



November 10, 2019

Mr. Jeff L. Ronaldson  
Will County Division of Transportation  
16841 W. Laraway Road  
Joliet, IL 60433

Dear Mr. Ronaldson,

On behalf of our Will County members, Ride Illinois, a statewide bicycle advocacy organization, would like to request the county's Division of Transportation to review and substantially update its bicycle and pedestrian accommodation policies – as has been done by every other Chicago area county DOT, and IDOT, in recent years.

While Will County Forest Preserve has a good and growing off-road trail network, a bike- and walk-friendly road network is necessary for the safety of people walking or biking to get around for transportation, whether by choice or necessity. For roads where there is need, this may include sidewalks or sidepath trails, intersection crossings, paved shoulders, or other features.

In our 2019 Chicagoland update of our 2011 survey of county DOT bike/ped policies, we found Will's to be ranked lowest, by a substantial margin. Also, our 2015 Complete Streets Audits of county highways found poor bike/ped conditions on most of Will-jurisdiction roads in the growing and developed areas of Will, where accommodations for walking and biking are most needed.

As in the other collar counties, one cannot get around many developed/ing parts of Will without having to use a major road for some fraction of the trip. When these road corridors have no space for people biking or walking, non-motorized travel becomes more unsafe. Besides endangering people who must bike or walk out of *necessity* (often economic, also age), such areas are at an economic disadvantage as companies are having a harder time recruiting young professionals to places where driving is the only real *option*. A 2016 national poll found significantly-increasing support for spending on bicycling and walking, across all demographics.

Some main points from our survey update of six Chicagoland county DOTs (enclosed):

- The other counties have a DOT staffer whose duties include reviewing road projects for what bike/ped features are needed (e.g. Bike/Ped or Non-Motorized Travel Coordinator).
- Will is the only county in which the towns always pay 100% of costs of bike/ped facilities along a county road. Local cost share is 0% in DuPage, 20% in Lake, usually 50% in Cook, and 0-100% in McHenry and Kane – depending on where within the county.

Working Statewide for Better Bicycling

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- All county DOTs have experience building county-funded sidepath trails along their roads – except Will.
- Most counties surveyed, plus Kendall, add paved shoulders of useable width for people riding bikes, on some or many of their urban and rural road projects.
- Other counties have been more proactive than Will about adding and paying for bike/ped accommodations as part of key county DOT bridge projects (e.g., Black Road over I-55).

In 2015, we analyzed Will's county road corridors with our Complete Streets Audit methodology, which considers what road design features are needed to accommodate people walking or biking along and across that road. The measure adjusts to a road's context: to achieve a good score on the 100-point scale, a quiet farm road or cul-de-sac would not need sidewalks, a sidepath trail, on-road space, or crossing features – but a major suburban arterial would. The enclosed map shows generally low scores in Will's developed areas. The enclosed spreadsheet breaks down results by pedestrian, bicycle, crossing, and context scores.

It is logical to assume that the low scores along county roads in Will's developed areas – lower than the average of what we've seen regionwide (Oct 2009 Chicago Tribune front page story on our report on 46 road project audits) – are the direct result of the policies that are still in place.

We ask WCDOT and the County Board's Public Works and Transportation Committee to study this issue and modernize your bike/ped accommodation policies. We would be glad to serve as a resource.

Sincerely,



Ed Barsotti, Chief Programs Officer  
630-978-0583, ed@rideillinois.org

Cc: Will County Board's Public Works and Transportation Committee members  
Will County Governmental League