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# **On the Road to the In-Between City: Excavating Peripheral Urbanization in Chicago's 'Crosstown Corridor'**

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*Abstract:* This paper critically engages the uneven distribution of infrastructure provision, connectivity, and mobility in contemporary neoliberal urban landscapes by uncovering the path dependent trajectories and politics of transportation in post-suburbia. Departing from contemporary debates on the evolving geography of urban peripheries, I utilize a relational theorization of the 'in-between city' to empirically unpack the urbanization processes internalized in the evolution of the '*Zwischenstadt*' in a North American context. Through a *longue durée* case study of transportation planning, politics, and spatial practice in Chicago's 'Crosstown Corridor', in-between urbanization is demonstrated to express an on-going multiscalar mediation of co-habiting modes of urbanism and strategic state actions that challenge generalized (sub)urbanization narratives. Despite continued interest from planners, politicians, and business groups, proposals for both a major urban expressway and rapid transit line have proved political lightning rods. Consequently, neighborhood protests, personal political battles, and macro-economic trends have locked-in a neglected development pathway for Chicago's inner suburbs. I argue that through disclosing key contradictory political-economic imperatives and conflicting scales of mobility, it is possible to identify space for political and planning interventions that can adapt to, and develop, polycentric urban practice in and through in-between urban space.

*Keywords:* Urbanization, In-Between City, Politics of Transportation, Expressways, Chicago

## **Infrastructure, In-Betweenness, and the Evolving Metropolitan Periphery**

Today's urban peripheries are sites of remarkable transformation. On-going processes of deep sociospatial restructuring have led to the development of a diffuse patchwork of amorphous sub/urban constellations that capture the city in "a state between place and world, space and time, city and country" (Sieverts, 2003, page x). Reflecting the continuing impact of the Los Angeles School of Urbanism's examinations of the post-Fordist metropolis (Davis, 1990; Soja, 2000) and critical planning research on regional urbanization in Europe (Lehrer, 1994; Sieverts, 2003), a broad consensus now asserts our inherited concepts and metaphors do not adequately grasp the realities of extended and multilayered urban environments. Images of multi-garage single-family homes and big box stores – largely abstracted from North America – may construct a pervasive discourse of 'the suburbs' as a homogenous, middle-class, auto-dependent landscape: suburbia as embodying the "serial enhancement" of the American Dream, or the banal antithesis of the urbanity of the city (Anderson, 2010; Knox, 2008). Contemporary suburbanization, however, is characterized by a qualitative transformation of structures and functions that defy such pre-conceived and pejorative notions (Harris, 2010; Quinby, 2011).

Urban scholars have employed a variety of new conceptual languages to grapple with the diverse social, political, and environmental implications of urbanization on the urban periphery. Now classic accounts of 'technoburbs' (Fishman, 1987), 'edge cities' (Garreau, 1991; Teaford, 1997), 'ethnoburbs' (Li, 2009), 'metroburbia' (Knox, 2008), and 'exopolis' (Soja, 2000) have inspired ambitious comparative research on 'global suburbanisms' (Hamel and Keil, 2015; Keil, 2013) and 'post-suburbanization' (Phelps et al., 2010; Phelps and Wu, 2011). Here, the notion of post-suburbia captures the sense of an incremental shift from previous suburban processes *and* the emergence of a new mode of urbanization that breaks from our traditional views of the relationship between the metropolis and its core (Lucy and Phillips, 1997). The dual task of refocusing the analytical lens of critical urban studies beyond the inner city and sublating reified

urban-versus-suburban dichotomies has become ever more pressing in the face of evolving patterns of sociospatial polarization, the rising suburbanization of poverty, and the emergence of heterogeneous suburban experiences (Keil, 2013; Schafran, 2013). This is true for both social and physical aspects of suburbanization since “the boundaries between the social and the physical are always fluid: the urban landscape is socially produced, and identity and practice are by necessity wrapped up in place and thus difficult to separate” (Walks, 2013, page 1479). Phelps *et al.* (2010), though, caution that the sheer diversity of current (post-)suburban research reveals the difficulties of coherently analyzing the properties, dimensions, or characteristics of peripheral urban development. The geography of city-regional urbanization unfurls as a fluid nebulous milieu as postwar residential suburbs evolve into economically diverse post-suburbs, declining cities regress to dormitories for nearby centers, and new hubs emerge as cities in waiting.

This paper builds on recent explorations of Thomas Sieverts’s (2003) concept of the *Zwischenstadt* (or in-between city) to analyze metropolitan environments that are neither fully urban or suburban but rather captured between the hyper-connected, hyper-valorized nodes of polycentric regions. As an emergent global form, the *Zwischenstadt* is marked by a decentered urban structure punctuated by functionally specialized nodes and networks. Although their chaotic morphology appears unplanned, ‘in-between’ urban landscapes disclose a multidimensional amalgam of individual rational decisions. The actually existing “carpet of settlement... has the nature of a palimpsest in which old, superfluous and deleted text and images glimmer through the new text” (ibid., page 6). This co-presence of “several urbanisms” divulges the importance of engaging how different users perceive, experience, and represent the urban ‘text’ in qualitatively differentiated ways (Lefebvre, 2003, page 151; Walks, 2013). Keil and Young have significantly extended this approach by theorizing the in-between city as a relational space of post-suburban hybridization; one held in tension between the concomitant forces of centrifugal expansion and centripetal centralization (Keil and Young, 2009; Young and Keil, 2010, 2014; Young *et al.*, 2011). As such, they argue the multiple (often fragmented) flows, infrastructures, uses, and users

assembled in the *Zwischenstadt* express “the most dynamic and problematic forms of suburbanization” (Young and Keil, 2010, page 90).

The political and planning challenges presented by in-between urbanization have tended to be overlooked by, or at least struggled to mesh with, dominant metropolitan (urban and suburban) policy regimes and territorial politics (Young and Keil, 2014). This partly reflects the fact that while the in-between city displays the outcomes of a plethora of state strategies, governmental agencies have exhibited a piecemeal presence in such fragmented urban environments. This is not to say that attempts to restructure or retrofit suburban space have not fostered new modalities of governance (Hamel and Keil, 2015), articulations of territorial collective provision (Jonas et al., 2010), and development regimes (Savini, 2013; While et al., 2013). Dembski (2013), in analyzing large-scale planning projects in the Netherlands, offers a critical reading of the potential of new mechanisms of regional symbolization and institutionalization to engender a reimagining of the identity and politics of the *Zwischenstadt*. The construction of the ‘symbolic markers’ and ‘cityness’ necessary to strategically leverage regional infrastructures requires negotiating the often conflicting overarching interests of the urban landscape and the interests of local communities. But symbolic reconstruction, he suggests, can shift established spatial imaginaries and social norms in the urban periphery to concretely “[transform] the past into a new future” – if conducted with appropriate spatial and cultural sensitivity (ibid., page 2032; see Vigar et al., 2005).

Yet more often than not, higher order restructuring coordinates the reorientation of political imaginaries or territoriality as the disciplinary logics of neoliberal globalization materially and discursively reconfigure urban space. A central problematic of the in-between city thus emerges from inequalities in infrastructure provision that render such spaces disproportionately vulnerable to environmental, economic, and social risks (Young et al., 2011). As a key site where collective infrastructure systems are splintered and reassembled (Graham and Marvin, 2001), the in-between city gestates nascent forms of uneven development and social exclusion.

Transportation infrastructure is crucial in this context. Differential access exacerbates the in-

between city's lack of social and spatial centralities. Here, "the *Zwischenstadt* can be read as a system which permits the widest variety of action spaces and connections or as a 'menu' with the help of which inhabitants can put together for themselves *à la carte*, provided they can afford it" (Sieverts, 2003, page 71). Highly unequal power relations pose distinct challenges for individuals and groups seeking to move through, and actualize, spaces of everyday practice and inhabitation.

Conceptual and empirical work on the in-between city has done much to displace 'the city' as the necessary determining core of urbanization trends percolating into an undefined hinterland. Highlighting the evolving functional logics and patterns of sociospatial connectivity of post-suburban spaces has helped reposition the urban in-between as a key arena of metropolitan governance (Phelps and Wood, 2011; Young and Keil, 2014). But the task of integrating the *Zwischenstadt* into broader debates on city-regional development persists. Here, Walks (2013, page 1483) instructively argues that while the hybridity of the in-between city offers "an almost infinite" number of suburban constellations as a non-determined space, specific path dependent trajectories remain premised upon locally contingent (but multiscalar) planning, economic, social, political, and legislative histories.

This paper contributes to our understanding of the sociospatial milieu of post-suburbanization through a detailed examination of the historical-infrastructure antecedents of the in-between urban condition in Chicago, Illinois. Building on research critiquing simplistic narratives of infrastructure bundling/unbundling (Coutard, 2008; Soll, 2012), I am concerned with unpacking how urban infrastructures evolve in geographically uneven and historically unstable patterns that, when grounded in the concrete politics of place, form both the structuring mechanisms and strategic context through which the urban in-between is formed, governed, and experienced. The following analysis draws from a *longue durée* case study of the production of in-between urban space in what I term Chicago's 'Crosstown Corridor'. By disclosing key contradictory political-economic imperatives and on-going multiscalar mediation of co-habiting modes of urbanism and strategic state actions, I contend it is possible to identify space for political

and planning interventions that can adapt to, and develop, polycentric urban practice. My argument draws on extensive archival research and eighteen semi-structured interviews conducted with local planning agencies, government officials, urban think tanks, and community organizers in northeastern Illinois between 2008 and 2011.<sup>1</sup>

### **The In-Between Urbanization of Chicago's Crosstown Corridor**

Chicago's Crosstown Corridor follows a 22-mile (35.5km) circumferential route paralleling Cicero Avenue and 75<sup>th</sup> Street centered on freight railroad right-of-ways owned by the Belt Railway of Chicago (Figure 1). Juxtaposed against Chicago's lakefront façade, the study area constitutes an L-shaped inner-suburban section of what Abu-Lughod (1999) provocatively termed the "backstage city". From a position on the city of Chicago's urban-rural fringe when planning proposals for circumferential transport infrastructure were first drawn up at the turn of the twentieth century, the Crosstown Corridor has come to occupy a space between the hyper-valorized core of the global city (the Loop), and the sprawling, politically and socially fragmented suburban landscapes characteristic of the wider region.

#### **[FIGURE 1]**

Following Keil and Young, I conceive the Crosstown Corridor relationally as a North American expression of the *Zwischenstadt* as a result of its geographic situation between city and suburbs (the in-between city as place) and functional position between the centralizing and sprawling dynamics of city-regional urbanization (the in-between city as process). The Corridor cuts through Chicago's 'Bungalow Belt'; a sweeping arc of low-rise 1920s-1940s single-family

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<sup>1</sup> Planning documents, reports, personal correspondences, and newspaper articles were reviewed in collections held at the Chicago Historical Society Research Center, the Harold Washington Library's Government Publications Department, and Special Collections Center at the University of Illinois-Chicago's Richard J. Daley Library.

homes representative of much residential development in outer Chicago and inner suburban municipalities including Berwyn, Cicero, and Oak Park. Bungalow Belt housing opened the possibility to home ownership to many of Chicago's working class and immigrant communities, but its ubiquitous built form belied the crystallization of racial and ethnic segregation through the region in the postwar era. By the 2000s, Latino neighborhoods in the north and southwestern sections of the Crosstown Corridor had taken root alongside established African-American communities in the city's South and West Sides and dispersed White ethnic districts.

In addition to traversing ethnically, racially, and economically diverse residential neighborhoods, the Crosstown Corridor collates an amalgamation of varied landscapes and uses: an international airport, industrial and logistics centers, educational institutions, and commercial retailing (from large-scale shopping centers and big box retail to strip- and ethnic- mini-malls), and is bisected by railroads, expressways, and rapid transit lines radiating from the urban core. Its morphology and networks do not reflect a coherent overarching strategic planning vision. Rather, they reveal the competing impulses of an entrenched downtown-focused urban hierarchy (conditioned by regional expressway and rail systems that facilitates both commuting to the Loop and continental/global freight circulation) and emerging horizontal rhythms of mobility within and between suburban spaces; from commuting associated with industrial corridors around Cicero Avenue or the office parks flanking O'Hare Airport and suburban stretches of I-90, I-88, and I-55, to local trips to retail, cultural, and recreational facilities along commercial strips such as 31<sup>st</sup> Street. While there are major regional centers adjacent to the Crosstown Corridor, the area lacks the centralizing imperatives characteristic of edge cities and post-suburban hubs. Many of its constituent districts are 'transit deserts' crossed by higher-order infrastructure but with high deficiencies between service levels and demand (Jiao and Dillivan, 2013). Displacements and disconnections mark it as a locus for the 'contingent' (Theodore, 2003) and 'parasitic' (Wilson et al., 2009) forms of neoliberal urbanism critical scholars have identified in contemporary Chicago.



Despite its persistent physical and symbolic peripherality, the Crosstown Corridor has been central in numerous plans to relieve congestion in the central city and wider region. Improved north-south transportation beyond the Loop has featured in city and regional strategic planning documents since Burnham and Bennett's *Plan of Chicago* (1909): most notoriously in the form of Mayor Richard J. Daley's (in office 1955-1976) controversial Crosstown Expressway, but also more recently in his son, Mayor Richard M. Daley's (in office 1989-2011) global city transport visions.

The centrality of the Crosstown Expressway (and broader dynamics of American highway planning) to the discursive and material evolution of the Crosstown Corridor places this study within a tradition of critical analysis of urban renewal and postwar infrastructure policy. Concerted attention has been paid to spatial rhetoric and planning of North American urban highways (Biles et al., 2014; Mohl, 2003): the disastrous social and environmental consequences of their development (Gioielli, 2011; Henderson, 2006) and the political movements that successfully opposed them (Mohl, 2012; Robinson, 2011). Across postwar North America, expressways served as both functional material networks and symbolic spaces that spurred dreams of mobility, modernity, and circulation. However, entering the 1970s, social critiques regarding the lived experience of high modernism, perhaps most influentially in the writings and activism of Jane Jacobs, undermined the development of infrastructural networks as idealized technological-engineered systems. Indeed, public opposition and anti-expressway community movements are closely tied to the rise of Jacobs-style urbanism and the preservationist politics that 'saved the city' from modernism's meat axe. Yet while many progressive urbanists have lauded campaigns to stop expressways and curb auto-centric urbanism, less has been said about the implications of anti-expressway politics for the marginalized urban communities who have remained disconnected by a resultant lack of infrastructure investment.

In this regard, the case of the Crosstown Expressway and its successor transportation plans present a rejoinder to the ascendant 'bourgeois urbanism' lauded in many extant analyses of urban expressway contestation. First, the Crosstown Corridor is not an established inner-city

neighborhood but a mixed-use cross-section of inner-suburban Chicago already bisected by substantial transportation infrastructure. Popular accounts of the North American ‘freeway revolt’, as Avila (2014) notes, have tended to focus on a limited number of highly visible key battlegrounds. Opposed to such classic cases as Lower Manhattan and the Bronx in New York, Toronto’s Annex neighborhood, New Orleans’s French Quarter, and Cambridge, MA, the neighborhoods threatened by the Crosstown Expressway represent a fragmented inner suburban constellation hugging the outskirts of the city of Chicago. The political and geographic coherence of the Corridor is only realized in relation to the abstract spaces and imaginaries codified in broader regional planning frameworks. Second, although ground was never broken on the Crosstown Expressway, its specter continues to profoundly shape the material form, development agenda, and spatial practices in and through its footprint as an (abstract) symbolic marker. As recently as 2007, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives, Michael Madigan, called for the revival of the Crosstown Expressway as part of the Illinois State Toll Highway while Mayor Richard M. Daley decried the Expressway’s cancellation as “the worst thing that ever happened to this city” (cf. Speilman, 2007, page n/a). In contrast to popular narratives of the demise of the Crosstown Expressway (which primarily focus on neighborhood-based community resistance) the following analysis evinces the need to locate the mobility requirements of the Crosstown Corridor – as a social space – within a multiscalar articulation of the Chicago region’s: (1) changing economic geography; (2) patterns of urbanization; and (3) volatile political culture. As such, the struggle over transport provision in the backstage city reveals Chicago’s in-between urbanization as the product of institutional, technological, and discursive path dependencies that have locked-in distinct mechanisms of infrastructure bypass and sociospatial (dis)connectivity.

### **The Rise and Fall of the Crosstown Expressway, 1963-1979**

#### *A New Kind of Expressway*

Plans for postwar highway construction in the Chicago region began to take shape during wartime as the Chicago Plan Commission (1943) and the Chicago Regional Planning Association (1944) sought to mesh a proposed network of ten urban highways in the city of Chicago with a program of highway improvements in the surrounding counties. Attempts to corral the region's pointedly fragmented planning regime, though, remained contentious into the 1950s. The State of Illinois opened sections of I-94 outside Chicago in 1950 but financial limitations delayed widespread construction in the city. The passage of the 1956 *Federal-Aid Highways Act* marked the key turning point as the federal government massively escalated its involvement with highway construction, assuming up to 90% of the financial burden of freeway construction. Mayor Richard J. Daley aggressively utilized the Act's provisions while his clout in Illinois's State capital (Springfield) and Washington D.C. proved pivotal in securing funds for urban highway development. Expenditure on highway and toll-way infrastructure in the Chicago metropolitan area rocketed during 1957-1960 and at the turn of the decade, a circumferential crosstown route was the only section of the Chicago Plan Commission's proposed 1943 network yet to break ground. That the Crosstown Expressway was de-prioritized behind the construction of the city's radial highways revealed the importance of connecting central Chicago to the nationwide Interstate network (Rose, 1990). Yet the radial pattern of urban expressways in northeastern Illinois was also viewed by local planners as: (1) maintaining Chicago's dominant position as the transportation, logistics, and manufacturing center of the Midwest; and (2) preserving the vibrancy of the Loop, as comparable Midwest city centers were losing a much greater share of businesses to their suburbs.

It was not until November 1963 that the State, Cook County, and City of Chicago formed a Crosstown Expressway Task Force "to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed [crosstown] expressway... in sufficient detail so that the need for an expressway could not be challenged" (Pikarsky, 1973 [1966], page n/a). Under the leadership of Milton Pikarsky, then Chicago Commissioner for Public Works, the planning strategy for the Crosstown Expressway proceeded in very much the same manner as Chicago's radial expressways; although the Expressway's framing

as a circulator route emphasized removing congestion from city neighborhoods and its utility for the trucking industry rather than regional or national connectivity (Crosstown Expressway Task Force, 1964). Chicago's experience with urban expressway construction during the postwar period, however, had engendered pronounced public resentment. Mayor Daley had deployed the rhetoric of modernity and progress to justify the construction of an expansive urban expressway network that bulldozed low-income, ethnic, and Black neighborhoods, separated White and Black communities, accelerated middle-class 'white flight', and spurred tax increases (Ross, 1962). The city in which the Crosstown was to be embedded was a different city than the one that emerged in the immediate postwar period. Although he remained supportive of an expressway connecting O'Hare and Midway airports, Daley conceded the City would have to "take a new look" at the question of future expressway routes (cf. Ross, 1962, page n/a).

Any movement on the Crosstown Expressway was largely stalled until February 25, 1967 when the federal government proposed the road be redesigned as a 'total development concept' that would integrate mass transit, high rise apartment buildings, commercial and industrial zones, and green spaces. Daley enthusiastically embraced this new potential symbol of Chicago's modernity, stating the road would be "the most modern and beautiful expressway in the nation" (cf. Chicago Tribune, 1967, page 7). By 1972, the Crosstown Expressway had emerged as the national testing ground for a new kind of urban expressway centered upon neighborhood integration rather than regional development. The roadway's primary function would be to serve traffic beginning or ending within a mile and a half of the proposed route and as such was not strictly a bypass for long distance and suburban traffic. It sat at the core of a Fordist urbanization strategy that incorporated commercial and industrial development, bus-exclusive lanes, and schools located on decks bridging the roadway (Crosstown Executive Board, 1972). The total development concept garnered qualified support from organizations including the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, as well as residents in predominantly affluent southwest neighborhoods and suburbs who welcomed the prospect of a smoother drive along Cicero Avenue.

*Contesting the Crosstown Expressway, Politicizing the Crosstown Corridor*

Despite this backing, the Crosstown Expressway and its broader urbanization agenda continued to face dogged opposition from local communities who organized increasingly cohesive anti-expressway groups. Milton Pikarsky was well aware of the trauma urban expressways had caused city communities, but insisted constructing the Crosstown Expressway was in “the best interests of the citizens of Chicago” (Pikarsky, 1973 [1966], page n/a). He resolved to forward its benefits through a concerted public relations strategy centered on public hearings and speaking engagements. Such forums offered Pikarsky the chance to articulate the Crosstown Expressway as the centerpiece of the new mode of urbanization that, as “more than a bypass... and more than an expressway”, would “provide a new axis for community development... improving the relationship between the urban highway and community” (cf. Crosstown Executive Board, 1970, page 23, 31).

Public meetings opened a rare space for direct access to City planning officials and often turned heated as local citizens vented their concerns. Here, as with other anti-urban expressway movements in the United States, residents, community groups, and church organizations raised questions of racial discrimination to a prominent (if not primary) position in the struggle over the Crosstown. Postwar urban highway construction had reinforced Chicago’s segregationist public housing program, which concentrated much of the African-American community in ghettoized districts on the South and West sides (Hirsch, 1998) and the Crosstown’s east-west leg threatened the displacement of residents in established Black South Side neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> But instead of devolving into a purely racial conflict, Anti-Crosstown groups effectively mobilized the backstage city across racial and ethnic divisions, bridging fissures that had historically limited grassroots and working class movements in Chicago. Citizens Action Program (CAP) was the most influential

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<sup>2</sup> Community groups in these areas viewed the Crosstown as “a detriment to the black community” (Anthony, 1970, page 2) and raised concerns about both racialized residential displacement and the impact of the Expressway on employment opportunities in Black areas along its alignment (Chicago Defender, 1974).

anti-Crosstown group through the mid-1970s.<sup>3</sup> Under co-chairs Paul Booth, a labor organizer; Reverend Len Dubi, a South Side Catholic pastor; and group president Mary Lou Wolff, CAP adapted Saul Alinsky's model of neighborhood self-defense organization to form a "metropolitan self-defense organization" based on common issues, not common geography (Booth, cf. Negronia, 1972, page 14). This metropolitan spatial imaginary clearly contrasted to concurrent neighborhood-based anti-expressway movements in other North American inner cities and proved vital in garnering the support of diverse and potentially fragmented communities.

CAP deployed a confrontational approach that left them marginalized from City politics but successfully increased the anti-Crosstown campaign's visibility, turning the Expressway into a pivotal issue during the 1972 local, State, and federal elections.<sup>4</sup> The key election battle was for the seat of Illinois governor where incumbent, Republican Richard Ogilvie, a vocal supporter of the Crosstown Expressway squared off against Dan Walker, an independent Democratic candidate who clashed with Mayor Daley's political machine and opposed the freeway. Walker defeated Ogilvie 51% to 49%. This partially reflected resentment over Ogilvie's introduction of Illinois' first income tax during his last term in office, but NBC reported that CAP's Anti-Crosstown Coalition 'education drive' could have swayed 30,000-40,000 votes. Dubi and Wolff, on hearing the election result, stated, "Today's effort may be remembered as the beginning of the end of 'politics as usual' in Chicago" (CAP Anti-Crosstown Coalition, 1972, n/a). Governor Walker appeared at the 1973 CAP annual convention to declare: "I have a very simple message for you. The Crosstown Expressway will not be built" (Walker, 1973, page n/a).

### *The Crosstown at the Crisis of Fordism*

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<sup>3</sup> Formed in 1969 as *Campaign Against Pollution*, CAP developed into a citywide coalition engaging issues including education, taxation, redlining, and the Crosstown Expressway.

<sup>4</sup> CAP exposés disseminated information about rising construction costs, the lack of plans to accommodate displaced residents, and alleged land banking by City politicians and businessmen (e.g. CAP Anti-Crosstown Coalition, 1973).

Walker's election did not mark the end of the Crosstown Expressway just as it did not mark the end of politics 'Chicago style'. Rather, the Expressway persisted as a proposed spatial strategy to address the social and economic restructuring engendered by the mid-1970s' global economic crises. Chicago's decline as a pre-eminently industrial metropolis was readily apparent by the early-1970s. The economic boom of the postwar period had subsided and companies were leaving cramped, antiquated facilities in the city for greenfield sites in nearby suburbs and further afield. Manufacturing employment across the six-county Chicago area declined significantly over the following decade, but the city's share of the regional manufacturing labor market dropped dramatically to a mere 37% in the face of stiff suburban competition (Squires et al., 1987, page 25-29). That the city's experience of industrial decline was so much more severe than region as a whole presented a two-fold problem for Chicago: the City wanted to attract and retain manufacturing jobs within the city limits to boost the municipality's tax base but also needed to facilitate Chicagoans looking to access jobs relocating to surrounding suburban counties. This was a primary concern along the Crosstown Corridor given the area's existing concentration of industrial and distribution activities. The City saw the Crosstown Expressway as necessary to maintain the presence of the trucking industry and continually framed highway construction as an employment generator (Crosstown Associates, 1971; Lovell, 1977). Their plans won backing from key labor unions, including the UAW and Chicago Federation of Labor.

The prospects of an 'infrastructural fix' to the Crisis of Fordism based on the Crosstown Expressway, however, were hit by 1973 amendments to the Federal-Aid Highways Act that enabled monies earmarked for expressway construction to be transferred to other modes of ground transportation. Moreover, the Crosstown Expressway faced run-away costs in excess of \$1 billion associated with its 'total development' design while high inflation rapidly increased the real price of construction (Crosstown Associates, 1972). The 1973 Oil Crisis triggered fears over the excessive economic and environmental costs facing an auto-dependent America and prompted calls for new solutions to the nation's, and city's, transportation problems.

Mayor Daley repeatedly clashed with Governor Walker over transportation policy between 1973 and 1976 as he sought to force legislation to start construction on the Crosstown Expressway through the State legislature. As the 1976 State gubernatorial election approached, Daley turned his attention to usurping the Governor by pressing Illinois Secretary of State, Michael Howlett, to run against Walker in the Democratic primary. Walker could not match the weight of the Daley machine and Howlett swept all 50 Chicago wards. Daley's personal triumph, though, portended deeper issues in his political machine. Most notably Chicago's South and West Side Black communities gave Walker his strongest showing in the city and would ultimately back reformer Harold Washington to the mayoralty in 1983. Howlett himself succumbed to a comprehensive defeat by Republican James Thompson in the 1976 gubernatorial election.

Richard J. Daley died from a heart attack in his office on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of City Hall on December 20, 1976. Although Daley's successor, Mayor Michael Bilandic's brief time in office was difficult, he managed to reach a pact with Governor Thompson in March 1977 to make funds available for a realigned version of the Crosstown Expressway's southern leg and a Franklin Street Subway to replace the elevated rapid transit Loop structure downtown. In theory, the deal ended the 15-year battle between City and State over the Crosstown Expressway, but the compromise was as fleeting. In Washington, President Carter had committed to cutting energy consumption (placing financial support from the federal Department of Transportation into question) while Democratic challenger Jane Byrne would sweep Bilandic from City Hall in the 1979 Chicago mayoral election. Three months after taking office, Byrne and Thompson agreed to scrap the previous Expressway and Franklin Street Subway plan. In lieu, they diverted \$1.916 billion in federal funds earmarked for these projects to Chicago's beleaguered regional transit agencies and other pressing roadway improvements across northeastern Illinois. Their final deal split the funds 50/50 between city and suburbs and effectively buried any lasting remnants of Richard J. Daley's Crosstown Expressway.



For long-time opponents of the Crosstown Expressway, the Byrne-Thompson deal was a bittersweet victory. CAP had held its final annual conference in 1975. Despite the organization's significant victories, its inflexible metropolitan governance structure proved unable to accommodate the autonomy of neighborhood member groups and a lack of further unifying causes ultimately undermined the alliance. James Kelly of the Anti-Crosstown Action Committee, touched on the lasting legacy of the battle over the Crosstown: "for years [residents have] complained about ripped up streets and alleys, and for years they've been told no repairs could be made because the Crosstown was coming" (cf. Hirsley, 1979, page 1). The 1972 warnings of Hal Foust from pro-Expressway group Citizens Crosstown Committee proved prophetic of the problems that have come to characterize development in the Crosstown Corridor since 1979: "There may never again be a federal fund available for Crosstown, for completing the Chicago expressway system, for saving lives, for creating 13,000 new jobs, for easing traffic in the 1,500 daily trips on our incomplete system, and for rehabilitating Midtown" (cf. Joyce, 1972, page n/a). Within the City, where 67% of the dollars re-allocated in the Byrne-Thompson pact were spent on mass transit (as opposed to only 8% in the suburbs), the deal funded the extension of rapid transit to O'Hare Airport in 1984 and a southwest rapid transit line to Midway Airport, opened in 1993. These rapid transit extensions connected the urban core to Chicago's airports – foreshadowing the regional connectivity that would come to dominate the Chicago global city-region – but did little to improve the spatial and social peripherality of vast sections of the South and West Sides.

### **The Crosstown Corridor in the Global City-Region, 1989-Present**

Richard M. Daley defeated aldermen Timothy Evans and Edward Vrdolyak in the 1989 Chicago mayoral election with the backing of a significantly reconfigured political base and a new politics of growth (Bennett, 2010). The new mayor aggressively pursued a global city policy agenda focused on financial and business services, cultural regeneration, and the revitalization of the Loop. Large-scale

public works projects remained central to Chicago's urban development paradigm, yet their focus shifted from the modern (but highly segregated) ideals of urban renewal and the transportation projects pursued by Richard J. Daley to spatially selective megaprojects that facilitate global connectivity and competitive greening (City of Chicago, e.g. 2003). The global refocusing of Chicago's urbanization regime re-contextualized the spatial orientation and functional logics overlaid in the Crosstown Corridor. New plans for infrastructure development in the emergent in-between city vividly illuminated the contrasting scales of mobility assembled in the global city-region.

### *New Infrastructural Imaginaries*

Three months after Richard M. Daley assumed the Mayor's Office, the City released a preliminary overview for possible transit developments in the Crosstown Corridor. With the demise of the Crosstown Expressway, the north-south arterial streets on the West Side of Chicago remained problematically overcrowded, and, due to a lack of ongoing improvement in the shadow of the Expressway, were in a state of disrepair. In 1989, Cicero Avenue carried a higher volume of traffic than any other Chicago arterial street while adjacent Pulaski Road and Harlem Avenue both had sections where average daily traffic loads exceeded 40,000 vehicles (City of Chicago, 1989). Interest reignited around the Mid-City Transitway: a proposed rapid transit line that closely followed the Crosstown Expressway's alignment. The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) included a "Cicero Avenue O'Hare/Ryan Interline Connector" as a priority project in their 2010 (1990) and 2020 (1997) regional transportation plans and, based on high ridership projections, suggested the project was an excellent candidate for federal funding.

Little progress was made in moving the Mid-City Transitway forward, however. Although monies from the Crosstown Expressway's cancellation had enabled the construction of a rapid transit line to Midway Airport, the Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA) priority in the mid-1990s and early-2000s was maintaining and upgrading its antiquated and dilapidated heavy rail transit infrastructure. It was not until 2002 when Mayor Richard M. Daley commissioned a second round

of feasibility studies that the Mid-City Transitway regained any momentum. While the City had previously floated the idea of heavy rapid transit in the Corridor, the 2002 feasibility studies embraced a plethora of possible alternatives for transportation improvements. These included developing an elevated line utilizing existing Union-Pacific and Chicago Beltway Railroad right-of-ways; a bus rapid transit roadway, a truck-exclusive roadway, or combination of transit and truck freight infrastructure. Again, while developing transit and freight facilities in the Crosstown Corridor was a popular idea on paper, it remained low on the City and CTA's overall list of transportation investments and funding projects. Despite feasibility study reports commissioned by the City indicating a potential ridership of 90,000-95,000 riders per day, the Daley regime prioritized extensions to the Orange, Red, and Yellow CTA lines, and the creation of a new downtown 'Circle Line' (Addie, 2013).

*(Failures in) Addressing the Challenge of In-Between Spatial Practice*

The Circle Line emerged as a central component of the City of Chicago's 2003 Central Area Plan. The CTA (2002) envisioned the new line encircling the freshly re-designated urban core between two and three miles from the Loop. The proposed line purportedly addressed Chicago's transportation needs by: (1) bolstering service to tourist and entertainment destinations, the Illinois Medical District hub, and gentrifying near West Side neighborhoods; (2) integrating rapid transit and regional rail facilities while utilizing existing infrastructure as much as possible (thus generating favorable cost-effectiveness levels for federal financing); and (3) addressing downtown congestion by rerouting service to non-Loop destinations. Projections suggested the 6.2 mile route could generate 10 million annual riders by 2030 with a \$1 billion budget; comparable to the construction costs of the 21.7 mile Mid-City Transitway (Chicago Transit Authority, 2009). The CTA incorporated Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) work on the Mid-City Transitway into their Circle Line analysis but, by contending the two projects served similar markets, posited that the Circle Line would serve more riders, since Cicero Avenue lacked the density to justify large-scale infrastructural investment. CDOT (2009) subsequently

suggested the Mid-City Transitway “is just a long-range concept... part of a long-range regional plan to address transportation needs”. At the regional level, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning<sup>5</sup> downgraded the Mid-City Transitway from a ‘priority project’ to a future ‘corridor recommendation’ (2010, page 213-215).

Equating the Mid-City Transitway and Circle Line is both contentious and problematic. Whereas the Circle Line primarily serves affluent White residents moving into gentrifying near-Loop neighborhoods and commuters in central areas already well served by public transit, the Mid-City Transitway provides communities that are structurally more dependent on public transit and isolated from regional job opportunities with improved access to growing regional employment hubs outside the Loop. The Circle Line is intricately connected to the production of urban space as an accumulation strategy; one focused upon the upper-end commercial and residential functions of the global city’s urban core. By contrast, the development opportunities along the Mid-City Transitway appear less immediate. Employment is mainly in industrial, distribution, and lower-end retail activity. Further, the City prefers the Mid-City Transitway’s primary ‘global’ function – the (overstated) need to connect O’Hare and Midway – to be served by a splintered Express Airport Service on the Blue and Orange El Lines running through the Loop (Chicago Transit Authority, 2006).

The sociospatial dynamics at play here speak to the regional mobilities and global center-oriented urban policies guiding infrastructural investment under Chicago’s current urbanization regime. ‘Backstage’ spaces that have felt the sting of neoliberal sociospatial restructuring remain overlooked (like other quintessential in-between landscapes) as “mere empty vessels to be filled with connective tissue meant to produce centralities elsewhere” (Young and Keil, 2014, page 1599). Despite a proposed increase in service for some low-income and ethnic groups in and adjacent to the Crosstown Corridor, local community organizations have critiqued the Circle Line for a perceived misallocation of the CTA’s limited funds and its potential to catalyze displacement. The Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO), for example, has called for alternative low-

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<sup>5</sup> The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning superseded CATS as Chicago’s Metropolitan Planning Organization in 2006.

cost solutions to the transit demands of Chicago's in-between city to better accommodate local residents' everyday spatial practices and open access to employment and retail opportunities. Proposals included reopening stations on the Blue and Green El Lines, reinstating bus routes cancelled during cuts in 1997, and increasing the capacity on existing bus service. LVEJO has realized some significant victories by framing transit as a social justice issue, most notably lobbying the CTA to instate permanent bus service along 31<sup>st</sup> Street (Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, 2014). Yet their 12-year struggle not only discloses the institutional barriers, shifting priorities, and funding options available to Chicago transportation planners (especially in the wake of the Financial Crisis), but also highlights the entrenched mechanisms of infrastructural bypass engendered by the regional scales of mobility now prioritized within the global city-region (Addie, 2013; Keil and Addie, forthcoming).

### **In-Between Antecedents: Lock-Ins, Remnant Spaces, and Phantom Infrastructure**

The development of the Crosstown Corridor as a relational geographic and historic product belies a complex, multiscalar negotiation of diverse communities, interests, and space-times that has been deeply conditioned by infrastructural lock-ins and unequal power relations. The 1956 Federal-Aid Highways Act's inflexible funding arrangements foreclosed alternative transportation options and established the primacy of urban expressways within America's dominant Fordist mode of urbanization (Biles et al., 2014; Mohl, 2003). With automobility embedded in the very notion of the American (suburban) life, federal funding for expressway construction effectively subsidized the decentralization of population and industry. Chicago's experience with postwar Interstate development presented a double-edged sword for the metropolis. Urban expressways thoroughly integrated Chicago into America's transportation network, ensuring the city could maintain its position as a preeminent continental hub. However, the expressways that drove through the city's neighborhoods in the 1950s and 1960s unlocked processes of local 'bypassing' (Graham and

Marvin, 2001) and the conditions for racialized, class-based, and anti-urban “secessionist automobility” (Henderson, 2006). As a consequence of Chicago developing the radial spokes of its urban expressway system prior to a crosstown route, the city’s expressway network failed to fully integrate the fabric of auto-centric urban space at the metropolitan scale. The north-south axis of Cicero Avenue remained central to the City’s and State’s plans for regional connectivity largely due to the influence of the trucking and logistics industries, but the Crosstown Corridor, as a lived space for its residents, remained a marginal concern.

The federal government ruptured the path dependencies of the 1956 Act in 1973 by enabling monies earmarked for expressways to be transferred to other modes of ground transportation. With high inflation driving up the real price of construction, growing dissatisfaction with urban expressways, and environmental concerns due to the 1970s Energy Crisis, anti-expressway groups forged a powerful discourse lobbying for new transportation solutions. At this critical juncture, community organizations including CAP and the Anti-Crosstown Action Committee focused their opposition to urban expressways by promoting their neighborhoods as a space of inhabitation. The production of urban space through the everyday practices of residents in the backstage city therefore became locked into a struggle with the abstract spaces of the City’s planners and engineers and Mayor Richard J. Daley’s desire to promote the economic development and symbolic civic value of the project. The irony of the anti-Crosstown Expressway movement’s victory was that while it succeeded preventing the roadway bulldozing through their communities, it did not manage to reconfigure the overarching symbolization of the backstage city as a space to be traversed rather than place to be inhabited.

The goal of increasing the profitability of the wider urban landscape remained the fundamental imperative structuring transportation and urban planning in the Crosstown Corridor. To this end, urban transportation infrastructure has been a persistently contested object of political struggle between shifting constellations of City, State, and federal actors. Yet while the complex patterns of land use and layered governance arrangements found in the in-between city make it “a

prime location for... political confusion” (Keil and Young, 2009, page 495), northeastern Illinois’s governmental fragmentation and strong home rule powers – in combination with the City of Chicago’s regional dominance – has perpetuated the institutionalization of geographic planning silos; despite growing overtures to new regionalist thinking entering the twenty-first century. Both the politics and connectivity of Chicago’s in-between city have tended to be addressed via *municipality*-focused planning frameworks that overlook the morphologically integrated but institutionally differentiated suburbs, even when looking to leverage *regionalizing* mobility flows (e.g. City of Chicago, 2011). Although anti-Crosstown Expressway groups effectively ‘jumped’ to the metropolitan scale through a focused, issue-based politic (although one predominantly operationalized through a municipal territoriality), a lasting ‘in-between politics’ capable of breaching pre-existing territorial institutions and imaginaries did not materialized in Chicago.

Questions of access and connectivity continue to pivot around key privileged urban nodes, most recently in the corridors and hubs of CMAP’s (2010) growth management strategy. Held in the shadow of long planned but never built phantom infrastructures (both the Crosstown Expressway and MidCity Transitway) the Crosstown Corridor has suffered a lack of infrastructure investment and consequently remained a poor potential site for the investments in the built environment that have constituted a vital component of Chicago’s urban accumulation regime since the late-1980s. Without the required infrastructural investment, industrial and logistical activity increasingly migrated to the suburbs where greater expanses on land (with significantly lower rents and taxes) were available to accommodate the increasing scale and growing technological advancements of industrial and freight activity. Communities in the Crosstown Corridor have thus been caught, drawing on Keil and Young’s relational theorization, *in-between* the centralizing and sprawling imperatives of global city-regional urbanization. On one hand, the neoliberal logics of transport investment in ‘Global Chicago’ are concentrated on the hyper-connectivity of the Loop and O’Hare Airport (Farmer, 2011) while on the other, the outer suburbs compete through an emerging suburban territorial politics for their stake of the global and

continental logistics industries (Cidell, 2011; Keil and Addie, forthcoming). Chicago's 'backstage city' is consequently locked-in a peripheral form of in-between urbanization as an extended landscape characterized by "the remnant spaces of Fordist urbanization" (Young and Keil, 2010, page 90) and infrastructural bypassing conditioned by the rhythms of global urbanization.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has critically engaged the uneven distribution of infrastructure provision, connectivity, and mobility in neoliberal urban landscapes by uncovering the path dependent trajectories underpinning the production of a particular articulation of the *Zwischenstadt*. Through unpacking the historical development of Chicago's Crosstown Corridor, it has demonstrated the capacity of the in-between city, as a post-suburban conceptual lens, to analytically and politically "[validate] both the overlooked spaces in-between and the emerging metropolitan spaces of which they are part" (Young and Keil, 2014, page 1605). As a relational conceptual framework, the in-between city focuses our attention on the power geometries, privileging, and exclusions disclosed through excavating the production and overlapping of multiple eras and modes of urbanization. The Crosstown Corridor emerges as a contested and contingent urban space; a site of nascent symbolization and meaning, multifaceted spatial imaginaries, and a diverse array of often-contradictory spatial practices. In this sense, the case offers an important rejoinder to reductionist accounts of the anti-expressway politics that form a foundation trope of contemporary bourgeois urbanism, and demonstrates the need to further refocus the lens of critical urban studies away from the highly visible and organized urban political arena of the inner-city.

The in-between urbanization of the Crosstown Corridor reveals the central role played by shifting state selectivity and politicized production of multiscalar urban infrastructure (MacLeod, 2011, page 2638). This is not, however, a simple narrative of social and spatial marginalization. Its specific contours and relations reflect its sociospatial production as a historical product that



necessitates embedding within wider political, economic, and social transitions. The in-between city might contain privileged hubs and networks, yet throughout the above case study, these have exhibited a clear tendency to be structured by functional logics tied to the generation of urban centralities elsewhere; both related to the territoriality of spatial Keynesianism and subsequent neoliberal state strategies (see Brenner, 2004). The edifices of divergent modes of urbanization in the Crosstown Corridor have been overlaid and crystallized in the fixed capital of transport infrastructure. As a consequence, its in-between urbanization internalizes both what we might consider ‘traditional’ suburban forms *and* qualitatively distinct forms of post-suburban ordering. This presents clear challenges regarding how we conceptualize the characteristics and dimension of current peripheral urbanization processes and how we approach the political and policy challenges presented by amorphous, fragmented and segregated urban space. What is evident is that in contrast to the planned ideal or dominant discursive trope of suburbia, contemporary suburbanization engenders complex geographies of hyper-connectivity and bypassing wherein geographic proximity does not neatly equate to social or political propinquity.

Processes of symbolization, codified in particular infrastructural imaginaries, have proved vital in shaping the in-between urbanization of Chicago’s Crosstown Corridor. As symbolic markers, the Crosstown Expressway emerged as a high modern ideal while its successor, the MidCity Transitway, came to embody as an urbanizing spatial fix for the backstage of the global city. As Dembski (2013) suggests, such imaginaries, if effectively mobilized, may hold the potential to forge new centralities within the in-between city. Yet the symbolization *of* the in-between city is very different to symbolization *for* the in-between city, and perhaps more importantly, *by* residents of the now ubiquitous *Zwischenstadt*. It is worth stressing that in the absence of the development of large-scale transportation infrastructure and subsequent investment in the built environment the practice of everyday life through the spaces of the Crosstown Corridor condition their own constellations of mobility and sociospatial rhythms. The Lefebvrian notion of an “emergence of an urban order, but one bearing the possibility of a new global relation of centrality for all” (Quinby,

2011, page 72) is significant here. The decentered horizontality of the urban in-between engenders interactive patterns and intertwined connections that mix different uses and users together (Kolb, 2008, page 160) in a manner that defies conditioning by the overarching and domineering mobility networks of the global city-region. Future comprehensive and systemic infrastructure in the Crosstown Corridor (such as the MidCity Transitway) appears dependent on a paradigmatic shift in the logics prioritizing 'productive' (for capital accumulation) investments in the built environment. Present City, State and federal funding mechanisms lock transport planning into a competitive, zero-sum engagement with alternative projects looking for funding and a construction green light (Addie, 2013, page 203-204). Accordingly, repositioning the 'backstage city' into the core of regionalizing policy frameworks becomes an ambitious but necessary task. Processes of bypassing and sociospatial disconnection have characterized the road to the in-between city in Chicago. Internally and externally forging new meaning for the in-between communities of the Crosstown Corridor pivots on mobilizing an urban politics capable of adapting to emergent everyday spatial practices and strategically realigning the imperatives of regional development with formal and informal mechanisms to empower those disconnected from the sociospatial centralities of the global city-region.

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**Figures:**

Figure 1: The 'Crosstown Corridor' in context

