

State of the Loop

Q2 2024 (April - June)

Executive Summary: The Beating Heart of Chicago's Future

Chicago's Loop district demonstrated resilience and growth in Q2 2024, with positive trends across categories at a crucial time in the post-pandemic recovery. Multimodal transportation shows a significant increase, with weekend pedestrian activity on State Street in the Loop notably exceeding 2019 levels; a significant rise in cycling; and rebounding CTA ridership. The neighborhood's office occupancy continually surpasses other major metros, and leading companies' investments in office expansion and improvements demonstrate the business community's commitment to the Loop. Cultural events drew hundreds of thousands, enhancing the district's vibrancy beyond the workweek. Crucial decisions surrounding the future governance and funding of Chicago's transportation authorities will play a vital role in determining the Loop's long-term economic health and vitality.

Transportation

Pedestrian activity on State Street in the Loop has shown encouraging signs of recovery. **State Street recorded 35,561,428 visits** year-to-date, representing a 10% increase compared to last year, and hovering within 10% of 2019 levels. **Weekend visits have been particularly strong, surpassing 2019 levels by 28%**, with an average of 442,000 pedestrian impressions on Saturdays and Sundays.



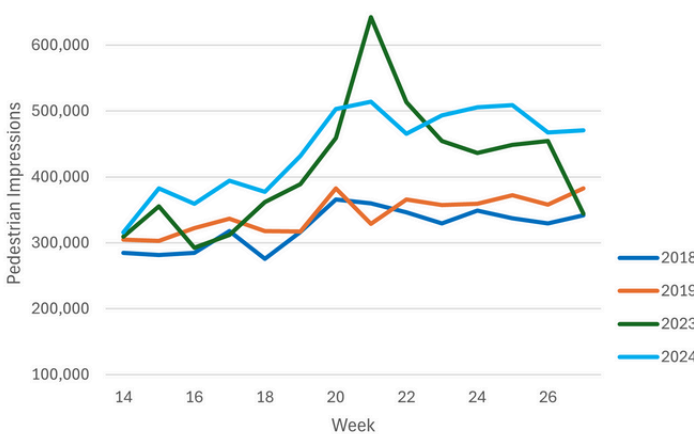
100 Walk Score **100** Transit Score **+119%** Increase in cycling

Chicago is also experiencing a remarkable bike boom, with **cycling up 119%** between fall 2019 and spring 2023, the largest increase among the country's ten largest cities. The Loop boasts a perfect 100 in walk and transit scores, the only downtown studied to do so, according to CLA's recent *Value of Downtown* study, giving residents the peace of mind to choose sustainable commute choices.

Preparing for the Future

The future of Chicago's mass transit systems, crucial to the Loop's economy, faces significant challenges and opportunities ahead. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), which oversees the CTA, Metra, and PACE, is approaching a **fiscal cliff in 2026** as federal COVID funding is set to dry up and the full impact of remote work trends is felt. To secure the RTA's fiscal future, changes are necessary. Loop stakeholders should monitor proposed state legislation like the **Metropolitan Mobility Authority Act**, which could significantly alter how transit decisions are made, improving the Loop's economy and quality of life.

Weekend Pedestrian Impressions in Q2, State Street



CTA reported over 70 million rides in Q1 2024. Year-to-date **ridership has increased by 13%**, with May 8 marking the system's busiest day since 2020, recording more than a million rides.

Office

Chicago's office market shows promising signs of recovery. In Q2, the average weekly **office occupancy in Chicago surpassed that of New York City and Los Angeles by 4% and 8%**, respectively. This figure represents a continued upward trend following the pandemic, according to data from Kastle Systems.

Arts and Culture



The Loop's cultural scene is thriving, with signature events and institutions drawing impressive crowds throughout Q2 2024. Cultural institutions' attendees **increased by 4% compared to Q2 2023**. Total attendance **exceeded 1 million attendees** this quarter, representing **nearly \$300 million in direct economic impact** (Choose Chicago, AIC, DCASE).

Of note, Memorial Day weekend saw bustling activity, with Sueños Music Festival attendance exceeding 60,000 each day, generating an **additional \$243 million in economic activity**. In Millennium Park, the Chicago Blues Festival attracted 114,000 fans, one of the largest attendance records in park history. These numbers collectively indicate a vibrant, culturally rich downtown district that continues to attract both residents and tourists alike.

Investment

Invenergy announced an expansion of its Wacker Drive headquarters, adding 34,876 square feet to accommodate a growing Chicago workforce. HOK architecture firm also announced the relocation of their Chicago office to Prudential Plaza, signing a 13-year deal for 24,450 square feet. This move follows a **\$50 million commitment** by the building's owner, Wanxiang America Real Estate Group, to upgrade the lobby and tenant amenities. HOK, part of the team that designed O'Hare Terminal 5, has grown its local workforce by 30% in the past 18 months. These investments signal a strong vote of confidence in the Loop's future as a prime business location.

Highlight: Corridor Ambassadors Provide Social Services, Helping Thousands



Chicago Loop Alliance's Corridor Ambassadors (*above*) summer expansion program launched this quarter, temporarily adding three Social Services Outreach Ambassadors to the team. In partnership with CPL's Harold Washington Library, the outreach team made **over 1,100 referrals** in May alone to employment, housing, and ID social services. This program demonstrates CLA's commitment to addressing social issues and supporting everyone in the Loop.



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