



Transportation and Infrastructure

Background

The transportation industry dominates the economy in Illinois' new Sixth Congressional District. Within our boundaries, we are home to multiple Metra lines, freight service, hundreds of miles of roads and bike trails, and a number of major waterways.

In order to truly maximize our transportation economy, we must ensure all of those parts are operating to the best of their abilities for the people of the Sixth, in concert. In looking at the Sixth District's transportation network as a whole, we effectively drive the best performance from all parts of the system, not just as a series of parts.

The workforce in the new IL06 consists of approximately 347,625 people. Of that total, 70.8% drive alone to work, 7.5% carpool, 9.9% take public transportation, and 1.9% walk. An additional 5.6% of the workforce works from home. Of all the congressional districts touching Chicago, the new IL06 has one of the lowest numbers of workers over the age of 16 using public transportation to travel to and from work.

Addressing our infrastructure problems is more than just adding additional lanes on I-88, I-55, and other major roads--we have to change the dialogue on public transportation, make it more sustainable, and make it more accessible and reliable from Oak Forest to Elmhurst. We must create innovative solutions that will increase reliability and usage of green forms of transportation.

We need a representative that will ask transportation industries the tough questions on why services are not performing efficiently and not addressing opportunities for improvement – and I've done that in my first term. When action is not taken and best practices are not implemented, our representation must enact appropriate legislation to protect travelers and commuters. Our representation cannot be beholden to special interests. That's why I refuse to accept corporate PAC money, and I'm the only candidate in this race to do so. I will be a fighter for our district so all of our needs are met.

Key Stakeholders in Transportation and Infrastructure

I know the importance of developing strategic plans that involve all the stakeholders in a region. We need leaders that are willing to listen to the community's concerns and adapt their operations to best fit local residents--this includes regularly facilitating meetings with all transportation executives in Chicagoland alongside all members of government: federal, state, county, and local. We have done that work. Over the past twelve months, I brought together colleagues across our district in all levels of government with key transportation stakeholders to solve multiple local issues. Prior to this, it had not been done. We need to continue to work together to solve local problems affecting commuters and providers while also driving electrification, high speed rail, and other green transportation projects.

With less than 10% of the workforce in the new IL06 using public transportation, we need to get all transportation stakeholders in the same room to discuss ways to work together and make participation and ridership higher for public transit.

I'm proud of my close collaboration with transportation agencies and community leaders. In my first year in office, we tackled significant train delays and blockages and [reduced delays up to 100%](#), particularly in the Beverly area and surrounding suburbs.

In my role on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I've made significant progress. I'm proud to be endorsed by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman, Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), and to have received endorsements from Amalgamated Transit Union Local 241 and 308, Transportation Communications Union/IAM, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, and [many more](#).

A Holistic Look at the Issues--Needs of the District

In our district, we have a number of transportation issues. We have rail bottlenecks, a major airport without investment in the community around it, and crumbling bridges. I secured \$240 million in transportation funding for my district, and I'm proud to share that thanks to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Illinois will receive [\\$18 billion](#) in funding for additional projects.

One of the biggest complaints I've heard across my district is that many of our public transportation stations are not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was enacted over 30 years ago.

Building world-class, equitable public transportation starts by ensuring every station, bus and train across our nation is equally accessible to everyone. One of my bills, the [All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\) Act](#) was included in the IIJA package, and it will finally provide federal funding to bring all our transit centers up to full ADA compliance.

We have a number of transportation deserts in the district. Transportation deserts are those areas where residents do not have proper access to public transportation. These are primarily where our transportation needs are not being met, and we are forced to rely on environmentally and economically inefficient personal vehicles as our means of travel.

Transportation deserts in-district include:

- Bedford Park: 65th Street underpass/overpass. For years, drivers have been stopped at the train crossing for inordinate amounts of time. As your representative, I will prioritize using CREATE funds to get this project completed urgently.
- Chicago (Southwest Side): Limited access to bus and 'L' service requires individuals to plan over an hour to travel to certain destinations. That's why I support facilitating conversations with CTA, PACE, Metra, and other transportation stakeholders to increase transportation options for all parts of Chicago.
- Southwest Suburbs: Metra delays and limited service have hurt the parts of the district with already-restricted access to public transportation. In some parts of the district, especially communities on or near Metra's Southwest Service, there are only a handful of trains each day--and on Sundays there are none at all.

Cracking Our Dependence on Private Transportation

Yet, this alone is not enough to break the reliance on private transportation. For the long-term, I support plans to build greener infrastructure in the Sixth District, as well as across Illinois and nationwide. Adding lanes to highways and maintaining our roads is simply not enough.

As we enter the next decade, we need a leader with innovative transportation solutions. The District needs a leader that will provide adequate funding for public transportation so Chicagoland can have a reliable rail system, reduced car congestion, and thriving airports.

In order to increase ridership on public transportation, I propose the following:

- Building and maintaining the interstate highway is not sustainable in its current form—instead I propose allocating more funding to green infrastructure solutions and public transit.
- Using peer-reviewed evidence detailing the benefits of public transportation for communities that are in transportation deserts
 - A 2016 study found that when new train stations are expanded into suburban communities, there is a natural spike in housing developments—nearly all of which were multi-family homes. The author found that “rail transit could be an effective tool to guide land development in suburban station areas where nearby neighborhoods have enough vacant land zoned for development and some non-residential destinations, and when there are multiple state and local

mandates and incentives”¹ (Dong, 2016). We should pursue funding not only to place new transportation stations in blighted areas, but to add service for areas that need it the most.

Environmental Impact

We need to start rethinking our transportation system and how it can work better for people in the district.

While passenger train ridership has declined in recent years, freight rail is the most energy-efficient mode of transportation. According to key experts, “On average, trains are four times more fuel efficient than trucks. They also reduce highway gridlock, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce emissions of particulate matter and nitrogen oxides” (Association of American Railroads, 2019)².

It would be highly efficient if passenger and freight trains did not share track, like they do in multiple areas of the district. While this may be a large investment, it should be considered as Congress discusses the next infrastructure bills. When delays are in the news, that is due to train idling--trains are often delayed or stalled due to freight interference. That has to stop for three reasons: (1) it creates burdensome delays for people trying to get from point A to B; (2) it creates a health hazard for people around transportation hubs now subject to fumes being emitted into the atmosphere; (3) it creates inordinate delays for our first responders (police, fire, and medical) trying to maneuver train crossings and provide services to those in need.

Setting Criteria to Address the Most-Needed Transportation Projects

Projects should be evaluated and assessed based on their urgency, determined by two main criteria: (1) evidence-based health hazards; and (2) risk to the general public if used.

Considering so many people in our district rely on driving, we have to make sure our roads and bridges are operational. A study from the American Society of Civil Engineers states that of the 26,848 bridges in Illinois, [8.8% are structurally deficient](#).

These structurally deficient bridges pose a tremendous public safety concern. All levels of government should coalesce to fund these crucial infrastructure projects in an innovative way. We should not have to replace bridges regularly, but by investing in more economically and environmentally-conscious materials these bridges can last for decades with low levels of maintenance.

¹ Dong, Hongwei. (2016). If you build rail transit in suburbs, will development come? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 82(4).

² Association of American Railroads. (2019). The Environmental Benefits of Moving Freight by Rail. Accessed from <https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AAR-Environmental-Benefits-Moving-Freight-by-Rail.pdf>.

Green Infrastructure

I support green infrastructure projects that will truly innovate the way we think about our roads. If we continue to fill potholes and use the same systems that lead to these major problems over the years, these problems will persist. There are initiatives in other states and countries for energy-efficient roads--such as roads that generate energy and feature LED lights instead of typical pavement markings³. These roads can generate electricity, reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and reduce the costs of maintenance (like filling potholes) over time. I support initiatives to include thermal components in the roads as well, which will reduce reliance on snowplows in the winter.

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Questions or comments about this policy? Please send us your ideas at info@marienewmanforcongress.com.

³ Patton, Zach. (2009). Could Roads Be the Next Source of Renewable Power? *Governing*. Accessed from <https://www.governing.com/topics/transportation-infrastructure/Could-Roads-Be-the.html>.