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Des Plaines Station Feasibility Study

Existing Conditions
Technical Memorandum

City of Des Plaines

April 2, 2019

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The City of Des Plaines

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1. Introduction

The City of Des Plaines is conducting a comprehensive feasibility study for a new station on the Metra North Central Service Line (NCS). The NCS line uses 40 miles of the Canadian National Railway (CN) route between Antioch and Franklin Park and operates its last 12.7 miles to Chicago Union Station (CUS) over the Metra Milwaukee District West (MD-W). This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Where can the City physically accommodate a station and parking on the NCS line?
- Will the station be compatible with current railroad operations?
- Will there be a sufficient number of potential users?
- Will the anticipated impacts to traffic, storm water, and other factors be manageable?
- Does a realistic funding source for a new station exist?
- Will a station stimulate the redevelopment of adjacent properties?

This technical memorandum lays the groundwork for the consideration of adding an infill station to Metra's NCS line in Des Plaines by describing existing and future conditions of the area surrounding the potential station site. This area will be defined in two ways:

- The larger market shed that represents the capture market of originating and destination users, and
- The half-mile radius within the immediate station area.

The memorandum will cover the following areas:

- Background and purpose of a potential station
- Regional setting of the proposed station
- Recommended location and the spacing between adjacent stations
- Definition of the station's market sheds, both origin and destination
- Socioeconomic trends of the station market sheds
- Transportation resources in the local area
- Travel patterns within the local area
- Station area land use, zoning, infrastructure, and other characteristics
- Identification of major travel generators, including largest area employers, cultural attractions, and shopping areas
- Environmental screening
- Land acquisition and potential displacement
- Conflicting land uses or other topics of concern

2. Background and Station Purpose

Railroad lines criss-cross the City of Des Plaines, carrying both commuter and freight traffic. Two of these lines, the Union Pacific Northwest (UP-NW) and the North Central Service (NCS) serve Metra commuter trains. The UP-NW line operates between Chicago and Harvard in McHenry County, and includes two stations in Des Plaines, Cumberland and Downtown Des Plaines. With the UP-NW cutting diagonally east-west across the northern one-third of the City, the southern two-thirds of Des Plaines is not well-served by transit. The NCS line, operating between Chicago and Antioch in Lake County, runs north-south across the 6-mile length of Des Plaines with no station stops. As documented in the *Station Spacing Technical Memorandum* (Des Plaines, November 2018), the NCS has a 6.9-mile long gap without a station between the Prospect Heights Station north of the City, and the O'Hare Transfer Station to the south. In addition, the *Connecting Cook County Long Range Transportation Plan* (Cook County, August 2016) identified much of the area of south Des Plaines as a transit desert, that is, having high demand but lacking access to high-quality transit.

The City has identified a number of large and contiguous commercial properties that are vacant or under-utilized near the NCS, which could potentially be redeveloped. A new station could spur the development process to affect this transition in land use. In addition, the residential neighborhoods near the NCS tend to be comparatively dense, with smaller lot single-family or multi-family, which would complement a proposed transit investment. Many of these neighborhoods contain households that are classified as low-moderate income, based on the Community Development Block Grant criteria. The City has also advanced plans to develop areas east of the NCS as mixed use (*Oakton Street/Elmhurst Road Corridor Study*, Des Plaines, 2009).

It should be noted that the NCS line offers unique service on the Metra system, in providing direct access to O'Hare Airport. The NCS O'Hare Transfer Station will have improved connections to the Airport terminals from the extension of the Airport Transit System (ATS), which is expected to be fully operational in fall 2019. This improvement could give users of a Des Plaines NCS station convenient access to O'Hare Airport terminals, including both air travelers and workers.

This Des Plaines Station Feasibility Study will build upon previous plans and studies completed for the City, which are summarized in Section 7.1, Existing Planning Studies.

3. Regional Setting

The City of Des Plaines is in Cook County, and shares borders with the City of Chicago, Elk Grove Village, the Village of Mount Prospect, the Village of Glenview, the City of Park Ridge, and the Village of Rosemont. The population of Des Plaines is higher than its suburban neighbors (58,193 in 2017, compared to 32,776 in Elk Grove Village; 53,930 in Mount Prospect, 47,659 in Glenview, 37,494 in Park Ridge, and 4,151 in Rosemont). The City is located between I-90 and I-294, approximately 17 miles northwest of downtown Chicago (Figure 3-1).

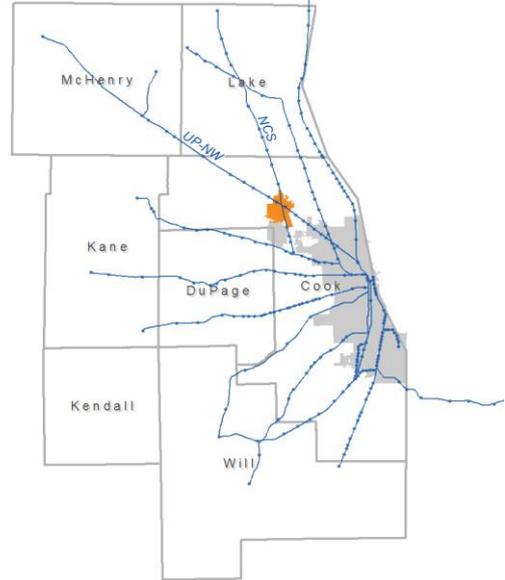
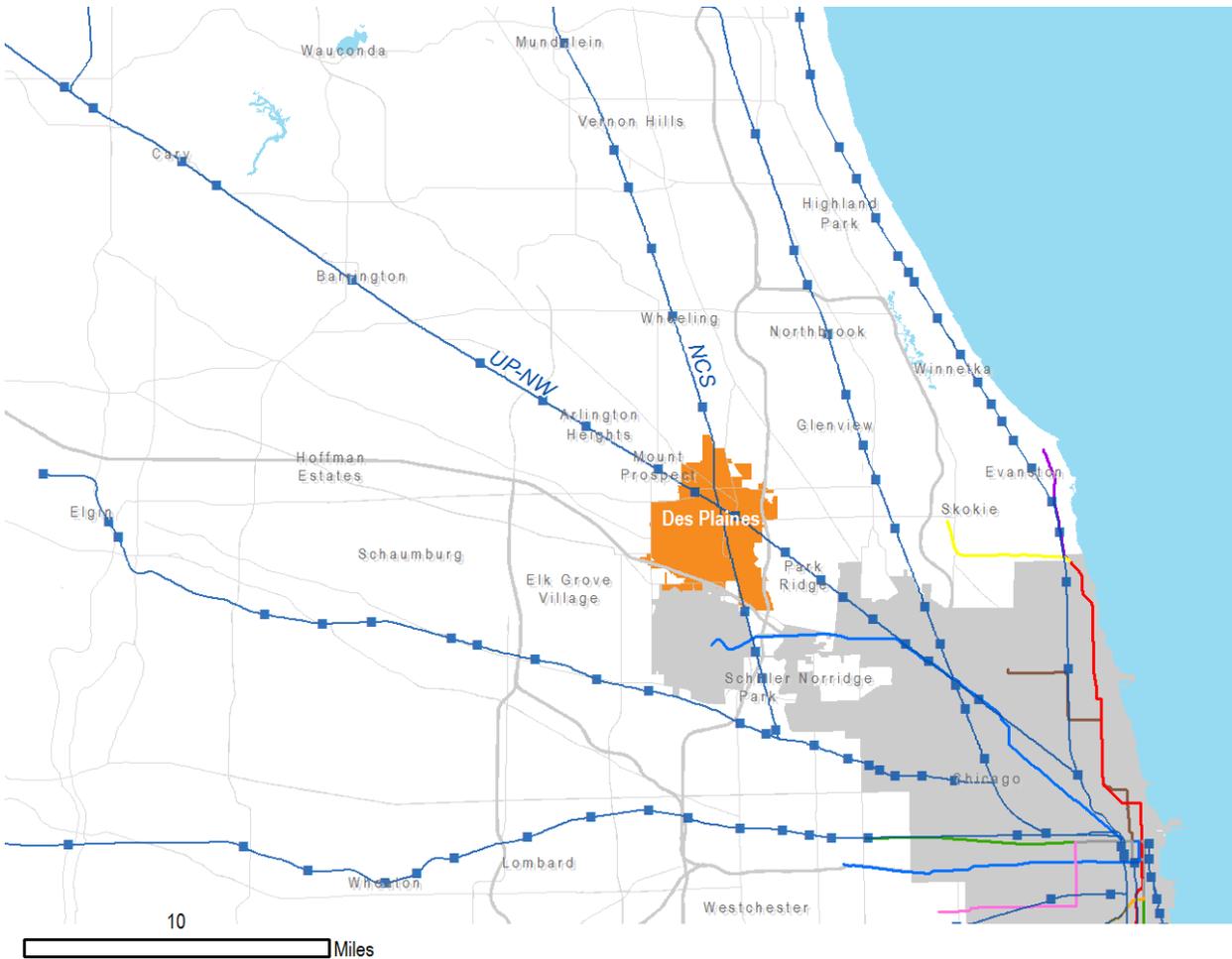


Figure 3-1: Des Plaines Regional Setting Map



4. Station Site Screening

The Des Plaines NCS Station Feasibility Study document, *Station Spacing Technical Memorandum* (Des Plaines, November 2018), examined eight possible sites for a new station in Des Plaines along the Metra NCS line, ultimately recommending a site at Oakton Street. A map of the eight locations is shown on Figure 4-1, with the Oakton site labeled number 7. An aerial photograph of the recommended site is provided in Figure 4-2.

Figure 4-1: Possible Des Plaines Station Locations

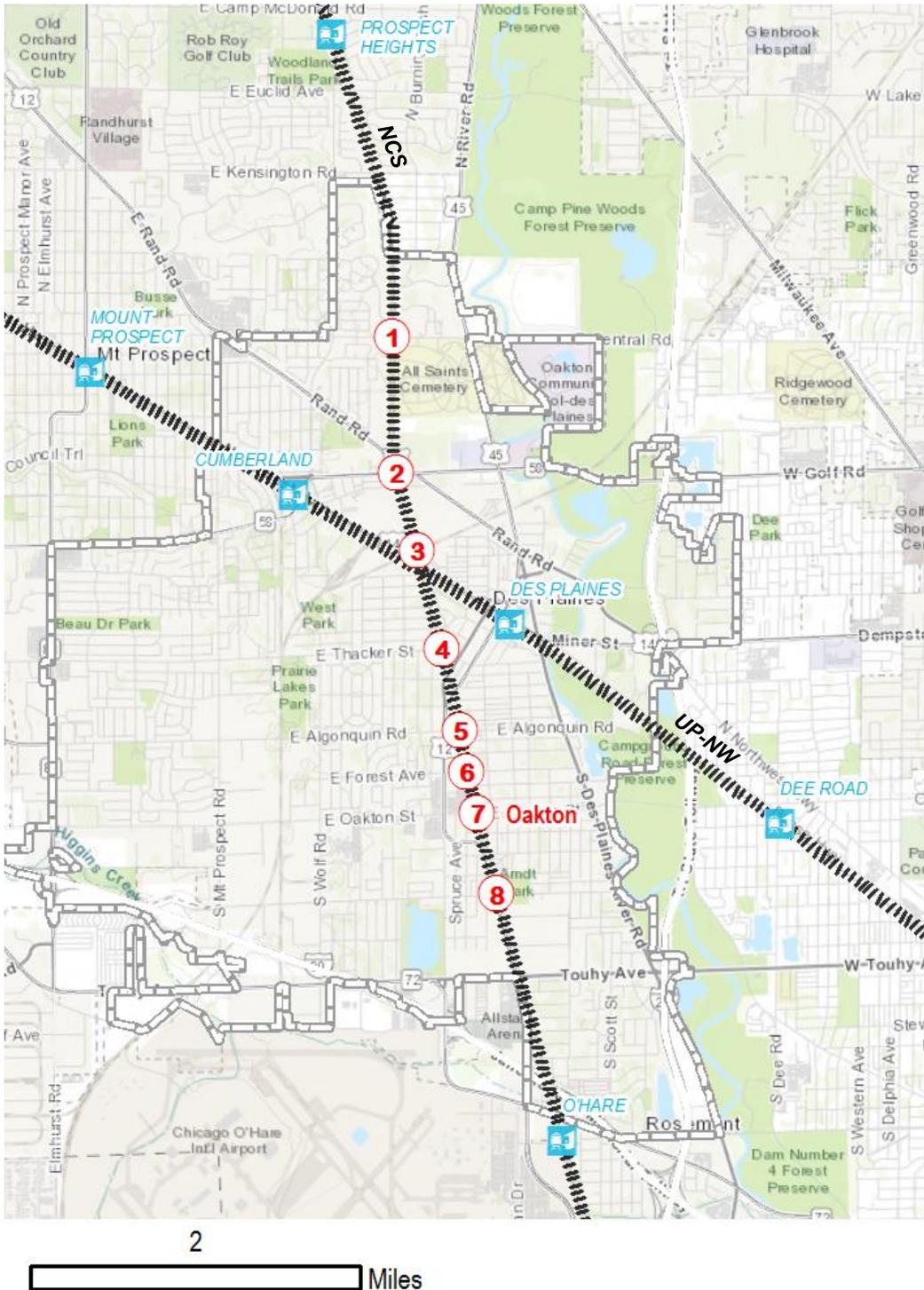
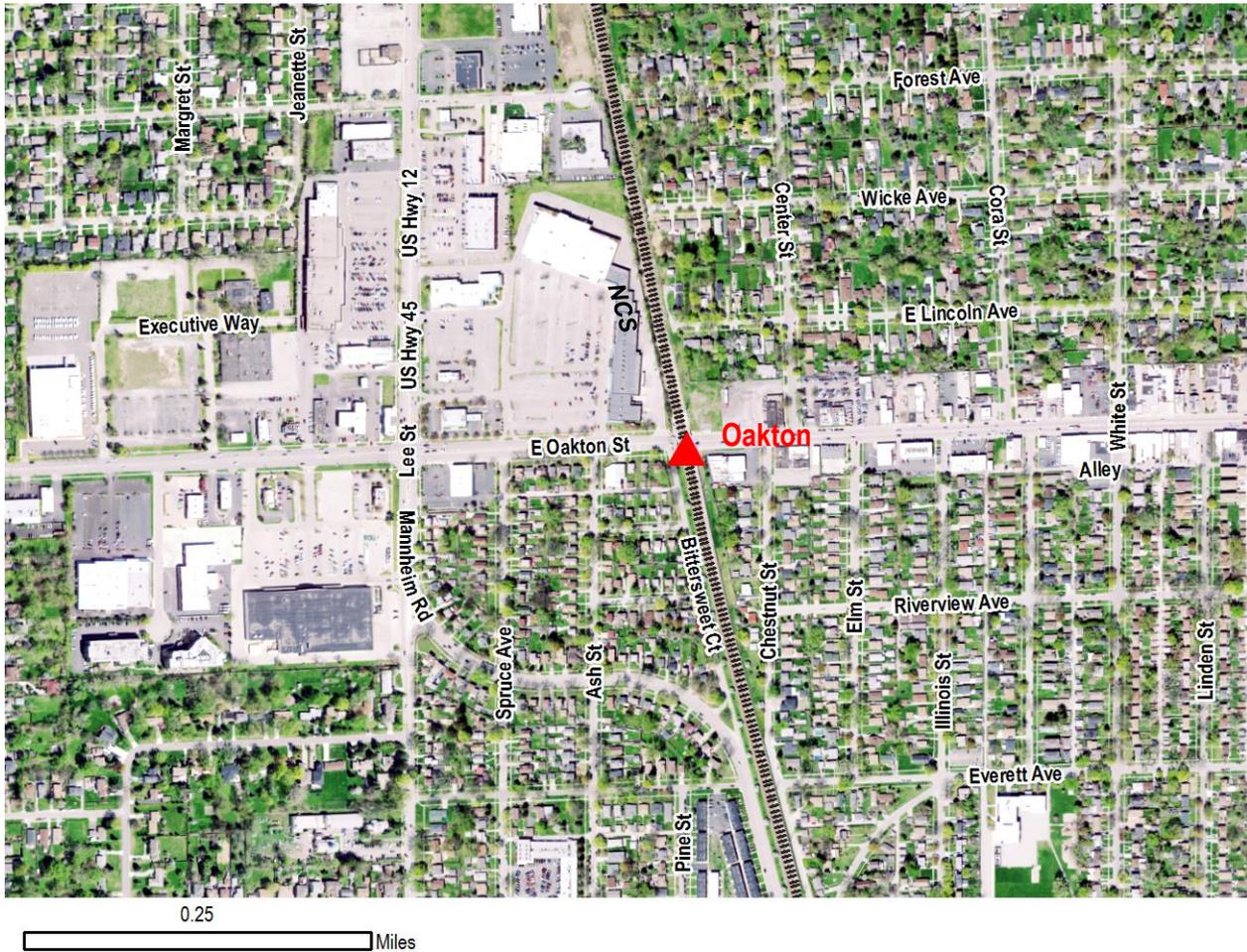


Figure 4-2: Oakton Site Aerial



The selection of the Oakton Street site was based on several comparative advantages relative to the other sites, including:

- Served by two tracks
- Spacing to adjacent stations of Prospect Heights and O’Hare Transfer exceeds 2-miles
- Relatively greater distance from UP-NW Cumberland and Des Plaines Stations
- Highest Walk Score index of evaluated sites (SOURCE: walkscore.com)
- Vacant and re-developable land
- Good roadway access from east and west of the NCS line
- Proximity to planned Pace Pulse Dempster station

At Milepost 19.2, the proposed NCS Oakton station would be placed in Metra Fare Zone D, which also includes the O’Hare Transfer and Rosemont Stations. Prospect Heights is a Zone E station.

4.1 Station Spacing

The review of station spacing provided in the *Station Spacing Technical Memorandum* (Des Plaines, November 2018) indicated that the Oakton Street site is 4.9 miles from Prospect Heights and 2.1 miles from O’Hare Transfer. Placing the station near the midpoint of these two existing stations would have resulted in being closer to the UP-NW Cumberland and Des Plaines Stations. The examination of Metra boardings and distances between stations in the spacing analysis concluded that the 2.1-mile station spacing here would not be a limiting factor in ridership performance.

Service levels, station amenities, and the size of the potential ridership market are likely to be deciding factors in the feasibility of an infill station between O'Hare Transfer and Prospect Heights.

4.2 Station Elements

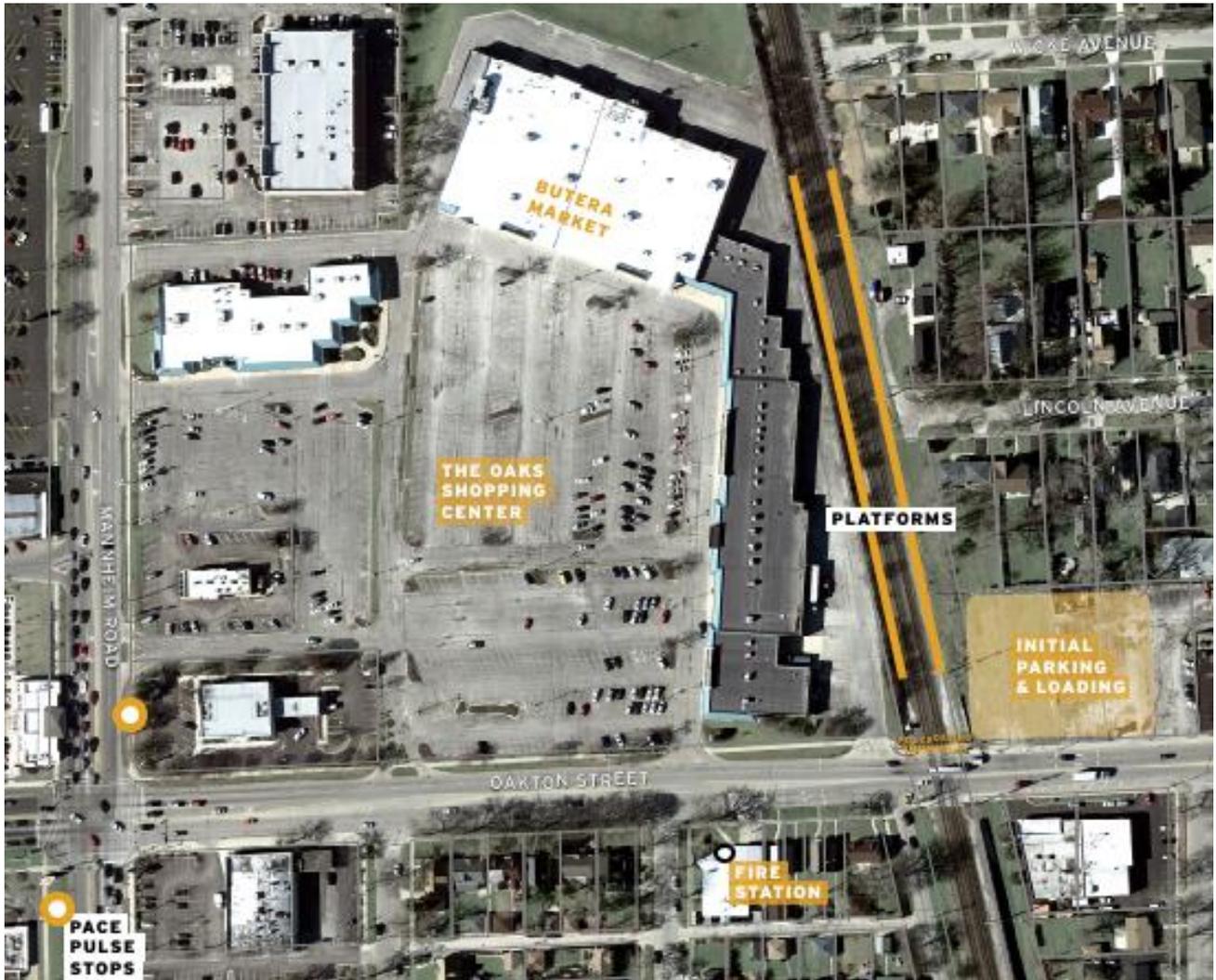
Given the availability of vacant or under-utilized land, it is recommended that the station and parking facilities be placed on the north side of Oakton Street. Major elements of the station would include:

- **Station Building** | This would be the station's primary waiting area (i.e., depot or warming shelter), and would be on the west (inbound) side of the rail right-of-way, serving passengers boarding inbound trains. A small passenger shelter could also be provided on the outbound platform, serving riders waiting for northbound trains.
- **Platforms** | Two low-level side platforms that would accommodate eight rail coaches were assumed. The south end of each 635'-platform would be set 100 feet north of Oakton Street.
- **Parking** | The analysis of rider demand will provide insight on the number of boarding passengers who will be expected to use park-and-ride, which will serve as the basis for determining parking capacity and required land. It is assumed that it may be desirable to have parking on both sides of the railroad tracks. Vehicle access from Oakton Street will be an important issue to address.
- **Pedestrian Track Crossing** | It is proposed that an at-grade crosswalk be provided adjacent to Oakton Street. Safety protection and warning devices would be included. Pedestrian links to the north ends of the platforms can also be considered, but without the ability to cross the tracks.

4.3 Des Plaines Oakton Street Station Layout Concept

Figure 4-3 presents a conceptual layout for a proposed Des Plaines station located at Oakton Street. This is intended to support the feasibility study and should not be viewed as how the station and parking facilities will look when ultimately designed. The potential to redevelop portions of the existing Oaks Shopping Center to accommodate the station waiting area and commuter parking will be considered.

Figure 4-3: Conceptual Des Plaines Station Layout



5. Definition of Station Market Sheds

Users of a proposed Des Plaines Oakton Street Station would be either: 1) area residents accessing the NCS traveling to downtown Chicago or other destinations served by the line, or 2) persons originating from other stations on the line traveling to destinations in the area served by a Des Plaines Oakton Street Station. A key part of the analysis to estimate demand for the proposed Des Plaines station is to define the area that residents would be drawn from, representing a catchment area for originating riders of the station. A second area must then be determined for riders alighting at the station to reach their trip destinations. Passenger trip data from a Metra 2016 survey describes riders traveling during the weekday AM period (i.e., before noon), and as such, are assumed to be starting their Metra trip (i.e., from their residence). Travel during the PM is assumed to be the rider’s return trip for the day.

5.1 Rider Origin Market

The Des Plaines Oakton Street Station origin market shed was based on the unique area that is nearest to the Des Plaines Oakton Street Station site in relation to other Metra stations (Figure 5-1). This approach results in a reasonable degree of correlation with station rider origins — though no methodology perfectly models human behavior in travel patterns (see Figure 5-2). The potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station market shed as defined here was used in all subsequent analysis of the origin market.

Figure 5-1: Distance-based Market Sheds

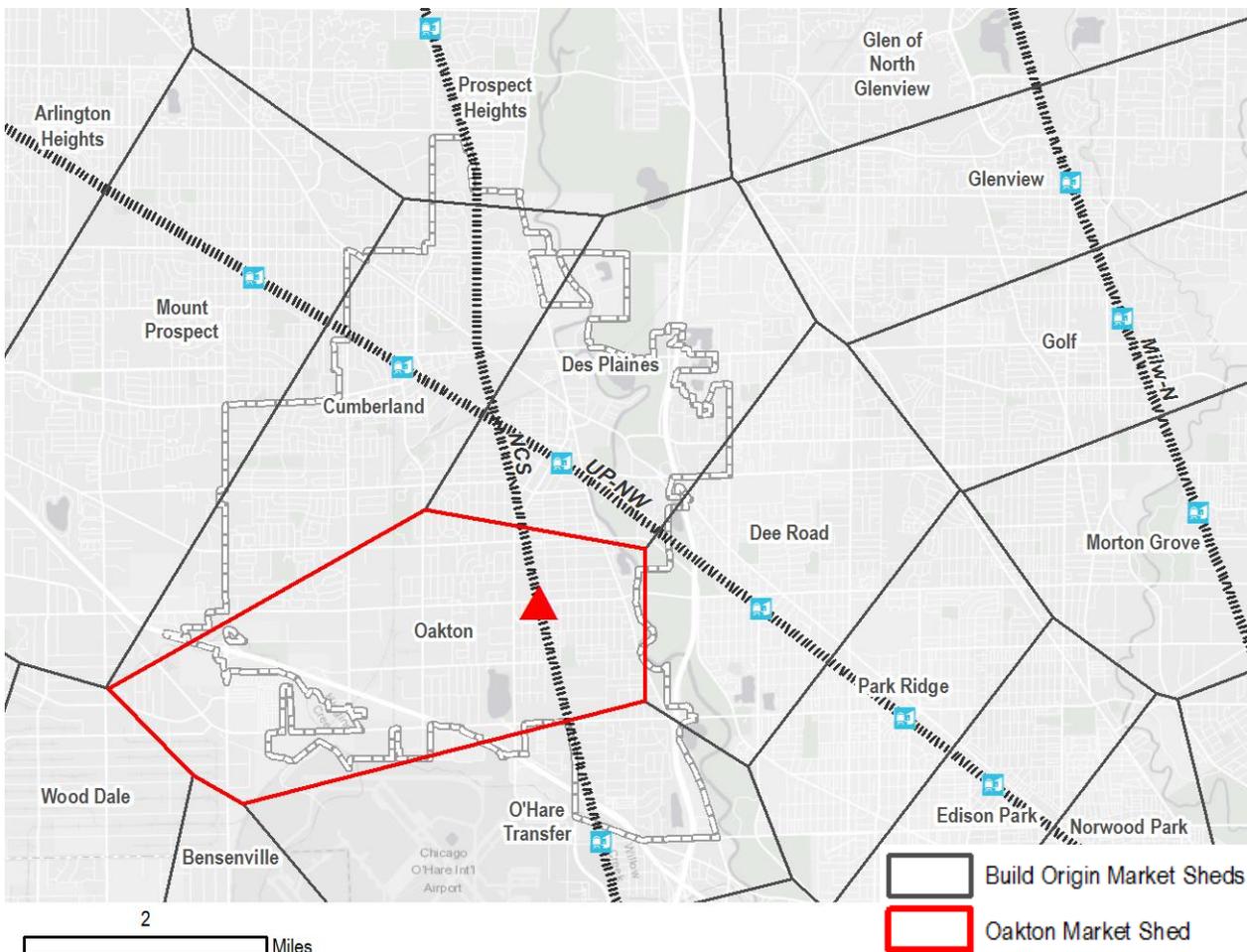
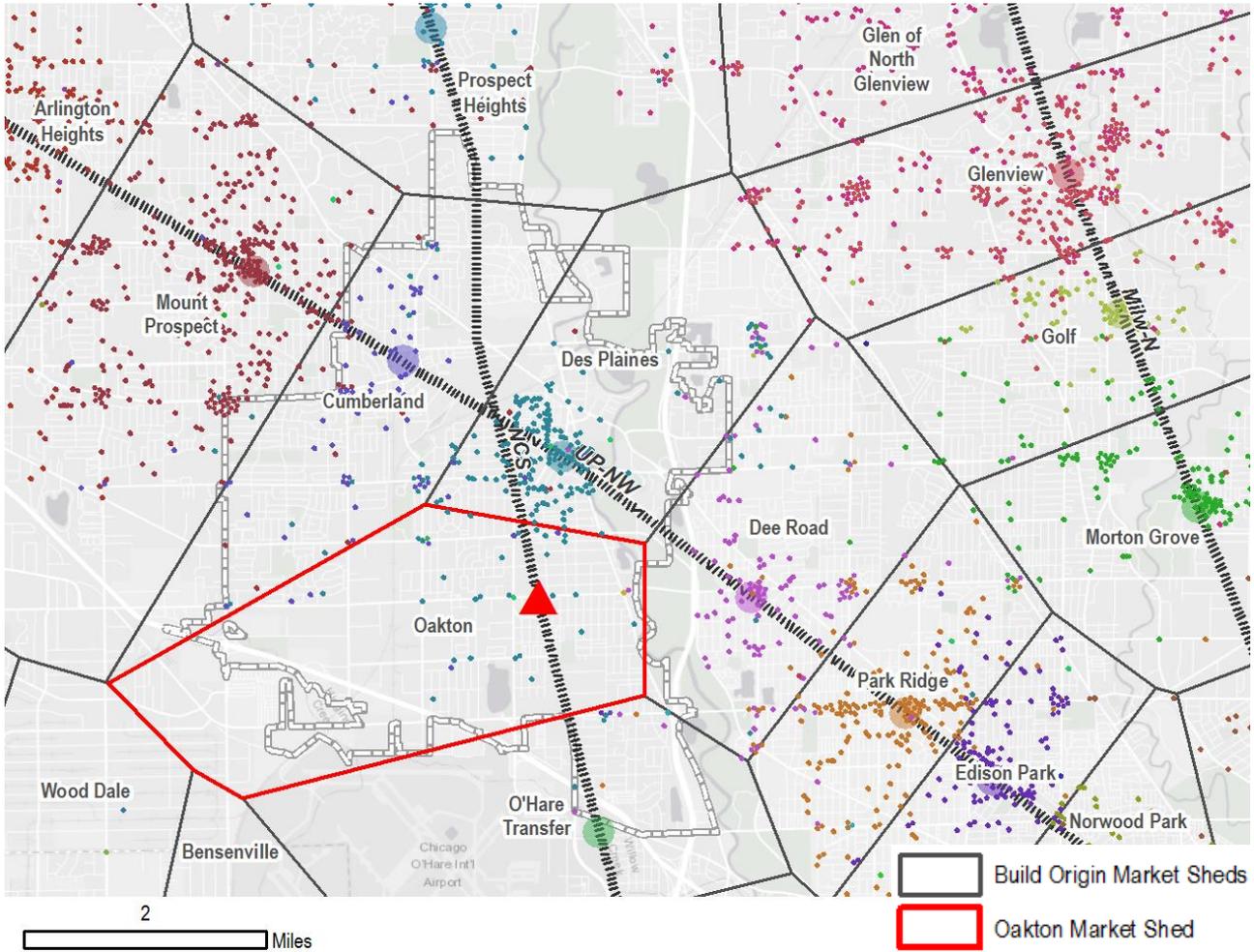


Figure 5-2: Market Sheds with 2016 Origins by Boarding Station



SOURCE: Metra 2016 Origin-Destination Survey

Based on 2016 data from Metra, 148 originating riders (“origins”) are located within the proposed Des Plaines Oakton Street Station market shed. (Note that the mapped origins are weighted survey responses, with each dot representing multiple riders.) Most origin riders currently use UP-NW stations: 66 percent board the Des Plaines Downtown Station and 16 percent board the Cumberland Station. Just 11 percent board the O’Hare Transfer Station on the NCS Line (Table 5-1). Most (85 percent) of these origins within the Oakton station market shed access the station via automobile, with 57% driving alone, 25% being dropped off, and 2% carpooling. Of the remaining, 5 percent walk, 5 percent bike, and the rest take a Pace bus or some other means of travel.

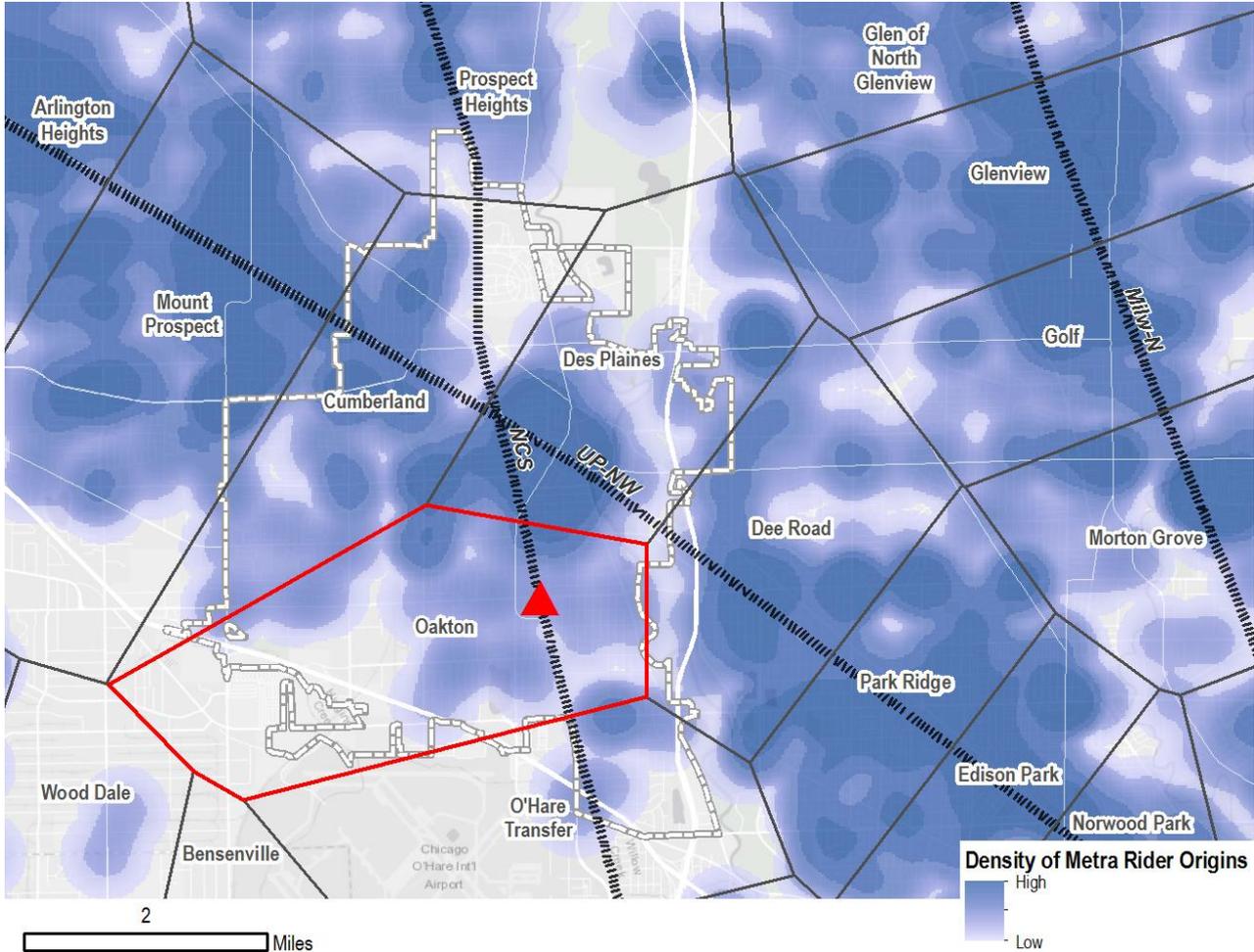
Table 5-1: Metra Origin Riders in Des Plaines Oakton Street Station Market Shed by Station of Use

Boarding Station	Rail Line	Weighted Origins	% of Total
Des Plaines	UP-NW	98	66%
Cumberland	UP-NW	24	16%
O'Hare Transfer	NCS	16	11%
Dee Road	UP-NW	4	3%
Other		6	4%
Total		148	100%

SOURCE: Metra 2016 Origin-Destination Survey

A heat map of the origins for the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station and nearby stations is depicted in Figure 5-3, indicating that many of the existing riders within the Des Plaines NCS market shed are in the immediate proximity of the potential site at Oakton Street. These riders reside within Des Plaines, though the shed does capture a small portion of Elk Grove Village at the southwest corner (see also Figure 3-1).

Figure 5-3: Density of 2016 Metra Rider Origins (0-3 riders per acre)

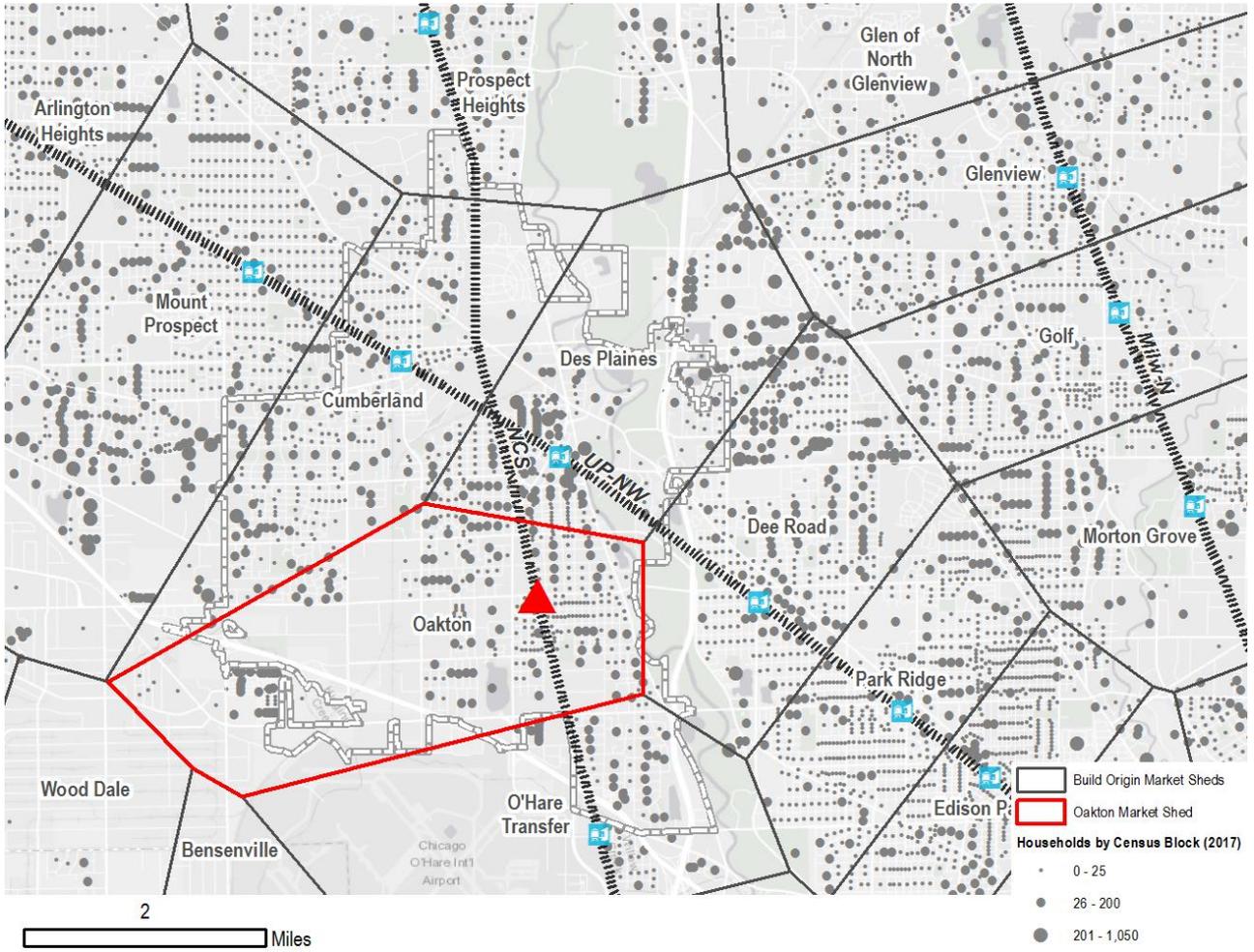


SOURCE: Metra 2016 Origin-Destination Survey

5.1.1 Socioeconomic

Using 2017 data from Esri Business Analyst (based on US Census American Community Survey (ACS) data), the estimated number of people in households within the proposed market shed was tabulated: roughly 22,000 people and 7,000 households (see Figure 5-4). In terms of employment, the local labor force totals about 11,000 employees, according to 2015 Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data. As can be seen in Figure 5-4, large portions of the western part of the market shed do not report households—this is reflective of the large amounts of industrial and transportation-related land uses in the area.

Figure 5-4: Households by Census Block (2017)



SOURCE: Esri Business Analyst 2017 Data

Based on analysis of 2015 Census LEHD origin-destination data, there are just over 900 central business district (CBD) workers living within the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station origin market shed (this is an important metric since the downtown work commute is Metra’s primary market). The distribution and density of these workers is shown in Figure 5-6. For reference, origin market sheds were created for existing stations under “No Build” conditions using the same methodology as above, but excluding the Des Plaines Oakton Street Station and thus retaining a larger area for adjacent stations, which no longer lose territory to the Oakton Station (see Figure 5-5). In these No Build conditions, there are 1,360 CBD workers in the nearby UP-NW Des Plaines Station shed, 1,540 for UP-NW Cumberland, 2,250 for UP-NW Dee Road, and 560 for NCS O’Hare Transfer.

Figure 5-5: Distance-Based Origin Market Shed (No Build Conditions)

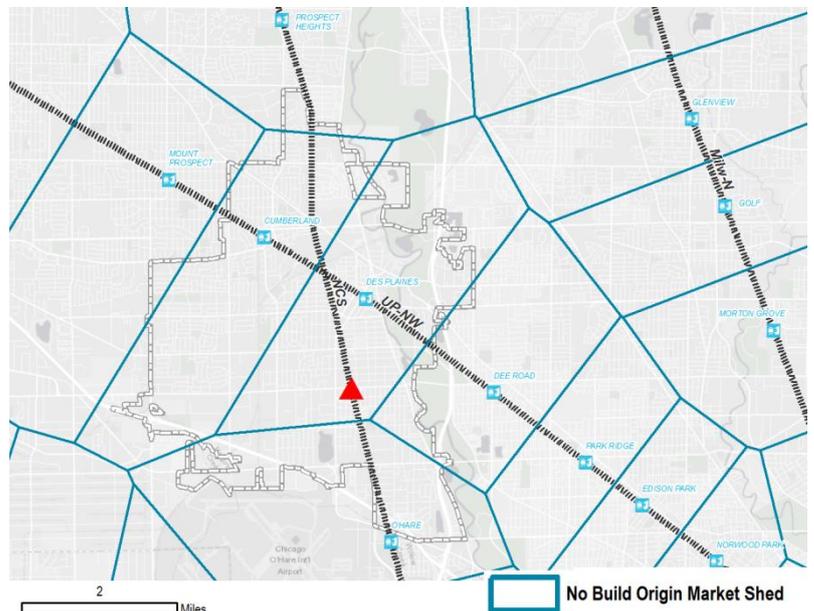
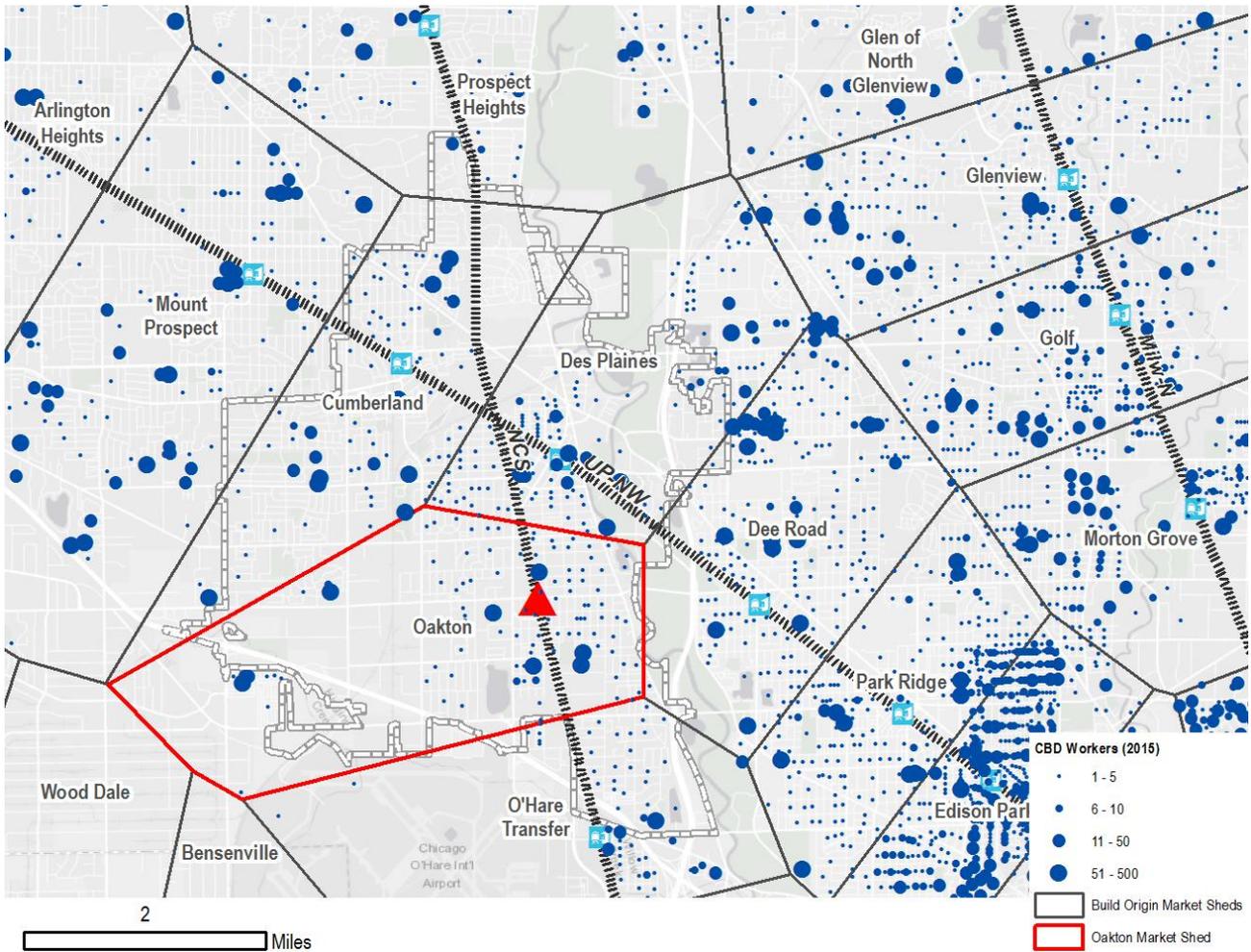


Figure 5-6: CBD Workers per acre (2015)

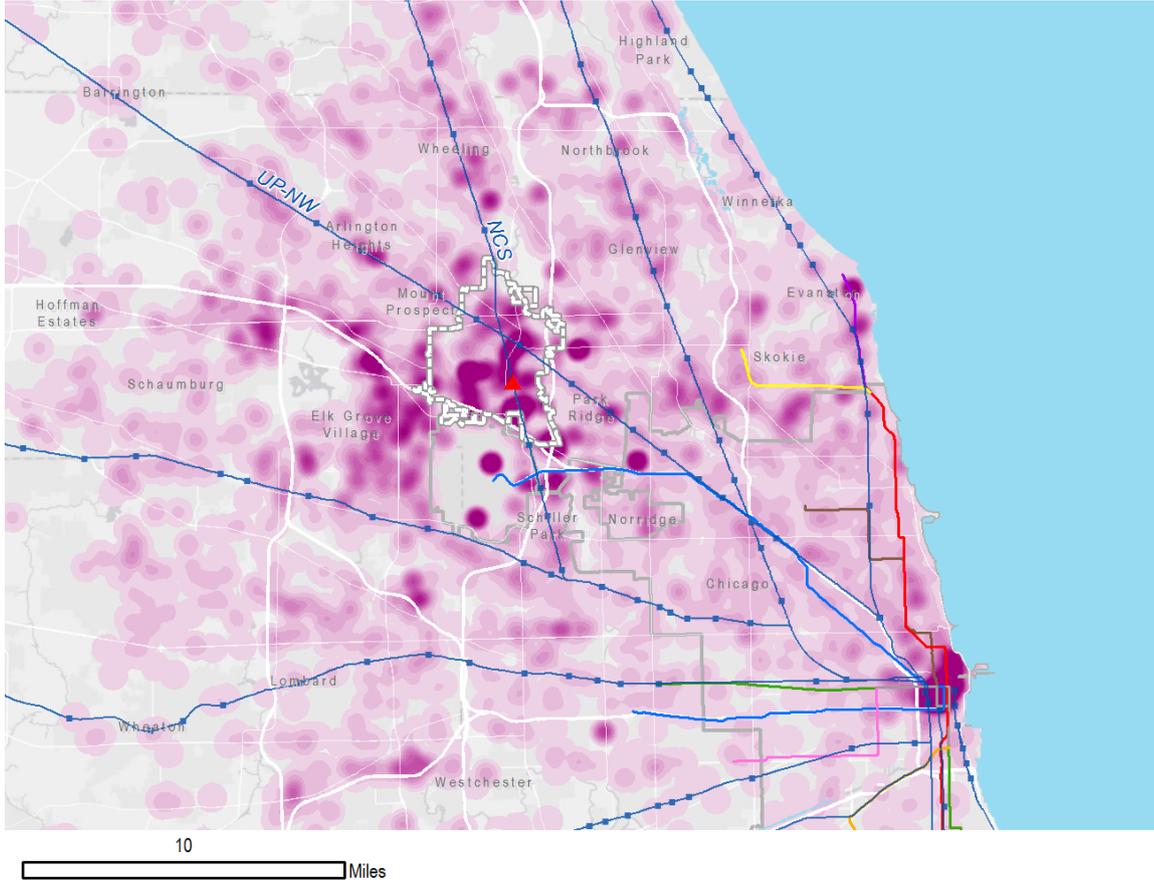


SOURCE: LEHD (2015)

Using the LEHD data to understand work trips outside of the typical downtown commute, Figure 5-7 illustrates the density of employment locations of workers residing within the Oakton station origin shed. Among the 10,125 workers living in the Oakton market shed and working within the Chicago metropolitan area, the greatest densities are in downtown Chicago, Des Plaines, and Elk Grove Village.

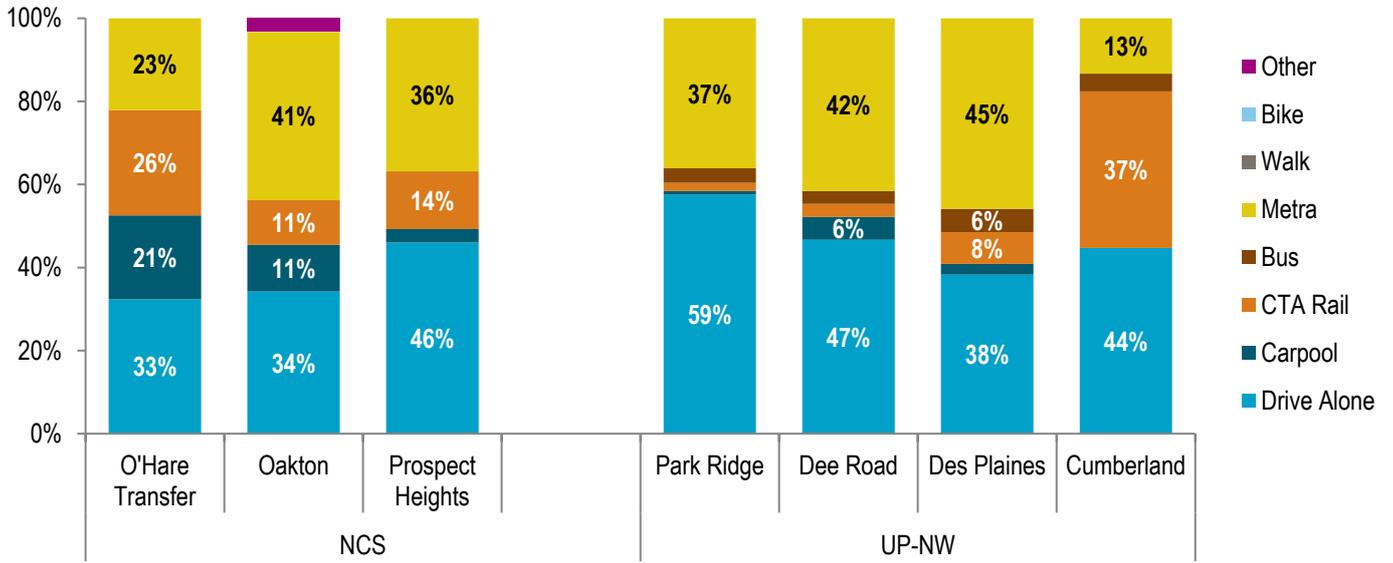
When evaluating the commuter flows between the origin market shed and the primary destination for area commuters (i.e., downtown Chicago), it is also useful to consider the reported travel mode used. According to census data, among the Chicago central business direct (CBD) commuters living in the Oakton origin shed, 41% commuted by Metra, 45% by driving or carpooling, and 11% by CTA rail. As the census survey instrument does not allow for multi-modal trips, it is not possible to identify when, for example, a bus is used to access a commuter rail station, or CTA rail is used to complete a line-haul bus trip. Comparisons by mode across stations are provided in Figure 5-8. The Oakton station market shed has similar proportions to other origin sheds. The spatial distributions of these mode shares are shown in Figure 5-9 and Figure 5-10.

Figure 5-7: Work Site Density of Oakton Station Origin Shed Residents



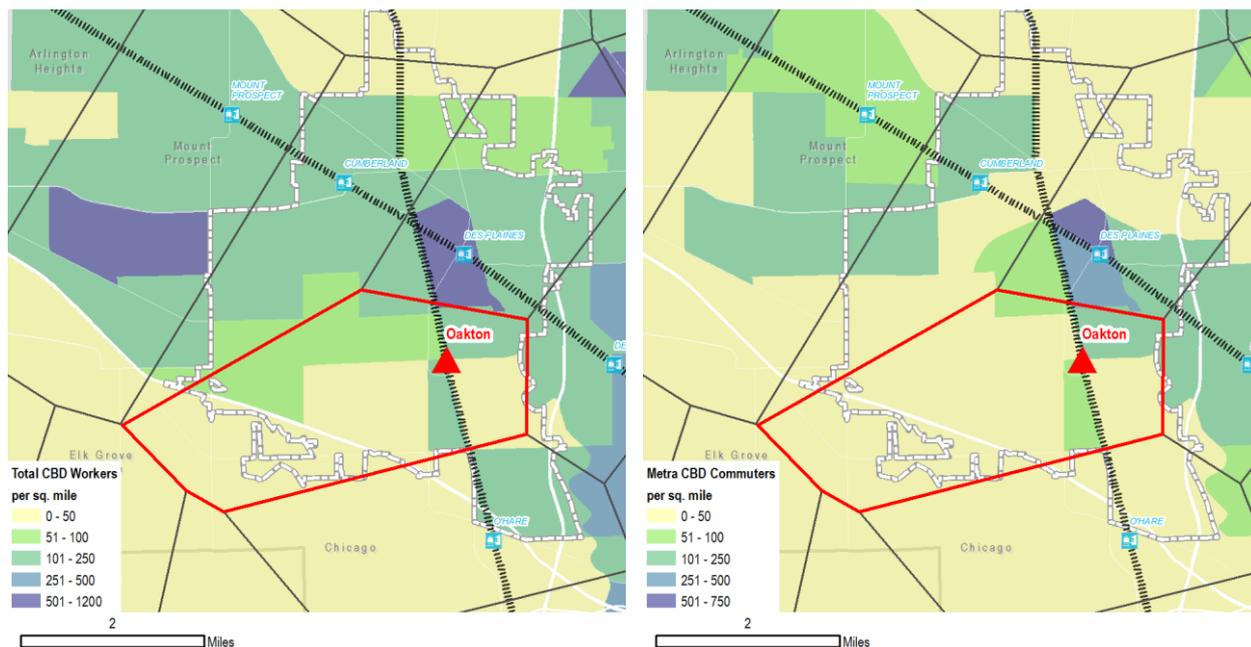
SOURCE: LEHD (2015)

Figure 5-8: CBD Commuter Mode Share by Rider Origin Market Shed



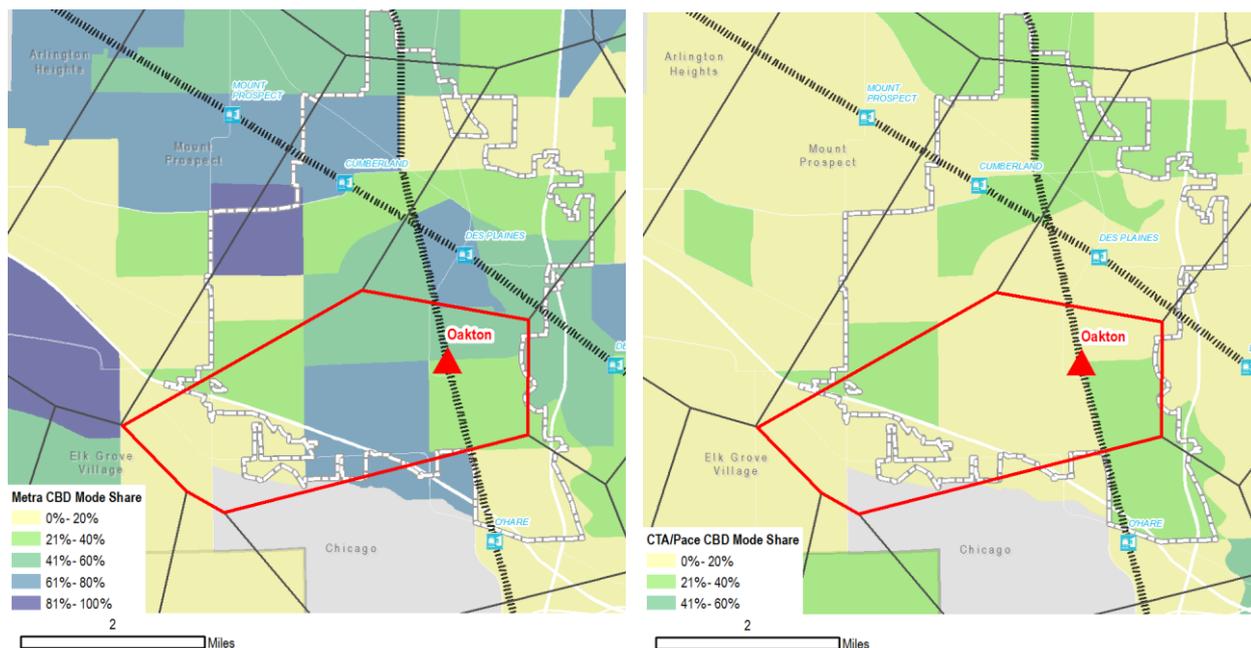
SOURCE: Census Transportation Planning Products 2010 (ACS 2006-2010)

Figure 5-9: CBD Worker Density, Total and Metra Commuters



SOURCE: CTPP 2010

Figure 5-10: CBD Mode Share by Census Tract



SOURCE: CTPP 2010

5.1.2 Land Use

As noted above and illustrated in Figure 5-12, the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station is situated in what is currently a primarily non-residential area. Of the parcel acreage in the market shed, 23% is industrial land use, compared to a maximum among nearby stations of 8% at Cumberland. Tied for most prevalent land use type is single-family residential (also 23%) followed by transportation and utilities (13%, or 31% when including right-of-way). The Des Plaines Oakton Street Station market shed has a lower amount of multi-family residential in comparison with UP-NW stations like Des Plaines and Dee Road, but a larger share of commercial space.

Figure 5-11: Land Use Acres of Oakton Station and Adjacent NCS / UP-NW Station Market Sheds

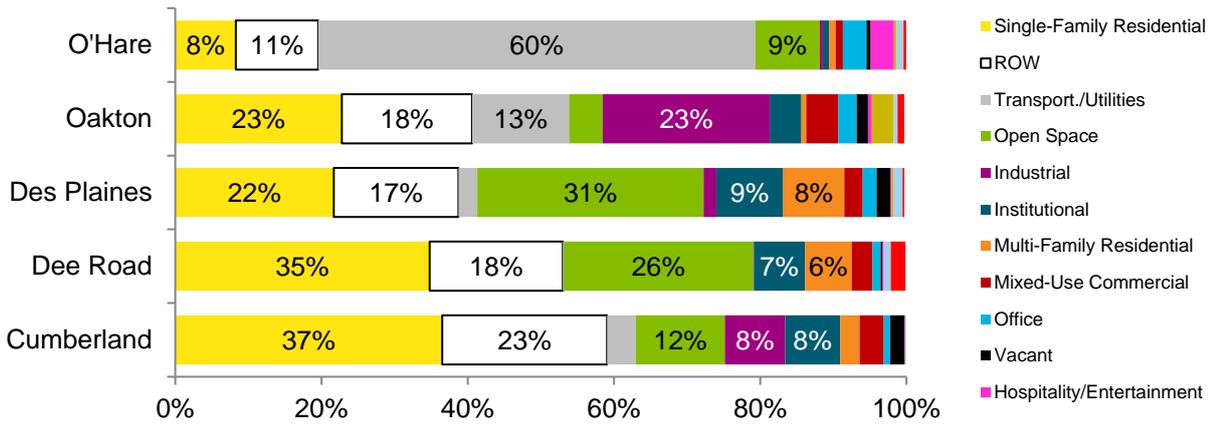
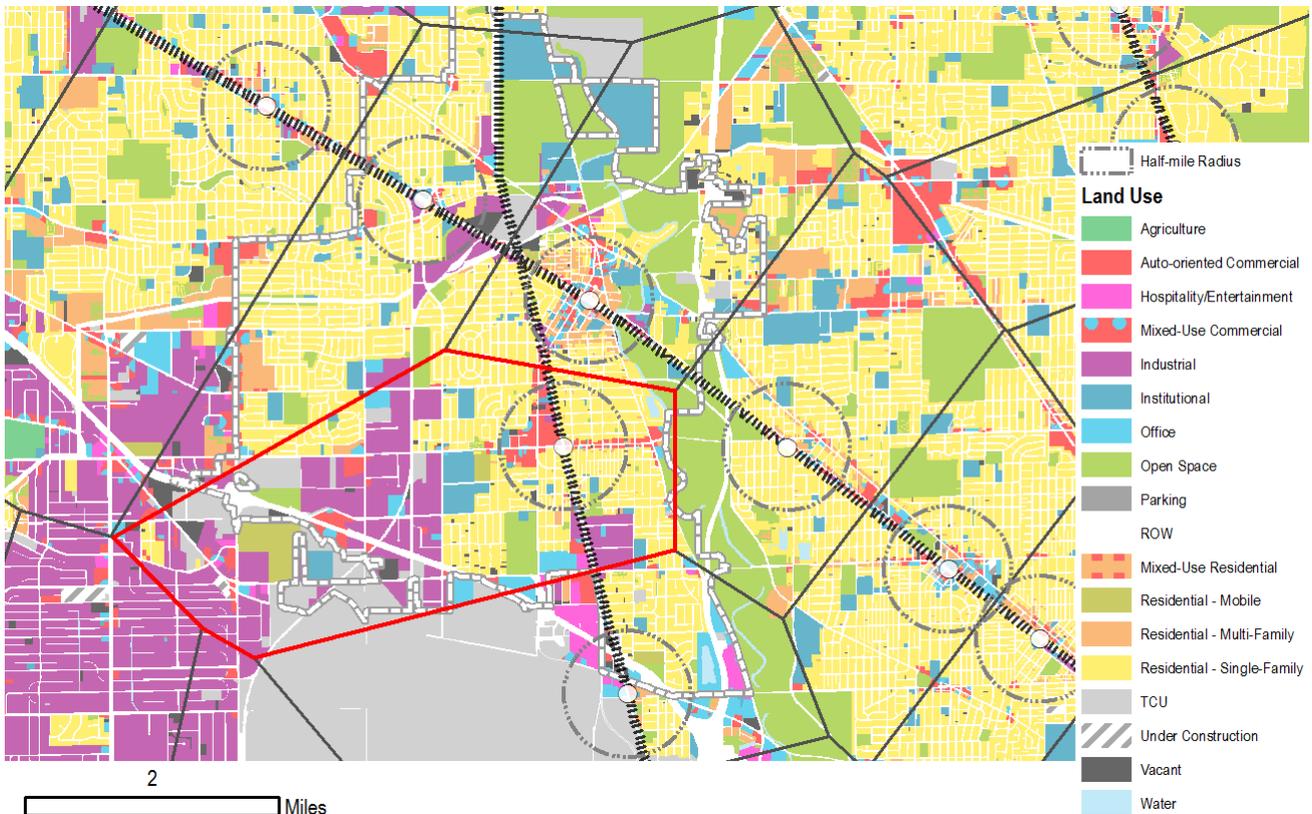


Figure 5-12: Land Use (2013)



SOURCE: CMAP (2013)

Analysis of the 2016 Metra non-downtown destination locations was conducted to better understand how far riders were able or willing to travel by connecting Pace bus or private shuttle, based on straight line distances. After removing outliers beyond the 90th percentile of straight-line distance by mode of egress, the Metra system wide weighted average distance was 2.3 miles for Pace bus and 1.9 miles for private shuttle (Table 5-3). Among this filtered destination dataset, 18% of destinations were reached by Pace bus or private shuttle, while walk egress accounted for 53%.

Narrowing the data down to suburban stations similar to the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station (i.e., located within suburban fare zones B-D), stations were analyzed based on whether they are in a primarily residential or a non-residential location, with the latter defined as less than 40% of the half-mile market area designated residential. The Des Plaines Oakton Street Station area is currently 49% residential, which puts it in the residential category.

The average distance traveled to a work or destination location from a primarily residential station was about the same for Pace bus (2.3 miles). Distances varied more greatly between residential versus non-residential stations for egress by walking (0.3 miles at residential locations vs. 0.6 at non-residential) and egress by private shuttle (2.3 miles at residential locations vs. 1.3 miles at non-residential). Bike distances are consistently around one mile. Pace bus trips are more common in non-residential locations (13% vs. 7% of trips), and walk trips are more common in residential locations (64% vs. 53%). Otherwise the proportions are similar.

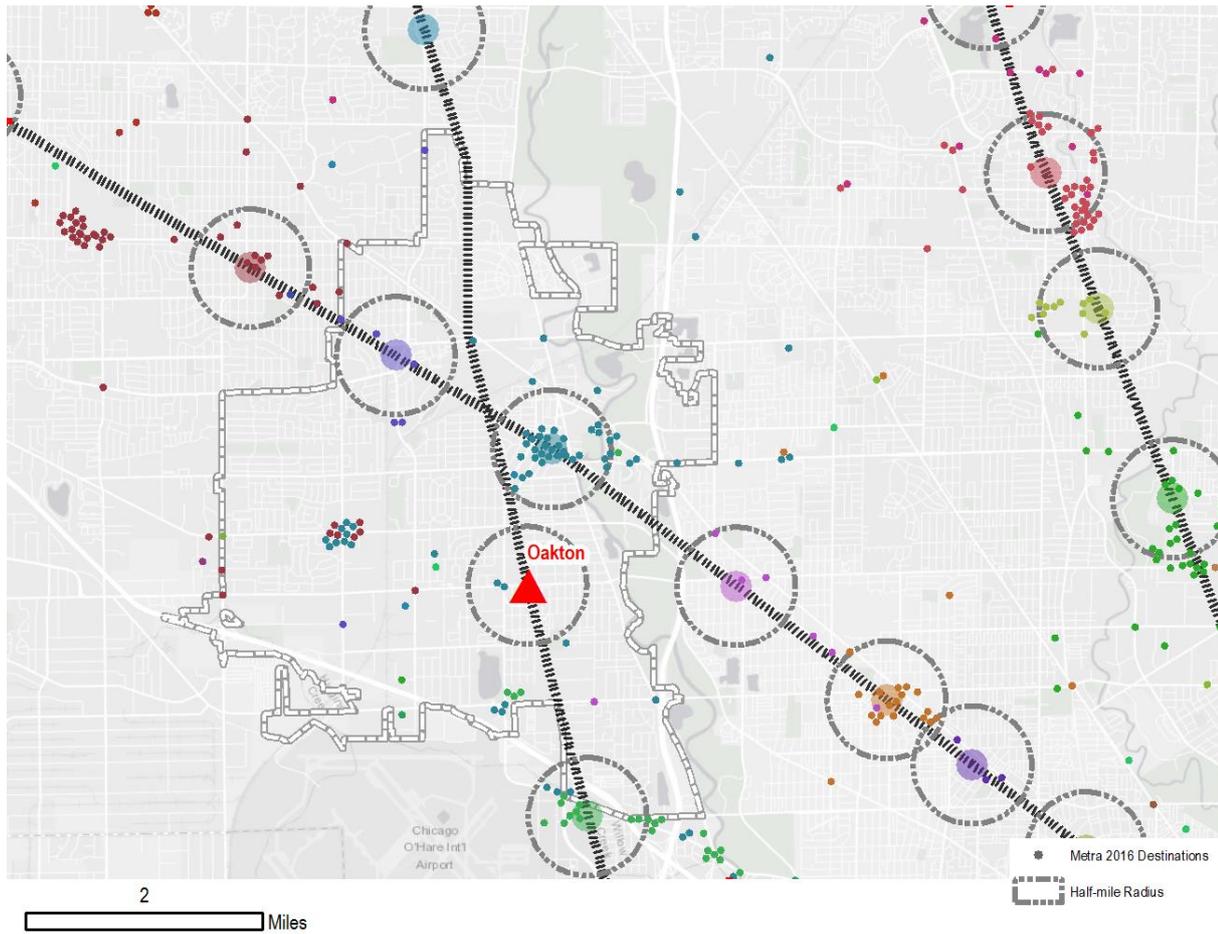
Table 5-3: Distance to Destination by Mode of Egress and Station Category

Mode	System	Residential Suburb Zone B-D	Non-Residential Suburb Zone B-D
Walk	0.5	0.3	0.6
Bicycle	1.2	1.0	1.1
Pace Bus	2.3	2.3	2.4
Private Shuttle	1.9	2.3	1.3

SOURCE: Metra Origin-Destination Survey (2016). Values rounded to nearest decimal.

The current distribution of Metra destinations is provided in Figure 5-14. According to 2016 data, fewer than 10 Metra riders were destined for locations within a half mile of the Oakton site, all of whom alighted at the UP-NW Des Plaines Station and either walked or were picked up. Expanding the radius to a mile, that figure increases to about 40, roughly half of whom alighted at Des Plaines (primarily walk/pick up mode of egress (MOE)) and 22% at O’Hare Transfer (primarily walk/bike MOE). However, it should be noted that this includes some riders who are within a half-mile of the UP-NW Des Plaines Station. The largest cluster of Metra destinations near the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station but outside the immediate station area of an existing station is at the intersection of Algonquin Road and Mount Prospect Road in Des Plaines. The only transit service at this location is Pace Route 230, and just 13% of 46 Metra riders (who alighted at the Mount Prospect or Des Plaines UP-NW Stations) take a Pace bus to reach this destination.

Figure 5-14: 2016 Metra Destinations

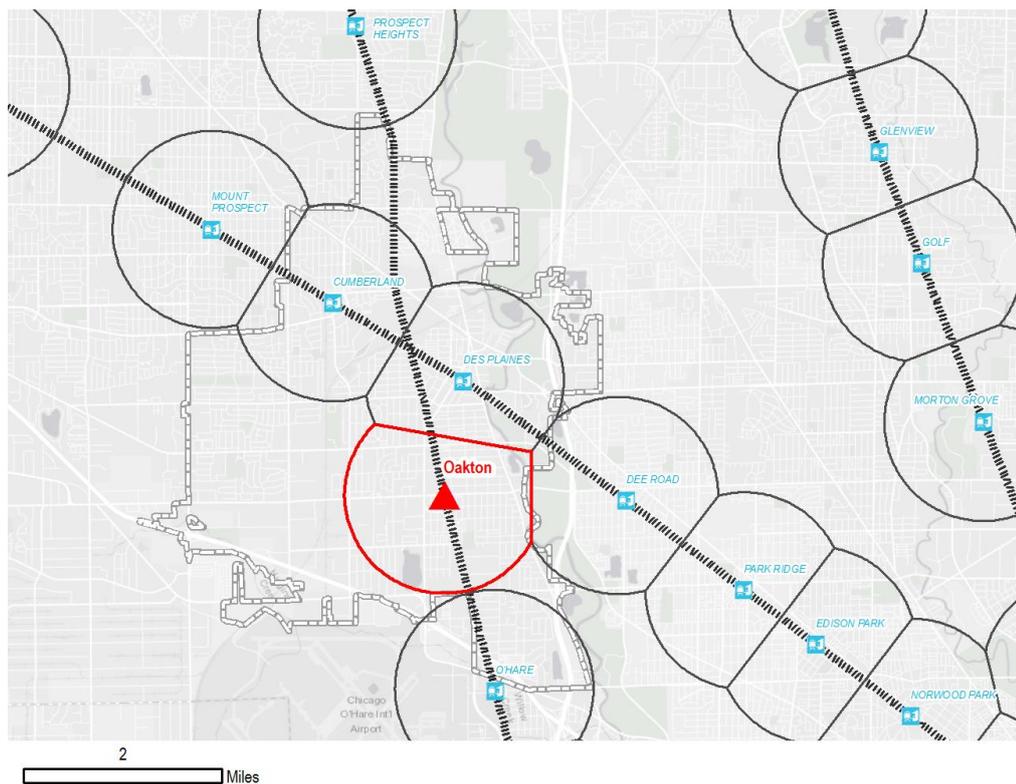


SOURCE: Metra Origin-Destination Survey (2016)

To better understand the potential for a destination market, LEHD data was analyzed to determine the home location of people working within a half mile of the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station. Of these 2,011 workers, 8% (165) are living in the market shed of one of the existing NCS stations. Of the 165 workers living in the NCS market shed, about half live at least 10 miles away from the potential Oakton station and thus are more likely to consider using Metra service than shorter-distance home locations (where they might be more likely to drive, bus, bike, or walk).

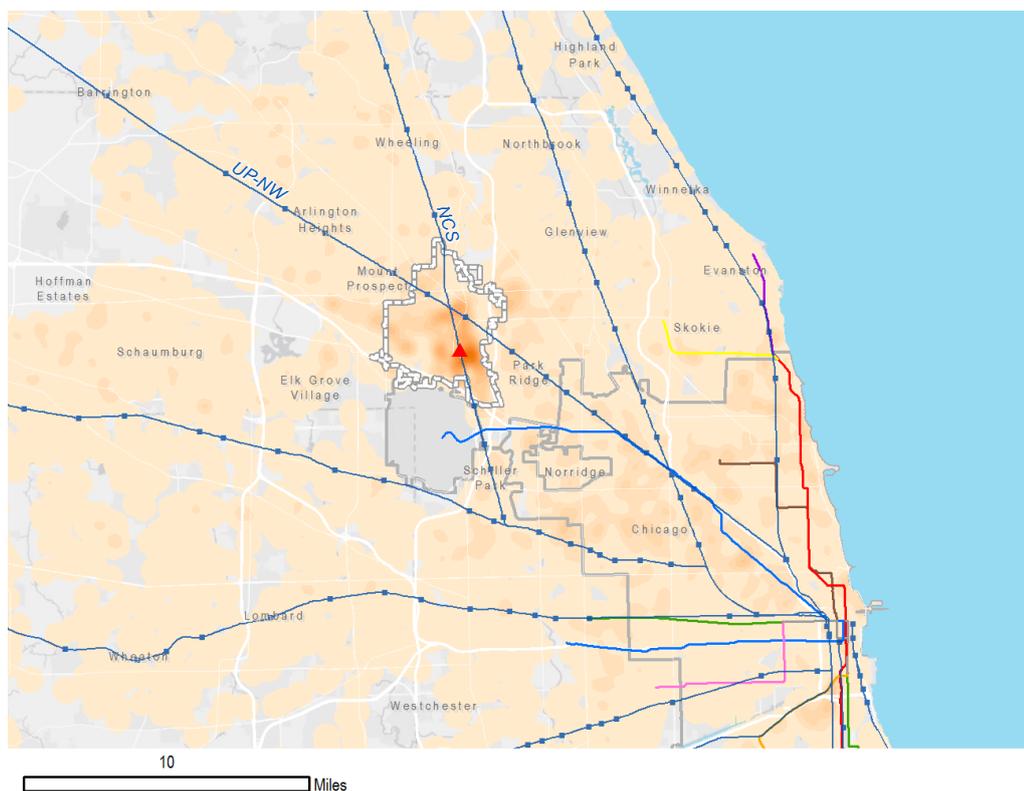
To aid in estimating the division of transit work commutes between adjacent Metra stations, the team developed destination sheds similar the methodology for the origin market sheds (i.e., nearest straight-line distance to station). These destination polygons were then restricted to the one-mile radius, as depicted in Figure 5-15. This one-mile distance was used to capture other egress modes than just walking—such as an average bike trip or short bus connection. Based on this analysis, there are 656 residents accessible to an NCS station working in the Des Plaines Oakton Street Station destination shed, of whom nearly 400 live at least 10 miles from the station.

Figure 5-15: Non-Overlapping Destination Sheds with 2016 Metra Destinations



Finally, to better illustrate the spatial distribution of Oakton destination shed worker origins, Figure 5-16 shows the density of these home locations, using LEHD origin-destination data. There are nearly 7,200 total workers in the destination shed (as of 2015), 45% of whom are classified as high-wage workers (earning \$3,333 or more each month). The greatest density is in Des Plaines itself.

Figure 5-16: Density of Home Location of Potential Oakton Station Destination Shed Workers



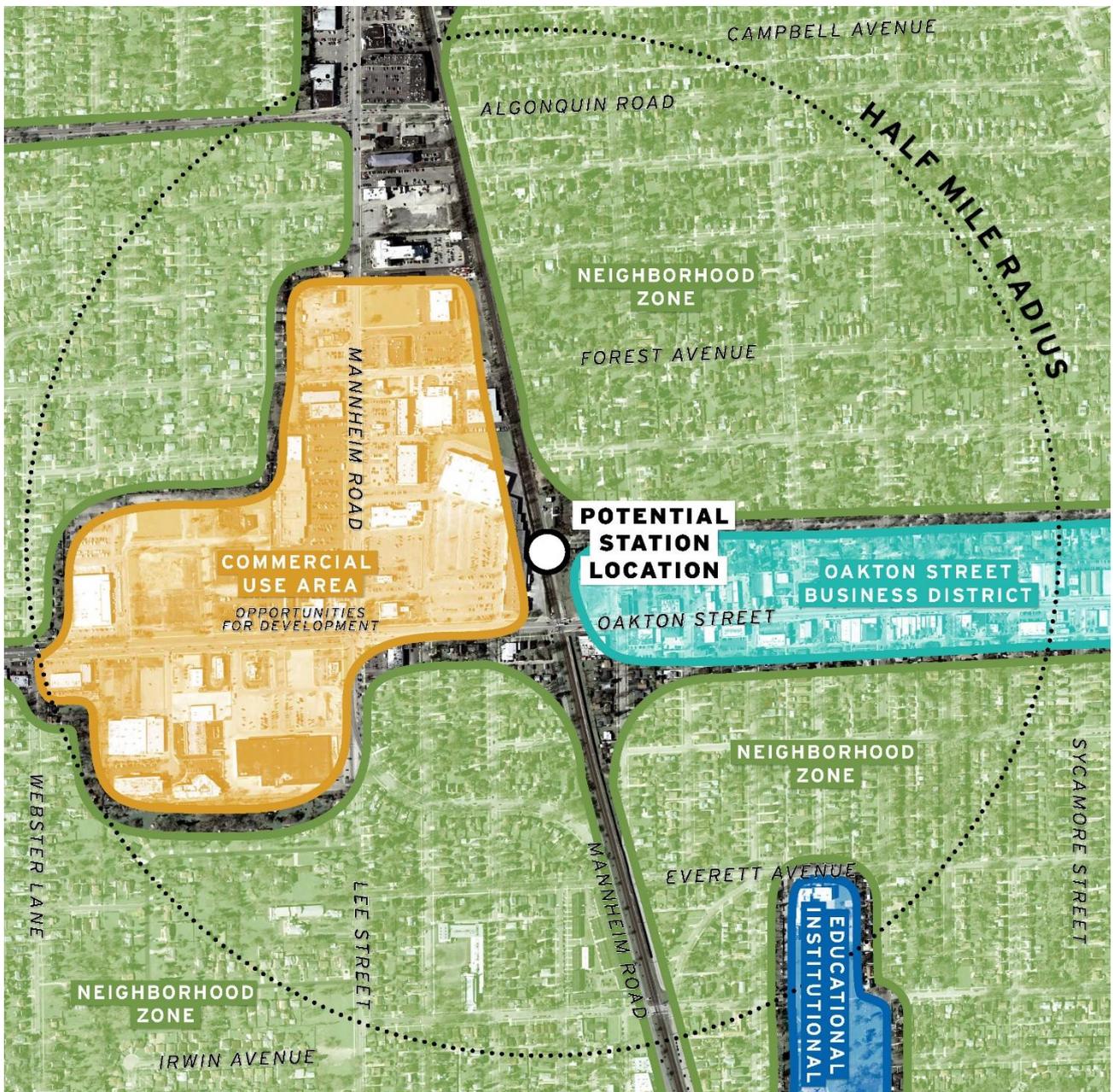
SOURCE: LEHD (2015)

6. Station Area Characteristics

The Des Plaines Oakton Station Area has been identified as including the territory within a half-mile radius of the western terminus of Lincoln Avenue at the Canadian National Railway (CN) tracks, which is located one block (roughly 400 feet) north of Oakton Street. The station area sits entirely within the City of Des Plaines municipal boundaries, and is generally aligned with Campbell Avenue to the north, Sycamore Street to the east, Irwin Avenue to the south, and Webster Lane to the west.

In addition to the North Central Service line, the two main organizing elements of the station area are Oakton Street and Mannheim Road, which are busy arterial corridors and important access routes within Des Plaines and the surrounding region. (See Figure 6-1.)

Figure 6-1: Station Area Context



6.1 Land Use

The overall land use and development character of the Oakton station area is consistent with a major arterial roadway crossing within a suburban context. Larger-scale commercial uses and suburban-styled commercial shopping centers are clustered around the primary intersection, and the surrounding areas are predominately single-family residential neighborhoods.

Residential

Residential land use is the most common land use category overall at just under 50% of the total station area, with detached, single-family homes encompassing the clear majority of this use. Based on an estimated total of 1,443 households within a half-mile radius of the proposed station,¹ the average density of all residential areas is roughly six units per acre.

Residential neighborhoods to the south/southeast have a slightly denser character, with single-family and some two-unit buildings on smaller lots served by alleys—common in many inner-ring suburbs. North of Oakton Street, the residential areas have a more typical suburban development pattern, with larger lots and front-facing parking in garages and driveways.

Commercial

The station area has a substantial amount of commercial land use, with large shopping centers flanked by expansive surface parking lots representing the largest proportion of commercial land area. Smaller one- to two-story commercial uses predominate along the primary corridors of Oakton Street and Mannheim Road, with the western segment of Oakton Street and northern segment of Mannheim Road featuring a more suburban commercial character with free-standing, auto-oriented uses surrounded by parking. East of the NCS tracks, however, a more traditional mixed-use commercial character exists along Oakton Street with a finer-grain development character consisting of one- to two-story buildings that have little to no setback from the right of way.

Industrial

There are only a handful of properties identified as industrial use within the station area, and these uses are lighter industrial in nature and tend to include some commercial components or features—for example, the Boston Fish Market processing facility on Forest Avenue includes both indoor and outdoor dining space. Notably, the eastern portion of Oakton also has some commercial uses that are generally more industrial in nature, including auto repair shops, rental centers, and a landscaping company.

Institutional

Institutional uses are fairly limited within the station area and include a handful of churches, South Elementary School to the southeast, Fire Station 62 at 1313 East Oakton Street (south side of Oakton, west of CN), and a US Post Office Center to the west. Though not located within the station area, Maine West High School and a few elementary schools lie just west of the station area. Initial

Table 6-1: Station Area Land Use Summary (half-mile)

Land Use (CMAP)	Area (acres)	% of Total
Single-Family Residential	240.5	47.9%
Multi-Family Residential	4.9	1.0%
Commercial	88.1	17.5%
Mixed-Use Commercial	3.4	0.7%
Hospitality/Entertainment	1.1	0.2%
Institutional	22.1	4.4%
Industrial	4.2	0.8%
Transportation/Utilities	13.7	2.7%
Common Open Space	1.5	0.3%
Vacant / Construction	8.6	1.7%
Right of Way	114.6	22.8%
Total	502.7	100%

SOURCE: CMAP

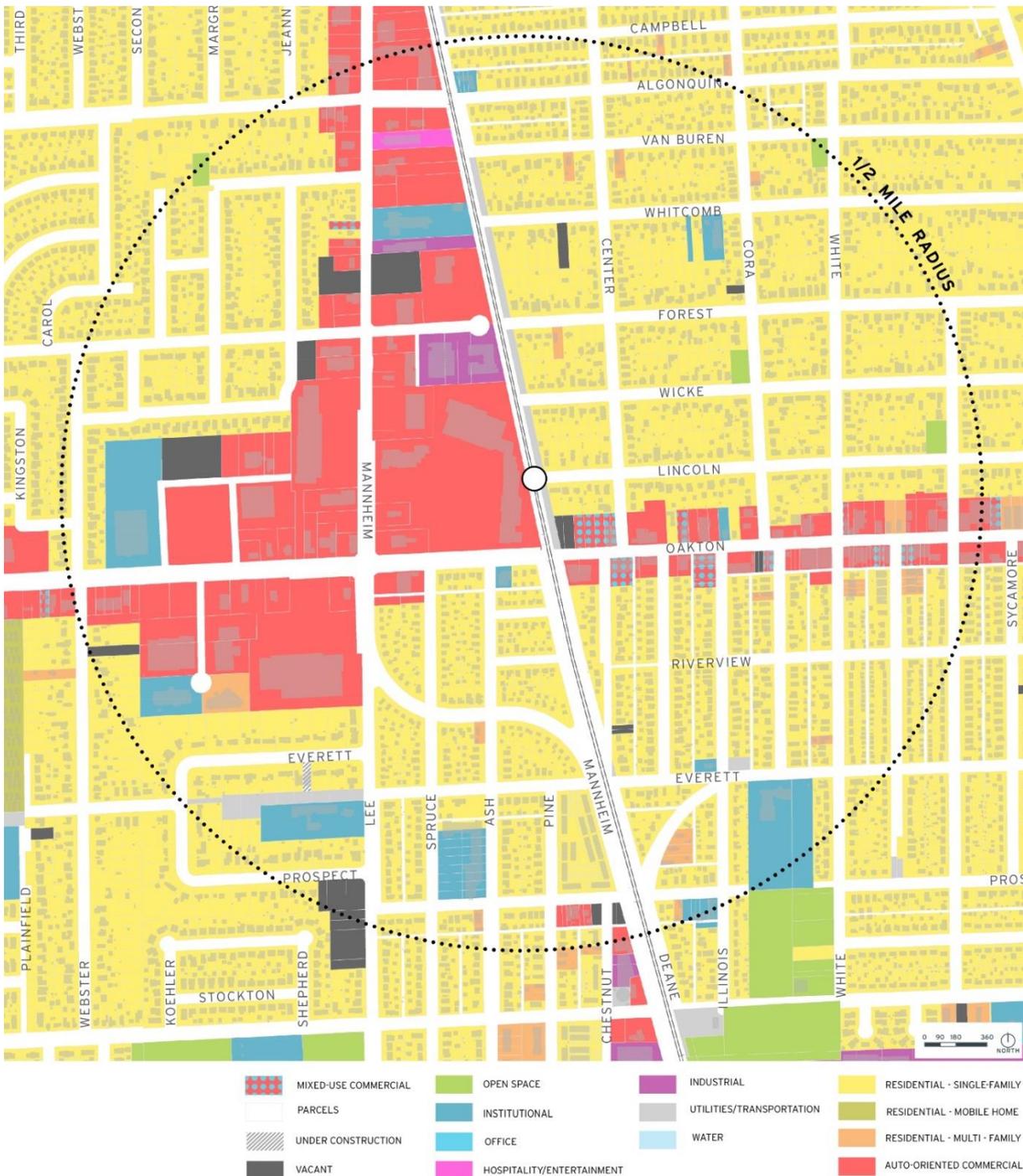
¹ Source: Esri Business Analyst Online

conversations with area residents indicate that high school students traveling to or from school represent a considerable amount of foot traffic within the area.

Open Space

Few parks or open spaces exist with the station area, though there are several large recreational areas and opportunities relatively close by. The Cook County Forest Preserve has a significant presence roughly one mile east of the project station site, which includes Algonquin Woods, Campground Woods, and the Des Plaines River Trail. Lake Opeka, a large park and recreation area within Des Plaines, lies just over a half mile to the southwest and may represent another popular destination for station area residents and visitors.

Figure 6-2: Station Area Land Use Map



6.2 Zoning

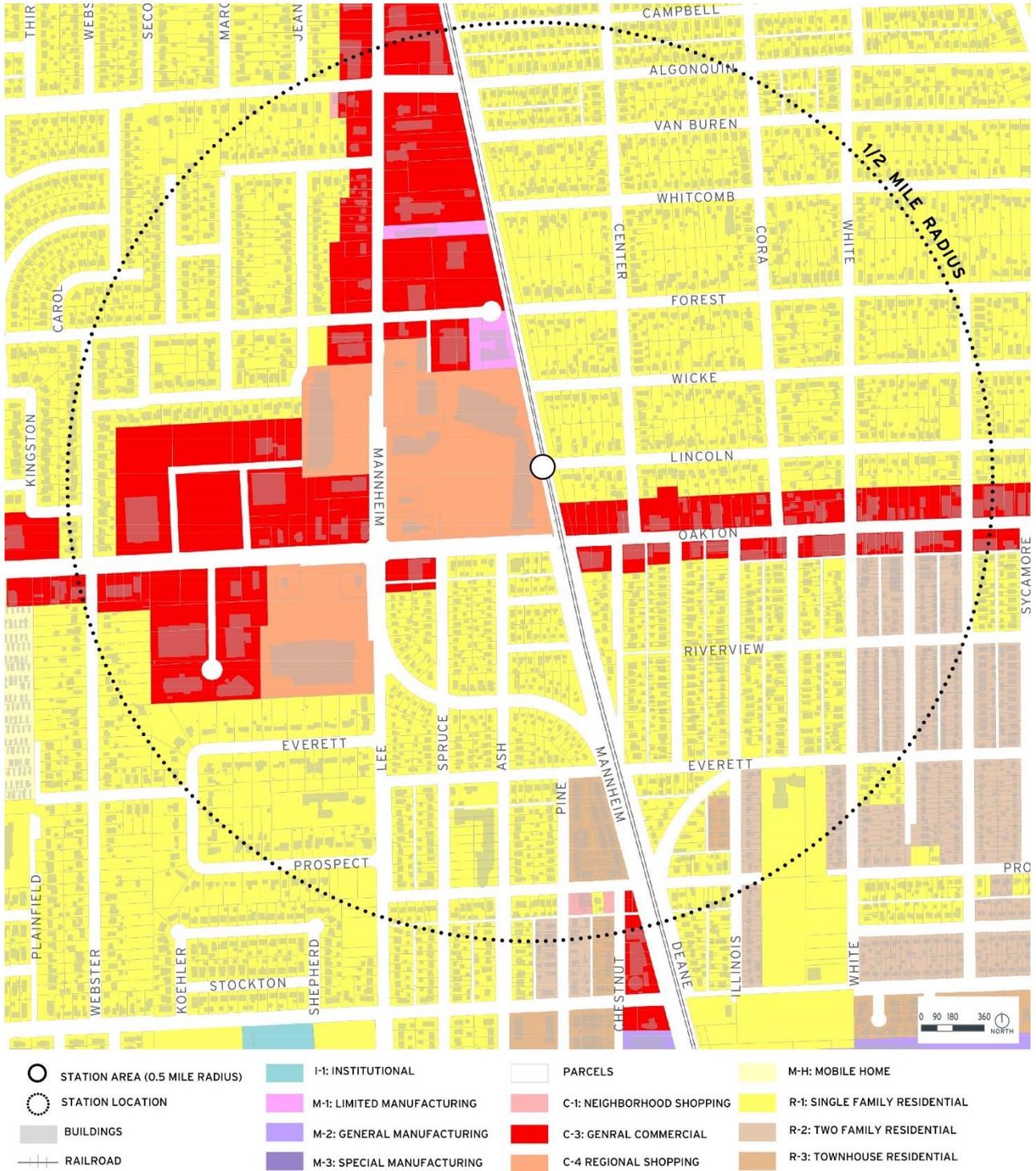
Zoning within the proposed station area is generally split between R-1 Single-Family Residential districts and a combination of C-3 and C-4 commercial zoning districts. Two-Family Residential zoning (R-2) and Townhouse Residential (R-3) are also present in the south portion of the station area, as well as a very limited amount of Neighborhood Shopping (C-1) and low-intensity Limited Manufacturing (M-2) zoning.

As indicated in Figure 6-3, the C-4 Regional Shopping district occupies a considerable amount of land at roughly 38 acres but is comprised of only 10 properties in total. These properties are clustered around the Oakton and Mannheim/Lee intersection and include The Oaks Shopping Center located to the immediate west of the proposed station. The larger proportional size of these properties is consistent with the intent and related development standards of the C-4 zoning district, which is expressly intended to “accommodate shopping centers” and related outlot development (*City of Des Plaines Zoning Ordinance*, last updated January 7, 2019). While a broad range of commercial uses are permitted in C-4 districts, notably, residential development in any form is not.

The other commercial district zoning with a large presence in the station area is C-3 General Commercial, which is intended to support a very wide range of commercial uses and development types. Though C-3 districts do not generally permit residential use, a specific allowance is made for upper-story residential use along Oakton Street (one unit per property) to the east of the NCS tracks. In addition, the C-3 standards allow for Mixed-Use Planned Developments as a conditional use, which is intended to encourage significant increases in residential density if basic commercial use thresholds are met.

Both R-1 and R-2 zoning districts, which make up a considerable portion of the station area, are intended to maintain low-density residential neighborhoods and do not permit any development types beyond detached single- or two-family dwellings. While much of the residentially zoned land within the station area is already built out as mature neighborhoods, any future efforts to increase density in the area—for example through infill development or redevelopment—will be further limited by the R-1/R-2 zoning standards. As a result, future efforts to promote transit-oriented development within the station area will likely occur as mixed-use planned developments on commercially zoned land.

Figure 6-3. Station Area Zoning Map



6.3 Infrastructure and Utilities

The station area is served by publicly owned and controlled underground water and storm sewer lines that are located within the rights-of-way of most of the area’s public streets. This includes several large-diameter lines that also run adjacent to and under the CN Railway tracks near the proposed station location between Oakton Street and Wicke Avenue.

Along Oakton Street there are a series of both storm and combined gravity main sewers, including a 54” diameter storm sewer that runs west from the CN tracks through the far west end of the station

area. At the CN tracks, the 54” storm sewer turns north, increases in size to 60” in diameter and proceeds to run along the east edge of The Oaks Shopping Center property before turning east and heading down Lincoln Avenue. A secondary 18” storm sewer line also runs the along the east edge of The Oaks Shopping Center north of Lincoln Avenue. East of the CN tracks, there are only combined sewer mains along Oakton Street, with the largest having a 24” diameter.

Water mains also run beneath Oakton Street, including a 12” diameter line adjacent to the southern edge of The Oaks Shopping Center property, which then crosses under the CN Railway tracks before proceeding east along Oakton Street. A 24” diameter water main also exists within the ComEd utility corridor, immediately east of the CN rail line, running parallel to the tracks. Within the immediate proximity of the proposed station—generally between Oakton and Forest—ComEd owns or controls properties to the immediate east of the CN railway line, where it operates overhead power lines.

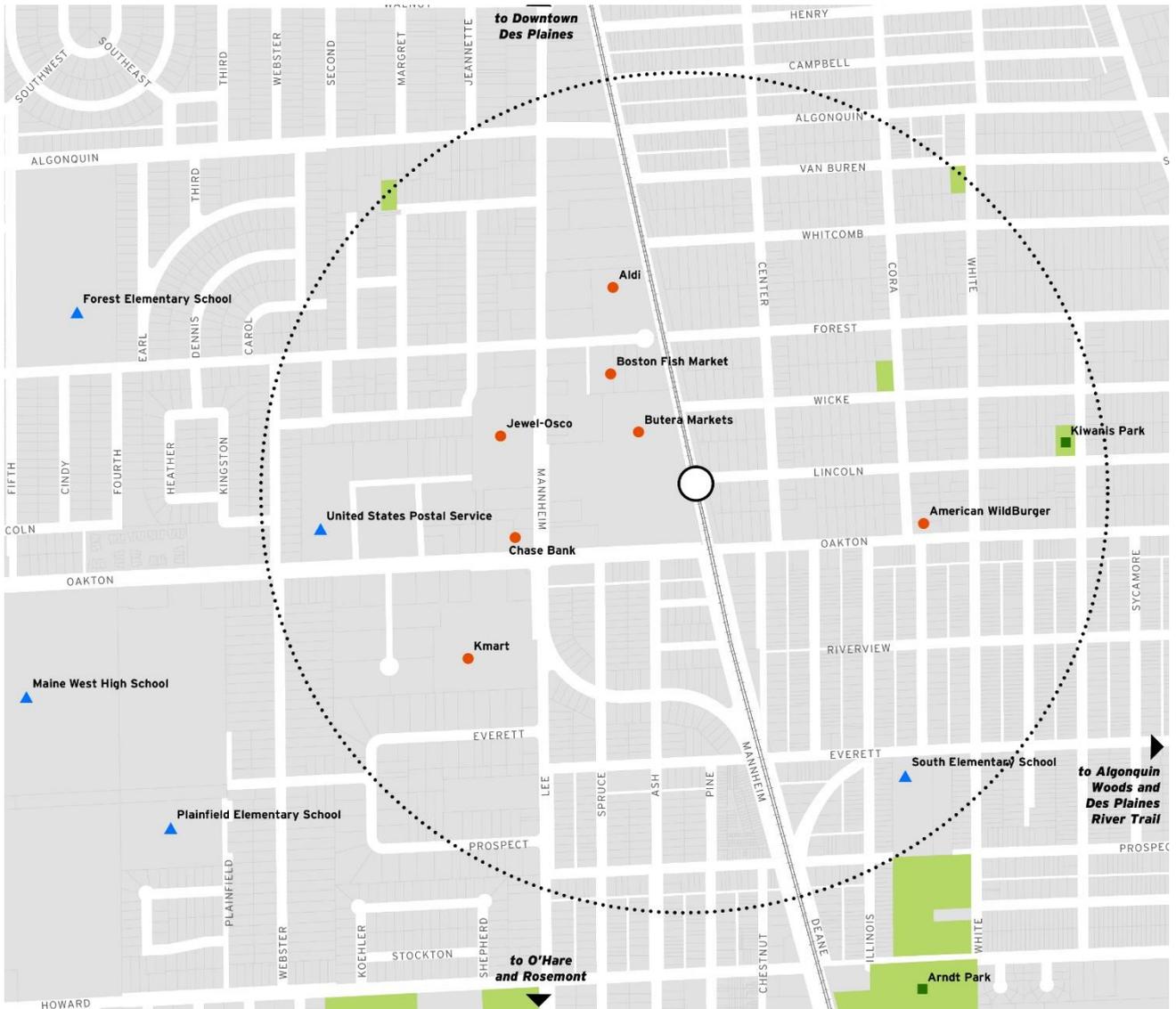
Additional information regarding other essential utilities within the Study Area—including power, gas, and telecommunications—were not available to the project team at the time of this writing. Formal surveys of existing utilities and infrastructure, including a more detailed analysis of the exact location and condition of utilities identified above are strongly recommended before any formal implementation efforts proceed in the future.

6.4 Local Points of Interest

Within the station area, the primary points of interest consist of a number of retail anchors and popular dining establishments. These are well-known destinations for convenience shopping and provide a local employment base. Being located roughly one mile south of Downtown Des Plaines, the businesses located along Oakton Street were also noted by City Staff and other community stakeholders as playing an important supporting role as the City’s “Main Street off of Main Street.”

South Elementary School is the only local public institution located within the station area, but there are several schools and religious institutions nearby noted by area residents and stakeholders as being important neighborhood hubs and foot traffic generators. Several important recreation destinations also exist within a mile or less of the proposed station, including Lake Opeka to the south and Cook County Forest Preserve land and the Des Plaines River Trail to the east, as noted above. (See Figure 6-4.)

Figure 6-4: Local Points of Interest Map



Though not located within the immediate environs of the station area, proximity to O’Hare Airport and the entertainment uses and transportation network around Rosemont to the south are important considerations when evaluating potential demand for future development within the station area.

6.5 Public Spaces

Public open space within the station area is limited to a handful of small neighborhood parks and the South Elementary School schoolyard. Other public/semi-public spaces—such as plazas, wide sidewalks, and non-vehicular rights-of-way—are also very limited within the station area at this time. While the provision of any substantial parks or green spaces is unlikely to occur in the future without significant changes to existing development, future redevelopment of currently under-utilized or inefficient commercial areas could provide new opportunities for public space. Should the proposed train station be implemented, any associated redevelopment plans should integrate adequate public or semi-public spaces for gathering and outdoor activities, such as dining and occasional community events.

As has been noted in the above sections, several regional-scale public open spaces do exist within relatively close proximity to the proposed station. To take advantage of these opportunities (for the

benefit of both local residents and potential Metra riders alike), improved bike and pedestrian connections and wayfinding elements should be considered where appropriate.

6.6 Transportation Access

The Des Plaines Oakton Station area is dominated by the intersection of two regionally important arterial corridors with high average daily traffic (ADT) counts. Existing land uses and development patterns are directly correlated to the intersection of Oakton Street and Mannheim Road and reflect a post-war suburban character that favors automotive convenience over pedestrian activity and walkability. However, the possible addition of both a new Metra NCS station and enhanced bus/arterial rapid transit service (i.e., the Pace Pulse Dempster line) within immediate proximity of one another could offer significant potential for transformation of the station area.

6.6.1 Roadways and Sidewalks

Within the station area, Mannheim Road (US Route 12 / 45, and also called Lee Street north of Oakton Street) is under Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) jurisdiction within the project area, and is designated as a State Maintained Truck route (Class II). North of Oakton Street, the ADT on Mannheim Road is 21,200 vehicles, and south of Oakton 19,700 vehicles (source: IDOT: <https://www.gettingaroundillinois.com/gai.htm?mt=aadt>).

West of Mannheim, Oakton Street is also under IDOT jurisdiction, where it has an ADT of 25,500 vehicles. East of Mannheim, however, Oakton falls under municipal jurisdiction, and has an ADT of 20,200 vehicles. All other roadways within the station area are under municipal jurisdiction.

While the prevailing character of the station area is oriented towards automotive travel and convenience, road and sidewalk conditions are generally in adequate condition. Aside from a few notable exceptions—for example the far northern and southern segments of Mannheim, and Oakton Street east of the tracks—sidewalks exist and are adequately buffered from vehicular travel ways. Initial discussions with area residents and business owners revealed that the eastern segment of Oakton Street was particularly challenging due to high traffic counts and more constrained right-of-way distances. The on-street parallel parking that exists along this portion of the corridor was perceived as a safety issue and a desire to widen the existing roadway was noted by several local stakeholders. Should implementation of a new Metra station proceed, this issue and area of focus will likely require further study to determine both the nature and intent of any future improvements.

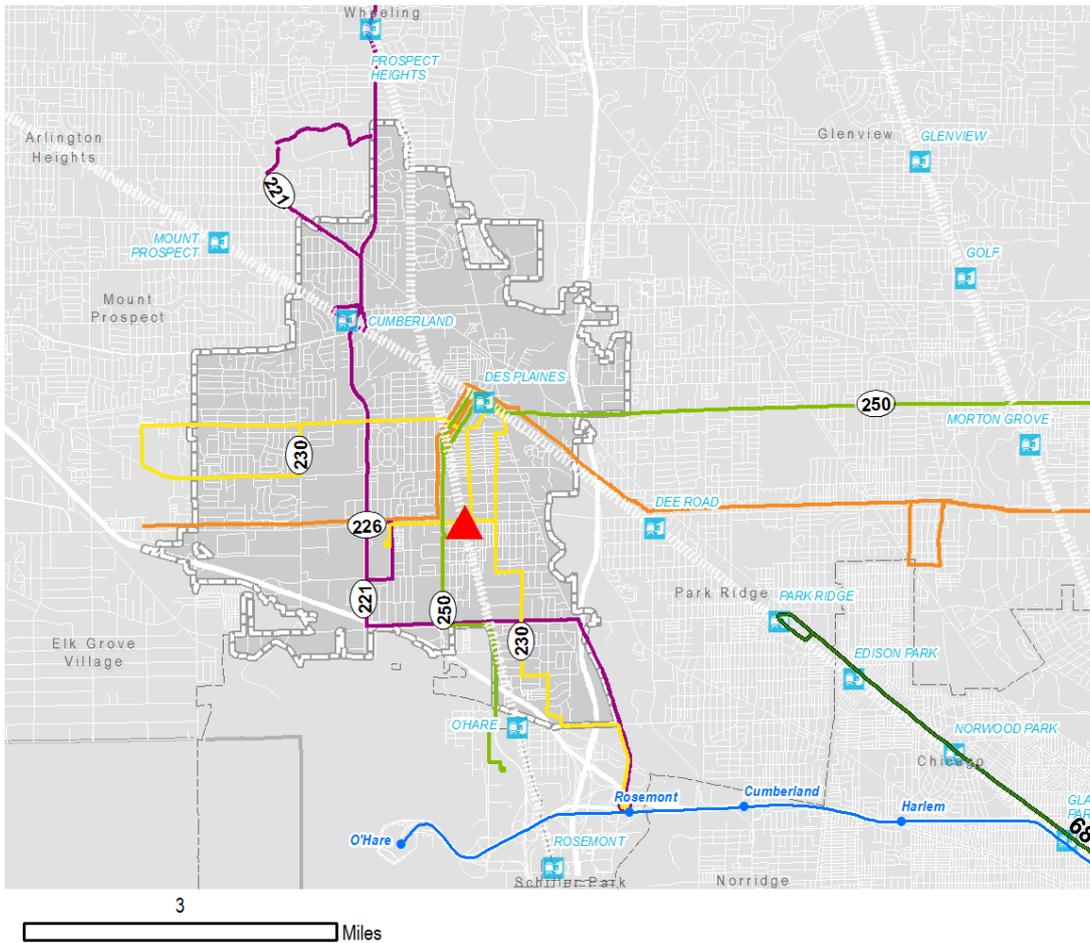
North-south movement is relatively unimpeded to, from, and within the station area, but opportunities to travel east-west across the CN railway tracks are limited to only three locations: Algonquin Road, Oakton Street, and Prospect Avenue. This already presents a significant constraint to area connectivity and the introduction of a new Metra station could further impact congestion and potentially public safety if not appropriately addressed in the future. The City's forthcoming Comprehensive Plan identifies this concern and recommends at least one additional east-west connection be established, although implementation may be difficult due to both physical and jurisdictional constraints.

6.6.2 Transit Connectivity

Within a short distance of the proposed station location are four Pace bus routes: 221 Wolf Road, 226 Oakton Street, 230 South Des Plaines, and 250 Dempster Street. At a farther distance are the

CTA's Blue Line and Bus Route 68 Northwest Highway. Figure 6-5 shows the routing of these alternative transit services.

Figure 6-5: Nearby Transit to the Proposed NCS Oakton Station



Transit routes proximate to the proposed Oakton station are summarized below (source: Pace and CTA websites).

- **Pace Route 221 – Wolf Road** | Provides weekday service between north Prospect Heights, Kensington Business Center, western Des Plaines, Rivers Casino and the Rosemont CTA Blue Line Station. Midday service operates south of the Cumberland Metra Station. Peak period headways are roughly every 15-30 minutes. Nearest stop is about one mile from the Oakton station.
- **Pace Route 226 Oakton Street** | Provides weekday service between the Jefferson Park CTA Blue Line / Metra Station and Oakton and Hamilton in southern Mount Prospect via the UP-NW Des Plaines Metra Station. Stops also include Edgebrook Metra Station, Village Crossing, Oakton Community College/Prairie Center, Niles West High School, Oak Mill Mall and Maine West High School. Peak period headways are infrequent west of Niles, including Des Plaines—roughly one hour.
- **Pace Route 230 South Des Plaines** | Provides weekday service between the Rosemont CTA Blue Line station and the Des Plaines Metra Station. serving south Des Plaines. Rush hour extension to the western part of Des Plaines. Stops include Rivers Casino, Maine West High School, Prairie Lakes Park Community Center, Salvation Army HQ and Elmdale Apartments. Certain rush hour trips serve the O'Hare Lakes Office Complex. Peak period headways are roughly every half hour.

- **Pace Route 250 Dempster Street** | Provides daily service from downtown Evanston to the Des Plaines Metra station via Dempster and then south to the O'Hare Kiss-n-Fly Airport Transit System (ATS) Station. Service along this line includes the Davis Street CTA Station (Purple Line), the Skokie Swift CTA Station (Yellow Line), Notre Dame and Maine East High Schools, and Lutheran General Hospital. Peak period headways are roughly every 15 minutes. This route is also part of Pace's planned Pulse rapid transit network. These services will involve enhanced express bus service using the latest signal technology and streamlined route design. The Pulse Dempster Line is anticipated to be in-service in 2020, and will include a station at Lee/Mannheim and Oakton.
- **CTA Blue Line "L"** | Rosemont Station is 3.2 miles southeast from the potential Oakton station, providing connections to downtown and the larger CTA network.
- **CTA Bus Route 68 Northwest Highway** | Located 3.2 miles away, service runs roughly every 20 minutes, connecting the Metra UP-NW Park Ridge Station with Jefferson Park Terminal, parallel to Metra UP-NW along Northwest Highway.

Current Metra service is provided at nearby UP-NW and NCS stations. Relevant data on three UP-NW and two NCS stations are provided on Table 6-2. The median of all non-downtown stations on the Metra system is also shown. It can be observed that level of service on the NCS is lower than for the UP-NW and for the median Metra station.

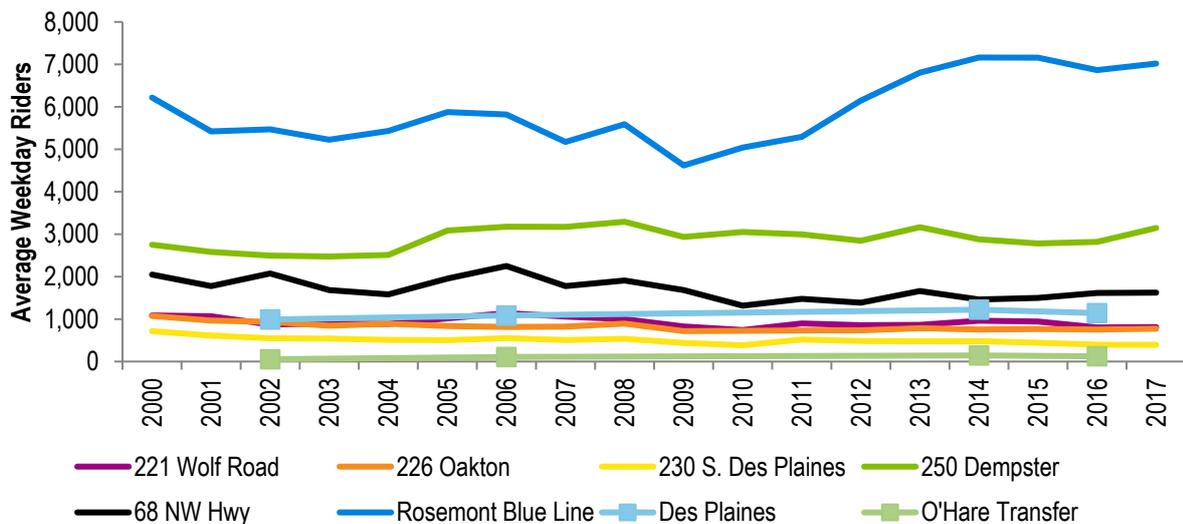
The boarding history across nearby transit service is provided in Figure 6-6. Most bus and rail ridership has held steady over time, but ridership at the Rosemont Blue Line station has risen dramatically since 2009, after a declining trend from 2000 until that point. It is likely that the growth in ridership is due in part to the large-scale commercial development that has taken place in the area in recent years (such as the Fashion Outlets of Chicago (Rosemont), which opened in 2013, and various entertainment venues located within the Village of Rosemont).

Table 6-2: Proposed NCS Des Plaines Station – Comparative Statistics of Nearby Stations

	Prospect Hts.	O'Hare Transfer	Cumberland	Des Plaines	Dee Road	Metra Median Station*
Metra Line	NCS	NCS	UP-NW	UP-NW	UP-NW	--
Distance to Downtown (miles)	24.0	17.1	18.6	17.1	15.0	17.4
Metra Fare Zone	E	D	D	D	C	
Timetable Effective Date	5-Feb-18	5-Feb-18	29-Jan-12	29-Jan-12	29-Jan-12	--
Inbound Trains per Weekday						
AM Peak	5	5	9	12	8	8
Midday	2	2	6	6	6	6
PM Peak (reverse)	2	1	3	4	4	3
Evening	0	0	3	5	3	4
Outbound Trains per Weekday						
AM Peak (reverse)	2	2	5	5	5	4
Midday	2	2	5	6	6	6
PM Peak	4	4	7	9	6	7
Evening	2	2	6	6	6	6
Total Trains per Weekday	19	18	44	53	44	44
Travel Time to/from Downtown						
Minimum (in mins)	42	30	27	24	27	29
Maximum (in mins)	52	40	44	42	37	46
Parking Capacity (spaces)	328	0	253	317	172	312
Daily Average Parking Fee	\$1.75	--	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50
Weekday Boardings (2016)	266	123	455	1,142	515	428

SOURCE: Metra; *Median of all non-downtown stations.

Figure 6-6: Weekday Boarding History (Nearby Transit)



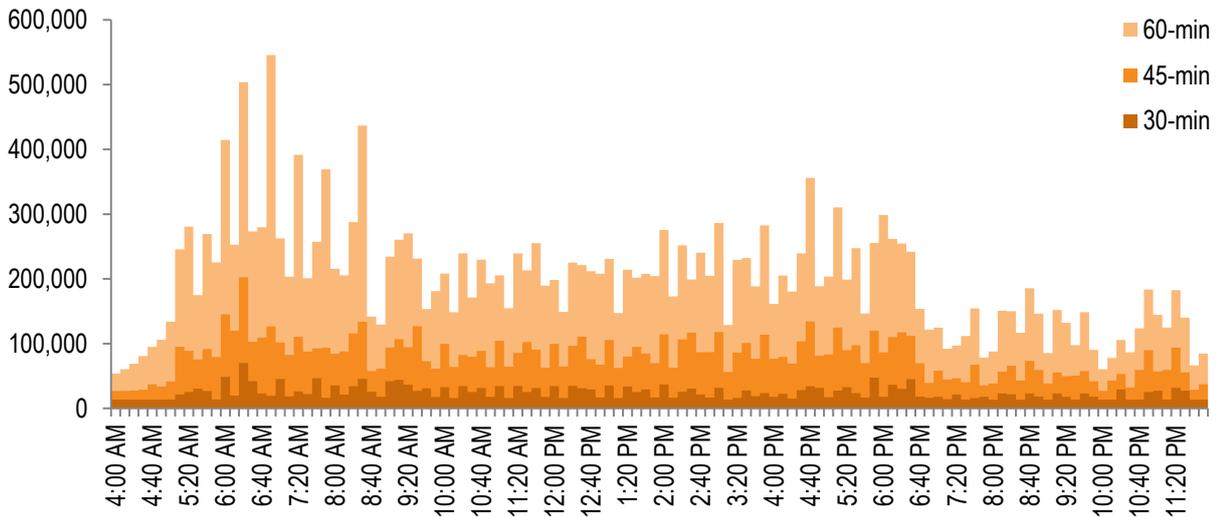
SOURCE: Pace and CTA data: RTAMS, average September weekday riders, 2000-2017. Metra (2017).

Schedule-Based Connectivity Analysis

In order to better understand how the existing transit network serves persons living near the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station, General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data for Metra, CTA, and Pace were gathered in November 2018 and a network analysis was performed to determine how many employment destinations could be reached using only currently operating walk-access transit service from the half-mile Oakton station area, including the wait times needed to transfer between routes.

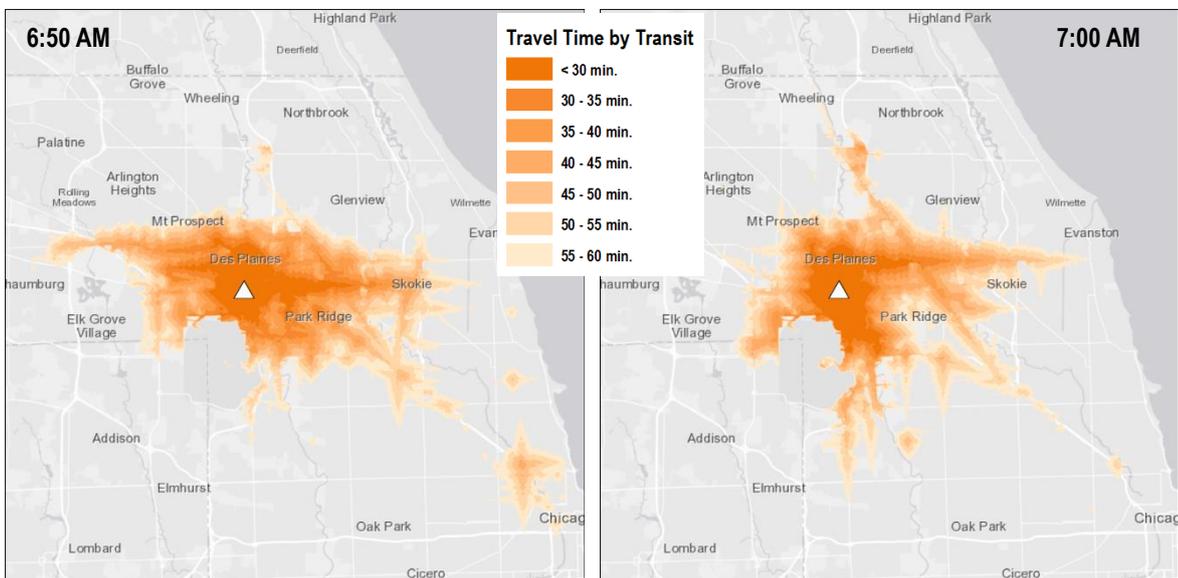
As indicated by periodic spikes in job accessibility during the AM peak in Figure 6-7, the opportunity to take advantage of Metra service at nearby stations on the NCS and UP-NW dramatically increases the number of jobs accessible. Currently, for non-vehicular access commuters, Metra stations can only be reached from the Oakton site by taking connecting bus service, which, due to timing, distance, and road congestion-related constraints, limits access to jobs in central Chicago via transit. The changing landscape of transit accessibility over the course of an hour (in 10-minute departure time intervals) is also illustrated spatially in the maps in Figure 6-8.

Figure 6-7: 2015 Jobs Accessible via Transit from Oakton Site

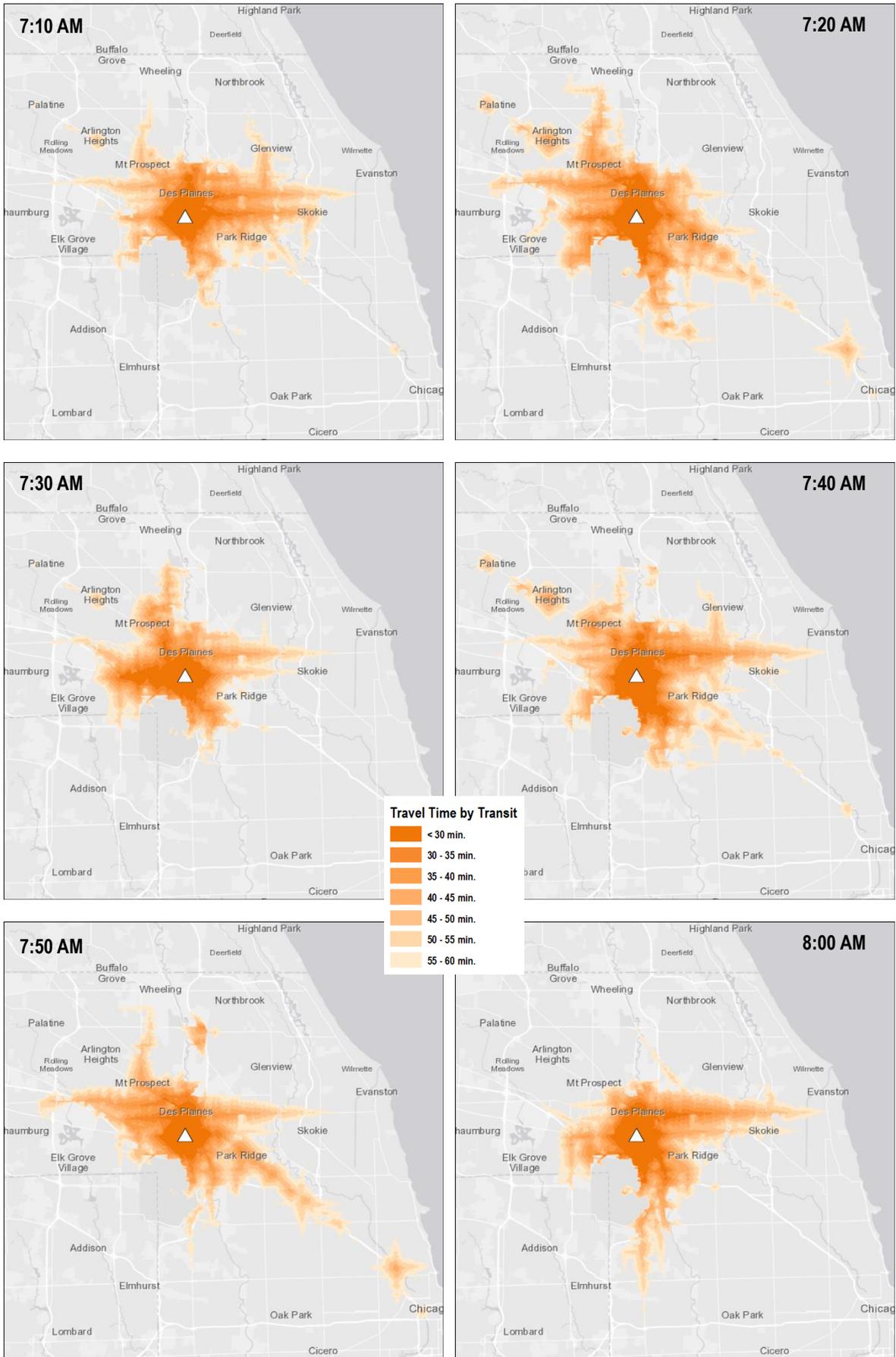


Data source: Metra, CTA, Pace GTFS data (November 2018)

Figure 6-8: 60-minute Transit Service Areas from Oakton Site by Departure Time



Des Plaines Station Feasibility Study



Data source: Metra, CTA, Pace GTFS data (November 2018)

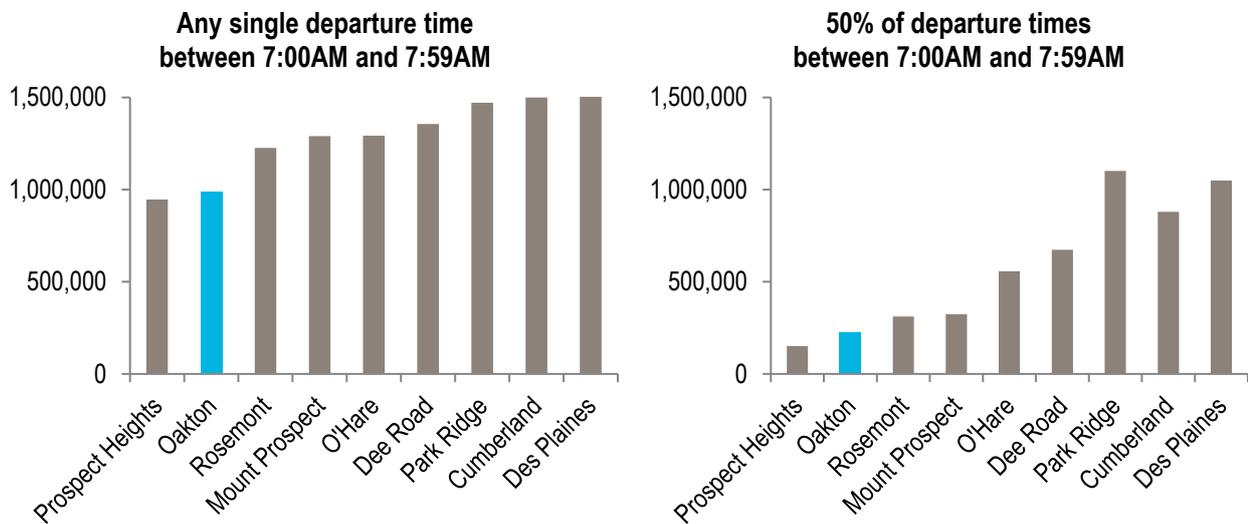
Finally, for the purposes of further analyzing job accessibility by transit, the network was evaluated to determine the number of jobs accessible via a 60-minute or shorter transit trip for departure times ranging between 7:00 AM and 7:59 AM on a weekday morning. This analysis was carried out for the Oakton site as well as nearby existing Metra stations.

As shown in Figure 6-9, Oakton is at the lower end of the spectrum, with fewer than 1 million jobs accessible by transit (assuming at least one possible departure time between 7:00 AM and 7:59 AM), which is about a third less than at nearby Des Plaines and Park Ridge stations, and a quarter less than at the O’Hare Transfer station.

Assuming that people need more flexibility in their schedules and wish to be able to reach their workplace within an hour for at least half of the possible departure times, the figures drop dramatically for the Oakton site without Metra service, reflecting the significant impact of Metra service (relatively infrequent but time-efficient). Only 225,000 jobs are accessible under these conditions, compared to over a million at Park Ridge and Des Plaines Stations, and 555,000 at O’Hare Transfer.

These results highlight how dependent people in the area around the Oakton site are on making transit connections to nearby Metra stations to reach jobs. Connections aren’t frequent enough to maintain reliable transportation to workplaces farther afield, should an individual happen to miss the feeder bus. For example, Oakton loses 72% of its 60-minute job accessibility under the 50% departure time parameters, whereas Des Plaines and Park Ridge lose about 25-30%.

Figure 6-9: Jobs Accessible via 60-minute transit/pedestrian trip (Nearby Stations)



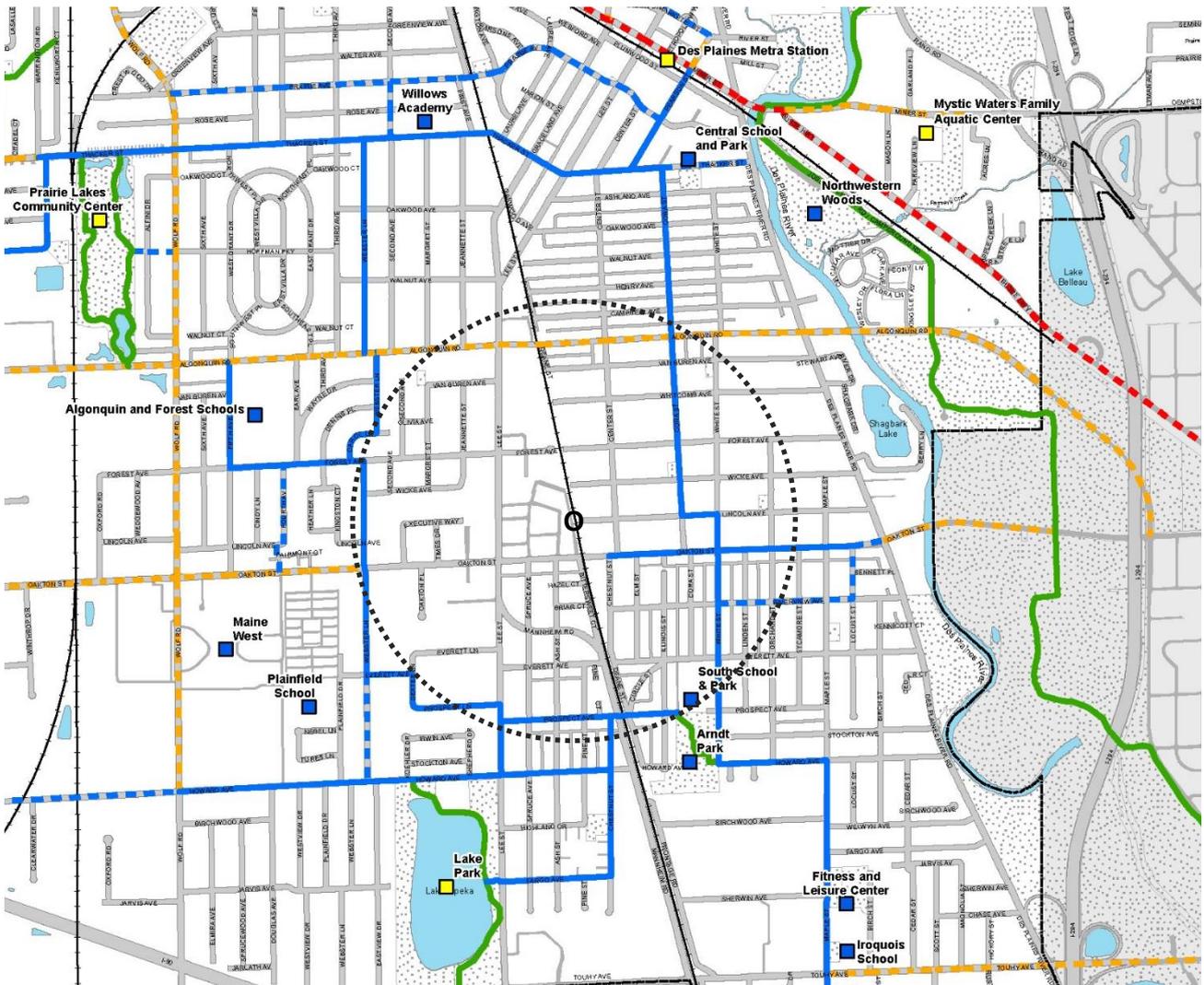
6.6.3 Non-motorized Access

Due to the limited opportunities for east-west movement and a general lack of amenities or infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists (aside from the generally complete sidewalk network), non-motorized access within the station area is particularly constrained. Efforts to improve the community’s bicycle infrastructure have been taken in recent years though, including the adoption of a citywide Complete Streets Policy in 2012, and ongoing route and trail enhancements. The City’s Proposed Bike Network Map, last updated in 2016, also provides an indication of future plans for non-motorized access within the station area (Figure 6-10).

Conversations with local stakeholders, including representatives of the community’s bike coalition, indicated that bicycle use is common in the station area, but generally occurs along residential side streets and avoids major arterials. This observation is supported by the Bike Network Map’s designation of Cora Street/White Street as an Active Local Route, which represents the station area’s preferred north-south bike corridor.

As noted above, east-west movement across the CN Railway tracks is severely constrained and is likely to remain that way in the future with only two enhanced track crossings. The proposed bike network indicates that Algonquin Road has been identified as a future east-west local arterial route, while Prospect Road is an existing local route on the far south end. East of the tracks, Oakton Street is also recommended as an Active Local Route for bikes up until Des Plaines River Road, where it becomes a Proposed Arterial Route as it crosses over the Des Plaines River before connecting to the Des Plaines River Trail. However, at the time of this writing, few bicycle-related enhancements along Oakton have been observed. Riverview Avenue, located one block south of Oakton has also been proposed as a local bicycle route, though only for a limited distance between White and Locust Streets. All three primary east-west routes are intended to connect to the Des Plaines River Trail roughly one mile to the east of the proposed station, and establishing and enhancing this connection should remain an important goal moving forward.

Figure 6-10: City of Des Plaines Proposed Bike Network Map (2016)



Bike Route Legend

- Active Local Route
- Proposed Local Route
- Active Local Arterial Route
- Proposed Local Arterial Route
- Active Regional Route
- Proposed Regional Route
- Trail

6.6.4 Safety

A prevalence of vehicular crashes and pedestrian/vehicle conflicts was noted as a significant concern during discussions with local stakeholders. The station area is generally oriented toward automotive convenience, but a significant amount of pedestrian activity also exists—notably from students walking or biking to area schools. One of the larger issues within the station area affecting both pedestrians and bicyclists is the general lack of appropriately marked or signed pedestrian crossings, which is especially relevant for crossings across the two main arterials. The arterial crossings that do exist are relatively far apart and offer little in the way of markings or safety enhancements beyond standard crosswalk striping. The result is a decreased level of pedestrian safety and comfort, which will need to be addressed if increased pedestrian activity and a heightened emphasis on walkability is desired.

The lack of east-west crossings of the CN Railway tracks is another potential safety concern that may need to be addressed as part of any future Metra station implementation efforts. On-site observations by project team members in fall 2018 indicated that informal track crossings by local neighborhood residents may be common. Evidence of track crossings was especially evident near Forest Avenue, which is a prominent east-west pedestrian travel route for area residents.

Another possible safety concern is that a new station at Oakton would incrementally increase gate downtown at the Oakton railroad crossing. This has the potential to impact response time for calls east of the CN tracks for Fire Station 62 emergency vehicles.

6.7 Environmental Screening

Storm water retention within the station area is limited to a handful of locations along the west side of the tracks to the north and south of Forest Avenue. However, these are generally intended to serve existing development. A review of municipal infrastructure data indicates that the vast majority of storm water catchment and conveyance occurs through sub-surface infrastructure—generally within or along public right of ways. The provision of additional infrastructure for catchment will likely be part of any future redevelopment efforts.

While some degree of separation or buffering between the tracks and adjacent residential and commercial land uses does exist within the station area, concerns about noise and pollution have been noted by local residents. These impacts and concerns are likely to remain whether or not a new Metra station is implemented, due to the regular use of the tracks for freight and passenger service.

7. Considerations

In addition to the existing conditions analysis outlined above, it is important to consider several other topics to better understand and assess the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street Station market. These include:

- Finding from previously completed and ongoing planning efforts
- Historical and projected socioeconomic growth
- Land acquisition consideration
- Potential land use conflicts

7.1 Existing Planning Studies

A significant amount of planning and analysis relevant to the potential station site has been completed in recent years. Findings relevant to this Feasibility Study are summarized below.

Oakton Street/Elmhurst Road Corridor Study, 2009 | This Plan included four separate districts along Oakton Street and Elmhurst Road, two of which are relevant to the potential Oakton Street Station site: the Oakton Retail District to the west of the CN tracks, and the Oakton Mixed-use District to the east. The Vision statements for the two districts are as follows:

- Oakton Retail District is a mix of large format retail and mixed-use development providing a regional destination...Its attractive shopping environment creates a unique sense of place within Des Plaines.
- Oakton Mixed-use District is a unique place...Its traditional commercial development pattern will be the foundation for improvements that help create a strong pedestrian environment and focal point for the community. New activities and destinations attract residents and visitors...and re-establish it as one of the city's great places to live, work, and play.

The Oakton Retail District redevelopment plan includes features such as a more pedestrian-oriented environment (e.g., reduced setbacks for commercial properties along Oakton Street and Lee Street) and higher-density residential along Executive Way, while still retaining large-footprint commercial like the Oaks Shopping Center.

The Oakton Mixed-use District redevelopment plan includes a destination commercial and open space, including a public green with market arcade and commercial redevelopment on the north side of Oakton between White and Orchard Streets. This is one of the two targeted mixed-use redevelopment areas, along with the parcel immediate to the east of the potential NCS infill station site. The plan emphasizes parking infill, access and management to ensure that customers to corridor businesses—as well as residents along the corridor—can reach their destinations. It also includes streetscaping and gateway improvements to aid in attracting customers and new businesses.

Cumberland Station Area TOD Plan, 2010 | Intended to guide and spur TOD near the UP-NW Cumberland Station, this Plan focused on revitalizing the commercial area near the station, particularly within a quarter mile. The study found a need for significant improvements in vehicular and pedestrian circulation for safety and improved flow, as well as a need to ensure that future developments are less auto-oriented in nature. Analysis identified potential to support additional restaurants, specialty retail, and professional dry-cleaning. Design guidelines include features like improved pedestrian facilities, façade and streetscaping/landscaping improvements, parking reconfiguration, an upgraded stationhouse (completed spring 2019), and targeted private sector redevelopment, among others. A representation of the long-term plan is provided in Figure 7-1. The Cumberland Station TOD Plan is representative of the City’s long-standing commitment to aligning land use policies and dedicating resources to better support transit as an attractive and convenient travel mode.

Figure 7-1: Cumberland Station Long-Range Master Plan



Source: Cumberland Station Area TOD Plan (2011)

Active Transportation Plan, 2011 | This plan makes note of opportunities to improve non-motorized access to Metra Stations to improve safety and accessibility. Recommendations include installing bike racks or covered bike parking near stations, installing a mid-block crossing on Northwest Highway to provide a refuge for pedestrians trying to reach the Metra station or Pace bus stop, or making other infrastructure improvements (e.g., traffic signal, underpass) to ensure that the impediments to accessing transit are minimized. These same considerations should hold for the potential NCS infill station in Des Plaines. This plan also makes note of a potential future Metra Station near Oakton Street, as well as potential stations along the proposed Metra STAR Line (not under active consideration by Metra at this time).

City of Des Plaines Economic Development Initiative, 2014 | This study examined five primary geographic priority areas across Des Plaines, in addition to ancillary and other sites, to find and evaluate opportunities for economic development. One of the priority areas was the Oakton Street Corridor.

A citywide market overview determined that the area has strong demographic support, despite the lower median income than other nearby Chicagoland suburbs. The housing market is relatively affordable and thus attractive to first-time home buyers, and there is a scarcity of inventory, yet limited appetite for new single-family development. The study does, however, see opportunity for multi-family development, assuming it’s of sufficiently large size to be profitable (e.g., 150 to 200 units). Des Plaines is experiencing growing diversity in its population, which suggests growth in addressing diverse needs.

The retail portrait is less strong. There are no significant concentrations of national retailers and little cohesion to the retail space, which makes it difficult to compete with a number of nearby retail

destinations for market share. Several near-term opportunity outlet types are identified, such as specialty food, limited service restaurants, pub/tavern, cosmetics/beauty, among others.

The office market is similarly challenged, and recommendations focus on filling vacancies downtown rather than building new. Redevelopment of the O'Hare Lakes Office Plaza as mixed-use is also recommended.

In terms of strategy, citywide recommendations are to focus on addressing issues with roads and the river, to the greatest extent possible, and ease of doing business. Specific implementation steps for the Oakton Street Corridor are to improve curb appeal and focus on retail gaps in eating and drinking establishments. Funding could be pursued via a mechanism such as a TIF or SSA district in the Oakton Street Corridor. A study into the feasibility of implementing a TIF district in the Oakton Street Corridor is currently underway.

A Comprehensive Plan for Des Plaines, 2019 | This plan espouses a number of principles that support a potential infill NCS station in Des Plaines. For example, it is typically recommended that the creation of a major transportation amenity such as a transit station be accompanied by a supporting mix of land uses to ensure that the station is well-used; this mix of high-density residential and commercial land uses is often referred to as transit-oriented development (TOD). The Comprehensive Plan recommends expanding mixed-use development targets downtown, near the existing Cumberland Metra Station, and along Oakton Street (i.e., the potential site identified in this memorandum). The plan highlights the need to provide a range of housing options such as townhomes and other higher-density multifamily residential properties (which are considered transit-supportive), and recommends updating zoning along the Oakton Street corridor to permit townhomes, rowhouses, and mixed-use development. Another plan recommendation is to incorporate inclusive growth principles by prioritizing investments in economically disconnected areas (EDAs); the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) identifies the area to the southwest of the intersection of Lee Street and Mannheim as an EDA, a portion of which is within the half-mile station area.

The future land use map in the Comprehensive Plan indicated that the portion of the station area to the east of the CN tracks is intended for lower-density urban mix with residential, and the Oakton Street corridor to the west is commercial, with single-family residential to the south and west of Lee Street. These future land use designations are compatible with the transit-oriented development that may be expected to occur in tandem with the construction of a Metra station near the intersection of Oakton and Mannheim.

Other recommendations specific to the Oakton site include a recommendation to re-evaluate the above-mentioned Oakton Street Corridor study in light of the final recommendations from this study, complete a traffic and/or parking study for Oakton Street (as local businesses complain about parking and congestion issues), evaluate the implementation of a tax increment financing (TIF) or special service agreement (SSA) district to fund projects along the Oakton corridor such as streetscaping, façade improvements, parcel assembly for larger developments, public parking, etc.

Part of the Comprehensive Plan—the Existing Conditions Issues and Opportunities chapter—completed a retail gap analysis, incorporating a 10-minute drive from the intersection of Oakton Street and Mannheim Road, finding that the opportunities are mostly auto-oriented retail outlets, which are less relevant as a component of TOD due to their typically lower densities. One exception is potentially “General Merchandise Stores.” The understanding is that there is a great deal of competing retail nearby, and that it will be difficult to compete, particularly without supporting

demographic growth to increase demand. The existing conditions analysis found that the Des Plaines housing market is performing comparably to or slightly better than benchmarks, and that there is an opportunity to diversify the housing stock to include more multifamily residential.

The Existing Conditions reports that perceptions of vacancy along the East Oakton Street Corridor are high, and that the small size of parcels and shallow depth limit large-scale redevelopment, making parcel assembly by public agencies potentially impactful in supporting revitalization of the corridor. At the intersection of Oakton and Lee, dubbed in the plan Central Oakton, it is recommended that the focus remain on filling existing vacant retail, repositioning aging retail properties, and—in the longer term—filling in under-utilized parking lots or vacant sites. The plan identifies few opportunities for expansion in the West Oakton Industrial Corridor.

7.2 Socioeconomic Growth

CMAQ data on the population, households, and employment per local allocation zone were gathered for the market shed. The current and future household and employment levels shed light on the potential feasibility of the Des Plaines Oakton Street Station in terms of market demand. We assess these values more holistically here, but the forecast values are also incorporated into the travel demand forecasting in an upcoming technical memorandum. For a visualization of the data for the origin and destination market sheds, see Figure 7-2 and Figure 7-3.

In terms of households within the origin rider market sheds, the Des Plaines Oakton Street Station is expected to grow, adding 0.8% households annually 2015 through 2050, which translates to 2,390 new households, or a total of 9,817 households by 2050 (Table 7-1). This is faster than the annual growth rates of nearby NCS and UP-NW origin market sheds, which are expected to have 0.5% to 0.7% more households each year.

Table 7-1: Origin Market Shed CMAQ Household History and Forecast by Subzone

Line	Station Market Shed	Households		Household Change (2015-2050)	
		2015	2050	Absolute	Annual
NCS	O'Hare Transfer	3,284	3,870	586	0.5%
NCS	Oakton	7,427	9,817	2,390	0.8%
NCS	Prospect Heights	13,524	16,671	3,146	0.6%
UP-NW	Dee Road	12,172	15,074	2,901	0.6%
UP-NW	Des Plaines	13,673	16,433	2,759	0.5%
UP-NW	Cumberland	8,866	11,437	2,571	0.7%

SOURCE: CMAQ

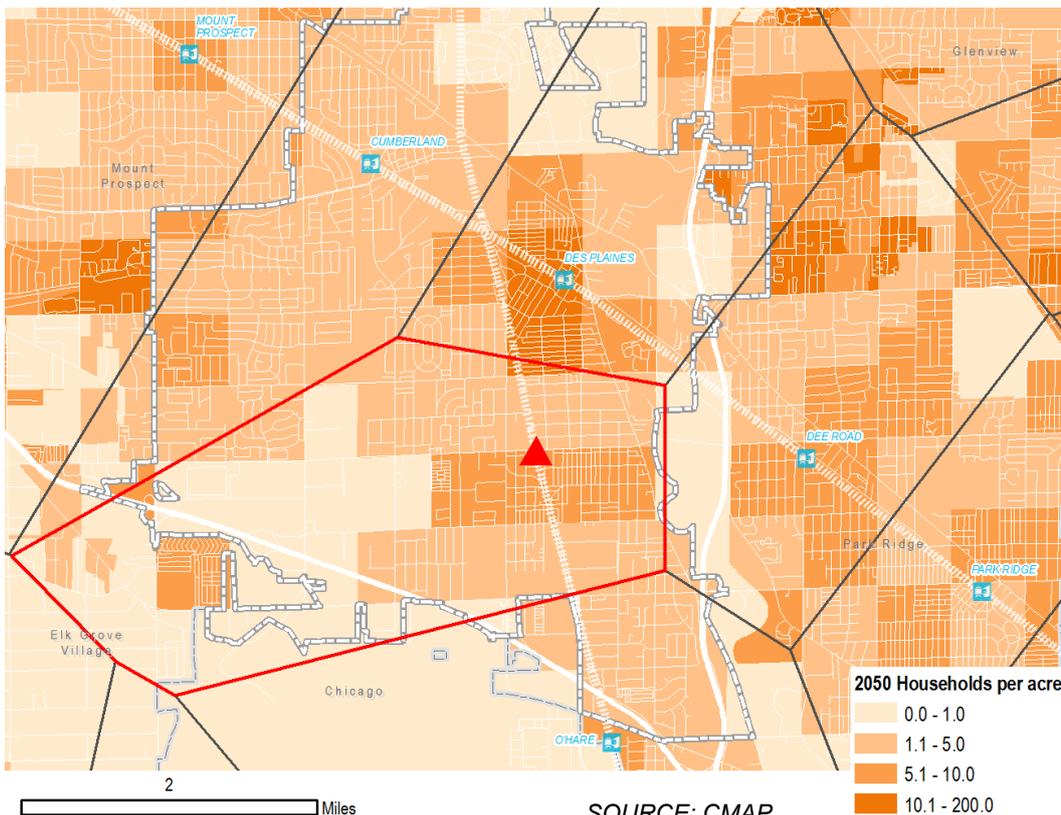
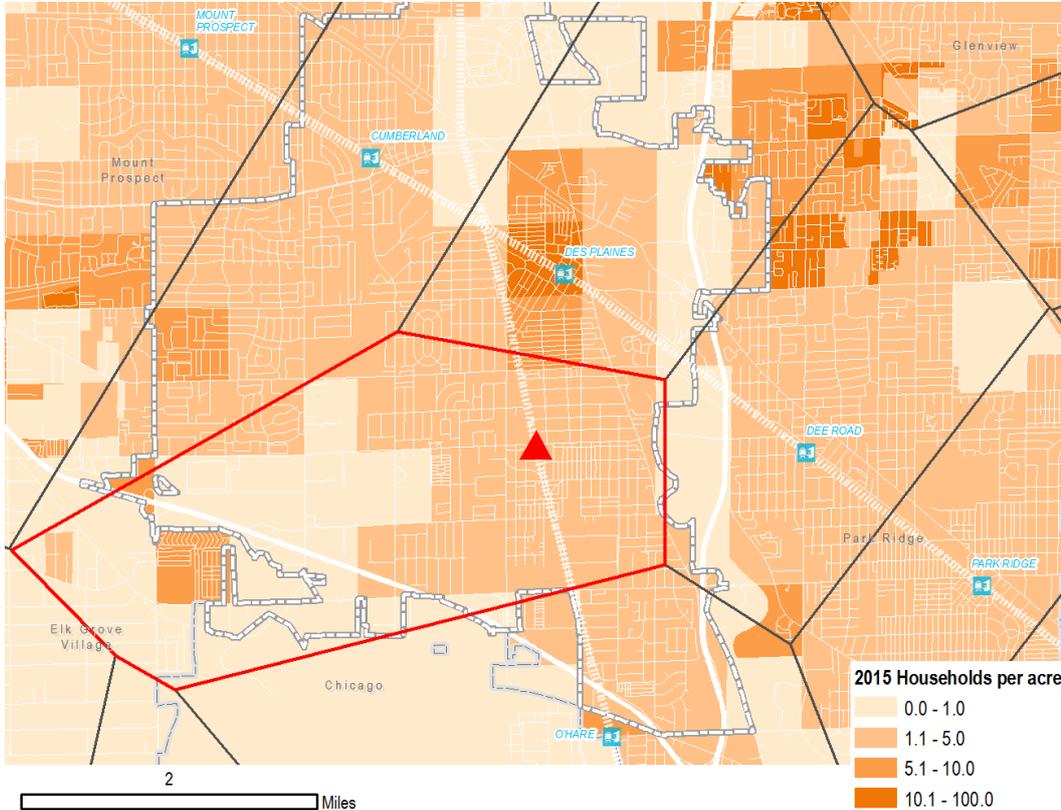
Table 7-2: Destination Market Shed CMAQ Employment History and Forecast by Subzone

Line	Station	Employment		Employment Change (2015-2050)	
		2015	2050	Absolute	Annual
NCS	O'Hare Transfer	16,498	18,811	2,313	0.4%
NCS	Oakton	8,337	9,651	1,313	0.4%
NCS	Prospect Heights	3,738	4,495	756	0.5%
UP-NW	Dee Road	7,639	8,365	726	0.3%
UP-NW	Des Plaines	7,472	8,163	691	0.3%
UP-NW	Cumberland	4,645	5,405	760	0.4%

SOURCE: CMAQ

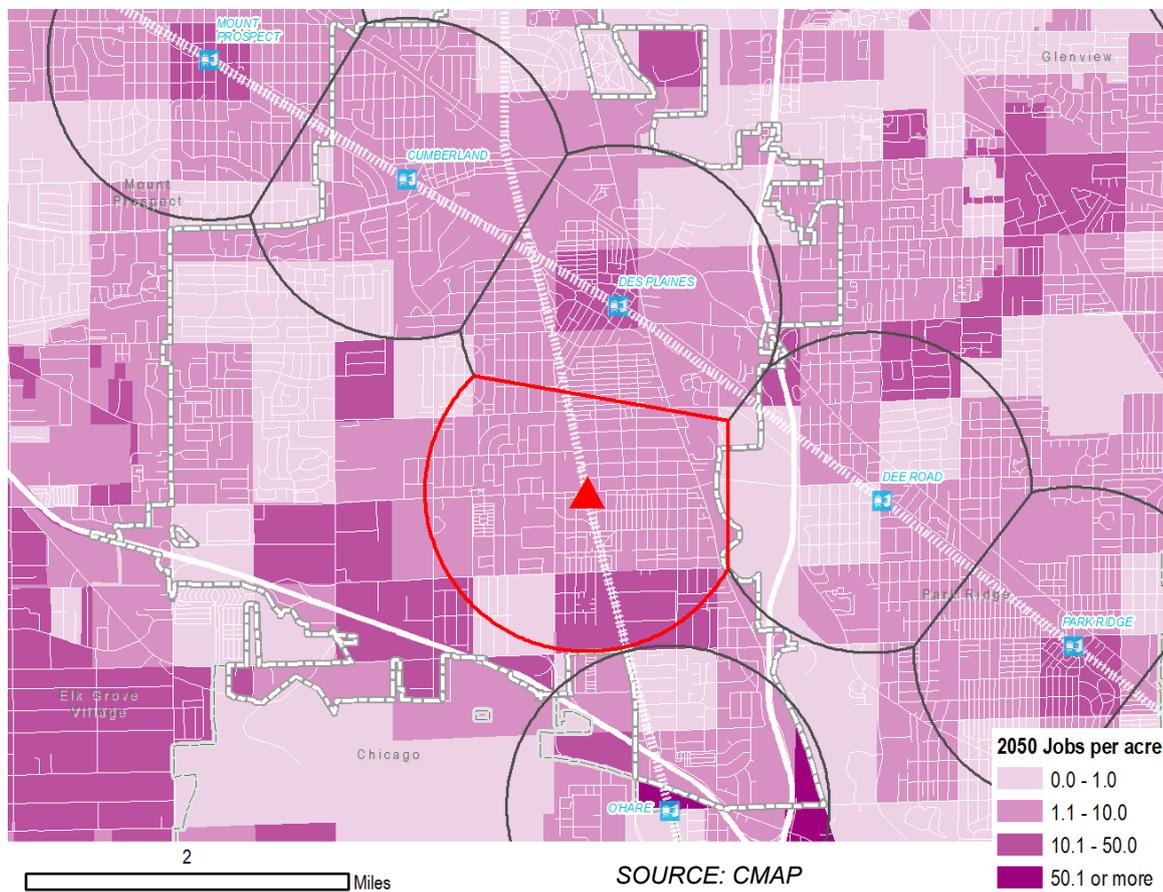
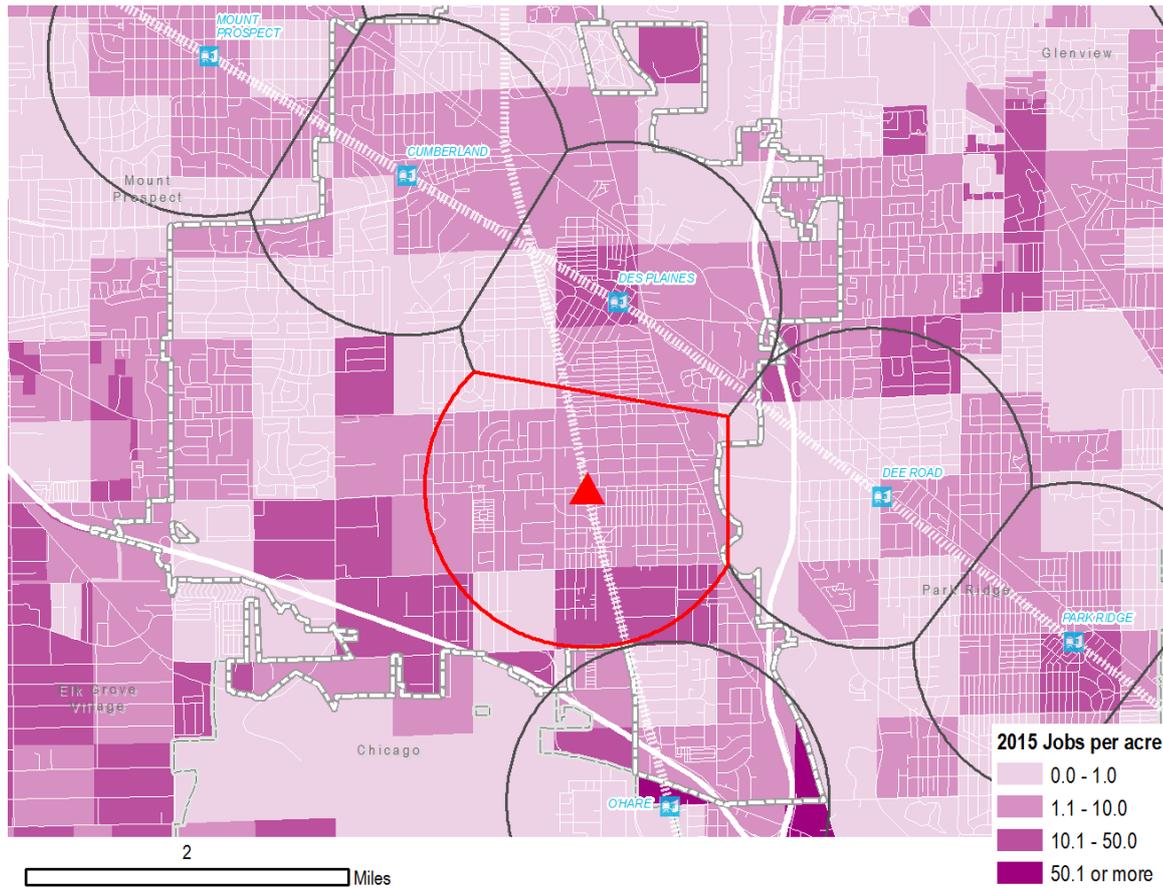
Similar to adjacent NCS stations O’Hare Transfer and Prospect Heights, the potential Des Plaines Oakton Street station is expected to grow jobs more slowly, approximately 0.4% annually (Table 7-2). This is slightly faster job growth than is expected in the destination market shed of UP-NW Dee Road and Des Plaines stations. The Des Plaines Oakton Street station is expected to have 1,313 more workers by 2050, growing from about 8,337 to 9,651 workers.

Figure 7-2: 2015 and 2050 Household Density by Subzone



SOURCE: CMAP

Figure 7-3: 2015 and 2050 Employment Density by Subzone



To summarize, the CMAP forecasts show growth from existing conditions for both the potential origin and destination Metra ridership markets for a Des Plaines Oakton Street station, though the area's growth rate is not projected to be exceptional in comparison with that of neighboring stations. It is important to note, however, that CMAP forecasts are completed at a metro level, and thus a more detailed analysis is often worthwhile in the case of smaller study areas, such as the station market sheds analyzed here.

7.3 Land Acquisition

Vacant or undeveloped land along Oakton Street to the immediate east of the proposed station location represents an opportunity to quickly implement critical station features such as commuter parking, drop-off lanes, and passenger waiting areas. Land acquisition and consolidation will be required, as the property in question is not currently owned or controlled by the City; future acquisition or shared-use agreements with multiple owners will be required. Another important land consideration is the ComEd-owned utility corridor that runs adjacent to the east side of the tracks. Initial conversations with the utility have indicated that while shared use of—and access through—this property will be possible, development of any formal structures intended to support rail service will not be permitted.

On the west side of the proposed station, the size and consolidated ownership of the Oaks Shopping Center, whose property runs along the entire length of the anticipated platform, may provide an opportunity for expanded station facilities and amenities. However, the site's existing businesses and associated access and loading areas suggest that Metra station improvements on this land may need to occur over a longer-term implementation program. Preparation of any future plans for the west side of the station should also include a thorough study of opportunities for new transit-oriented development (TOD) that can support increased Metra ridership and overall economic vitality within the station area.

Beyond the land immediately adjacent to the proposed station, the City of Des Plaines is also actively involved in coordinating and marketing a potential TOD opportunity at the western edge of the station area. Located along the north side of Oakton Street at the intersection of Times Drive and Executive Way, the roughly 11-acre site has recently been consolidated and cleared. The majority of the site is owned by a private entity, but the City does retain ownership and control of the existing street rights-of-way and has expressed direct interest in vacating these lands to enable a larger mixed-use residential development.

7.4 Conflicting Land Uses

There are few land uses within the station area that would preclude or greatly diminish the feasibility or viability of a new Metra station. However, due to the mature nature of the surrounding neighborhoods and existence of generally more restrictive single-family zoning, dramatic changes to the surrounding residential neighborhoods are unlikely in the future. On the other hand, the area's commercial uses—and large shopping centers in particular—do represent a significant opportunity for future infill development or redevelopment. Many of these properties are inefficiently laid out or under-utilized, or have high vacancy rates and are generally poorly positioned relative to current market trends.

Another likely conflict point is traffic congestion on Oakton, which is widely viewed as an existing issue that may be made worse by increased railroad crossing times and higher traffic counts as the result of a new station and related development. While many local stakeholders have advocated for

solutions to the current congestion that would favor auto-served businesses and travel, such as increased roadway widths, removal of on-street parking, and increased off-street surface parking; these interventions would seem to go against a vision for a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented district character in line with best practices for transit-served locations and development.

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