

# Stone Avenue Metra Station

La Grange, IL

Station Area Access Improvements

*Summary & Recommendations Report*



Chicago Metropolitan  
Agency for Planning



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May 2012



## Background / Overview

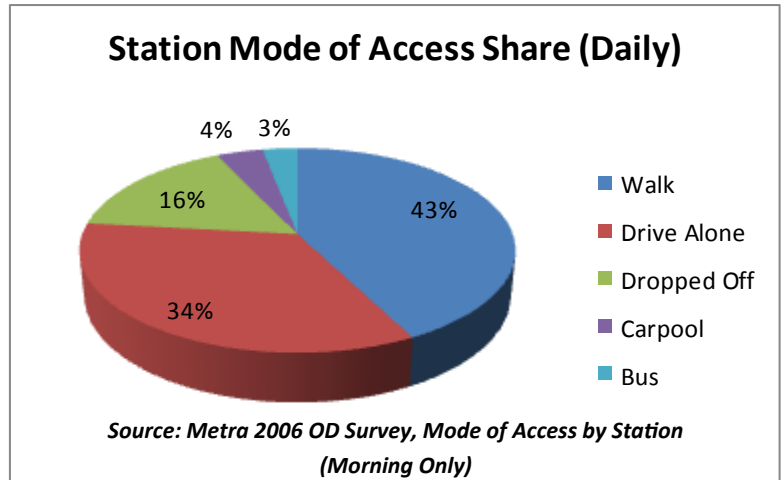
The Village of La Grange requested the assistance of the RTA to assess various commuter, pedestrian and access-related issues in and around the Stone Avenue Station area. In response, the RTA organized a half-day meeting with the Village, BNSF Railway, Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC), Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Metra and the Active Transportation Alliance (ATA) to discuss these issues and recommend potential solutions. The following report summarizes the recommendations derived from this meeting and can be used as a guide for the Village.

### Stone Avenue Metra Station

The **Stone Avenue** station is located on Metra's BNSF railway line in La Grange, IL, 14 miles west of Chicago's Union Station (the line's eastern terminus). The original station house was built in 1901, situated between Burlington and Hillgrove Avenues. Crossing access for commuters, pedestrians and automobiles is located at Brainard Avenue, just west of the station.

There are a total of 38 commuter trains that stop at Stone Avenue Station each weekday with 988 total daily boardings (*Metra 2006 Boardings and Alighting Counts*). As shown on the adjacent graph, commuters access the station via various modes, with walking the most popular. In addition to significant pedestrian commuter traffic, there is also a significant non-commuter pedestrian presence which includes those walking to and from the adjacent high school, junior high school two blocks north and adjacent business district. It is also important to state that while 42% of commuters walk to the station is above the system average (21%, RTA Report- *Access & Parking Strategies for TOD*), the Village has observed increased pedestrian activity since the 2006 Metra survey.

While improvements to all modes of access are addressed within this report, commuter access and mobility is the focus due to the high percentage of non-driving commuters.



*Aerial Photo of Stone Avenue Metra Station Area of Focus*



## Station Area Observations & Recommendations

The following observations were discussed during the meeting with the Village, RTA, BNSF Railway, ICC, CMAP, Metra and ATA, including recommended solutions with corresponding graphics.

**Brainard Avenue:** In 2010, Metra replaced the concrete platforms at this station resulting in not only a grade differential between the platforms and the sidewalks, but also the elimination of the mid-block pedestrian track crossing. The grade differential between the platforms and connecting sidewalks has caused an accessibility issue that needs to be corrected in order to be compliant with ADA requirements. While some work has been done to make the station area ADA compliant, various improvements are still needed for full compliance.

Additionally, the elimination of the mid-block crossing has resulted in an increase in commuter and pedestrian traffic crossing the tracks at Brainard Avenue. Commuters alighting and waiting to cross on the north side of Brainard queue between the signal arm and the tracks. Improvements to divert and guide commuters safely away from the tracks such as fencing, crosswalks and changing the current concrete crossing to a rubber crossing are needed at this crossing to enhance safety and accessibility. Without these pedestrian diversions, there currently exist multiple pathways to cross. A controlled pathway will provide additional safety from oncoming traffic and express trains that do not stop at this station. Pedestrian diversions along Brainard should also be considered to keep pedestrians from crossing at various points along Brainard.

### Recommendations

1. Widen the sidewalk leading to Burlington from the railroad crossing. A wider sidewalk will increase pedestrian capacity and divert pedestrians on a controlled path to Burlington. Recommended width would be as wide as the gate arms can cover.
2. The Village could consider installing a pedestrian diversion (such as a fence) at the platform and crossing on the north side (outbound) of platform. This would guide commuters away from the edge of the platform and behind the signal arm. Diverting commuters and pedestrians behind the signal arm will increase safety at the crossing and steer commuters to the intersection. This type of improvement would be a longer-term solution and would depend on funding availability. This may also require additional exploration of pedestrian movements to ensure that this is a viable solution.





**Brainard Avenue (continued):**

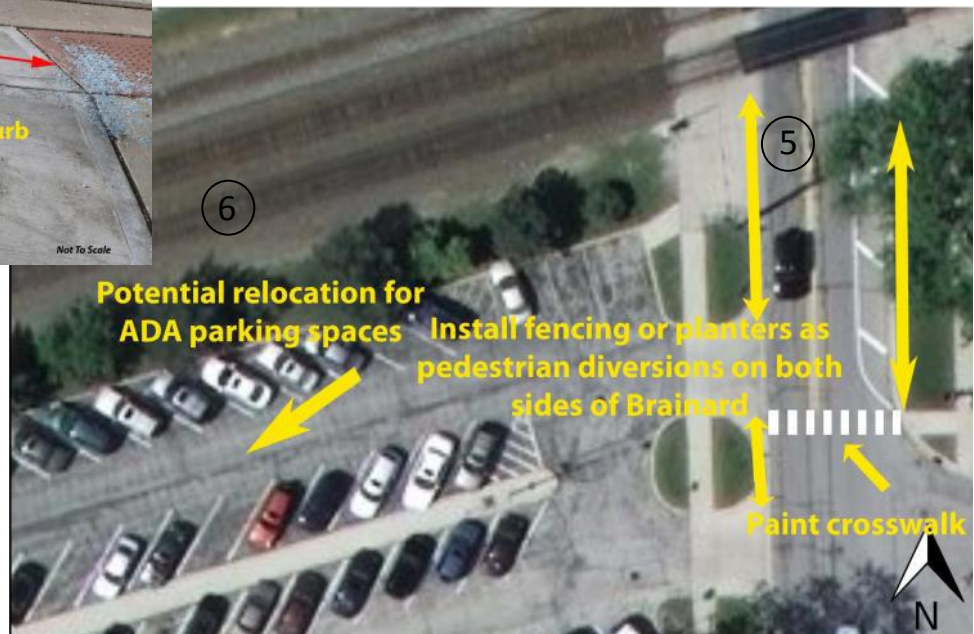
3. Install a new rubber railroad crossing. The current condition of the crossing is worn timber; laying rubberized material will create a more even, skid-proof surface, which creates a safer pathway across the railroad tracks for pedestrians and commuters. It is recommended that the width of the new paving/concrete match the width of the street and sidewalk on both sides. The Village may also consider striping the pedestrian pathway with paint as well.



4. Lay a new tactile strip at the sidewalk crossing on Brainard just south of Hillgrove.



5. Installing pedestrian barrier (fencing, planters) along both sides of Brainard will keep pedestrians from crossing the street at various points to reach the west parking lot.



6. ADA spaces may also be relocated to the west parking lot. This would require a reconfiguration of the current parking space layout, which the Village is contemplating in 2013 when the parking lot is scheduled to be repaved.



7. The Village may want to consider an alternate configuration for the entrance/exit to the west parking lot. Consolidating the entrance/exit to one curb cut to increase safety for pedestrians crossing. This option would also require a painted crosswalk across Brainard. This would be achieved by closing the northernmost entrance to the parking lot and providing only one entrance/exit. Because this is a commuter lot, the majority of cars parking will be entering in the morning and leaving in the afternoon. Existing stop signs on Brainard and Burlington could remain.



**North Side Platform (Hillgrove Avenue) Access:** Additional construction is planned to renovate the station’s interior and exterior, as well as the outbound shelter and ADA ramp (both located on the north side of the tracks) at the Hillgrove Kiss-n-Ride. Currently the station area provides 4 ADA parking spaces, but 9 are actually required according to ADA regulations. It is recommended that all ADA parking spaces be relocated along Burlington Avenue and/or in the West parking lot, which would allow for the removal of the ADA ramp along Hillgrove Avenue. Additional bike and moped parking could be offered in this location.

Commuters alighting from the outbound train utilize various pathways to reach their intended destination. This may involve walking through the area where cars are waiting to pick up commuters or crossing Hillgrove mid-block between Stone Avenue & Brainard. Currently there are no crosswalks at Stone Avenue & Hillgrove. Pedestrian obstacles such as light poles and landscaping along the Hillgrove Avenue sidewalk block a clear pathway to a safe crossing.

**Recommendations:**

8. Paint a crosswalk on each side of Stone Avenue at Hillgrove Avenue to create a guided pathway across the street. Currently there is no crosswalk, and commuters cross at various points along Hillgrove. The Village should consider painting new crosswalks or refreshing existing crosswalks at all crossings in the immediate station area to safely guide commuters. All sidewalks connected to crosswalks must be improved to comply with ADA regulations.





**North Side Platform (Hillgrove Avenue) Access (Continued)**

**9. & 10.**

Remove stairs under canopy; the temporary stairs further east should be made permanent to encourage commuters to cross Hillgrove at a painted connecting crosswalk. By removing the stairs under the canopy, more room will be available for additional bike parking and commuters will be directed to the staircase further east. The ramp and stairs can be removed if all existing and additional ADA parking is relocated to the south side of the tracks along Burlington Avenue and/or the commuter lot on Brainard Avenue.





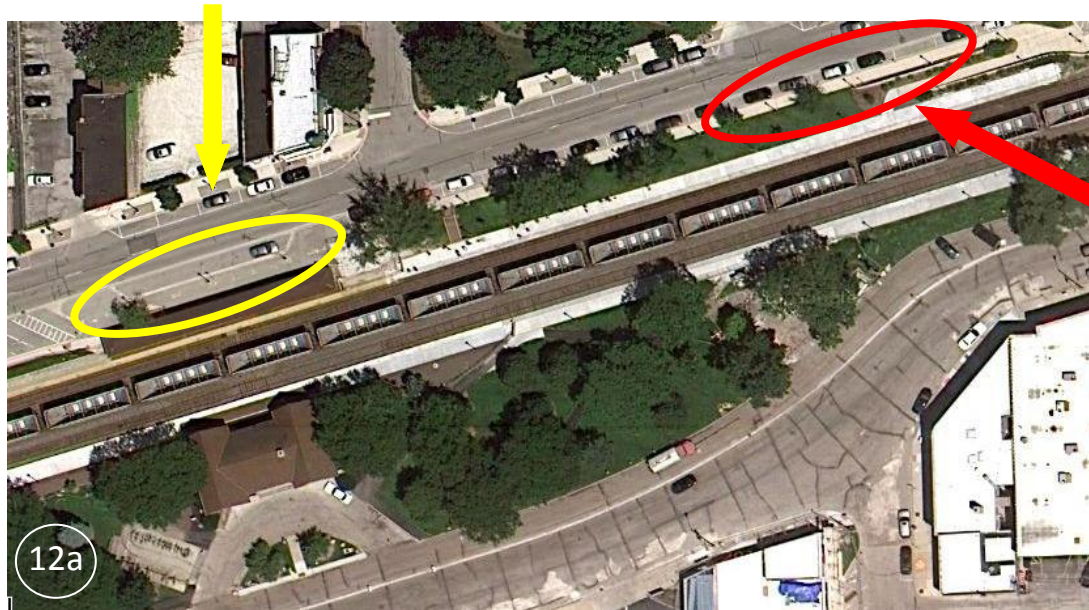
**North Side Platform (Hillgrove Avenue) Access (continued):**

11. Extend fencing along north platform to the canopy from Brainard Avenue. This will divert commuters to Brainard and eastward towards the new, permanent staircase and will prevent commuters from crossing at multiple points along Hillgrove.

12a. Improvements may be considered for the current location including an expansion of the parking area if the ramp and stairs are removed.



**Current Hillgrove Kiss-n-Ride location**



**Recommended alternate location for Hillgrove Kiss-n-Ride (adjacent to existing ADA ramp)**

12b. **Hillgrove Kiss-n-Ride alternate location:** It is recommended that the Hillgrove Kiss-n-Ride be relocated east of the temporary stairs direct Kiss-n-Ride commuters away from those crossing Hillgrove at Stone Avenue and also those walking west to Brainard. The recommended length of the new kiss-n-ride area is under 100', and should be located close to the existing ramp on the east end of the station area.

13. Additional bike / moped parking can be accommodated in the location of the former ADA ramp. It is recommended that the tree also be removed in order to create a wider pathway for commuters and better access to future bike / moped parking.





**Burlington Avenue Immediate Station Area:** Currently, there is no designation for ingress or egress at the circle drive off of Burlington. Cars dropping off and/or picking up commuters enter and exit on either side, causing traffic confusion. Also, the sidewalk connecting to the station through the circle drive does not lead to a crosswalk at Burlington Avenue, creating an unsafe pedestrian route. Additionally, there are no sidewalks on either side of the circle drive to connect to the sloping sidewalks leading to the station. The Village requests relocation of the station attendant's parking space on Burlington in front of the circle drive, as well as relocation of the mailbox and fire hydrant, in order to improve the historic aesthetic of the station house and pedestrian safety in the area. The newspaper boxes should also be be relocated, as they create a diversion for bicyclists using the bike racks.

It is also recommended that all ADA parking spaces be relocated to this side of the station area along Burlington Avenue and/or the commuter parking lot. Currently the station area offers 4 ADA parking spaces but 9 are actually required according to ADA regulations. If all 9 ADA parking spaces are consolidated to the Burlington Avenue side of the station and/or the commuter parking lot, the ADA ramp located at the north platform can be removed and that location used for additional bike and moped parking. If the relocated ADA parking spaces are not in use along Burlington Avenue, the area can be used as an additional drop-off location.

**Recommendations:**

14. Add a sloping sidewalk between the west side of the station and the bike parking leading to the platform that meets ADA regulations. Alternatively, the Village may consider constructing gradual sloping sidewalks in a curved fashion up to the station that connects to the Burlington Avenue sidewalks. Either option will provide improved accessibility to the platforms.

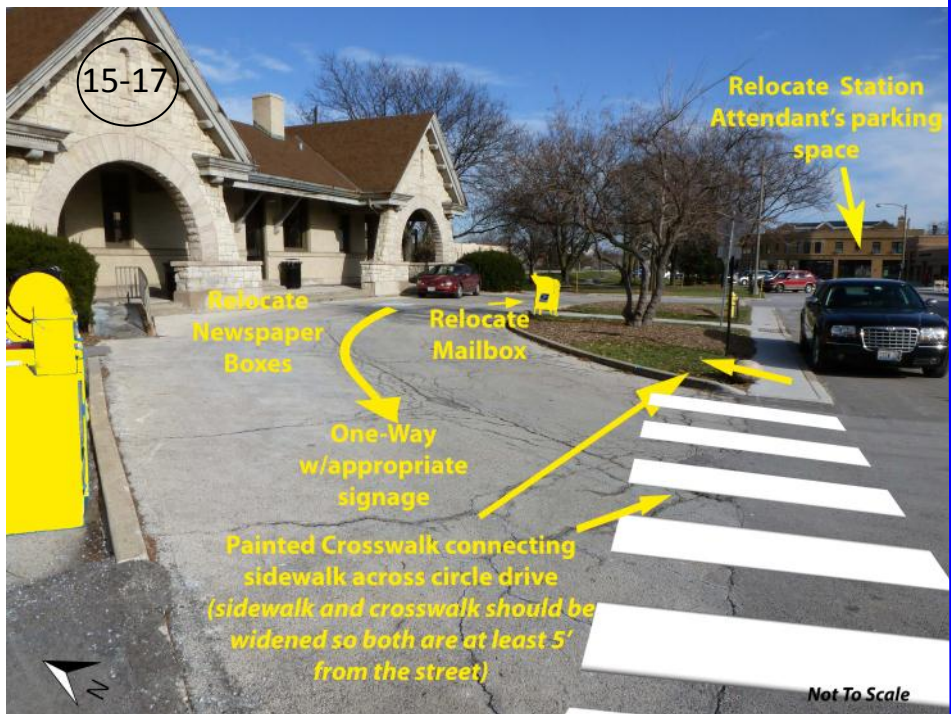
15. Mark circle drive as two-lane, one-way in and one-way out for traffic control.

16. Relocate newspaper boxes, mailbox and fire hydrant to locations away from bike parking and out of path of sidewalks. Their current locations impede commuter access to station area sidewalks and bike parking.

17. Paint and provide signage for all crosswalks. All sidewalks must be improved to comply with current ADA regulations.



Add a sloping sidewalk to the west side of the station adjacent to the bike parking for a direct access to the platform.





**Burlington Avenue Immediate Station Area (continued):**



18. Relocate station attendant parking space as this impairs the visibility of pedestrians crossing Burlington Avenue from the Circle Drive.

19. The mid-block crossing on Burlington Avenue from the station should be relocated to connect to Stone Avenue on the west. Any connecting sidewalks must be improved to comply with ADA regulations.

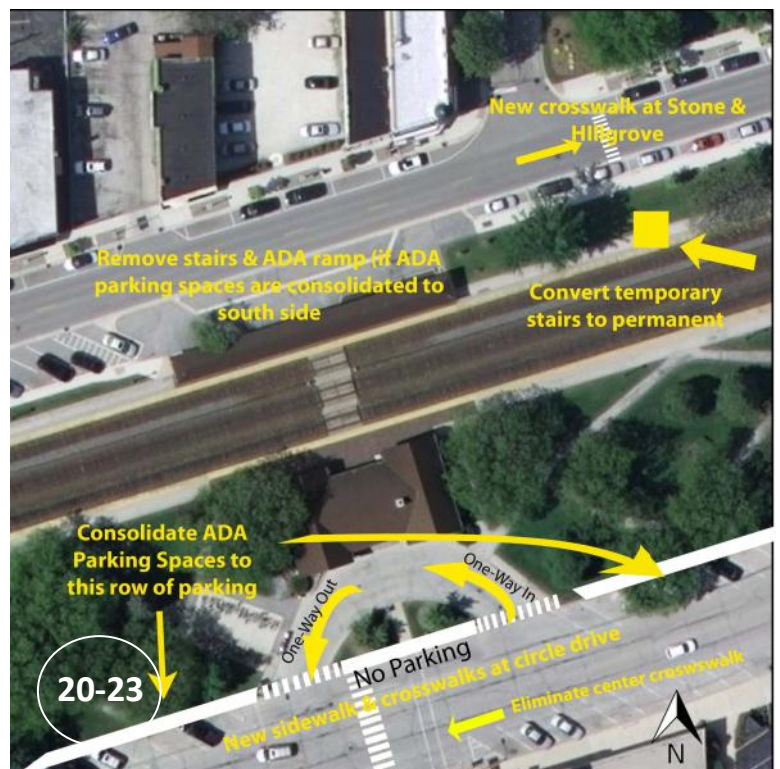
20. Add sidewalks parallel to Burlington Avenue to allow for connectivity and access to station. New sidewalks should be at least 5' from curb, or wide enough to cover at least 5' of walkway.

21. Reconfigure ADA parking spaces to increase amount to 9 spaces (all located on Burlington Avenue and/or commuter parking lot).

- ⇒ This will require an addition of 5 more parking spaces based on current ADA calculations.
- ⇒ ADA specifications would not require a ramp on the north side platform (Hillgrove Avenue) if there are no ADA parking spaces on the north side.

22. Traffic-calming improvements such as curb bump-outs may be considered at the curb cuts of the circle drive to narrow the entry and exit.

23. Adding accessible access connecting Burlington Avenue to the platform on the west side of the station (adjacent to the bike parking) would provide direct access to the platform.





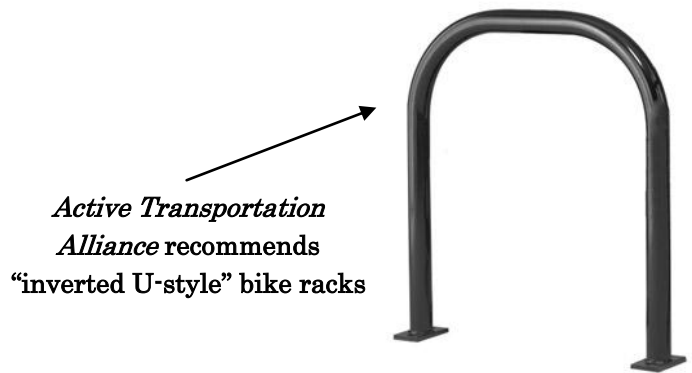
**Bike / Moped Parking Improvements:** The planned Stone Avenue Train Station renovation project includes bike amenity upgrades on both sides of the station. Currently there are three bike rack areas— one on the Burlington side of the station and two on the Hillgrove side of the station, one of which is covered. Besides improving the racks themselves, access to some of the bike rack areas needs improvement. Additional bike parking is recommended on the Burlington Avenue side of the station, preferably covered. The Village may consider adding cameras at all bike/moped parking locations as an additional security measure. Relocating the newspaper boxes to a location not in the pathway of commuters or the bike racks will provide improved access to those who bike to the station. There is also a designated parking area that provides for a limited number of mopeds, and this could be expanded to accommodate more mopeds if the need exists.



Designated moped parking on Burlington Avenue



South side of station bike parking area



Active Transportation Alliance recommends "inverted U-style" bike racks

Source: [www.belson.com/images/UX238-SF-P-001-M.jpg](http://www.belson.com/images/UX238-SF-P-001-M.jpg)

**Examples of covered bike parking and modern bike racks**



Wilmette Metra Station



Westmont Metra Station



Brookfield Metra Station



## ***Potential Funding Sources***

The Village may consider exploring the following grant opportunities to fund various recommended improvements at the Stone Avenue Station. Implementation of access improvements in the station area can be completed in phases; solutions such as painting crosswalks and improving signage are lower-cost solutions that can be completed in the short-term, while the larger improvements can be planned for the mid-term. Collaborating with partners such as the BNSF, ICC, Metra, etc. will provide helpful guidance to ensure that any/all improvements align with all local, state and Federal regulations and standards.

### **Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)**

[www.dot.il.gov/opp/itep.html](http://www.dot.il.gov/opp/itep.html)

The Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program provides funding for community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. Project sponsors may receive up to 80% reimbursement for eligible project costs. A project must qualify as one of the 12 eligible categories listed in the ITEP Guidelines Manual and it must relate to surface transportation to be eligible for funding.

### **Transportation, Community and System Preservation (TCSP)**

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp/)

The Transportation, Community and System Preservation (TCSP) Program is a comprehensive initiative of research and grants to investigate the relationships between transportation, community, and system preservation plans and practices and identify private sector-based initiatives to improve such relationships. Eligible projects are those that aim to:

- Improve the efficiency of the transportation system of the United States.
- Reduce environmental impacts of transportation.
- Reduce the need for costly future public infrastructure investments.
- Ensure efficient access to jobs, services, and centers of trade.

### **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)**

[www.cmap.illinois.gov/congestion-mitigation-and-air-quality](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/congestion-mitigation-and-air-quality)

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program is a federally-funded program for surface transportation improvements designed to improve air quality and mitigate congestion. Jointly administered by FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), this program is locally administered by CMAP for either transit or highway projects that contribute significantly to a reduction in automobile emissions that cause air pollution.

### **ICC Grade Crossing Protection Fund Program**

[www.icc.illinois.gov/railroad/CrossingSafetyImprovement.aspx](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/railroad/CrossingSafetyImprovement.aspx)

The GCPF, appropriated to IDOT but administered by the ICC, assists local jurisdictions in paying for safety improvements at highway-railroad crossings on local roads and streets. The GCPF is typically used to help pay for the following types of projects:

- Warning Device Upgrades
- Grade Separations - New and Reconstructed:
- Pedestrian Grade Separations
- Crossing Closures

### **Surface Transportation Program (STP)**

[www.cmap.illinois.gov/council-of-mayors/stp-resources](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/council-of-mayors/stp-resources)

The regional Surface Transportation Program is a federal transportation program administered through CMAP and IDOT. The STP may be used to finance improvements to the surface transportation system. The funds can be used to improve eligible arterial and collector streets or Transportation Control Measure (TCM) projects. Examples of TCM projects may include pedestrian or bicycle improvements, commuter parking, transit improvements, capital expenditures, and intelligent transportation systems (ITS) projects.