



THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

North America's first successful rails-to-trails conversion. Founded 1963.

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Annual Meeting Advocating for Prairie Path Bicycling Safety

During the November 2025 IPPc Annual Membership Meeting, we set aside significant time to discuss e-bikes and their impact on our trail. The issue with e-bikes is complex due to various local ordinances, e-bike classifications, etc. In short, the e-bike market is ahead of our ability to effectively manage its use. As such, we invited Dave Simmons

from Ride Illinois to share the various activities his organization has in play to address this issue. Dave noted some short and long-term goals ranging from:

- Education needs
- Legislation updates
- Reigning in retailers

We also had a spirited discussion with significant and important feedback from our members related to the use of e-bikes. In addition, we acknowledged the need to engage the medical community especially as the significant growth of e-bike usage has resulted in a significant increase in injuries. In fact, in the June 2025 article from the American College of Surgeons (ACS), *Statement on Electric Bicycle Safety and Injury Prevention, ACS notes among other comments that:

- More than 1.1 million electric bicycles were sold in the United States in 2022 with a projected annual growth rate of 10%^{1,2}
- Over 20,000 people are injured while riding electric bicycles annually with approximately 3,000 individuals requiring hospitalization, and this is likely underreported³

- The rate of electric bicycle injuries is increasing annually^{4,5}
- Electric bicycle injuries are more severe than their manual bicycle counterparts^{6,7}
- Head injuries occur most frequently, and only a third of injured patients are reported to wear helmets⁸

As the IPPc considers how to best address the e-bike issue on our trail system, we will, based on membership feedback, focus on 3 areas of safety:

1. A 15 MPH posted speed limit
2. Stress announcing yourself when passing
3. Continue to recommend the use of helmets

While these 3 recommendations will not solve all our challenges nor will they be easy to enforce, we believe these set a minimum standard users should know and follow. As a trail user, your feedback is crucial and because we are still in the planning stage, this is the time to speak up. Please share your thoughts via email to info@ipp.org. We appreciate your feedback!

1-8 American College of Surgeons. (2025, June 6). Statement on electric bicycle safety and injury prevention [Policy statement].



In the fall, DuPage County has placed these signs on the Illinois Prairie Path

CA&E Train Car 321 Is Coming Home to Villa Park

As many of you know, the Chicago Aurora & Elgin (CA&E) electric railway provided passenger & cargo service to the western suburbs with service ending in July 1957. Fortunately, Illinois Prairie Path founders/volunteers had the foresight, motivation and resources to convert the abandoned railway into a nature trail – the Illinois Prairie Path. This was the beginning of the US Rails-to-Trails movement. lpp.org/history

Car 321 (pictured right) was built in 1914 and served CA&E passengers for many years where the Illinois Prairie Path is currently located. It is will soon be moved to Villa Park, renovated, then staged alongside the Prairie Path in early 2026 thanks to the Illinois Railway Museum, Fox River Trolley Museum, Village of Villa Park, the Villa Park Historical Society, Burke Engineering, Ornamental Iron Workers, Carpenters' Union, DuPage County, the IPPc (Illinois Prairie Path) and other organizations. All parties are very excited to bring Car 321 home to Villa Park! lpp.org/wp-content/uploads/Car-321-is-coming-home-to-Villa-Park.pdf

The Village of Villa Park shared their excitement for this project at a December 12 Town Hall. Stay tuned for project updates in the coming months!

Reactions to Car 321 from our FaceBook page:

Wow! very cool to hear! I think it will be neat to have an original CA&E car back near its home. Crazy to think it's been around 60 years since a piece of CA&E rolling stock has been anywhere near the right of way.

-Ryan K.

Amazing work everyone!

-Anthony I.

Neat. I'm looking forward to seeing the project finished.

-Bill E.

Wow! What an absolutely wonderful idea! Cannot wait to see the finished product!

-Kathy L.

My dad road that train to work. Then, when it stopped running, he and his work buddies had to car pool to get there. Ah, memories.

-Pam C.

This sounds like a great historical project.

-Gail B.

...great they want to do this. Long overdue. Brings context to the path.

-Bruce M.

Villa Park already has a station used as a museum. The park along the trail is a gem.

-Stephen M.



CA&E Train Car 321 coming to Villa Park



Rendering of Car 321 under a pavilion resembling train stations from its era



Villa Park Town Hall. "Car 321, Where Are You?" Commemorating the Initial Train Car Announcement

L-R: Ralph DiFebo (IPPc), Michelle Dunlap (IPPc), Jeff Friedman (IPPc), Kevin Patrick (Villa Park Village President), John VanSanten (IPPc), and Andrea DiFebo (IPPc)

Eighty Feet Equals Improved Rider Safety and Comfort

For the past few years, the IPP(c) has been working the Village of Bellwood to create a safer crossing of the Illinois Prairie Path (IPP) at 25th Avenue. After considering several options, Bellwood has now completed a re-routing of the path on both sides of 25th Avenue.

The path, which had T-boned mid-block into busy 25th Ave traffic, has now been re-routed 80 feet to the south to the corner intersection of Madison/Maywood Dr. and 25th Ave. The newly paved path provides more space than before and has softer curves as it approaches the corner. The intersection is equipped with a pedestrian signal and a painted crosswalk. This relatively simple change will provide riders with a tremendous improvement in flow and safety.

The landscaping is anticipated to be completed in the spring. The IPP(c) looks forward to seeing these final touches. Our thanks to the Village of Bellwood and Mayor Andre Harvey for working with the IPP(c) on this improvement.



Newly installed IPP crossing of 25th Ave in Bellwood

Revisiting Prairie Path Signs



Melisa Ribikawskis, Senior Transportation Planner and Trails Coordinator for DuPage County, presented the county's update at the Annual Meeting. During her presentation, she presented recent department accomplishments and

provided an update on the status of the East Branch DuPage River Trail progress. Among the highlighted accomplishments were:

- Installation of 5 new benches along the Prairie Path in partnership with IPPc and donors; 1 was relocated
- Staff maintenance hours including mowing, storm clean-up, debris removal, and responding to resident concerns
- Modernization of trail signage to provide better information and consistent branding across all trail systems
 - Updated and new signage has been installed throughout the DuPage path system which includes directional wayfinding, cross street signage, and trail access signage
 - In addition, new signs have been placed on the path reminding users of essential protocols and rules including:
 - Safe Travel Speeds
 - "Passing" announcement recommendation e.g. "passing on the left"
 - Keeping to the right side of the trail and move off when stopped
 - Cleaning up after pets and maintaining pets on leashes
 - Using trash receptacles

Also highlighted in her presentation was the development of a multi-phase, county wide Active Transportation Plan. Currently, the county is focusing on the public outreach phase of this process which includes:

- The establishment of in-person focus groups
- Administration of public surveys, and
- Several "pop-up" events and activities related to this

plan's development, and

- The collection of information on existing conditions of the County wide system

After receiving input, the county will continue with the next phase of development of this multi-phase, county wide Active Transportation Plan.

For more information on this plan see:

tinyurl.com/DuDOTATP

Melisa also provided an update on the East Branch DuPage River Trail (EBDRT), a planned 28-mile regional trail in Central DuPage. Its current route is roughly parallel to the East Branch of the DuPage River. This plan, which is currently in "Phase I" of development, includes:

- Adjusting planned alignment
- Public Involvement Meeting to discuss alternatives
- Generating consensus among key stakeholders

Finally, Melisa addressed updates regarding ongoing Trail Maintenance. These included:

- Clearly outline maintenance responsibilities
- Establishing a regular schedule to control invasive plants along the trail
- Consistently addressing maintenance needs and solutions
- Concentrating on long-term solutions for parking near the trail system while focusing on maintenance, accessibility, and other challenges associated with space constraints

Regarding this final bullet, the County will continue to focus on the Illinois Prairie Path crossing at Army Trail Road. At this site, a parking and accessibility study is currently in progress. In addition, a survey at the Army Trail Road location has been completed and an engineering design is being developed to assess options.

The Illinois Prairie Path appreciates its ongoing cooperative relationship with DuPage County and its capacity to provide a continued forum for IPPc members and the path user community.

Illinois Prairie Path (IPPc) Officers and Directors - 2026

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Fat Bike Fun – Winter Cycling on the Prairie Path

I've been a rider on the Illinois Prairie Path (IPP) for 30+ years and love riding in every season. Undeterred by the extreme heat of summer or the brutal cold of winter, I'm always geared up and joyfully spinning along the IPP. The only conditions that caused me to move inside to the dreaded boredom of my indoor trainer – Snow & Ice. Spinning on a stationary bike while streaming shows or movies will never be as compelling as riding on the IPP and taking in all the nature surrounding me.

The perfect solution came through a random post on STRAVA, a physical fitness tracking app. A few years back, I posted a road bike ride with the comment "Last ride before the blizzard" – a big snow storm was predicted the next day. My cousin Luke in Minnesota responded: "Get yourself a Fat Bike and you can ride in the blizzard". With that Northern inspiration, I visited my favorite bike shop and bought a Fat Bike.

Fat bikes get their name from their wide "Fat" knobby tires – typically 4.5+ inches wide. Fat tires provide much greater stability and traction in tough conditions

like snow and ice. They also absorb more of the bumps and shocks than regular tires – providing a more comfortable ride on rough surfaces. Get studded tires (highly recommended for riding the IPP) and you can go anywhere anytime.

I'm like a kid waiting for snow to fall. In my 4th Winter on a Fat Bike, I absolutely love it! The Prairie Path is magical in the wintertime, especially during and after a fresh snowfall. My Fat Bike gets me out there to enjoy it. No more indoor trainers for me!

Note: There are many great options for Fat Bikes and associated gear. Check with your favorite bike shop for recommendations. I ride a Trek Farley 9.6 with studded Dillinger 5 tires.

John VanSanten, IPP Board Member and Treasurer



If You See Something, Say Something

Recently, we have heard reports of "unauthorized" dumping near the Prairie Path. With its 62 miles of trail to maintain, we always need and appreciate your help. If you "see something, say something".

One aspect of the Illinois Prairie Path (IPP) organization that we most appreciate is the devotion of the hundreds of members we have as part of our community. The Illinois Prairie Path is more than just a "path", it is a gateway to shared moments with loved ones, experiences in nature, and even access to other communities. It is in this vein that we invite you to share when there is an issue that needs attention.

While as IPP board members, we do our best to stay on top of path issues identifying fallen tree limbs, disposed tires, or other type of "issues" that take away from the beauty that is the IPP, we invite you to share your findings/concerns by dropping us an email at info@ipp.org. Your concerns will be forwarded immediately to those responsible.

The IPP is indeed a shared experience, and it's great because of the devotion of all who use the path. Thank you for your assistance in our pursuit to keep the IPP one of the best "rails-to-trails" in the nation!

August | September | October | November | December

Thank you

Your membership and donations are used to provide services and fund improvements benefiting Illinois Prairie Path members and users.

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