



VIII. TRANSPORTATION

This chapter of the Plan sets forth a Vehicular Access and Circulation Framework and related Goals and Policies for the transportation system in the City. The street system, public transportation, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities are addressed. The chapter concludes with a Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan that identifies a future trail network and depicts prototype design solutions for enhancement and expansion of an off-street trail system.

ROADWAYS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Regional access to and from Oak Forest is provided by I-57 which connects to I-294 to the northeast and I-80 to the south. Access to downtown Chicago, O'Hare and Midway airports, and major employment centers to the north and west of Oak Forest are provided via these routes.

In Oak Forest, the one U.S. highway that is under state jurisdiction is U.S. Route 6 / 159th Street. Other roadways under state jurisdiction are IL Route 50 (Cicero Avenue) and 147th Street. The City receives funds from the state to defray maintenance costs for these state routes, and changes to these roadways require state review and approval. Community input suggests that the City may wish to reconsider the speed limit on 159th Street. Currently 45mph west of Central Avenue, this limit exceeds the allowable speed on 159th Street further east, and west of Harlem Avenue.

Arterial roads in Oak Forest that are under Cook County jurisdiction are the following: Central Avenue, 151st Street between Oak Park Avenue and Central Avenue, and 167th Street. Other arterial roads that are under local jurisdiction and/or are maintained by the City include Ridgeland Avenue between 151st and 159th Streets. Oak Park Avenue will remain under state jurisdiction, but the City will be





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responsible for maintenance after ongoing reconstruction is complete.

Roadways within the City that serve to collect and redistribute traffic from local streets onto more major roadways include: Laramie Avenue, 151st Street between Central and Cicero Avenues, Boca Rio Drive, Arroyo Drive, Victoria Drive, 155th Street, Waverly Avenue, Long Avenue south of 159th Street, Fieldcrest Drive, Lockwood Avenue, and Forest Avenue.

Most other streets are local streets that are maintained by the City.

There are grade separations where the Metra Rock Island District Line intersects with Cicero Avenue and 159th Street, which help to maintain traffic flow along these busy arterials by eliminating the need for at-grade railroad crossings.

Oak Forest is served by Metra Rock Island District Line commuter rail service and Pace suburban bus service. In addition, there is "dial-a-ride" bus service provided for senior citizens by the City of Oak Forest and Bremen Township. The Metra commuter station within Oak Forest is located at the northwest corner of 159th Street and Cicero Avenue. Pace bus routes serve Oak Forest along 159th Street, Cicero Avenue and Central Avenue. Additional detail regarding facilities and service levels is included in the May 2007 *Background Report*.

VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK

Figure 8: Vehicular Access and Circulation Framework graphically depicts proposed improvements to be pursued over the next ten to fifteen years related to transportation and mobility, to complement the goals, policies and strategies to be included in the Plan. The overall roadway system will remain essentially unchanged, with a Plan focus instead on enhancing pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation access throughout the City.

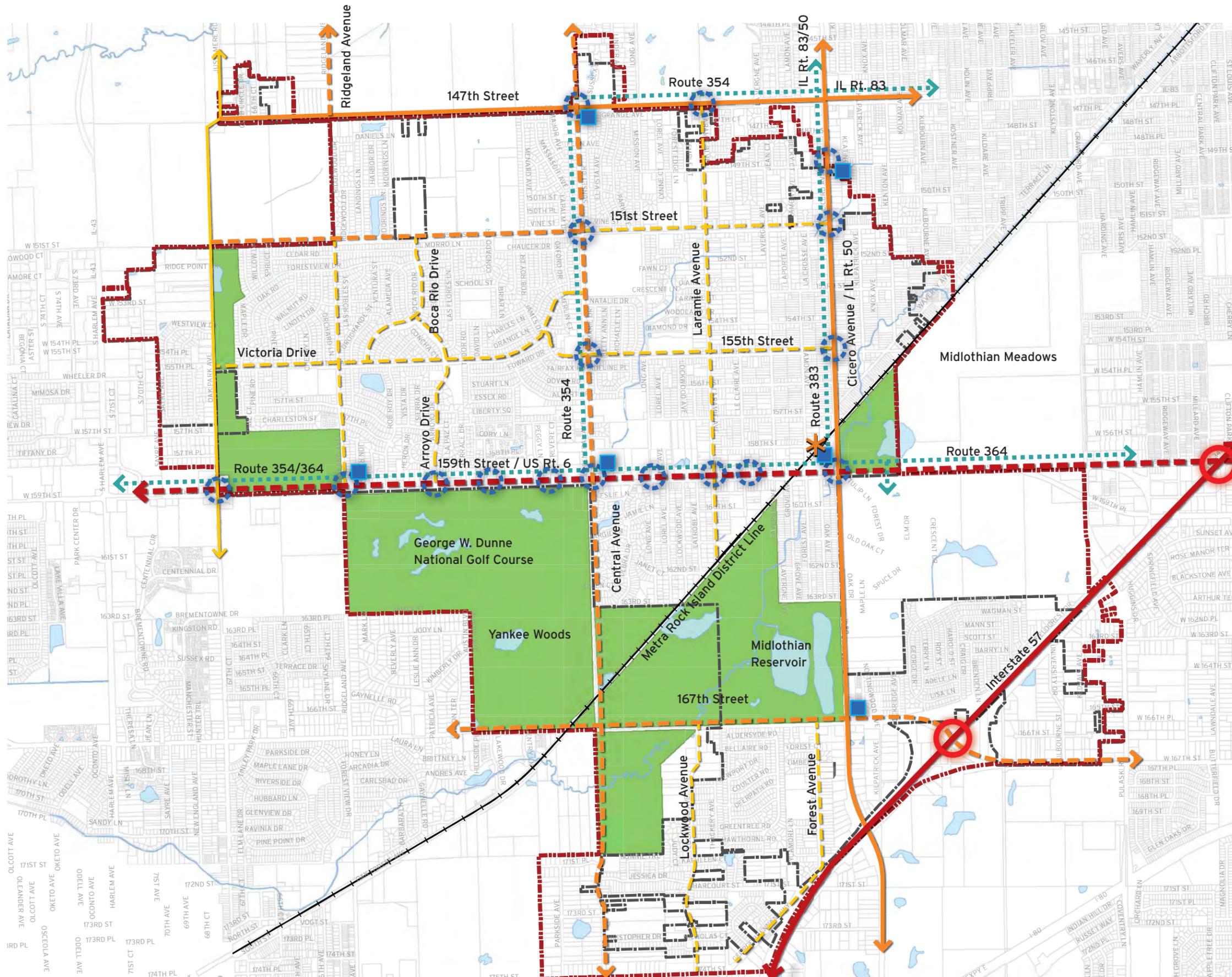


FIGURE 8

VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK

LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Planning Area Boundary
- Forest Preserve
- Water Bodies
- Expressway
- Interchange
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- County Route
- Other Arterial
- Collector
- Metra Commuter Rail
- Pace Bus Route
- Gateway Signage (General Location)
- New Metra Station
- Improve Pace Bus Connections and Amenities





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Key features of the Vehicular Access and Circulation Framework include the following:

- Other than ongoing maintenance and repair, significant changes are not anticipated in the roadway system. The City should continue to coordinate closely with state and county agencies that have jurisdiction over key City roadways, to mitigate the impact of any changes proposed by these external agencies and relieve congestion on major corridors.
- Improvements to access and circulation will focus on ensuring a continuous sidewalk/pathway system, including crosswalks and pedestrian-activated crossing signals at key intersections, in conjunction with consistent streetscape and urban design elements. Key roadways targeted for these upgrades include: Cicero Avenue, 159th Street between Cicero and Central Avenues, Central Avenue between 147th and 159th Streets, 151st Street between Ridgeland and Central Avenues, and 167th Street between Lockwood and Cicero Avenues.
- Improvements along other key roadways will focus primarily on ensuring a continuous sidewalk/pathway system, including crosswalks and pedestrian-activated crossing signals at key intersections, to ensure safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians (south of 159th Street) to forest preserve trailheads, schools, bus stops and other public uses. Key roadways targeted for these upgrades include: Central Avenue between 159th and 167th Streets, 167th Street between Central and Lockwood Avenues, 159th Street west of Central Avenue (focusing on safe crossings at intersections), 147th Street west of Ridgeland Avenue, and 151st Street west of Ridgeland Avenue.
- A new Oak Forest Metra Station will be constructed at the existing station location as part of the "Gateway" redevelopment at the intersection of Cicero Avenue and 159th Street.
- Improvements to amenities for Pace bus riders are indicated along 159th Street, 147th Street, Cicero Avenue and Central Avenue. Consistent signage, concrete pads connected to the adjacent sidewalk, benches and trash receptacles should be installed at all bus stop locations. Shelter structures should be provided at the stops with the highest passenger counts, and those nearest major activity hubs.
- Preliminary locations for consistent gateway signage have been indicated, to build upon the existing gateway signs already in place. The locations identified should provide a consistent welcome sign within a landscaped area. Wayfinding signage to





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direct visitors to commercial corridors and other key destinations should be provided at major intersections.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Because Oak Forest's transportation system is largely complete, the City's transportation goals and policies provide direction for system enhancements to improve existing vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access within the established framework.

TRANSPORTATION GOAL # 1

Improve and maintain a street system that provides for safe and efficient movement of motorized and non-motorized traffic.

Policies:

1. Work with IDOT and Cook County Highway Department to reduce the impact of regional congestion on Oak Forest, and to implement necessary improvements in a manner sensitive to the City's desired community character.
2. Continue to ensure adequate resources for the improvement and maintenance of local streets through the annual capital improvements budget.
3. Require the elimination of excessive curb cuts to improve traffic flow and improve the safety of turn movements on arterials throughout the City.
4. Discourage non-local traffic in residential neighborhoods through street design, speed limit enforcement and limited street closures. Street closures should be considered only with local support and with pedestrian and bicycle connectivity maintained.
5. Work cooperatively with local institutions to address parking shortages that may negatively impact surrounding areas.

TRANSPORTATION GOAL # 2

Promote the use of alternative modes of transportation through the establishment and improvement of facilities that serve transit users, pedestrians and cyclists.

Policies:

1. Provide better facilities and connections for pedestrians and cyclists to travel along and cross major arterials that function as hazards or barriers to non-motorized movement.





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2. Improve the “walkability” of the City by repairing and filling in gaps in the sidewalk system, in particular near schools and other institutional uses.
3. Pursue opportunities to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to commercial and institutional areas.
4. Preserve and extend multi-use trail connections to existing bike and equestrian trails at the periphery of the City.
5. Work with Metra to build a new high-quality Metra station as part of the Gateway TOD redevelopment at the existing station site.
6. Increase commuter parking capacity as opportunities arise within the Metra station area, in locations that will encourage commuter patronage of local businesses.
7. Monitor the need for and expand local transit options, including Pace Bus service and demand-response services, to enhance service access along Oak Forest's primary arterials and to serve Metra station commuters.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MOBILITY PLAN

With the exception of most arterial and collectors, many residential streets in the older part of town (east of Central Avenue) do not have sidewalks. There are sidewalks in newer neighborhoods west of Central Avenue, however. At the south end of the City, some residential streets have sidewalks whereas others do not. Where roadway improvements are proposed as described above, sidewalks are typically reconstructed.

Oak Forest residents have convenient access to trails within the Forest Preserves that surround the City. Both paved and unpaved trails loop through Midlothian Meadows, Midlothian Reservoir, Yankee Woods, and the George W. Dunne Golf Course. There are also connections to Arrowhead and Turtlehead Lakes and other forest preserves located north of the City.

Community input during the planning process suggested a strong interest in exploring potential improvements to pedestrian and bicycle mobility throughout the City of Oak Forest. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan was developed to provide an organizing structure within which to implement mobility improvements in the City as opportunities arise. The elements of the Mobility Plan are intended to provide clear guidance with regard to the functional and aesthetic aspects of establishing a consistent network of trails,





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based upon prototypical right-of-way conditions found throughout the City.

The elements of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan are depicted and described in the following figures:

- Figure 9: Mobility Framework provides an overall organizing strategy for implementation of improved connections, pedestrian and bicyclist amenities and crosswalk features throughout the City. Key elements of the framework include strengthening connections to the Metra Station “pedestrian focus area,” to public facilities, and to adjacent forest preserve trails at the perimeter of the City.
- Figures 10, 11 and 12: Mobility Plan- Central Avenue Prototype Sections A-A, B-B and C-C depict the potential creation of a continuous off-street trail along Central Avenue connecting several public and institutional land uses, to encourage resident access and pedestrian activity. The three sections and related illustrative sketches depict the use of new lighting and landscaping elements to create a consistent visual identity along this key corridor despite the disparate land uses present along its length.
- Figures 13: Mobility Plan- Cicero Avenue Prototype and Figure 14: Mobility Plan- 159th Street Prototype depict typical recommended improvements to the public realm along the City’s two primary commercial corridors. While sidewalks exist along these corridors already, excessive curb cuts and visual clutter contribute to an inhospitable environment for pedestrians and bus riders.
- Figures 15: Mobility Plan- 151st Street Prototype and Figure 16: Mobility Plan- 147th Street Prototype depict typical off-street trail improvements to arterials through primarily residential portions of the City, many of which have a rural character with gravel shoulders and drainage ditches. This character can be maintained while still providing safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle access and enhanced storm water management features.

