

Tipping Point: Reverse commuters add to congestion between city, suburbs

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CHICAGO (FOX 32 News) - Growing congestion and the trend of people and businesses moving closer to the city are creating unique and profound concerns that have Chicago suburbs at the tipping point.

But an urban re-invention is currently taking place outside city limits.

Traffic on the expressways and arterial roads around Chicago pose a growing problem for suburbs that are trying to keep or attract young professionals.

Michael Ou commutes to Deerfield from Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood. He gave up on driving and now uses public transportation.

"The total commute was usually around an hour and a half to two hours, depending on the traffic," Ou told FOX 32 News. "But at the time I was also driving an SUV. The gas costs were really ridiculous."

Ou, like many younger workers, wants to live in the city but found a good suburban job. So he does the reverse commute for now. Since it still takes him an hour and a half to get to work on the train and bus, Ou is considering a move to the suburbs. Others in his shoes might move to a new job instead.

The American Public Transportation Association found that by 2040, more of Deerfield's young professionals will choose to live and work closer to Chicago because of increased congestion in the suburbs.

That's based on another study by The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning that projects the number of Deerfield commuters, during peak rush hour, is expected to increase by 52 percent by 2040.



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CHICAGO AT THE TIPPING POINT

FOX 32 News Special on Transportation: Chicago at the Tipping Point

Updated: FOX 32 News explores solutions to local traffic and congestion issues – like public transit - in a Special Report on Transportation: Chicago at the Tipping Point.

Tipping Point: More Chicago area residents choose to live without cars

Updated: More people are ditching their cars and the presumed concept that we each need one. FOX 32 took a look at how the carless life works, as traffic congestion has the Chicago area at the tipping point.

Tipping Point: RTA overhaul

Several major corporations made the commute simpler for their employees in the last three years, when they moved out of the suburbs and into downtown Chicago.

Motorola Mobility left Libertyville and moved 3,000 employees into the Merchandise Mart. United-Continental moved an operations center from Elk Grove Village into the Willis Tower. United moved its corporate headquarters downtown years earlier.

In Deerfield, major employers have opted for a different approach, providing a shuttle service coordinated by the [Transportation Management Association of Lake-Cook](#).

"The number one thing that it does is allow them to attract and retain quality employees. Employers are looking for quality employees," TMA of Lake-Cook Executive Director Bill Baltutis said. "But many of the Millennials live in the city. They have good job skills, but many of the jobs are out here in many cases, so that allows them to do that."

About 40 companies are using their own money to help subsidize the [Shuttle Bug service](#) in conjunction with [Pace](#) and [Metra](#). It runs between the Metra stations and the businesses, allowing workers to use public transportation to reach Deerfield and avoid congestion.

Chad Gates is among the many reverse commuters who ride the shuttle every day. He said he wouldn't have taken the job he has now if not for the shuttle service, since city life in Chicago was what helped him decide to relocate.

"You don't move to Chicago to live in the suburbs," Gates said. "I'm from out of state, so it was a big deal for me to live in the city. But a great opportunity was in the suburbs, so I took it."

Other suburban communities are looking for ways to reduce congestion and improve people's ability to get to and from work through a concept called [Transit Oriented Development](#). Kathy Tholin is the CEO of the [Center for Neighborhood Technology](#), a transit think tank in Chicago.

"It's not all about transit," Tholin said. "It's about how we develop the rest of the region, what decisions do we make today about where to build the next housing and what decisions do we make about where to bring businesses."

A new apartment and shopping complex right next to the Metra station in Orland Park is a prime example of how communities are coordinating development and public transit. Sheri Fassl is one of the many residents who moved into the building because of its proximity to the train station.

"I actually came from downtown. I used to walk and now I take the train. It's just really convenient," Fassl told FOX 32. "Being able to get back down there without a car, at that point, was very important to me. If I would have moved somewhere else it would not have been as easy or possible at all."

PHOTO GALLERIES

PHOTOS: Shedd rescue dogs add something special to your visit

Updated: The Shedd Aquarium has added a marlin to its family. But this Marlin walks on all fours and is covered in hair. The two-year-old Labrador mix is one of the Shedd's new rescue dogs.

PHOTOS: Brookfield Zoo celebrates International Polar Bear Day

Updated: Thursday is International Polar Bear Day! The Chicago Zoological Society and Brookfield Zoo are celebrating the day by spreading the word about reducing carbon footprints.

PHOTOS: Sinkhole collapses part of Corvette Museum in Ky.

Updated: A gaping sinkhole collapsed part of the National Corvette Museum in Kentucky on Wednesday, damaging eight prized cars that plunged in a heap.

PHOTOS: Grey seal pup born at Brookfield Zoo New Year's Day

Updated: The first animal born to the Chicago Zoological Society in 2014 is a grey seal pup! He is the first of his species to ever be born at Brookfield Zoo - and on a special day, no less: New Year's Day.

Dolphin calves thrive at Brookfield Zoo

Updated: Chicago Zoological Society and Brookfield Zoo officials are cautiously optimistic about the progress of two male dolphin calves born at the zoo earlier this year.

may improve Chicago area transportation

Updated: Easing congestion and creating jobs in the Chicago area will require a transit system that works wherever people live and work, whether they call the suburbs or the city home.

Tipping Point: Better transportation will put unemployed to work

Updated: Chicago's ability to move people and products efficiently to and from the city and the state will determine its ability to move our jobs and economy into the future. Transportation means business.

Tipping Point: Same-sex schools in the Chicago area

Updated: No doubt that failing schools have Chicago at the tipping point, and lots of strategies have been tried to turn things around.

Tipping Point: Job seekers network, find support at group meetups

Updated: On a recent Monday morning, while thousands of Chicagoans headed to work, seven Chicagoans who are unemployed met at a public library, to help each other find some work.

Tipping Point: CTA, Metra, Amtrak during the deep freeze

Updated: The going certainly got tough this week if you were 'going' any place! In the city that works, we look at how public transportation worked during the deep freeze.

Days before Christmas, sub shop abruptly fires all employees by email

Updated: A sign outside promised, "World's Finest Sandwiches," but inside, Snarf's was empty Monday.

FOX 32 News Special: Chicago at the Tipping Point

Updated: FOX 32 News explores the current and past state of the economy in Chicago and Illinois in a [Special Report on the Economy: Chicago at the Tipping Point](#).

Tipping Point: Is Chicago on the same financial path as Detroit?

Updated: One of the reasons why many people wonder if Chicago is going to be the next Detroit is both cities have massive unfunded government pensions.