



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**CITY OF CHICAGO RECEIVES \$2 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT TO RECONNECT
WEST SIDE COMMUNITIES**

CHICAGO — The City of Chicago has been awarded \$2 million by the U.S. Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program – a competitive federal grant program to help communities mitigate the negative effects of highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, mobility, access, and economic development. This funding will support the City in engaging the community, and identifying and planning infrastructure improvements to promote traffic safety and enhance accessibility and connectivity on Chicago's West Side. It will also address longstanding adverse impacts of the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) on surrounding neighborhoods.

These efforts will closely align with ongoing efforts to rebuild and modernize the I-290 highway and Blue Line transit corridor, led by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Chicago Transit Authority (CTA).

"The construction of I-290 in the 1950s destroyed homes and businesses, segregating our city and displacing entire communities," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Today, it continues to be a physical barrier for West Side Chicagoans, so this funding is an important step towards reconnecting these communities and improving mobility. I thank our federal partners for securing this funding, and we look forward to developing a plan shaped by the community to improve connections on Chicago's West Side."

The Reconnecting Communities Program was established through President Joe Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and is the first program of its kind dedicated to rectifying the damage done by past transportation projects.

"Historically, Chicago's West Side has been separated by the imposing physical barriers of I-290, which not only divides neighborhoods, but stifles economic growth and social cohesion," said **U.S. Senator Dick Durbin**. "By prioritizing investments in infrastructure that reconnects rather than divides, we are laying the foundation for a brighter future where every resident of the West Side can thrive."



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“As a strong proponent of modernizing our state’s transportation infrastructure, I also believe that progress shouldn’t come at the expense of working communities’ livelihoods, businesses and physical health,” said **U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth**. “I’m glad to see this federal funding helping restore resources and community connectivity on the West Side of Chicago, and I’ll keep working to ensure Chicago and cities all across our state receive federal support to grow and thrive.”

“For decades, residents all across the West Side of Chicago have experienced unprecedented community displacement due to construction and maintenance on the Eisenhower Expressway,” said **Governor JB Pritzker**. “I’m thankful to have partners in the federal government who share the belief that progress does not need to come at the expense of an entire community’s livelihood. By prioritizing this funding, decades old barriers are being removed and communities are being restored.”

“Our region’s commitment to advance equity and make inclusive investments closely aligns with the principles of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and we are excited the region is benefitting from this innovative federal program dedicated to reconnecting communities,” **Erin Aleman, executive director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)** said. “We are eager to collaborate with IDOT, CDOT, CTA, and our federal partners to help realize this regionally significant project that will improve people’s lives by supporting the President’s Justice40 goals, enhancing travel safety and accessibility, and helping foster economic opportunity.”

While many communities across the City of Chicago face challenges related to equitable transportation options, job access, and historic disinvestment, the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) presents a particular challenge to Chicago’s West Side neighborhoods in the form of a physical barrier. I-290 has divided neighborhoods on Chicago’s West Side since its construction in the 1950s, when more than 13,000 residences, 400 businesses, and 9 acres of a historic park were demolished.

Tight-knit communities were displaced or scattered while the new expressway system catalyzed suburban development and white flight. The effect of these physical and societal forces left poor and minority residents in disconnected neighborhoods with reduced economic opportunities. Recognizing the harmful legacy of these past actions, with this grant the City of Chicago intends to support setting a new course by improving community safety, cohesion, and quality of life through enhanced connectivity over and around the expressway and CTA’s Blue Line rail transit stations located in the highway median.



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The grant funding will allow the City to support upcoming IDOT and CTA reconstruction efforts by focusing on options such as improvements for people walking and bicycling on existing streets and paths surrounding and crossing the corridor, adding or enhancing pedestrian bridges and bicycle facilities, incorporating landscaping and other elements to enhance user comfort with new and renewed infrastructure, and making traffic safety and access improvements to nearby streets and intersections through complete streets principles.

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