



Social Justice Planning:

Social Media Community Engagement for the **Red Line Extension** Through Creation of a 'Digital Hood' for Chicago's Transit Bound Students

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Introduction

As students from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, our primary focus has been increasing the visibility of the Red Line Extension by engaging a younger audience and community stakeholders, Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy high school students. We aimed to inspire young people to get involved and push for the development of the Red Line Extension, which would extend Chicago's Red Line to the far South Side of Chicago. As university students, we have studied and learned about the RLE over the course of four months. During this time, we created a community engagement plan which involved a meeting with community stakeholders such as the Endeleo Institute at Trinity Church and TCA Clinic at Altgeld Gardens and meetings with the city agencies, CMAP (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning), the CTA (Chicago Transit Authority), and CDOT (Chicago Department of Transportation). In the second part of our community engagement plan, we distributed a survey to Brooks students, held a Zoom meeting and presentation with live polls that they responded to on their phones. Now in our final phase of the plan, we are providing this guide accompanied by a memorandum so that students can continue to be involved in the conversation that surrounds the Red Line Extension and inspire others to get involved as well. The results from a meeting with Brooks High School students indicates that many students are already familiar with the RLE and would be affected by its development.



The Purpose of This Guide

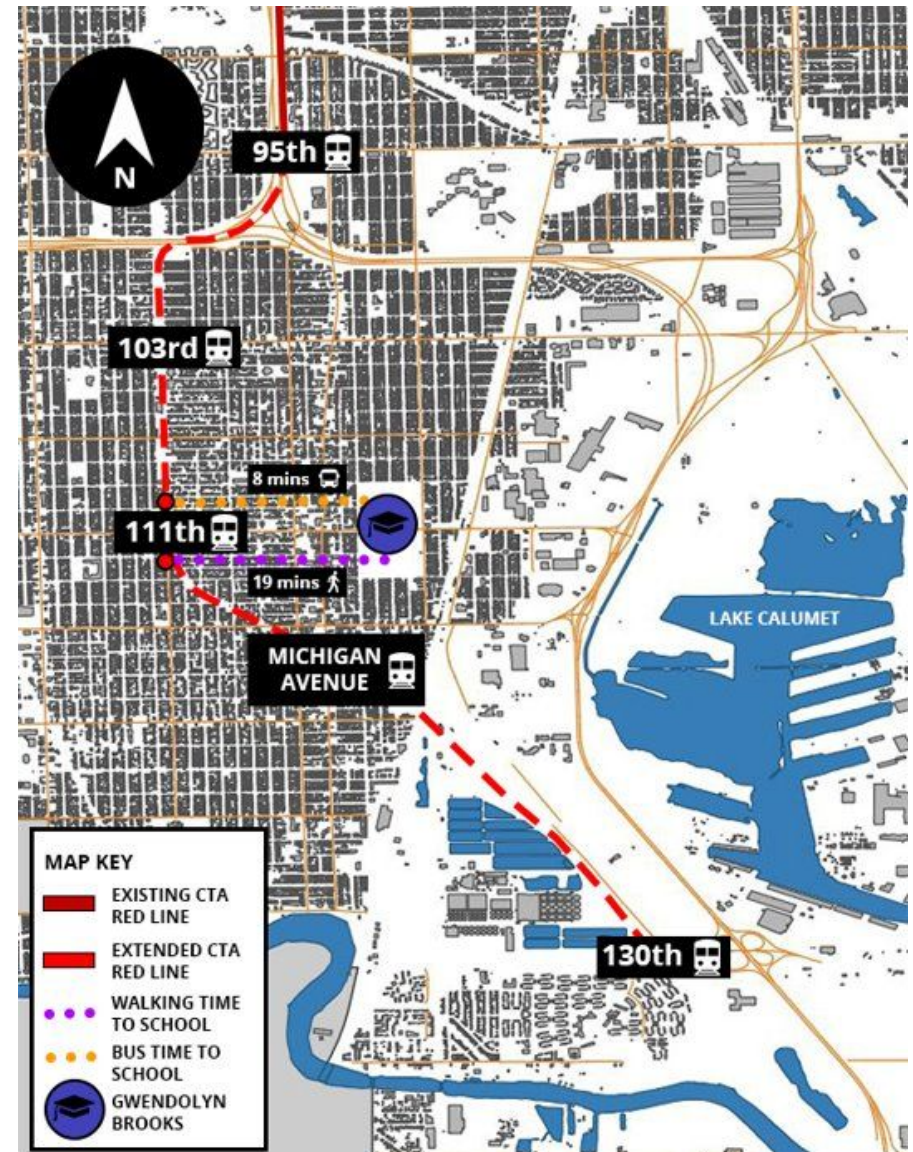
Students can use this guide to...

- Learn more about community stakeholders and how to get in contact with them
- Express their thoughts on the Red Line Extension (RLE) through our Twitter (@reduiuc)
- Be involved in pushing for the RLE continued development
- Connect with others that will be impacted by the RLE
- Share feedback with these groups and organizations

Background

The Red Line Extension (RLE) is the proposed extension of the Chicago Red Line's current 95th street stop to 130th street, through a total of four new stops (103rd, 111th, 115th/Michigan Avenue, and 130th). The RLE is expected to increase access to jobs and other resources to the Greater Roseland Area, which includes the community areas of Roseland, Pullman, West Pullman, Morgan Park, and Riverdale, as well as provide benefits throughout Chicago and the region of Northeastern Illinois. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) is the planning agency responsible for moving the RLE forward. Planning for this project officially began around 13 years ago, although the CTA first developed plans to extend the Red Line in the 1970s. After decades of residents calling for transit in the far South Side of Chicago, the Developing Communities Project (DCP), a faith-based organization originally started by Barack Obama, petitioned the residents of Greater Roseland to put the RLE on the ballot. In 2004, 39,000 residents voted in favor of the Red Line Extension. Through community engagement, a project that had been stalled for the last 30 years finally made headway.

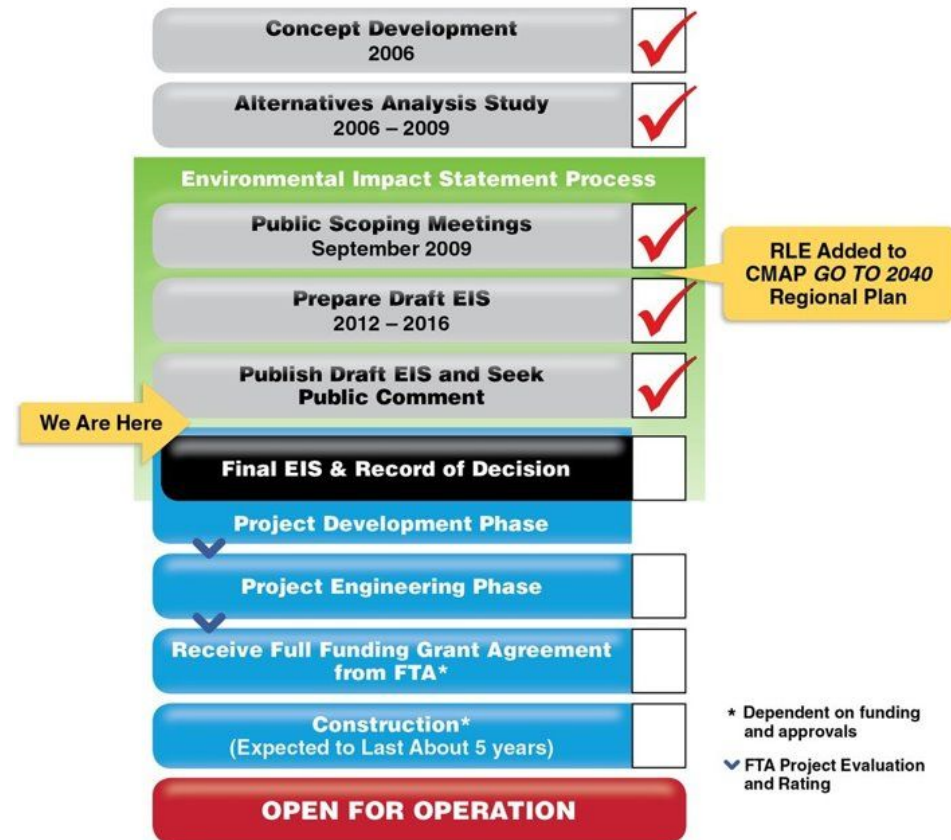
Since 2004, development on the RLE has been slow and its phases have been pushed back due to a variety of reasons, such as funding. The RLE has a total of nine phases described by the Chicago Transit Authority. These are federally mandated phases for every federally funded transportation project. From 2006 to 2009, the CTA did an alternatives analysis, which weighs the costs and benefits of alternative projects and routes to the RLE. In 2009, they held scoping meetings, where they engaged the public on important issues that would be relevant to the next part of the Environmental Impact Process.



Background

From 2014-2016, they produced a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which studied the positive and negative impacts the RLE would have on people and how they will prevent or reduce the negative impacts. There are nine documented phases for the Red Line Extension and the project is currently at the Final EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) and Preliminary Engineering phase and is estimated to produce a Final Environmental Impact Statement within the next few years.

Project visibility is crucial in determining the timeline for the RLE when the next phase will actually occur. Based on information gathered from the meetings with the community stakeholders and city agencies, we have learned that young people's voices have not been adequately taken into account thus far. Engaging young people through multiple modes, including social media and digital technology, can help to promote distributed democracy and create a platform for information sharing for Chicago's young people and students, who represent key transit consumers. Youth participation in the planning process is central to the RLE moving forward in a way that benefits young people. Young people can become involved, connect with city agencies, and express your thoughts through our Twitter social media account (RedUIUC) or by posting about the RLE other social media, like Instagram. You can also educate your peers, families, and neighbors so that the RLE can be prioritized. More ways to get involved can be found in the following sections.



Community Mapping

What is Community Mapping?

Maps are gates into information that permit us to investigate our world, discern it better, and engage more productively. Maps can ignite interest, providing insight, and motivate us to assist where needed. These visuals help us learn about where you are and how to get where you're going. What's most intriguing is that maps can tell a story. Maps are known to be an effective storytelling method. Imagine a tool in which combines powerful narratives, text, and imagery; this is a map. The significance of utilizing maps is that they to produce engagement with both community and stakeholders to allow for the framing of experiences.

Brenda Parker addresses the exclusiveness of maps in her article "Constructing Community Through Maps? Power and Praxis in Community Mapping". Brenda notes that many local maps have to ability to leave author's perspective unexplored. Ultimately, this article breaks down the mapping process and its critical relationship to community mapping. Unlike your typical regional map that you'll discover on your county's website, a community map is produced collaboratively by residents; or at least ought to be. The deliverables that should form this map are residents' knowledge and resources. Community maps are a powerful tool because they can initiate radical social change!

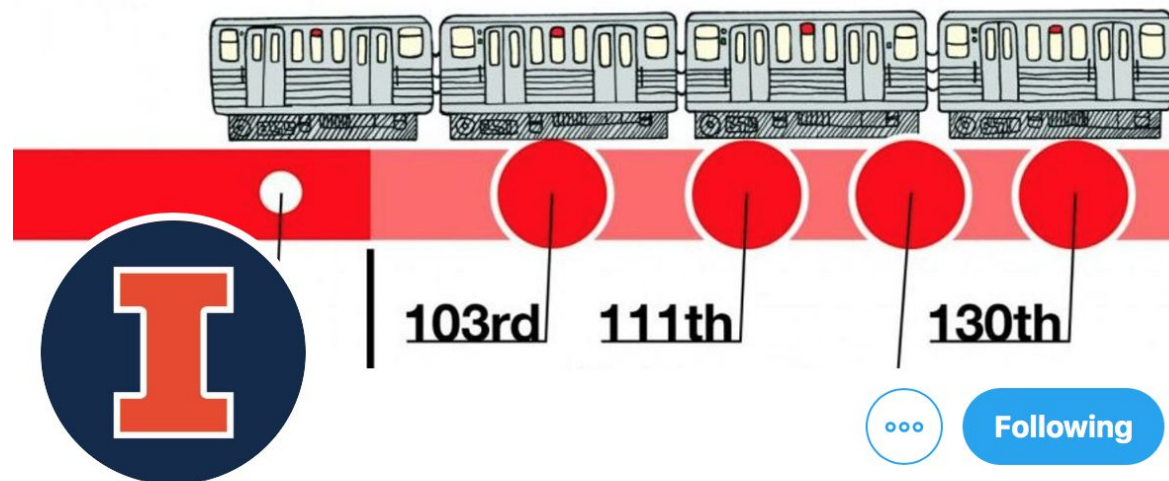
Geographer J.B. Harley , author of "Constructing Community Through Maps? Power and Praxis in Community Mapping" illuminates the tendentious role of maps shaping the world. Harley calls out the relationship between maps and power. He further notes that power relations could be reconstituted with the dissemination of cartographic knowledge.

The scrutiny of community maps has allowed the enhancement of understanding of its practice of exclusiveness, according to Parker. But what this does is raise questions around the potential of community mapping. Transparency, inclusion, and empowerment are all enacted in the formation of community mapping.

How to Pioneer Radical Social Change?

Maya People of Southern Belize stated in 1997, "map or be mapped". When people read maps, there is a thought of who constitutes "community" in this region. It should be evident in the representation of imagery, graphics, and technology, what culture or people is embedded within a community. So how do you create your own community map? To start, think about the existing physical condition of your community. Is it beautiful, desolate, under reconstruction? Describe the physical scenery you see as you pass through it. Then, document that experience. Secondly, name the monumental institutions, places, or figures that is popular within your community; the neighborhood park, local restaurant, grocery store, et. These are places or things that help distinguish your community from others. Third, describe the people that live within your community; race, income, age, etc. Next, you want to describe the issues that are present within your community. How are they affecting the resident within the community? Lastly, describe your vision and dream for your community. For example, you might want to note that you desire improved infrastructure, stores, schools, public transportation, parks, and even local programs for residents.

Social Media Engagement



Red Line South Extension (UIUC)

@RedUiuc

The idea of starting a social media platform has been something that we have been looking to take leadership and initiative in creating for that visibility to be seen. Twitter has been the idea for this social media platform. In today's modern society, we see information get spread so fast among communities, even internationally, through viral content. With the students being able to share and spread the good news, we can start a new wave of communications towards public officials, who have the power to move the project to a priority, which Far South Side residents have been fighting for for years. By taking polls and posting and re-Tweeting images, videos, and updates on the RLE, we'll be able to work from a community-based perspective to fight for a battle of the voiceless in the city of Chicago. It's time to support all community areas of the city, not just for higher income residents.

This will accomplish more than just visibility but will also amplify the voices of the next generation of Chicago citizens that'll help create for a better community in the Far South Side. By facilitating a direct democracy, we can create a bridge between the community and city officials. With more support towards pushing for the Red Line Extension, we'll be able to get the ball rolling to something bigger in sight. With the Twitter account being made, Red Line Extension UIUC (@Reduiuc), being able to expose key issues and spreading awareness and information about the project will assist the visibility that Professor Lou has presented for us to run with. By executing surveys/polls, podcasts, photos and links, we can properly engage real individuals to create a digital information hub and began building a digital network for the Red Line Extension.

Social Media Engagement

Social media is the most underutilized platform in the process of engaging community members with the Redline Extension Project. This can be attributed to the generational gaps that influence social media users; however, this is not reason enough to ignore its functionality. Social media provides the unique opportunity for interactions to happen without those involved having to be faced to face. As seen in recent events such as the Me-Too movement, Black Lives Matter, and the Chicago Teacher's Strike, various social media sites were used to unify the general public around the issue as well as spread awareness. Our study has found that while many have heard of the RLE Project, few know much about the details of the extension or the process that has gone underway to accomplish its completion. Utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik-Tok provides the opportunity to share that information. This also serves as the opportunity to bridge some of the gaps in understanding as younger community members are able to introduce older ones to the innerworkings of these networks.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) @Reduiuc and use #MyRLE

- Express your voice on how the Red Line Extension can and will benefit you!
- Talk about it with family and friends to get the word out
- Tweet about how the RLE will help you get to school, downtown, a friend's house, etc

Who to Engage

What is “civic engagement”?

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines civic engagement as a social science, a broad set of practices and attitudes of involvement in social and political life that converge to increase the health of a democratic society. In community development, civic engagement represents intellectual and action-oriented involvement with organizations, stakeholders, and groups that can affect, guide or influence a cause, project or policy. For the Chicago Transit Authority’s (CTA) Red Line Extension (RLE) project, there are many opportunities to engage and work for a communally desired outcome and create social capital in the process by forming and maintaining relationships and cooperating with different groups along the way.

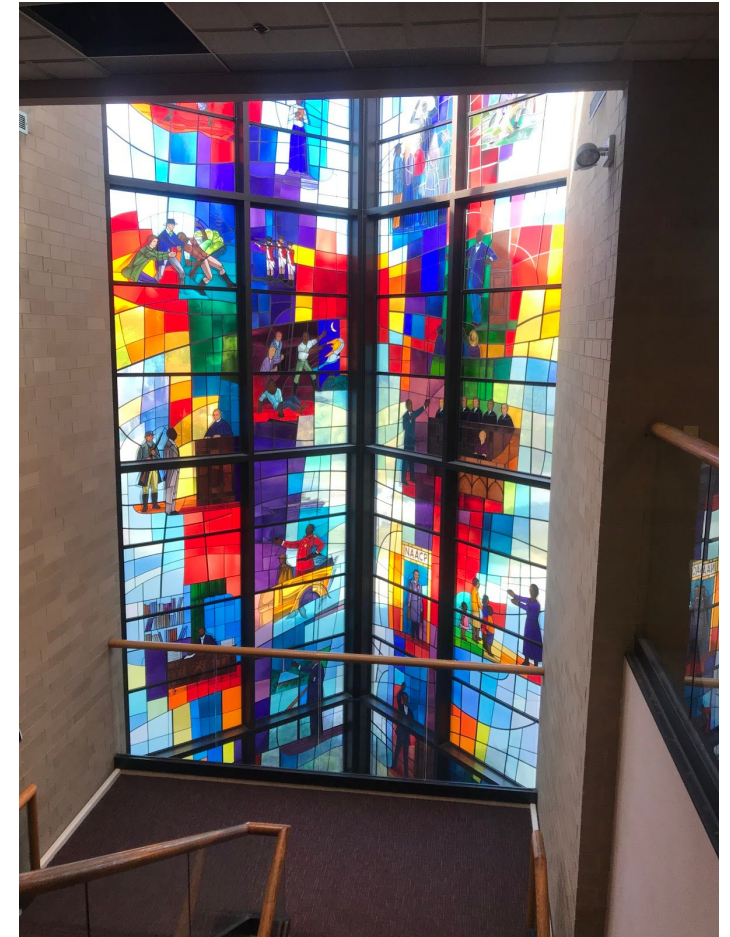
The CTA is directly responsible for the RLE project, and they are legally required to preserve the environment and engage all stakeholders in the project’s study area that can be impacted by the project. This includes residents, workers, students, organizations, and all parties involved. Since the RLE will serve neighborhoods and communities south of 95th street in Chicago, we have compiled a list of organizations and stakeholders to engage with, that can influence the development of the Red Line to reflect community desires and objectives.

Who to Engage

Endeleo Institute

The institute focuses on creating a culture of health in the Washington Heights community, specifically along the West 95th Street Corridor area. They are connected to Trinity Church, an anchor institution in the community, and dedicate their efforts into fostering community and economic development. The group was large involved in the restoration of the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library renovation through community-led effort of this previously disinvested library, on of the two regional libraries in the city.

The renovation efforts included a technology center, a safe space for teens to hang out and explore digital technology called YOUMedia, with the purpose of encouraging the community's youth to develop interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Math and Engineering) professions; displaying the organization's commitment to the community's future and opportunities. Endeleo is also involved in the plans for revitalization of the 95th street corridor, as well as engaged in the housing sector with their Sustainable Home Ownership Program, which aims to promote affordable and sustainable housing for Washington Heights residents. Endeleo is located within the study area of the RLE because of its proximity and heavy involvement around the 95th street CTA station, with significant potential to engage the project.



Who to Engage



Endealeo Institute Executive Director Melvin Thompson voiced support for the project at CTA's 2020 budget hearing on November 13, 2019.) Image taken from the CTA's newsletter.

Contacts:

Melvin Thompson
(Community Development)

Bob Wordlaw
(Jobs/Workforce Development)

Who to Engage

People for Community Recovery

This organization strives to achieve environmental justice for residents of neighborhoods affected by environmental pollution. People for Community Development (PCR) educates and advocates policy and programs in an effort to coordinate local residents on issues of the environment, health, housing, training, neighborhood safety and economic equity. The organization offers “Toxic Tours” of the Lake Calumet Industrial Area, which is located on the southeast side of Chicago, to show the conditions of the old industrial facilities, surrounding landfill, and pollution on the waterways; all in close proximity to residential communities in this area.

PCR engages with community residents by offering internships and volunteering opportunities; they also offer Employment Services to promote economic development through workforce development workshops helping people prepare resumes, develop interview skills and etiquette. PCR also helps people receive fair and equal treatment in housing issues through their Housing Rights and Advocacy program. The RLE project is required to develop an Environmental Impact Statement because of the magnitude and extension of the project, and PCR has the potential to engage the project and address environmental justice issues such as polluted land remediation, environmental issues with the Calumet water system, and other housing-related issues that could be affected by the RLE.



Altgeld Garden's Environmental Justice Photovoice Club is a program where youth use photography to share their personal stories, expose societal and environmental injustices, and to get support for issues that affect their community. This image of the Environmental Justice Photovoice Club was taken from the PCR's website, <http://www.peopleforcommunityrecovery.org>

Contact:

Cheryl Johnson

Who to Engage

TCA Clinic

TCA's mission is to improve the health of Chicago's south side residents by delivering high quality, patient-centered primary care and related support services that assure barrier-free access to health education, prevention and treatment. TCA is the only healthcare provider servicing the large community of Altgeld Gardens public housing development and nearby communities. Their services include internal/family medicine, dental services, pediatric services, obstetrics & gynecology services, behavioral health services, optometry, pharmacy, laboratory, ultrasound and care coordination services.

TCA's position as primary healthcare provider for many South Side residents puts them in a position to be a valuable stakeholder in the RLE project and the health implications that the project may bring for south side residents. When we met with Dr. Williams at TCA, we learned that asthma and diabetes were two of the most common health problems that young people were seen for, which relates to the issues of environmental racism and pollution as well as food and healthcare deserts.



From TCA Clinic's website, tcahealth.org

Contacts:

Dr. Williams

Who to Engage



Professor Lou Turner's Community Engagement in Urban Planning Class at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign after our meeting with the Chicago Transit Authority Nov. 15, 2019.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

The CTA is Chicago's main transit agency, managing the city's local bus and rail service. This agency is directly responsible for the development of the RLE project and is the agency in charge with the development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Their mission is to deliver quality, affordable transit services that link people, jobs and communities. Engaging with the CTA directly is a good opportunity to discuss transportation related issues specially, but they are also the agency that all other organizations on this list will engage with when discussing the RLE project.

The CTA is in the process of finalizing the final version of the EIS and has committed funds for the continued development of this project. The process however, is long and complex, needing to address issues such as engineering and design of the extension, displacement of homes, the potential for gentrification, environmental impacts on the Calumet waterways system, among other important topics.

Contacts:

Sonali Tandon (*Senior Manager*)

Marlise Fratinardo (*RLE Project Manager*)

Barbara Stubblefield (*Community Outreach, Workforce Development*)

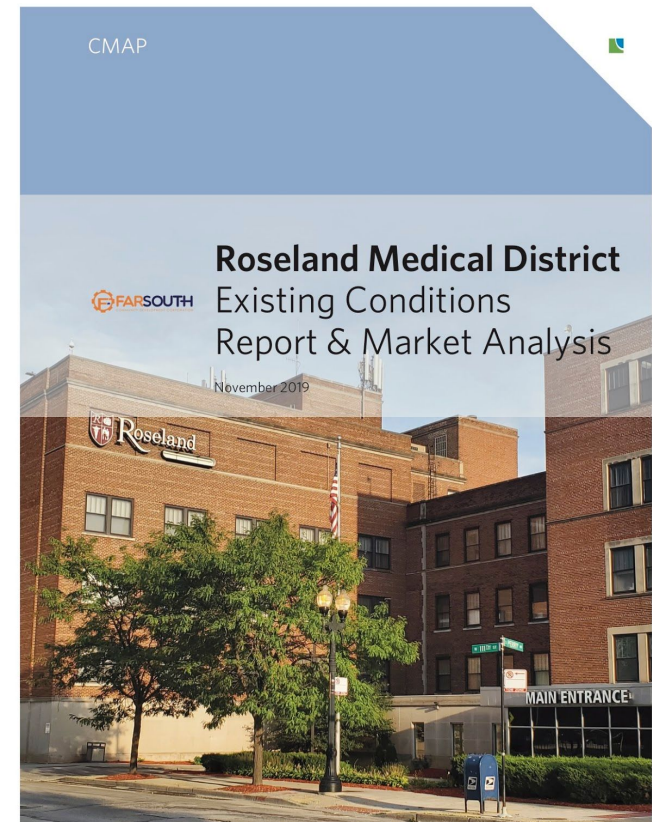
Leah Mooney (*Director of Strategic Planning*)

Who to Engage

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

Chicago's metropolitan planning organization, CMAP, provides oversight for regional planning efforts around Chicagoland and north-east Illinois, including the CTA RLE project. CMAP engages youth across Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will Counties through the FLIP (Future Leaders in Planning) program; a free leadership development program for high school students where teens learn about the issues that shape the region and collaborate with other students to think of potential solutions to those issues. Participants get to meet and interact with regional leaders who make key planning decisions in local communities.

The agency is responsible for implementing the region's long term 2019 TO 2050 plan, which envisions the region's goals and objectives as we move toward year 2050. CMAP is a planning agency that can influence the neighborhoods' around the RLE's future economic development plans and regional transportation plans, placing them as another stakeholder to engage in the RLE project.



CMAP's recent report on the Roseland Medical District at 111th St.
Access the report at cmap.illinois.gov/programs/ta/roseland

Contacts:

Katanya Raby
(FLIP, Roseland Medical District)

Lindsey Bailey
(Maps, Geographic Information Systems)

City Bureau: Open Reports - Report Card

The organization is a nonprofit civic journalism lab based on the South Side of Chicago, bringing journalists and communities together in a collaborative spirit to produce media that is impactful, equitable and responsive to the public. The City Bureau engages with emerging journalists and those interested in journalism through their Civic Reporting Program, a paid, 11-week opportunity to work in teams to produce a journalism project on a single, big-picture sociopolitical issue facing communities on Chicago's South and West Sides. Journalism and reporting are crucial for the RLE project as they provide the visibility and voice for the project to become noticeable in traditional media sources like newspapers and television. Combining journalism and social media has the potential to further increase the RLE's visibility and put the project on the map, and on everybody's radar.

South Side Weekly

This nonprofit newsprint magazine and radio show are dedicated to supporting cultural and civic engagement on the South Side of Chicago, providing educational opportunities for developing journalists, writers and artists. South Side Weekly published in-depth coverage of the arts, issues of public interest (like the RLE project), oral histories, poetry, fiction, interviews, and artwork from local photographers and illustrators. This organization has published articles about the RLE before, and is another great channel to engage with and increase the project's visibility in the media.

Impact

The **purpose** of all of this engagement related to and a product of the red line extension, is to activate students in understanding how transit is an issue relevant to them. In conversations with students, it was revealed that topics like workforce development and transit oriented development are things they prioritize, and after understanding more of access to opportunity, so are issues like health justice, opportunity deserts, gentrification, and TIF funding. All of these issues go hand in hand with the red line extension, it's environmental impact, and the role of young people in determining that. Many students in the city of Chicago are well aware of the issues of gentrification, whether through their own communities or the communities around them, and are wary of what impact the RLE will have in terms of that. In addition to that, many are key stakeholders in the conversation about businesses that will come because of RLE development since make up a good portion of the potential workforce in the south side community. Livability, and all the components that come with it, should factor in the experiences of young people, which is what this guide aims to do. Key parts of this guide are understanding the red line extension, and how students can engage with issues around it. To further amplify their rights as residents in their communities, **it is pivotal that they understand the role of things like TIF and opportunity deserts as the barriers put in place to the success of their communities.**

