

Introduction

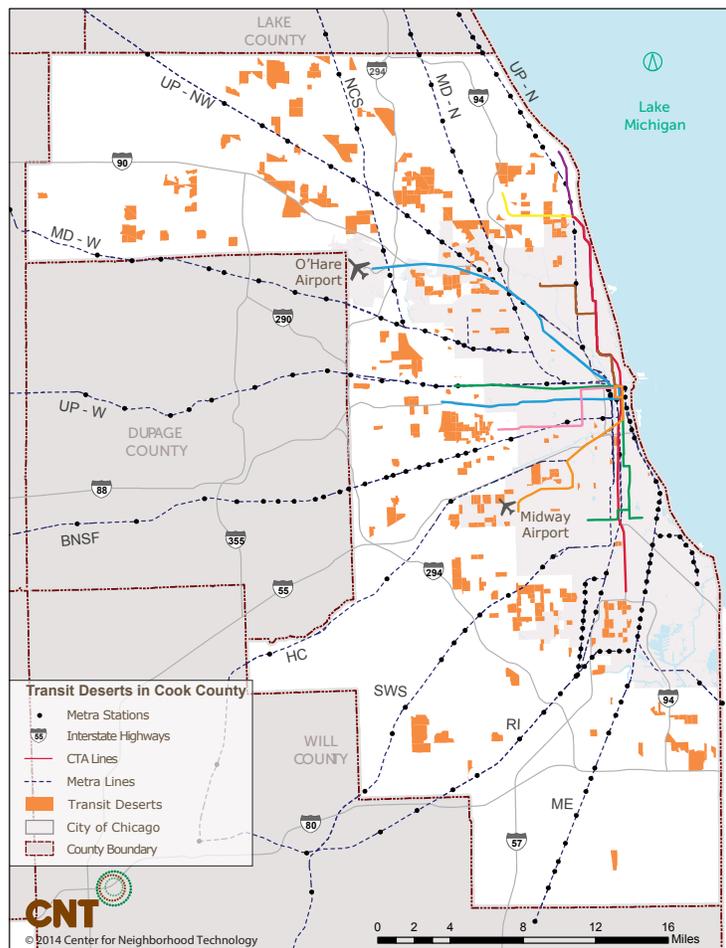
Our regional hub-and-spoke transit system is centered on Chicago's Loop. In the system's early years, the Loop was the predominant business hub, and workers could conveniently reach jobs by transit.

Over the last 60 years, a combination of relatively cheap fuel and massive investment in highways literally drove people and jobs further and further from the center, and away from the benefits of transit.

Sprawl severed the connections between transportation, land use, and economic growth. While jobs and residents migrated to the suburbs, the transit system has remained more or less the same.

In many parts of Cook County, access to affordable, high-speed mobility options is either severely limited, or nonexistent.

In short, Cook County has too many **transit deserts**.

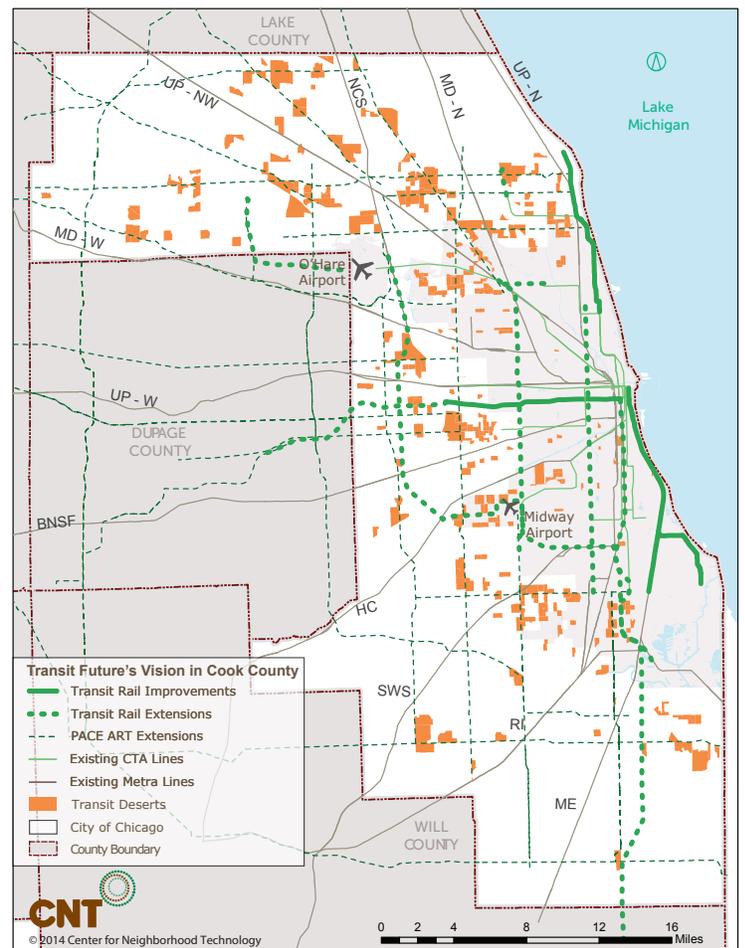


The current hub-and-spoke system leaves many Cook County residents stranded in transit deserts.

Transit Deserts in Current System

A transit desert is an area that has high demand for transit but lacks access to high-quality transit, meaning that it is more than a half-mile from a rail transit stop and a quarter-mile from high-quality bus service.¹ High-quality transit can be rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), arterial rapid transit (ART), or bus routes with frequent service (average headways of 15 minutes or less).

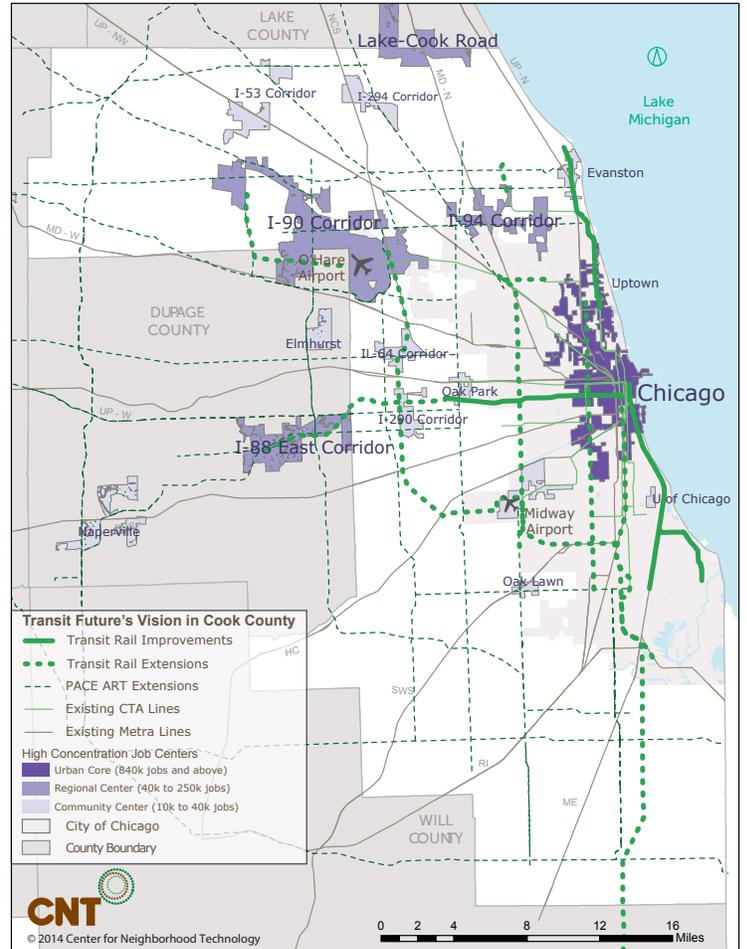
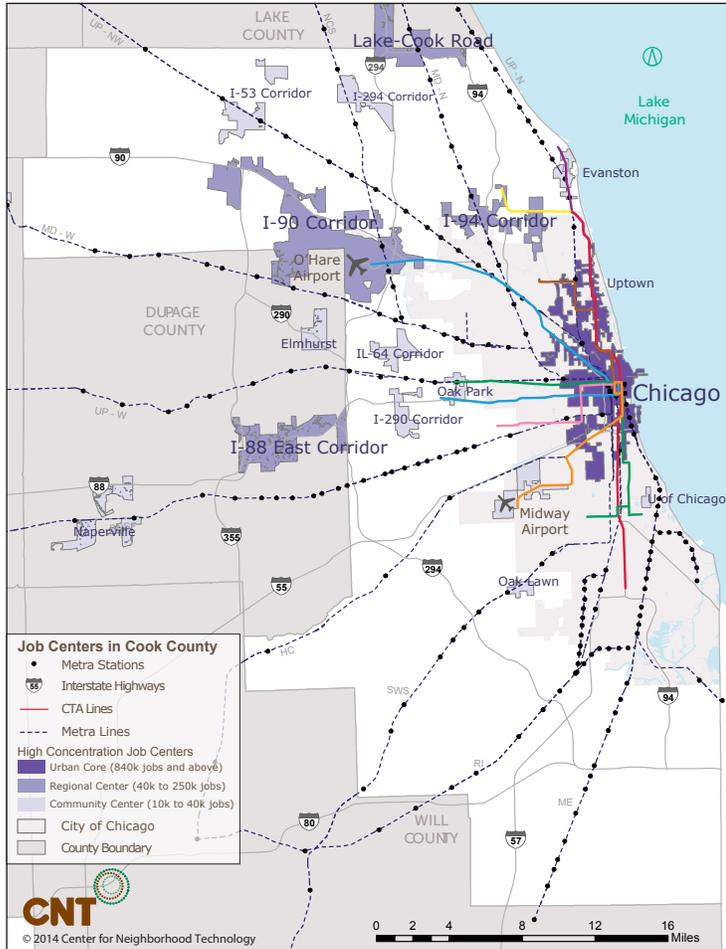
The region's hub-and-spoke transit system leaves many transit deserts between the lines that radiate out from downtown. Approximately **438,500 Cook County residents live in transit deserts**. Nearly a half-million people – roughly one-tenth of the entire population – face restricted mobility and limited access to all of the region's jobs and amenities.



Transit Future's vision for expanded transit could connect more people to jobs and opportunities.

Jobs in Transit Deserts

The lack of mobility options doesn't just affect those who *live* in transit deserts. It's also a problem for people who *work* in them, regardless of where they live. Four of the region's top five job centers are in suburbs that are not well served by rapid transit.² These employment hubs boast **over 390,000 jobs**, which means many workers are forced to spend hundreds of dollars a month on a car, and often to spend several hours a week commuting on congested roadways – time that could be spent with family or pursuing education or other opportunities.



For many Cook County residents, it's simply impossible to get to work via transit.

With an expanded transit system, workers can save time and money – and reduce impacts on the environment.

Living and Working in Transit Deserts

5,182,947

residents in Cook County in 2010



438,490

people living in transit deserts



161,763

households in transit deserts



268,274

jobs in transit deserts

Cook County in 2040

▲21%

Population

▲17%

Households

▲23%

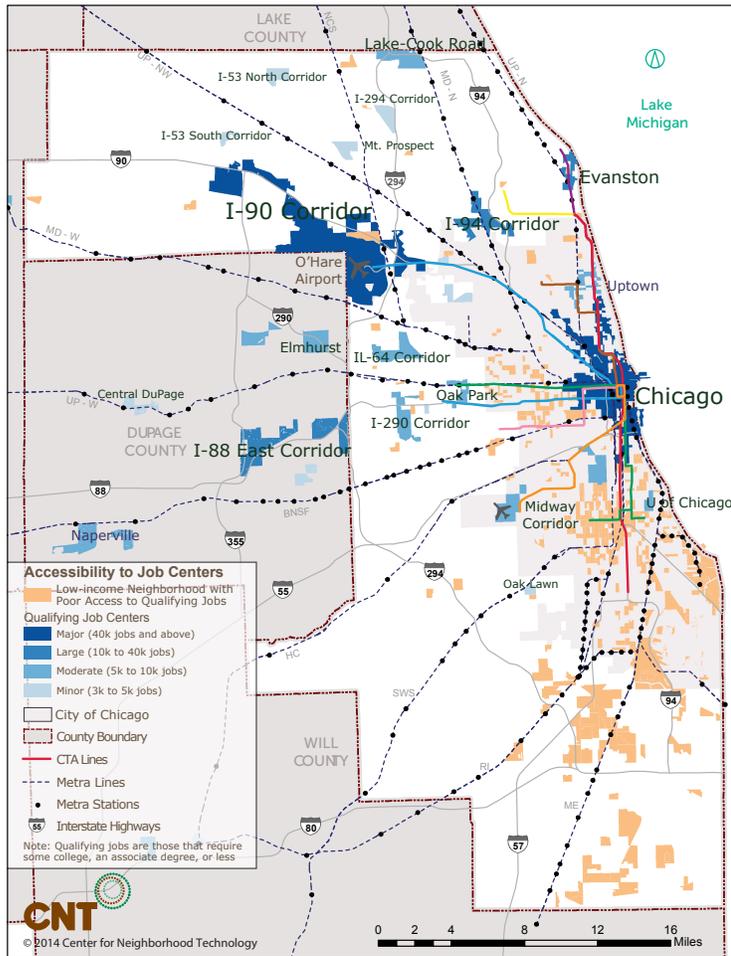
Jobs

Projected Change from 2010 to 2040, Source: CMAP

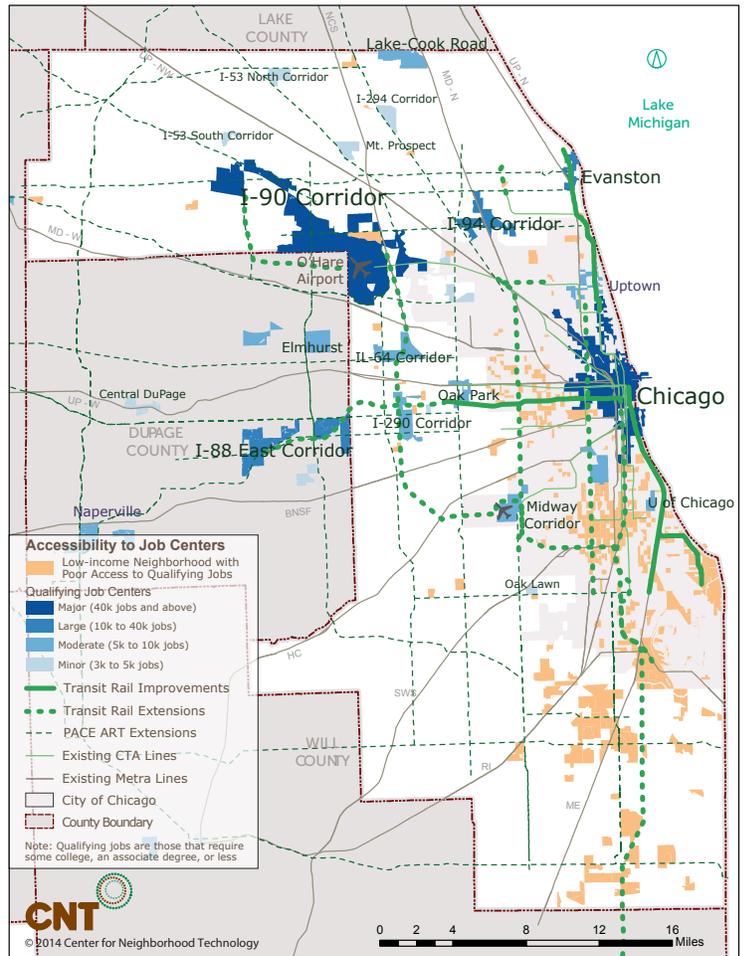
Low-Income Access to Jobs

Low- to moderate-income households are especially impacted by the jobs-transit mismatch. There are hundreds of thousands of entry-level jobs in the region for residents with a high school diploma (or equivalent), some college, or an associate degree, but many of these jobs are clustered far beyond the reach of the current transit system.³ **Transportation is already an average household's second-largest expense.** Spending money on an automobile (a depreciating asset) and fuel (subject to price spikes) just to access entry-level jobs makes it difficult for Cook County's low-wage workers to get ahead.

Not only is it impossible for individuals to get ahead without being able to get to work, it's impossible for our region to prosper without investment in the kind of reliable, affordable mobility choices that benefit the entire economy and everyone who lives here.



The disconnect between low-income neighborhoods and the location of entry-level jobs is stark.



Transit Future aims to make commutes more convenient and affordable for all residents.

Photo Credit: Chris Goldberg, Flickr/Creative Commons



Development Around Transit

Transit access doesn't just mean more job connections – it can also create sustainable neighborhoods and enhance regional growth. **Rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) stations can anchor local development, encouraging a walkable mix of housing, shops, and other amenities that keep living costs low and quality of life high.** In both the city and the suburbs, prosperous neighborhood and village centers are often built around transit stations.

Transit deserts miss out on this type of transit-oriented development. By giving residents better access to jobs and creating opportunities for new development, transit can bring buying power to neighborhoods that need it. Plus, research has shown that residential sales prices for properties located near transit are healthier and more resilient than in the broader metropolitan region.⁴ **Transit-oriented development can be the first step in building stronger, more vibrant communities.**



Photo Credit: ifmuth, Flickr/Creative Commons

¹ Transit demand was calculated using the variables of the number of senior population (65+) per square mile, number of adults (18-64) per square mile, number of children per square mile, number of retail and non-retail jobs per square mile, and the number of total autos per square mile within a census block group.

² Job clusters were identified using a combination of 2011 LED Census block group employment data and GIS to outline continuous block groups that met a minimum jobs threshold. These block groups were then combined to form employment centers. The total jobs were then summed and the employment centers were ranked.

³ A quantile regression analysis identified Census block groups with a mismatch between low-income households and qualifying employment opportunities within a 60-minute transit commute. Low-income Census block groups were defined as having a high concentration of households earning approximately 50% or less of the Chicago CSA median income (or less than \$35,000 in 2012). LED 2011 employment data was used to identify qualifying jobs - defined as jobs that require some college, an associate degree, or less - accessible via public transit.

⁴ <http://www.cnt.org/2013/03/22/proof-that-housing-near-transit-is-a-good-investment/>

⁵ <http://americafastforward.net/>

ABOUT THE TRANSIT FUTURE CAMPAIGN

Transit Future is a campaign to build a 21st century transit system in Cook County, making the region more livable, economically competitive, and environmentally sustainable. Efficient and affordable public transit helps link people to jobs, reduces congestion, and fosters sustainable economic growth. Transit Future's mission is to build broad support in Cook County for increased, impactful, and immediate investment in an expanded regional public transportation system.

vision.transitfuture.org
transitfuture.org



ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE



Transit Future's Vision

Cook County needs expanded transit service to fill gaps that leave people stranded and jobs unreachable. **Improved, expanded and modernized public transit can eliminate transit deserts, energize the economy, connect workers to jobs, and provide real savings for real people.**

Building a world-class transit system requires a steady, long-term investment – **an investment that will pay us back** with faster commutes, reduced cost of living, improved air quality, growth and development around the system, and a host of other economic and environmental dividends.

In an era of increased competition for fewer funding resources, **investment will flow only to the regions that take action to help themselves.** Creating a local, matching revenue stream can unlock billions of dollars in federal and other funding for the kinds of transit projects that can make our region more livable, economically competitive, and environmentally sustainable.

Transit Future advocates that the Cook County Board of Commissioners adopt a robust revenue source to fund the improvement and expansion of transit. This new revenue source will enable the county to take advantage of federal financing tools like America Fast Forward⁵ that will let us expand the system faster and realize return on investment sooner.

There's no time to wait.



TransitFuture