 2022 and while also identifying long-term projects. The Taskforce will also help develop other recommendations to making biking safe, convenient, and appealing to the community.

### Timeline

The Neighborhood Bike Network process is meant to allow for meaningful conversations with the Taskforce and the South Lawndale community while still moving quickly. The primary objective of this effort is to identify, design, and install projects in South Lawndale in 2022. This is the first of three Taskforce meetings, but other interim touchpoints and meetings will be scheduled as necessary.

## WHAT TRANSPORTATION RELATED INITIATIVES IS YOUR GROUP WORKING ON IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

General feedback from the Taskforce reflected a community that is excited for an expanded bicycle network, especially for how it would benefit young people in South Lawndale. Many community groups utilize community bike rides to build and strengthen community ties while reclaiming the streets from violence. Other initiatives promoted by the members of the Taskforce include bike repair classes, bicycle safety training, and environmental studies including air quality & walkability studies. Members mentioned concern regarding the lack of **safe and inclusive bike infrastructure**, the **poor street condition**, and **environmental issues** as some of the barriers to bicycling. There is a need to make the connection between how the role of bicycles can play into the greater neighborhood efforts and how it can help address issues of air pollution, crime/safety, and dangerous driving behavior.

### Other common themes include:

- Reclaiming and activating public spaces for safe community driven events including bike rides
- Taskforce is deeply involved and has access to many of the area's youth and their families

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

### Who's not here that should be? Who should we make sure we engage?

While the Taskforce works closely with many of the area's youth, they emphasized additional outreach to the **schools** and the importance of having a **physical presence at community events**. Additional groups members suggested contacting include **representatives at churches as well as public parks**. The Taskforce also felt that the primary study area west of Kedzie was well represented while additional groups east should be included. CDOT will contact the organizations suggested below for the next Taskforce meeting and engage with others not able to attend the first meeting.

Other community groups not present, but suggested, include:

- Enlace\*
- Chicago Parks District\*
- Latinos Progresando\*
- Chamber of Commerce
- Erie House
- Hospitals
  - St Anthony
  - Sinai
- Churches

*\*CDOT noted both Enlace, Parks District, and Latinos Progresando had been contacted and they will continue to reach out these stakeholders and others that have been recommended.*

How can CDOT reach out and involve all stakeholders? And what is the most effective way?

When asked how best to reach out and notify the community of the neighborhood bike network, Taskforce members responded that having a **physical presence at community events** has been most effective. Taskforce members host many community events throughout the year, especially in the summer. Having a presence and materials at these events will attract many people, including young people, who live in South Lawndale. Groups host many **bike tours** in and around South Lawndale, and this would be a good opportunity to engage with current bicyclists while exposing people who don't typically bike to the benefits of bicycling. Providing printed materials in local bike shops is a great strategy to reach people who already ride bicycles. In addition to the community events, the Taskforce members suggested having a **physical presence at community destinations** to reach community members who may not have access to the internet. LVEJO spoke how door-to-door canvassing and engaging folks within the neighborhood's parks great ways to connect with the community. Members also remarked the importance to provide all materials in English and Spanish in order to effectively communicate the Neighborhood Bike Network effort. CDOT will attend some of these events over the course of summer and utilize CDOT's SAFE (Streets Are For Everyone) ambassadors. These ambassadors promote safe bicycling for people walking and biking and host classes to teach all ages to ride a bike.

Community Events suggested:

- Latinos Progresando Wellness Fair
- Community bike rides
- Weekly outdoor programming at Beyond the Ball

## PERCEPTIONS OF BIKING IN SOUTH LAWNSDALE

Who is biking in South Lawnsdale and what is the perception of biking? Why do you think that is?

While the community is auto-dominated, many young people participate in group rides organized by multiple community organizations, especially in the warmer months. Children usually ride on sidewalks and within parks. Also seen are day workers traversing 26<sup>th</sup> Street to their jobs and commuters traveling through the neighborhood. When asked why more people from the neighborhood don't bike, members reiterated the concerns about street conditions, environmental factors, and personal safety/crime issues.

## Who's not biking in your community? Why is that?

Many residents in South Lawndale who are not currently biking but might be interested view biking on streets as unsafe due to the lack of infrastructure. Members responded that they see people biking through the community, but it's generally not perceived as residents who in South Lawndale. When asked why some residents might not bike, members responded there are many adults who may not know how to ride or know how to bike safely.

## STREETS, DESTINATIONS, CONNECTIONS, AND BARRIERS

### What are the important destinations in your neighborhood?

When asked where people are going today on their bikes, **schools, parks, and public community spaces** were mentioned most frequently.

- Parks
  - Piotrowski Park
- Schools
  - Gary/Ortiz Elementary School
    - Gary Ortiz Field
- Community Spaces
  - Working Bikes
  - Chicago Youth Boxing Club
  - Universidad Popular
  - 6062Trees: Sembrando Bajo el Sol Garden (Community garden)
    - 2612 S Trumbull Avenue

### What are the important streets in your neighborhood?

Commercial corridors, such as 26th Street, and streets that connect to other communities, such as Kedzie, Pulaski, and Cermak were also identified as important for the neighborhood. North-south streets like Pulaski are particularly vital as they provide access across the Sanitary Canal and Eisenhower Expressway and into the Brighton Park neighborhood. These streets were also mentioned as being uncomfortable for biking and would need better bicycle infrastructure to make them more inclusive and welcoming to new people biking.

Taskforce members had differing views on which streets were best for biking. Some noted that many members of the community felt most comfortable on busier, commercial streets like **Pulaski** and **Ogden**, where foot traffic is highest and visibility is best. Others felt uncomfortable and unsafe riding on busier streets due to traffic volumes, presence of large trucks, air pollution, etc. Some were more comfortable riding on neighborhood streets because they are quieter and have less traffic, but others expressed apprehension traveling on neighborhood streets for crime and personal safety reasons. There is a concern of bike riders crossing known gang lines on neighborhood streets, causing some groups to avoid these quieter streets during group rides.

### What are the barriers to biking in your neighborhood?

The **existing poor pavement condition** on many of the streets within South Lawndale combined with the **heavy trucks** that use them present some of the biggest barriers to people biking. Additionally, the **environmental concerns** caused by heavy volumes of motor vehicles create poor air quality on these commercial streets. Neighborhood streets present connectivity issues as

many are bifurcated by physical barriers and make these connections more challenging. People walking also noted they don't feel comfortable around motor vehicles as they don't feel safe from cars even at intersections with crosswalks.

Other Barriers include:

- Sanitary Canal and Eisenhower Expressway
- High-stress streets, specifically:
  - Pulaski
  - Blue Island
- Poor air quality on busy streets, specifically
  - 31<sup>st</sup>
  - 33<sup>rd</sup>

What are streets would you like to see bike infrastructure on?

While many of the commercial corridors have higher vehicle volumes, dedicated bicycle facilities would help make residents feel more comfortable using these routes and encourage new or inexperienced bicyclists onto these streets.

Commercial corridors, specifically:

- Pulaski
- 26<sup>th</sup>
- Ogden
- Kedzie

Neighborhood streets, specifically:

- 21<sup>st</sup> Street
- 25<sup>th</sup> Street
- 27<sup>th</sup> Street
- 28<sup>th</sup> Street
- 30<sup>th</sup> Street
- Keeler
- Hamlin
- Lawndale
- Albany

These neighborhood streets tend to be more continuous than others in the neighborhood while having existing signals at major intersections.