

- *Freeways Without Futures: Possibilities for Urban Freeway Removal in Chicago (John Norquist, Caitlin Ghoshal - Congress for the New Urbanism)*

America's twentieth century highway-building era was dominated by the construction of elevated urban freeways. These freeways cut huge swaths across our cities, decimating neighborhoods and reducing quality of life for city residents. This massive concrete infrastructure had devastating effects on urban economies, including blighting adjacent property. With the Federal and State Departments of Transportation confronting shrinking budgets and cities looking for ways to increase their revenues, public officials are now considering less expensive alternatives to expressway reconstruction.

This white paper examines factors that make Chicago's I-55/Lake Shore Drive and Ohio Street candidates for urban freeway removal. The land use footprint (and subsequent loss of tax revenue) and expense of maintenance make these streets candidates for cost-effective, "right-sized" roadways. The paper assesses traffic impacts, pedestrian safety and possibilities for stimulating valuable revitalization in Chicago neighborhoods. The paper also draws comparisons between Chicago and Midwest case studies by discussing freeway removal success stories. The paper concludes with recommendations for public officials considering boulevard conversion and/or capping projects in Chicago.