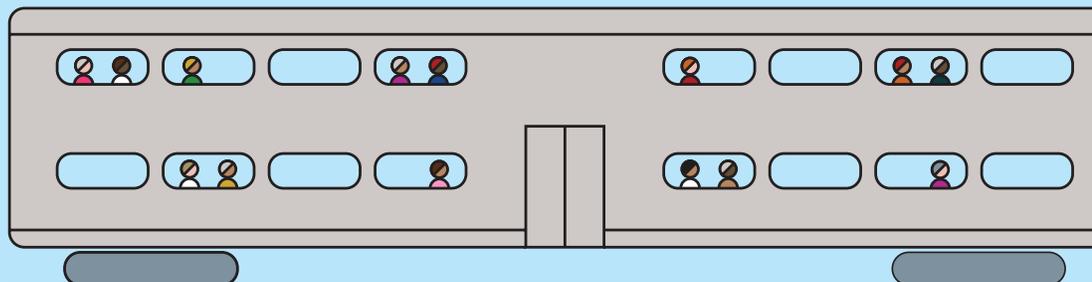
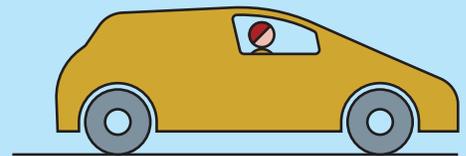
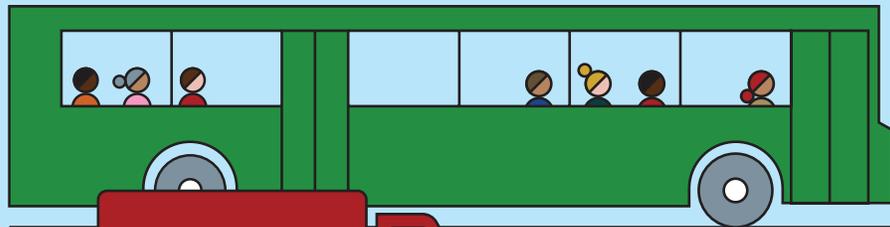
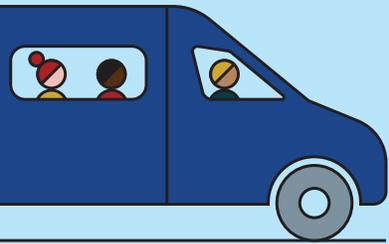
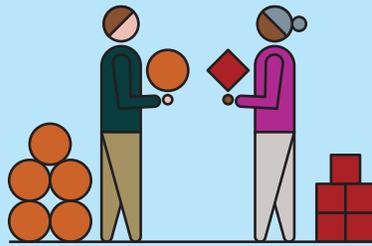


A transportation system that works for everyone

Improving equity in fees, fines, and fares



Purpose



Visit cmap.is/fees-fines-and-fares for the full report.

Why we assessed equity in transportation fees, fines, and fares

Our transportation system is a literal route to opportunity, connecting residents to jobs, education, and services. And yet significant transportation inequities exist for residents with low income, communities of color, and people with disabilities.

When all residents can access our transportation system, the entire region prospers. **ON TO 2050, the long-range plan for northeastern Illinois, recommends:**

- Leveraging the transportation network to promote inclusive growth in our region
- Fully funding the region's transportation system
- Implementing user fees carefully to avoid undue burdens on residents with low income

In support of these goals, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) conducted its first comprehensive analysis on equity in transportation fees, fines, and fares.

The project had two key goals:

- 1 Assess how fees, fines, and fares impact residents with low income
- 2 Recommend policy changes to improve equity

This overview summarizes the key findings and recommendations of the fees, fines, and fares project.

Which fees, fines, and fares?

 Motor vehicle registration	 Motor fuel tax and road usage charges	 Tolling	 Fares for public transit
 Parking	 Traffic and parking violation fines	 Rideshare fees	

Background



Residents with **low income spend 16%** of their income on transportation.



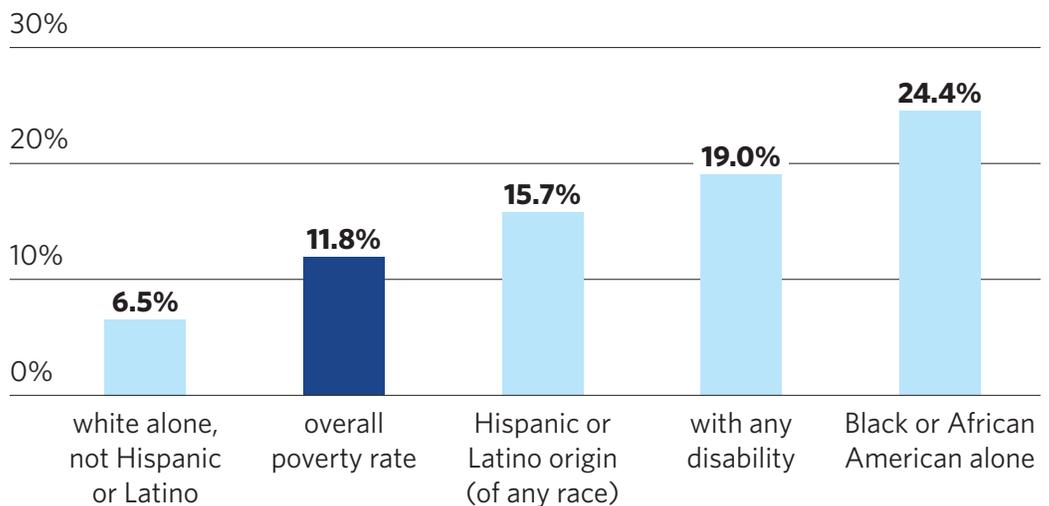
Residents with **high income spend 6%** of their income on transportation.

Households with low income struggle to pay for basic household needs.

In the metropolitan Chicago region, **nearly 12% of residents live below the federal poverty level.** For residents of color and residents with disabilities, that rate is substantially higher.

Households with low income struggle to pay for basic expenses like housing, transportation, and food. So although transportation fees, fines, and fares are relatively small, they can be a significant financial burden for many residents.

Black residents, Latinx residents, and residents with disabilities disproportionately live in poverty



The cost of driving is unaffordable for many households with low income.

Driving is the most expensive form of transportation. This is due to the many costs of buying and maintaining a car, rather than any associated fees or fines, such as the motor fuel tax. But many residents with low income must drive, due to a lack of other options. As a result, they spend a substantial share of their income on transportation.

Illinois' tax system is regressive.

Fees, fines, and fares are just one part of Illinois' overall regressive tax system. In other words, taxpayers with the lowest income pay a higher proportion of their pay in taxes than higher-income taxpayers. Illinois taxpayers in the **lowest 20% of incomes pay 14% of their income in taxes — while those in the top 5% of incomes pay less than 10% in taxes.**

Challenges



41% of households with annual income under \$30K **cannot use a bank account or access a credit card.**

Residents with low income must **work longer** to pay off fines compared to higher-income residents.

For example, a fine for failure to obey a stop sign requires:

16 hours
of minimum-wage work

5 hours
of higher-wage work

Many households with low income are unbanked and under-banked.

Many residents with low income cannot use a bank account or access a credit card. This makes it difficult to use modern, electronic methods to pay for fees, fines, and fares — and take advantage of any offered cost savings. For example, drivers on the Illinois Tollway can pay less in tolls by using an I-PASS transponder. However, transponders are most accessible to drivers who have a debit or credit card.

Systemic racism creates inequities in transportation safety and enforcement.

Traffic violations can lead to additional transportation costs for drivers. But enforcement is not equitable: Data show that people of color are involved in a disproportionate share of traffic stops. And Black drivers in the region received a third more citations on a per person basis than the average rate in 2018.

At the same time, higher numbers of pedestrian and bicycle crashes occur in neighborhoods with greater shares of residents with low income and residents of color. Both of these challenges show how structural racism is embedded in the built environment.

Unpaid fines can be financially devastating.

An unexpected expense — such as a traffic violation fine — can be devastating to those living paycheck to paycheck. When residents with low income cannot pay their fines, they may experience bankruptcy, tax garnishment, vehicles impoundment, employment restrictions, and credit score damage.



Opportunities



Just **55%** of residents in metropolitan Chicago live in areas with at least **moderately high transit options**.

Improving transportation options can create opportunity for low-income communities, people of color, and people with disabilities.

Daily commutes are longer for many residents with low income and residents of color, especially Black commuters. These lengthier commutes make it more difficult to access available employment and decrease overall productivity and quality of life. Similarly, many residents with disabilities lack sufficient options to commute to work and conduct their daily lives.

Affordable and accessible transportation for all residents — regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or ability — creates pathways to economic opportunities and improves quality of life in our region.



Households with low income take **20% more transit trips** than other households.

Ensuring affordable fares will help residents access jobs and conduct everyday activities.

Residents of all income levels rely on transit. But transit access is especially crucial for residents with low income, who tend to own fewer cars because of the high cost of driving.

These households are more likely to use transit for trips required to live their daily lives. But the cost of a fare can consume a relatively high share of earnings.



Expanding reduced fares to all residents with low income would result in them taking **15% more transit trips**, according to CMAP estimates.

Recommendations:

Routes to a more equitable system

CMAP and our partners considered a variety of strategies to reduce the impact of transportation fees, fines, and fares on residents with low income. The following recommendations also take into account other ON TO 2050 goals:



Improve mobility options

- Implement ON TO 2050 recommendations to promote transit-supportive land uses and affordable transportation options for everyone



Implement progressive tax strategies

- Increase state income tax exemptions
- Increase or expand earned income tax credit
- Implement graduated tax rates



Make transportation fees more affordable

- Expand reduced fare permits to all residents with low income
- Expand reduced vehicle registration fees to all residents with low income
- Base vehicle registration fees on vehicle value
- Structure rideshare fees to support transit goals



Increase access to cost-saving tools

- Encourage participation in the Transit Benefit Fare Program
- Increase access to Ventra
- Develop lower-cost alternatives to I-PASS transponders
- Waive any road usage charge equipment costs



Pilot fee and fare coordination

- Increase access to I-PASS accounts
- Allow local vehicle fees to be paid with the Illinois Secretary of State
- Integrate the fare system for trips across service providers



Improve parking options for residents and delivery drivers

- Offer reduced transaction fees for short-term parking
- Provide options for cash payment



Implement fine reform

- Adopt income-based fines or waivers
- Assess appropriateness of fine amounts
- Report and analyze the equity impacts of ticketing
- Offer alternatives to paying fines
- Improve collection practices
- End employment restrictions

Progress and partners



Visit cmap.is/fees-fines-and-fares for the full report.

Improving equity in fees, fines, and fares will require action and investments by policymakers, transportation agencies, and local governments across the region.

Illinois and the region have already taken significant steps, including some recent policy changes:

- 1 **An Illinois criminal justice reform bill signed in early 2021 rescinds license suspensions and license renewal holds due to failure to pay traffic violation fines, among other reforms.**
- 2 **The Illinois Tollway substantially reduced fees for missed tolls in 2020.**

To sustain this progress, CMAP and our regional partners will work to implement the report's recommendations through legislation, policy changes, new initiatives, and other reforms.

CMAP will also continue to conduct analyses and pursue policies that create a more equitable transportation system for our region.

Thank you to our partners

This report was developed with extensive input from transportation agencies, researchers, and advocates across the region. A group of partners also provided feedback throughout the project, including representatives from:

- Active Transportation Alliance
- Center for Neighborhood Technology
- City of Chicago, Department of Transportation
- City of Chicago, Office of Equity and Racial Justice
- Chicago Jobs Council
- Chicago Transit Authority
- Cook County
- Equiticity
- Equity Institute, YWCA of Evanston
- Heartland Alliance
- Illinois Tollway
- Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
- Metra
- Metropolitan Planning Council
- Muse Community Design
- Pace
- Regional Transportation Authority
- Union of Concerned Scientists
- University of Chicago Inclusive Economy Lab
- University of Illinois at Chicago

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is our region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois pursue strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See cmap.illinois.gov for more information.