

NORTHERN LAKE SHORE

TRAIL CONNECTIVITY PLAN



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS MEMORANDUM

JANUARY 2020

Introduction

The Northern Lakeshore Trail Connectivity Plan seeks to improve walking and bicycling infrastructure between and among Winthrop Harbor, Zion, Beach Park, Waukegan, and North Chicago, helping to connect trail networks to Lake Michigan and Illinois Beach State Park. The Existing Conditions Report, stakeholder engagement, and participation by the steering committee helped to create consensus around gaps, barriers, and potential opportunities. Efforts are ongoing to advise, identify, and support plan development. This memorandum outlines the key themes and recommendations, is structured to facilitate discussion with the steering committee, and serves as an inventory of all potential recommendations to be included in the draft plan. The project purpose, vision and goals can be found in the Existing Conditions Report found on the [project website](#).

Summary of Key Findings

The Existing Conditions Report analyzed relevant factors that impact the study area's walking and bicycling network, culture, and constraints. Informed by the core team, steering committee, stakeholders and community, this input serves as the foundation for recommendations in the Northern Lakeshore Connectivity Plan. The key findings presented in the Existing Conditions Report and summarized below serve as summary statements based on an examination of evidence for possible trail and path alignments, agency coordination, and other factors that impact feasibility.

1. A Preliminary Walking and Biking Framework Exists

- Expanding on the existing Go Lake County programs and creating a partnership between Go Lake County and the municipality park districts and communities would expand the opportunities for all residents.
- The school districts could also initiate Safe Routes to School programs to educate children and adults on the available resources and diminish the real and perceived safety barriers preventing members of the communities from walking and biking.
- Popular events can be better connected to main multimodal thoroughfares and the unique natural resources in the area. This can boost tourism and encourage alternative modes of transportation.

2. Popular Destinations and Events are Opportunities for Growth

- Lack of infrastructure, wayfinding and information makes it difficult for people to take advantage of key destinations, such as Illinois Beach State Park, North Point Marina, Waukegan Harbor and Marina, Metra Stations, etc.
- Opportunities exist for municipal partners to work more closely with Lake County, and for municipalities in the study area to work with each other to better promote destinations and events.

3. Improved Strategic Connections Increase Regional Potential

- The study area municipalities are most interested in creating a continuous north-south trail network that links natural assets and amenities along the lakefront and connects the study area from Wisconsin to southern Lake County.
- Improving and enhancing east-west connections will provide better access from communities to the lakefront, key destinations and to main bike/pedestrian thoroughfares.
- All connections will have to overcome obstacles such as highways and arterial street barriers, lack of lighting, minimal signalized crosswalks and sidewalks, low connectivity between Metra Stations and perceived barriers such as lack of wayfinding and socioeconomically and cultural factors.

4. Transportation Agencies are Key Partners, But Operate Under Constrained Resources

- Municipalities can work with transportation agencies (Illinois Department of Transportation, Lake County Division of Transportation) to help plan, facilitate and fund improvements.
- Improvements may have to be incremental to get the appropriate funding.

- All of these methods for obtaining funding or help from statewide agencies have one thing in common: local leadership, stakeholder support, and financial contributions are key to advancing local priorities.

5. Tourism Growth is Constrained by Factors Beyond Jurisdiction

- Improving and enhancing trails within Illinois Beach State Park in coordination with the IDNR is key to increasing connectivity in the study area.
- Trails, paths and other forms of transit can help bridge this gap between Metra stations for the northern half of the study area.
- Extending wayfinding signage beyond the immediate station area for Pace and Metra stations is important to connect popular destinations and natural resources.

Key Recommendations

1. Connect Walking and Bicycling Paths Directly into Illinois Beach State Park.

Bicyclists and pedestrians have to travel at least a mile from the entrance to Illinois Beach State Park to the shore. Providing walking and bicycling infrastructure, and improving rail crossings and signage will increase connectivity, comfort, and accessibility between the municipalities and the beach. Municipalities should partner with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and area tourism-related groups to seek funding and increase capital improvement opportunities to and within Illinois Beach State Park. **Table 1** identifies key corridors recommended to connect Sheridan Road (IL 137) to the shore of Lake Michigan. **Table 2** identifies other key lakefront connections to close gaps or create new corridors to the lakefront, including the opening of a new, potentially non-motorized access point to Illinois Beach State Park at Beach Road.

Table 1. Key East-West Corridors to Connect Sheridan Road to Lake Michigan

Corridor (From Sheridan Road to Lake Michigan)	Mobility	Accessibility	Comfort		Right-of-Way Feasibility
			Pedestrian	Bicyclist	
7th Street	Low	High	High	High	Medium
9th Street	High	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
14 th Street	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
17th Street / Foss Park Avenue	High	High	Low	High	High
27th Street	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
29th Street	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Argonne Drive	High	High	High	High	High
Beach Road	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Belvidere Street	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Buckley Road (IL 137)	High	High	Low	Low	Medium
Russell Road	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Corridor (From Sheridan Road to Lake Michigan)	Mobility	Accessibility	Comfort		Right-of-Way Feasibility
			Pedestrian	Bicyclist	
Shiloh Boulevard	High	High	High	High	Medium
Through Foss Park	High	Medium	High	High	High
Wadsworth Road	High	High	Low	Low	High
Washington Street	High	Medium	High	Low	Low
ComEd Right-of-Way	High	High	N/A	N/A	High

Table 2. Other Key Lakefront Connections

Corridor	Mobility	Accessibility	Comfort		Right-of-Way Feasibility
			Pedestrian	Bicyclist	
7th Street from Village Park to North Point Marina	Low	High	High	High	Medium
Mathon Drive and Seahorse Drive to Waukegan Municipal Beach (planned for 2020)	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Beach Road to Beach Trail and Patomos Avenue*	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
South Avenue from Waukegan Ravine to Market Street	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High

*New Access Point

2. Create Continuous, Multimodal Paths Across the Entire Study Area

Continuous multimodal paths are recommended along critical north-south, as well as east-west corridors to each end of the study area. If these routes can be improved for bicycle and pedestrian facilities they will create highly connected networks within municipalities, between municipalities and to important destinations. Creating exclusive nonmotorized facilities will help to improve safety along these corridors. It also will provide logical termini and improve mobility, comfort, and accessibility as reviewed in the Existing Conditions Report. **Table 3** shows proposed continuous multimodal connections and current multimodal evaluation results.

Recommendations to Improve Multimodal Connectivity:

- **Increase Pedestrian Comfort.** Recommendations for corridors with low/medium pedestrian comfort may include providing sidewalk links between disconnected paths, increased signage, and added barriers between vehicular traffic and pedestrian routes.
- **Increase Bicyclist Comfort.** Recommendations for corridors with low/medium bicyclist comfort may include proposed bike lanes in the right-of-way or on-street facilities with striping improvements or physical barriers to separate bicyclists from vehicles.
- **Improve Accessibility.** Recommendations for corridors with low/medium accessibility will focus on improving facilities that connect to regional trails or key destinations. This may include sidewalk improvements and improvements to cyclist facilities.
- **Overcome Feasibility Constraints.** Recommendations for corridors with low/medium right-of-way feasibility will suggest right-of-way acquisitions, easements, and traffic studies to provide information if a road diet is feasible.

Table 3. Proposed Continuous Multimodal Path Connections

Corridor	Mobility	Accessibility	Comfort		Right-of-Way Feasibility
			Pedestrian	Bicyclist	
Amstutz Expressway	High	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Wadsworth Road	High	Low	Low	Low	Low
Belvidere Road	High	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Grand Avenue	High	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Washington Street	High	Low	Low	Low	Medium
ComEd Right-of-Way	High	High	N/A	N/A	High
17th Street	High	High	Low	High	High
Shiloh Boulevard	High	High	High	High	Medium
29th Street	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Sheridan Road	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Rail Line (Abbot/ Abbvie Corporate Campus)	Medium	High	N/A	N/A	Medium
Patriot Path from Independence Grove to Robert McClory	High	High	High	High	Medium

3. Build Out Walking, Bicycling, and Wayfinding Infrastructure at Mobility Improvement Areas (MIA)

A Mobility Improvement Area (MIA) is defined as all potential pathways within a ¼ mile radius of a key destination. These include Metra Stations, high ridership bus stops, and other locations through communications with the community and community leaders. A photograph showing potential MIA and stakeholder input collected at the public meeting is shown in **Figure 1**.

There are four general improvements that can be made within the study area an MIA:

- 1. Build Sidewalks, Add Bike Lanes or Delineate Shoulders.** Completing sidewalk sections within ¼ mile radius of key destinations will improve walkability and accessibility. Where space is available, narrow roadways and add bike lanes. If shared spaces are more desired, mark shoulders to be used by people walking and bicycling without widening existing roadways.

- 2. Install Pedestrian and Bicycle Wayfinding.** Improving signage to key destinations will reduce perceived gaps in transportation and encourage members of the community to not only visit these destinations but to come by foot or bike. Metra trailblazer signs will be included in the recommendations and strategic locations of these signs will be crucial to connecting people to the Metra and bridging the gap between Metra stations.

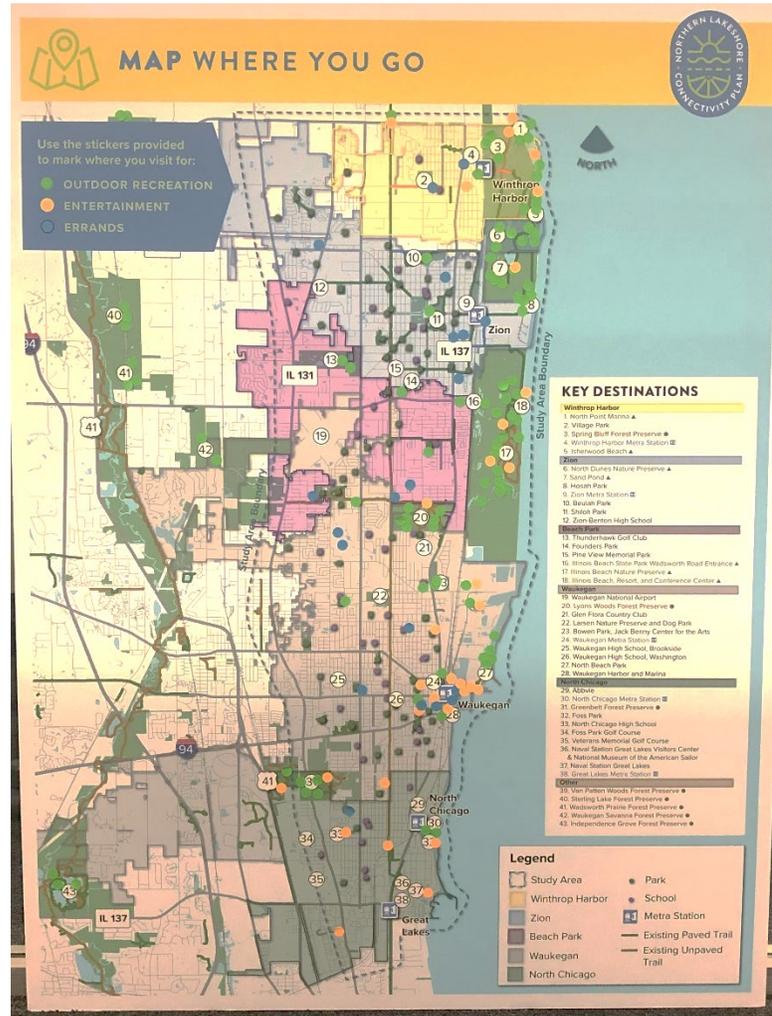


Figure 1: Map exercise from Public Meeting "Map Where You Go"

- 3. Construct / Improve Signalized Intersections.** Providing signalized intersections at ¼ mile spacing helps mitigate or eliminate conflicts between people walking with people driving, and improves safety for pedestrians in the presence of vehicular traffic. Adjusting signal timing and providing pedestrian push buttons can improve crossing conditions and has the potential to prioritize pedestrian movements at intersections.
- 4. Install Bus Pads and Shelters.** All Pace bus stops and terminals within the study area should be made accessible. High ridership bus stops and terminals should be upgraded to include shelters, real-time arrival information, and other amenities such as seating, bike parking, and other infrastructure to improve transit access and quality.

Proposed MIA are listed below:

- Metra Stations
- Pace Bus Stations
- Locations where Go Lake County Meets
- North Point Marina
- Spring Bluff Forest Preserve
- Isherwood Beach
- North Dune Nature Preserve
- Sand Pond
- Hosah Park
- Shiloh Park
- Harbor Front District
- Lyons Wood Forest Preserve
- Greenbelt Forrest Preserve
- Foss Park
- North Beach Park

Metra stations will be a key area of focus for the recommendations because of the presence of crashes near stations, levels of traffic stress, and stakeholder input citing safety concerns when walking or bicycling near Metra stations. Public workshop attendees were asked to identify where they felt unsafe walking and biking. Responses are shown in **Figure 2**.

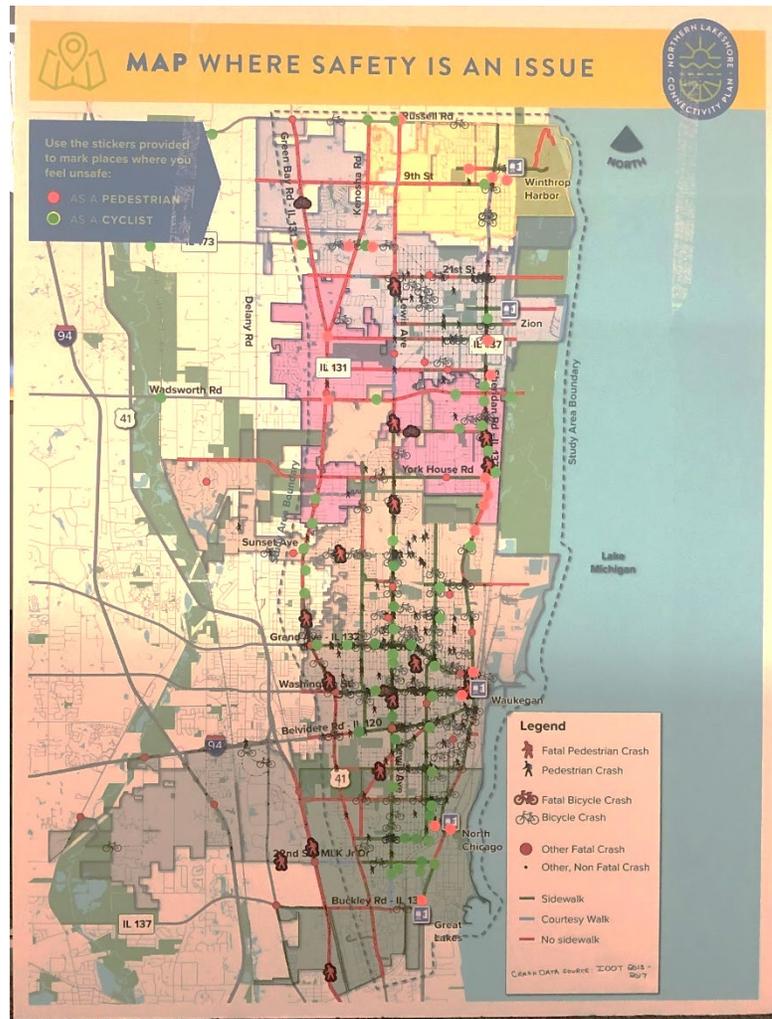


Figure 2: Map exercise "Map Where Safety Is An Issue"

4. Implement Year-Round Trail-Focused Programming

Stakeholders identified strong support for programming in all four seasons and an interest in inter-agency marketing. Stakeholders expressed enthusiasm for being outdoors and experiencing the exceptional natural resources located in their communities. The strong support shown during engagement activities highlights an appreciation for a sense of place where people live, and a willingness to engage in community activities. **Figure 3** shows the public responses on existing and proposed programs in all four seasons.

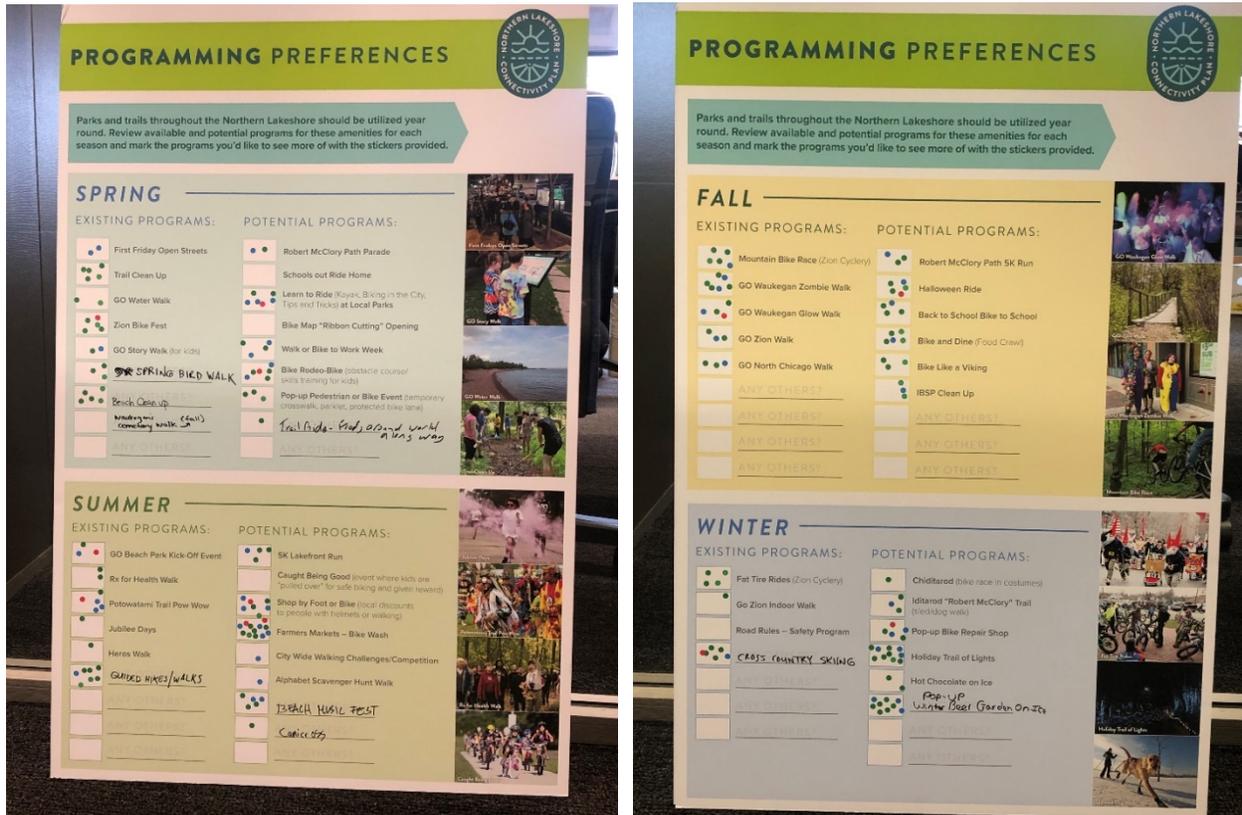


Figure 2: Programming Preferences Activity

In addition to providing feedback on the programmed events already in place and those suggested by the project team, community members shared their thoughts on new ideas for events. For example, people expressed interest for beach cleanup events currently held at Illinois Beach State Park, bird appreciation walks in the spring, guided hikes and beach music festivals in the summer, cemetery walks in the fall, and cross country skiing and beer gardens on ice in the winter. There are many great ideas for programs year-round that are supported by the community.

A key recommendation for programming activities includes the establishment of a regional calendar that cross-references events throughout the Northern Lakeshore region. It is recommended that quarterly coordination occur among agencies that maintain event calendars for events in the area such as Lake County Visitors Bureau, Metra, and Lake County Health Department. One or more agencies should compile this information to improve communication between municipalities and regional agencies, which will provide cross-promotional and advertising opportunities. A summary of recommended programs is shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Program Recommendations

Legend		
	New Program	Continue or Expand Program
Season	Event	Description
Spring	Bike Rodeo	obstacle courses for biking and a skills training seminar
	Learn to Ride	occur in a local park and would be centered on instruction for how to kayak, tips and tricks to riding your bike in the city, ice skating tricks, etc.
	Beach Cleanup	Encourage community members to take care of their beaches and become stewards to the environment by cleaning up trash from the shoreline or helping to implement erosion control measures.
	Trail Cleanup	Clean trash and debris from trails. In the future these events could be used to install erosion control measures along the trail to keep them in use.
	Zion Bike Fest	There are several themed events that Zion Cyclery puts on, focusing on mountain biking, food tours, sunset beach cruises, and much more.
Summer	Farmer Market Bike Wash	Stand at local farmers markets where you could wash your bike. This would encourage people to bike to the farmers market and promote a life style where biking is a means of transportation and not just a hobby.
	First Fridays Open Streets	Local businesses would come together to provide discounts on a night or week where everyone who is shopping by bike or foot would receive a discount.
	Guided Hikes/Walks	Go Lake County hosts a series of guided walking events in municipalities with Go Programs. There is interest to expand this program and have guided/themed walking tours and hikes.
	Beach Music Festival	People gather at the beach and listen to music.
	Potawatomi Trail Pow Wow	Celebrates summer and native American heritage in Shiloh Park.
Fall	Halloween Ride	People come dressed in costume and ride a trail of choice.
	Bike and Dine Food Crawl	Involves biking around to get to know a municipality's gastronomic scene. This event could be a great way to showcase locations and restaurants communities are most proud of
	Zion Cyclery Fat Tire Rides	Mountain bike races in different terrains surrounding Zion with beautiful scenery and topography.
Winter	Holiday Trail of Lights	Involves Christmas lights along a trail or street and outdoor appreciation while biking or walking through the lights.
	Pop-Up Beer Garden on Ice	An adult event that occurs on the frozen lake. The program could be expanded to include activities for children.
	Cross Country Skiing	Scheduled group cross country skiing.
	Pop-Up Bike Repair Shop	Involves partnering with a business in the community and setting up a bike repair shop at their location.

5. Develop Regional Wayfinding Network and Brand

The purpose of the wayfinding recommendations will be to enhance citizen awareness of trail connectivity through a unified wayfinding system.

Conversations with community members and stakeholders have made clear the need for wayfinding signage—both to direct pedestrians and cyclists to the safest and most comfortable routes, and to alert drivers that they are on a designated bike route. A holistic signage system throughout the region could leverage the project brand as a driver for regional tourism and economic development. As part of the final plan, a wayfinding framework will be developed that identifies key locations for signage in the study area. This includes the area surrounding Metra Stations and key bus stops, and decision points for cyclist and pedestrians on existing trails to access the lake. These locations will be informed by conversations with local communities, as well as through resident feedback received at the community open house and via the interactive online map.

The framework will be organized by sign type, as supported by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Interagency Sign Design Manual. The final framework will highlight priority locations, conceptual designs for various sign types, and preliminary cost estimates to implement.

6. Continue and Expand Interagency Coordination

As part of key recommendations development, this plan recommends interagency coordination in the immediate term to seek potential scope additions to projects currently in development. The IDOT FY 2020-2025 Rebuild Illinois Highway Improvement Program, the Lake County 2024 Proposed Highway Improvement Program, and multiyear programs led by the municipalities are summarized in **Figure 4** and **Table 5**.

When roadway resurfacing or reconstruction is programmed, ADA accessibility improvements are considered. As such, these are opportunities for local agencies (municipalities) to propose scope additions and pay for the marginal cost of these additions. Through collaboration, these present an opportunity to add walking and bicycling infrastructure along transportation corridors, regardless of agency of jurisdiction.

Figure 3: Multi-year Program Map (IDOT 2020-2025, LCDOT 2020-2024)

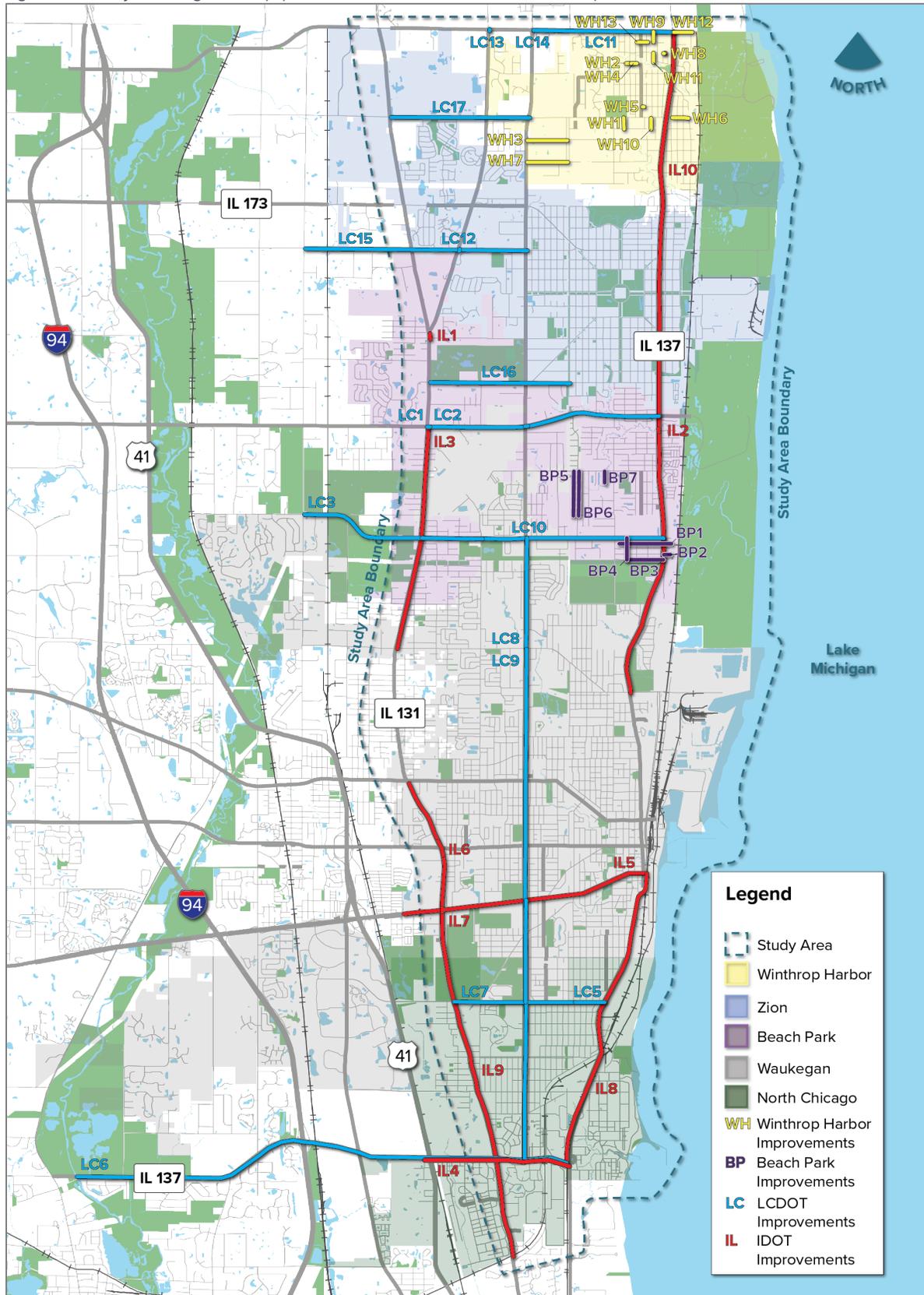


Table 5: Multi-year Program Table

Agency (Year)	No.	Limits	Type of Improvement
Beach Park (2020)	BP1	Bairstow Ave. from North Ave. to one block east of Sheridan Rd.	Resurfacing
	BP2	Paddock Ave. from Sheridan Rd. to one block east of Sheridan Rd.	Resurfacing
	BP3	Hendee Ave. from Garnett Ave. to Sheridan Rd.	Resurfacing
	BP4	Garnett Ave. from York House Rd. to Hendee Ave.	Resurfacing
	BP5	North Shore Ave. from Beach Rd. to Edgewood Rd.	Resurfacing
	BP6	Manor Ave. from Beach Rd. to Edgewood Rd.	Resurfacing
	BP7	Tewes Ct.	Resurfacing
Winthrop Harbor (2020)	WH1	Kimberly Ave. from 9 th St. to 10 th St.	Resurfacing
	WH2	4 th St. from Garnett Ave. to Thompson Ave.	Resurfacing
	WH3	11 th St. from W. Broadway Ave. to Lewis Ave.	Full width grind, patch and overlay
Winthrop Harbor (2021)	WH4	4 th St. from Thompson Ave. to Holdridge Ave.	Resurfacing
	WH5	8 th St. from Russell Ave. to 80' east of Russell Ave.	Resurfacing
	WH6	9 th St. from Fulton Ave. to South Park Ave.	Resurfacing
Winthrop Harbor (2022)	WH7	13 th St. from Lewis Ave. to W. Broadway Ave.	Resurfacing
	WH8	Kirkwood Ave. from 2 nd St. to end of block	Resurfacing
	WH9	3 rd St. from Runyward Ave. to end of block	Full width grind, patch and overlay
Winthrop Harbor (2023)	WH10	Charles Ave. from 658' south of 9 th St. to 9 th St.	Resurfacing
	WH11	Kirkwood Ave. from 3 rd St. to end of block	Resurfacing
	WH12	1 st St. from Sheridan Rd. to Oakdale Ave.	Full width grind, patch and overlay
	WH13	2 nd St. from Holdridge Ave. to Geddes Ave.	Full width grind, patch and overlay

Table 5: Multi-year Program Table (continued)

Agency (Year)	No.	Limits	Type of Improvement
Lake County (2019-2024)	LC1	Wadsworth Rd. at Green Bay Rd.	Intersection Expansion
	LC2	Wadsworth Rd. from Green Bay Rd. to Sheridan Rd.	3R Preservation, 3R Resurfacing
	LC3	York House Rd. from Delany Rd. to Sheridan Rd.	Resurfacing
	LC4	York House Rd. from Green Bay Rd. to East of McAree Rd.	Reconstruction Modernization - 2 lanes to 3 lanes
	LC5	14th St. from Jackson St. to Sheridan Rd.	Resurfacing
	LC6	Patriot Path from Des Plaines River Trail to Sage Ct. / Robert McClory Bike Path	Bike Path Modernization
	LC7	14th St. from Green Bay Rd. to Sheridan Rd.	Reconstruction from Green Bay Rd. to Jackson St., Signal Interconnect and Lighting from Jackson St. to Sheridan Rd.
	LC8	Lewis Ave. from York House Rd. to Sunset Ave.	Resurfacing
	LC9	Lewis Ave. from 14 th St. to Belvidere Rd.	Reconstruction
	LC10	Wadsworth Rd. at Lewis Ave.	Intersection Modernization - Construct 5-lane section
	LC11	Russell Rd. from Lewis Ave. to Sheridan Rd.	Resurfacing
	LC12	Kenosha Rd. at 21 st St.	Roundabout or Traffic Signal
	LC13	Russell Rd. at Kenosha Rd.	Roundabout or Traffic Signal
	LC14	Russell Rd. at Lewis Ave.	Roundabout or Traffic Signal
	LC15	21st St. from Delany Rd. to Lewis Ave.	Resurfacing
	LC16	33rd St. from Green Bay Rd. to Galilee Ave.	Resurfacing
	LC17	9th St. from Lewis Ave. to Sheridan Rd.	Resurfacing
IDOT (2020-2025)	IL1	Green Bay Rd. from 29 th St. to Kenosha Rd. (proposed)	Intersection Reconstruction
	IL2	Sheridan Rd. from Bull Creek to 0.2 miles south of Wadsworth Rd.	Culvert Replacement and ADA improvements
	IL3	Green Bay Rd. from Wadsworth Rd. to Sunset Ave.	Reconstruction
	IL4	Buckley Rd. from West of Frontenac St. to Bobby Thompson Expy. (IL 137)	Pavement Resurfacing, ADA Improvements, Pedestrian Signals
	IL5	Belvidere St. (IL 120) from Knight Ave. to Amstutz Expy. (IL 137)	Rehabilitation - Pavements, Standard Overlay and ADA Improvements
	IL6	Green Bay Rd. (IL 131) at Washington St.	Add Turning Lanes
	IL7	Green Bay Rd.(IL 131) at Belvidere (IL 120)	Traffic Signal Modernization
	IL8	Genesee St. (IL 137) from Belvidere St. to Buckley Rd.	Rehabilitation - Pavements, Standard Overlay and ADA Improvements
	IL9	Green Bay Rd. (IL 131) from South of Grand Ave. (IL 132) to EJ&E Railroad	Rehabilitation - Pavements, Standard Overlay and ADA Improvements
	IL10	Sheridan Rd. (IL 137) from Russell Rd. to Greenwood Rd.	Rehabilitation - Pavements, Standard Overlay and ADA Improvements

