

Historic Motor Row & Electric Avenue: Empowering Bronzeville's Decarbonized Mobility Future **Final Summary Report**



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Introduction

The Bronzeville Black Metropolis National Heritage Area is a storied landscape of African American excellence—home to generations of cultural, political, and entrepreneurial achievement. Spanning from Chicago's South Loop to Woodlawn, this National Heritage Area is rich in natural, historic, educational, and recreational assets that define its unique identity. At the forefront of preservation and innovation in this community is the Bronzeville Community Development Partnership (BCDP), a trusted 501C3 nonprofit with over three decades of leadership and engagement in Black Metropolis. With a mission grounded in Tourism, Technology, and Transportation, BCDP is spearheading sustainable development initiatives that use renewable, clean energy as a catalyst for economic opportunity.

One such initiative is the creation of the EV Institute—an electric mobility hub set to open in Bronzeville's historic Motor Row District at 2416 S. Michigan Avenue. Designed as a community-centered space for education, data sharing, and policy development, the EV Institute aims to build upon the neighborhood's automotive legacy while positioning it as a national leader in equitable transportation electrification.

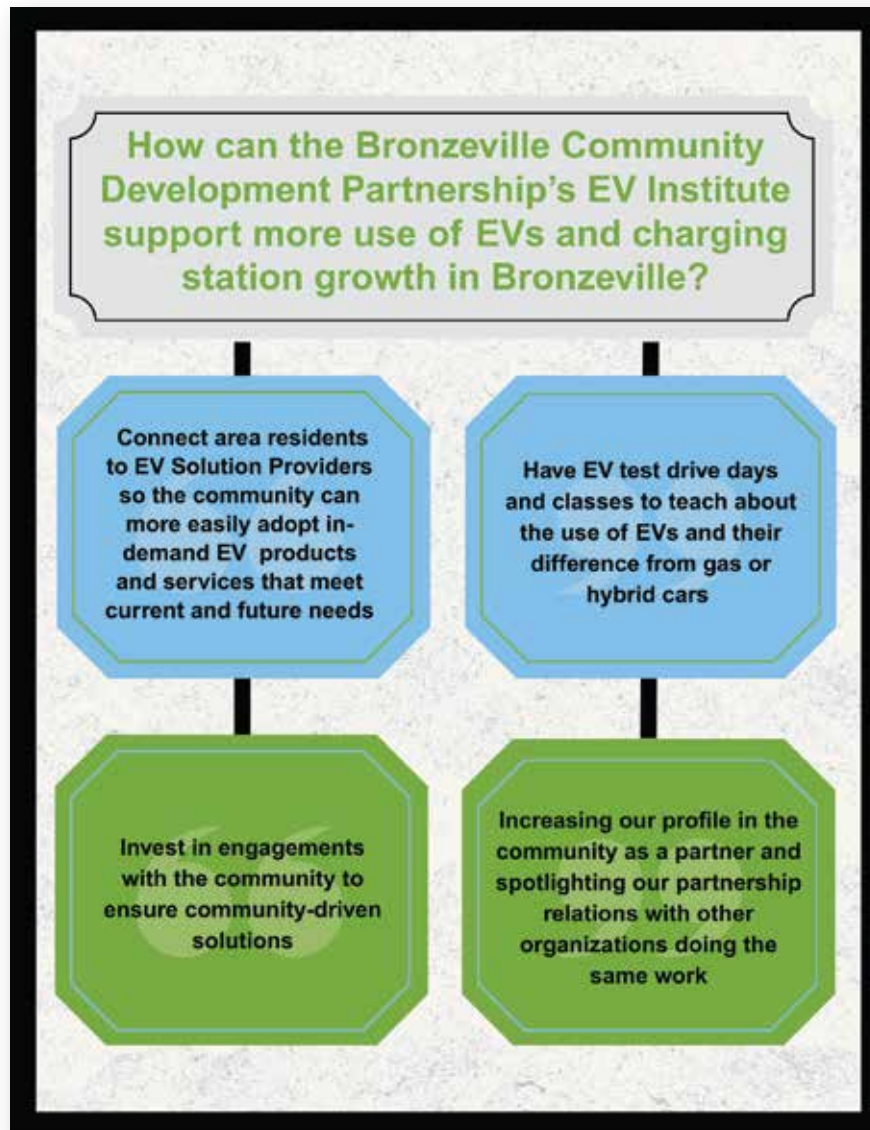
To help shape this vision, the Illinois Alliance for Clean Transportation (IACT) partnered with BCDP to implement a community-first engagement process. Using a methodology rooted in People, Place, and Process, the project sought to elevate community voices in the planning and design of the EV Institute. This effort included outreach through surveys, meet ups, and public events, all designed to increase awareness, gather input, and foster meaningful dialogue around clean mobility solutions.

This report summarizes the engagement process and provides a roadmap for next steps. It reflects a shared commitment to advancing community-led solutions that improve access to electric mobility, drive local economic development, and ensure that Bronzeville remains a beacon of innovation and resilience in the clean transportation future.



Meet Up One: Navigating the Future of E-Mobility in Illinois

On March 26, 2025, the EV Institute, in partnership with Bronzeville Community Development Partnership (BCDP), JitneyEV, and the Illinois Alliance for Clean Transportation (IACT), hosted the webinar “Navigating the Future of E-Mobility in Illinois.” The event highlighted how shifting policies, local leadership, and community collaboration are shaping the state’s electric mobility future.



Speakers included William P. “Billy” Davis (BCDP/JitneyEV), Brian Urbaszewski (Respiratory Health Association), and Samantha Bingham (City of Chicago CDOT). Attendees learned about community-based clean transportation efforts in Bronzeville and public health benefits, state and federal funding opportunities, and Chicago’s strategic EV plans.

Attendees: 14

Meet Up Two: Communities Embracing Micro Mobility

On May 29, 2025, the EV Institute, Bronzeville Community Development Partnership (BCDP), JitneyEV, and the Illinois Alliance for Clean Transportation (IACT) hosted a hybrid lunch-and-learn and webinar focused on the future of micro mobility in Bronzeville. The event highlighted Equiticity's Go Hub Bronzeville project—a one-stop community mobility center offering shared e-bikes, scooters, EVs, and wraparound services.



Speakers included Olatunji Oboi Reed (Equiticity), Alex Perez (Active Transportation Alliance), David Powe (Chicago Department of Transportation), and John Adams (Bronzeville Trail Taskforce). Presentations covered topics such as mobility justice, e-bike incentives, Complete Streets infrastructure, and plans for the transformative Bronzeville Trail.

Furthermore, each speaker emphasized the need for equitable access, community-driven planning, and sustainable investment in clean transportation. The event showcased the power of cross-sector collaboration in shaping a healthier, more connected future for Bronzeville. Questions and audience discussion indicated strong interest in locations for a Bronzeville Go Hub, and the potential impact of its services to the community

In-person attendees: 25

Virtual attendees: 16

Meet Up Three: EV Mobility Framework

On June 24, 2025, the EV Institute with partners BCDP, JEV and IACT, co-hosted a public outreach meeting with CDOT at the Chicago Urban League in Bronzeville to present the City's EV Mobility Framework. Ten community members participated in a dynamic discussion about proposed EV charging station locations and the expansion of bike and scooter-sharing infrastructure.



Their input will help shape a more equitable and accessible electric mobility system in Chicago. This event was part of a broader effort to ensure historically under served communities are actively involved in planning the city's clean transportation future. Discussions with attendees pointed to a need for additional public education and community outreach about access to EV transportation and charging infrastructure.

Attendees: 10

Meet Up Four: Future of Transit Town Hall - Bronzeville

The Bronzeville Community Development Partnership (BCDP), in collaboration with the EV Institute, JitneyEV, the Illinois Alliance for Clean Transportation (IACT), and the Transportation Equity Network (TEN), hosted a hybrid Future of Public Transit Town Hall on July 28, 2025. Held at BCDP's EV Institute, the event focused on the City of Chicago's Better Streets For Buses Plan and the future of bus transit in Bronzeville, particularly along the Cottage Grove corridor.

The meeting focused on the Better Streets for Buses Plan. The plan proposes 19 potential improvements to enhance bus infrastructure, increase safety, and make service faster and more reliable, with a strong emphasis on community input.



The presentation highlighted proposed upgrades for Bronzeville's Cottage Grove corridor, including safer street crossings, improved signage, and more accessible pathways. It also covered the potential benefits of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), featuring dedicated lanes and traffic signal priority to reduce commute times and boost economic access. The plan also includes the deployment of electric buses to reduce emissions in areas with high air pollution, such as Bronzeville. Questions and audience discussion indicated strong interest in additional bus shelters, improving scheduling accuracy, and devices in the toolbox aimed at lowering travel times, like dedicated lanes, queue jumping, and traffic signal priority.

In-person attendees: 10

Online attendees: 18

Four Community Engagement Events

The EV Institute participated in three in-person pop-up events at Overton Community Days on August 31, September 21, and October 19, 2024, to promote electric vehicle (EV) awareness and share information about clean transportation, incentives & rebates, and equitable access to charging infrastructure. The events featured local partners and organizations, with hands-on opportunities for attendees to learn about EVs and e-mobility.



The event included engagement from many community partners and participants. Highlights from the events included strong community interest, with survey results reflecting a growing familiarity and enthusiasm for electric vehicles. Across all three Community Days, the EV Institute saw consistent engagement and valuable feedback from attendees, underscoring the community's eagerness to learn more about EVs and sustainable transportation.

The fourth community engagement event was a partnership between the EV Institute, Bronzeville Community Development Partnership, JitneyEV, and the Illinois Alliance for Clean Transportation, which hosted a booth at the Ida B. Wells Festival's Community Forum, offering resources on EV access, charging infrastructure, and e-mobility solutions for under served communities. Out of 75 total attendees, 25 engaged directly at the booth. The event served as a meaningful opportunity to raise awareness, connect with residents, and gather input to inform future outreach.



Ida B. Wells Festival total forum attendance: 75

Ida B. Wells Festival direct booth engagements: 25

Why This Work Matters - Engaging the Bronzeville Community

In total, the Bronzeville Community Development Partnership's (BCDP) events engaged roughly 150 attendees, involving residents, local leaders, and partners in shaping the future of sustainable transportation in Bronzeville.

A Connected, Zero-Emission Mobility Ecosystem

Electric vehicle (EV) transportation, electric micro mobility options (like e-scooters and e-bikes), equitable access to electric trains and buses, and Better Streets for Buses programs (such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Bus Priority Zones) are increasingly working together to create more efficient, low-emission urban transportation solutions.

- Buses and trains handle longer, high-capacity routes.
- Micro mobility offers flexible, short-distance travel, solving the “first and last-mile” challenge and making it easier for riders to connect to bus and rapid transit stations.

Integrated Mobility Hubs

Cities like Chicago are investing in mobility hubs that combine public transit access with micro mobility docks, EV charging stations, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Shared planning and infrastructure—such as protected bike/bus lanes, transit-oriented development, and EV charging access for multi-family buildings—further enhance connectivity and safety.

Benefits and Challenges

- All e-mobility modes help to reduce reliance on private vehicles and cut emissions.
- Digital tools (like shared apps and unified payment systems) make services easier to use.
- Incentives and rebate programs help extend access to under served communities.
- Challenges remain: infrastructure gaps, affordability, and better coordination between operators are needed to scale up impact.

Equitable Mobility as a Climate and Equity Strategy

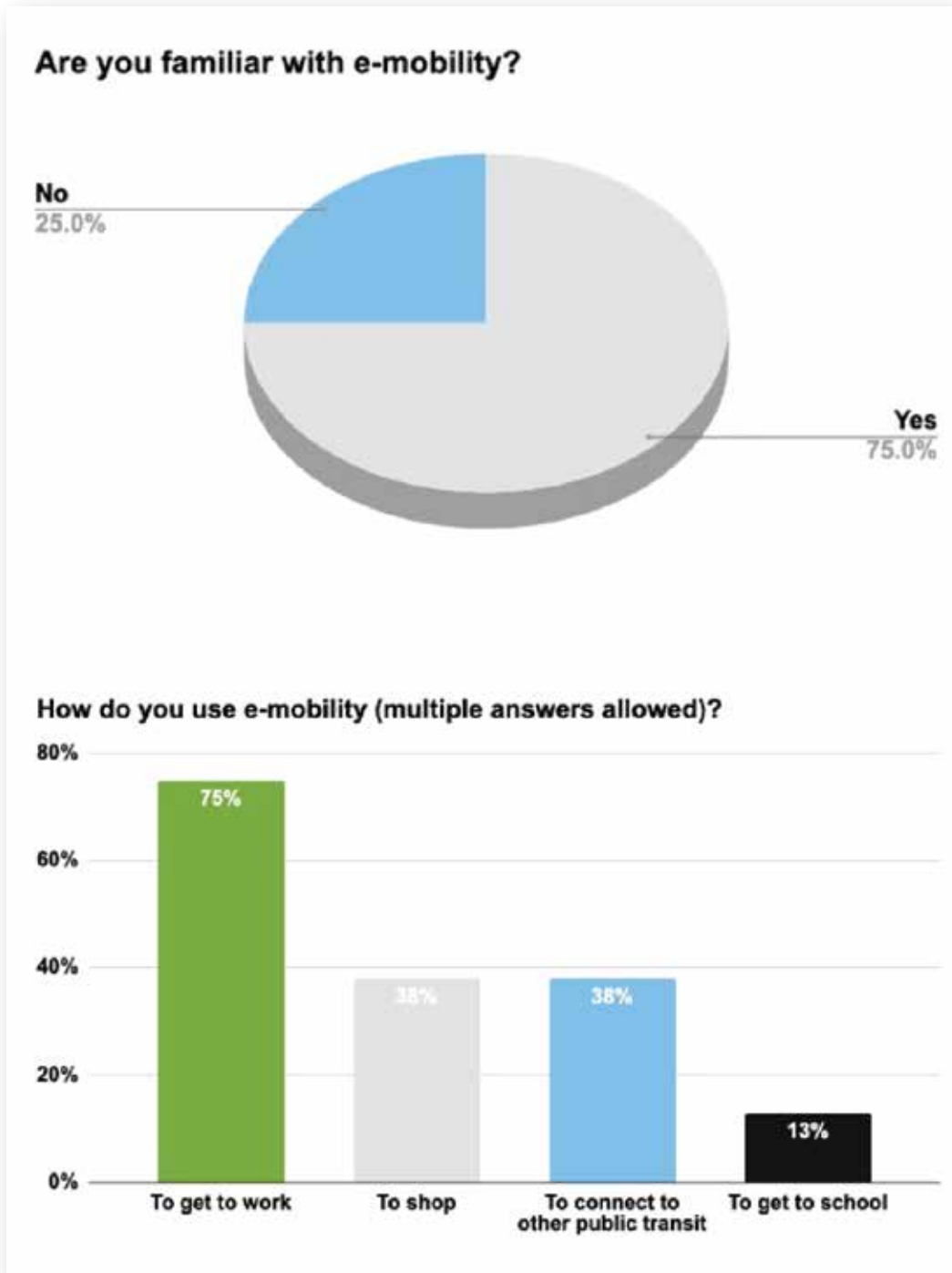
Combining improved access to public transit with electric micro mobility provides a scalable, sustainable way for cities to reduce congestion, meet climate goals, and expand transportation access—especially in historically under served neighborhoods like Bronzeville.



Combined Summary of E-Mobility and Active Transportation Polls

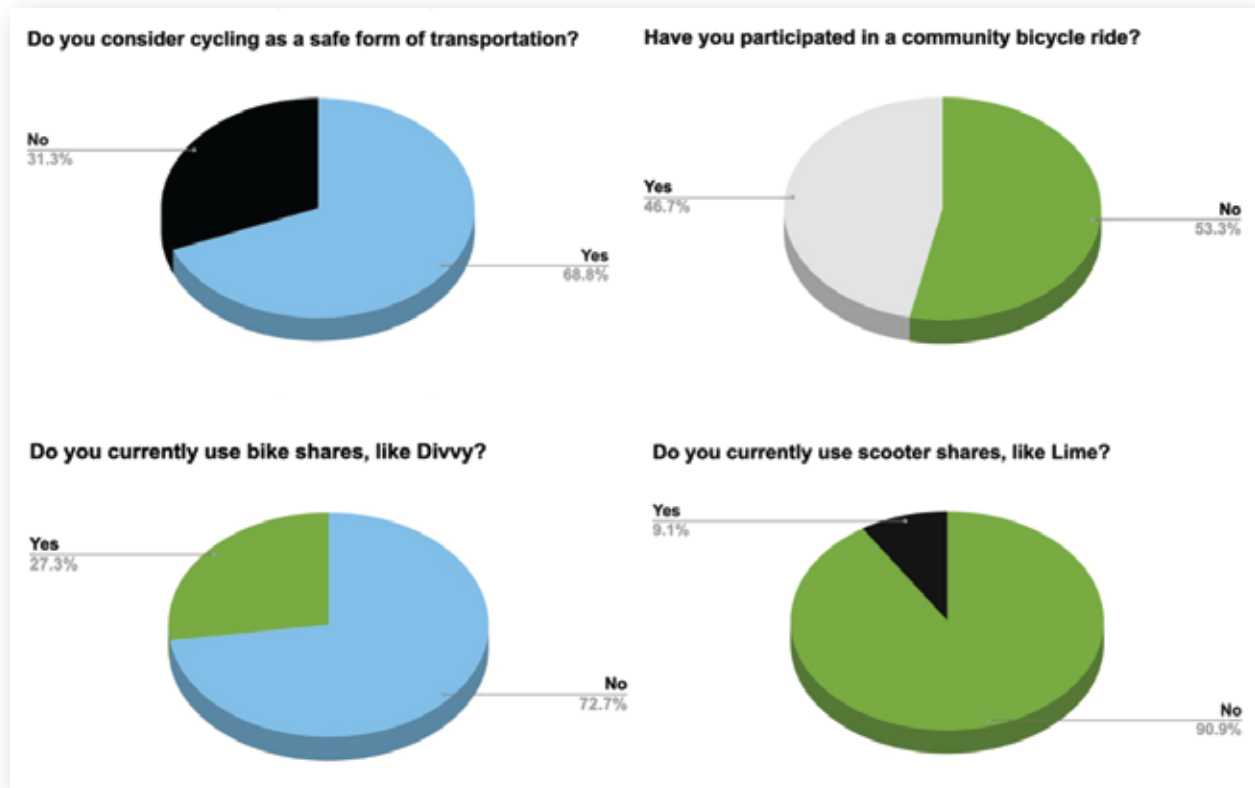
E-Mobility (8/31/24, 8 responses)

- Familiarity: 75% are familiar with e-mobility and want to learn more; 25% are not familiar but are interested in learning.
- Usage: 75% use e-mobility to get to work; 38% use it to shop; 38% to connect to other public transit; 13% to get to school.



Bicycles and Shared Mobility (5/29/25, 16 and 11 responses)

- Cycling Safety: 69% consider cycling safe; 31% do not.
- Community Rides: 44% have participated in a community bike ride; 56% have not.
- Bike Share Use: 27% currently use bike share services like Divvy; 73% do not.
- Scooter Share Use: 9% use scooter share services like Lime; 91% do not.



Key Takeaways

- There's strong baseline awareness and interest in e-mobility, especially for commuting.
- Cycling is generally viewed as safe, but participation in community rides is less common.
- Shared micro mobility (bike/scooter share) adoption remains relatively low, especially for scooters.
- Opportunities exist to expand education, build confidence, and encourage participation in shared mobility programs.

Next Steps

- 1) Launch EV Institute Programs
 - 12-month calendar of workshops, EV test rides, and workforce training seminars.
 - Quarterly “Electric Avenue Days” with schools & cultural partners.
- 2) Advance BRT & Better Streets Advocacy
 - Work with Transportation Equity Network (TEN) to advance community engagement around Better Streets for Buses plan implementation.
 - Form Bronzeville Transit Action Coalition.
 - Community design sessions for Cottage Grove upgrades & electric bus rollout.
- 3) Pilot Integrated Mobility Hub
 - Work with Equiticity to advance Bronzeville Go Hub.
 - Combine bus, micro mobility, EV charging, and walk-friendly design.
 - Partnerships with Divvy, Lime, and local EV operators.
- 4) Expand E-Mobility Education
 - Pop-up events at markets, festivals, transit hubs.
 - Hands-on demos + ComEd EV Ambassador incentive and rebate assistance.
- 5) Strengthen Data & Policy Leadership
 - Track usage, equity impacts, and resident feedback.
 - Publish annual “State of Bronzeville E-Mobility” report.
- 6) Secure Funding & Partnerships
 - Target NEVI, IRA, and private sponsorships.
 - Collaborate with universities for R&D and internships.



Vision

A connected, zero-emission transportation ecosystem that uplifts community health, equity, and economic opportunity.