Since 2001, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) has promoted safe cycling and walking through the City of Chicago’s Safe Routes Ambassadors and Bicycling Ambassadors. The goals of the Ambassadors are safety, encouragement, and education for cyclists and pedestrians, reducing crashes and making Chicago a safer place for active transportation.

The Ambassador programs are funded through CDOT and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), with the funding year running from September through August. Each season Ambassadors visit schools, parks, libraries, businesses, block parties, ward events, bike rides, farmers markets, festivals, Lakefront Trail, Riverwalk and the 606 trail outreach, and more. The Ambassadors also act as a street team for Divvy, Chicago’s Bike Share Program, during high-usage events and at new station locations. Finally, the Ambassadors work with the Chicago Police Department to enforce transportation laws that encourage a safer environment for people who walk, bike, and drive in the city.
MEET THE AMBASSADORS

CLAIRE

“The best thing about being an Ambassador is that I am is constantly exposed to a diversity of ideas, organizations, and unique cultures that constitute Chicago as a whole. This immersion allows me the incredible opportunity to proudly extend and represent a connection to all through bicycling!”

DEVONTE

“My favorite thing about being an Ambassador is being around people and talking to and teaching children of all ages. It can be hard to have the energy to do multiple things, or to be ready at all times, but we are always around for safety tips.”

EMME

“I’ve enjoyed so many events for so many different reasons. One that stands out is the bike safety rally that I went to twice in Golden Gate Park on the far south side. The organizers, attitude, and vision were inspiring and the connections were lasting.”

KAREN

“My favorite event this summer was Bike the Drive because the whole team was together and we got to enjoy Lakeshore Drive before the ride started. This can look like an easy job, but the work that is done has a purpose and it’s important.”

KIRA

“My favorite thing about being an Ambassador is the positive interactions I had through education and outreach. The Ambassador program is an amazing opportunity to grow your knowledge of bike infrastructure, safety, laws, and community! Teaching kids was awesome too!”

SOL

“I feel like I am making a difference about something I care about. I was biking to a school to give 2nd grade presentations and I saw a pedestrian get hit by a car. It really highlighted the importance of the work for me. There are lives at stake, and we work to make people safer. It’s hard not to be passionate about that.”

DAN

“I became an Ambassador because I wanted to connect with the bike community. I also wanted to understand how the police enforced laws and better understand how the police operated. I wanted to become an Ambassador to become a better advocate for alternative forms of transportation.”

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Each season, the Ambassadors travel all over the city, speaking directly with Chicagoans about bicycling safely. Traveling by bike, Ambassadors spoke to people in all 50 wards and every police district. Ambassadors can be found having these conversations on the Lakefront Trail, at Divvy Stations, at festivals, at block parties and many other locations. These events, along with schools, parks and enforcement led the team to visit 830 events during the 2014-2015 season.
TARGETED ENFORCEMENT

The Chicago Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Initiative Enforcement Program included joint safety enforcement events with the Chicago Police Department and the Bicycling Ambassadors, targeting behaviors dangerous to pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

Together with police officers, the Bicycling Ambassadors educated over 26,500 Chicagoans on how to safely share the road during enforcement events. In addition to the citations, more than 5,700 warnings were given by police to motorists and cyclists at events.

Bike safety events were held at peak commuting hours at the most high-crash and high-profile intersections identified by crash data and ridership and Aldermanic input, with additional requests by CDOT, police, and community groups. Motorists and bicyclists were informed of laws that protect the safety of people who walk and bike, and the importance of upholding those laws. Information was distributed about distracted driving, failure to yield for pedestrians and cyclists at controlled intersections, riding on the sidewalk, and riding against traffic, among other behaviors.

The Bicycling Ambassadors also partnered with police to distribute 2,000 bicycle headlights to cyclists riding unlawfully with no headlight. Lights were provided by the Chicago Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Initiative. The Bicycling Ambassadors also distributed 2,000 reflective ankle straps and arm bands to pedestrians and cyclists at these events.

160
ENFORCEMENT EVENTS
IN 17 POLICE DISTRICTS

158% INCREASE
SINCE 2011

5,745
MOTORIST & CYCLIST
CITATIONS & WARNINGS
The Safe Routes and Bicycling Ambassadors have a unique approach to educating children and youth. Working year-round for the last 10 years, they directly educate young people with bicycle and pedestrian safety messaging.

During the school year, the Safe Routes Ambassadors reach out directly to public and private schools and speak to individual classrooms of 2nd, 5th and high schoolers. The presentation content and activities are tailored to meet the needs of the classroom and age group. In elementary schools, Ambassadors work to schedule a second, hands-on outdoor session to reinforce classroom learning.

Elementary Presentations: First Visit
100 elementary schools were visited this season, reaching more than 14,000 students.

2nd Grade
Ambassadors work with students to teach the “Lean & Peek,” where students use stationary objects to check traffic for safe crossing conditions. Students are also taught to identify tricky crossing situations and to find an appropriate walking buddy.

5th Grade
Bicycle safety education is the focus of the fifth grade presentation, particularly visibility, predictability, and helmets. Students are taught how to select high visibility attire and equipment, as well as the value of predictable behaviors: riding in a straight line, hand signals, riding with traffic, and following the rules of the road.

Elementary Presentations: Second Visit
54 schools were visited twice this season, reaching more than 1,500 elementary students for hands-on activities.

2nd Grade
During a return visit to a second grade class, Ambassadors lead the students on a neighborhood walk with three challenges to complete: Crossing at a crosswalk; crossing at an alley, using the Lean and Peek; and crossing in the middle of the street, using the Lean and Peek.

5th Grade
Ambassadors lead students in an experiment to determine the speed of cars, explaining the math used to determine miles per hour. The outdoor lesson emphasizes that students can’t control the speed of cars, but can control their own choices – being visible, predictable, and wearing a helmet. continued, next page

41,500
CHILDREN & YOUTH EDUCATED

51% INCREASE SINCE 2011

110
SCHOOLS VISITED
High School Presentations
This year, the team visited 10 high schools, educating more than 1,100 new drivers.

The high school presentation is much more conversational and personal to the students’ own experiences. Ambassadors discuss all transportation options and situational examples of the best form of transportation. Ambassadors also explain the laws pertaining to pedestrians, bikes, and cars, much like the information distributed at enforcement events.

Junior Ambassadors
The Junior Ambassadors are the only peer-to-peer bicycle and pedestrian safety education program in North America.

Working with four full-time staff members, the Junior Ambassadors present at the Chicago Parks District daycamps, community events, and perform safety education on the Lakefront Trail. In just six weeks, the Junior Ambassadors are trained on communicating bike safety messages and becoming lifelong advocates for cycling.

In its eleventh season, the Junior Ambassadors program has had a lasting impact on its participants. Many Junior Ambassadors have gone on to become full-time Bicycling Ambassadors, including three this season. Even the program coordinator is a Junior Ambassador alum from 2007.

Working with the Chicago Parks District, Ambassadors and Junior Ambassadors performed 150 daycamp visits this summer.

During the summer months, Ambassadors partner with the Chicago Parks District Daycamps program to reach 6-12 year olds throughout the city bicycle skills and safety. The Ambassador presentations are active and instructive, including helmet fittings and bike rodeos.

The 2015 Junior Ambassadors team, led by full-time Ambassadors Devonte and Claire, at left.

The Ambassadors team visited schools and parks throughout the entirety of Chicago, as mapped above.

11 JUNIOR AMBASSADORS AND 4 FULL-TIME STAFF
150 CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT DAYCAMP PRESENTATIONS IN JUST SIX WEEKS
Chicago’s Ambassador programs are operated by Chicago Department of Transportation and staffed by Active Transportation Alliance, as funded by a federal 402 safety grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation and proceeds from the Divvy bikeshare program.