



2026 Public Policy Priorities

The Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce (CSCC) is advocating for the following priorities:

Priority 1: South Suburban Airport (SSA)

Endorse development of the SSA and urge state and federal leaders to complete the RFP process, select a development team, and break ground without delay. This will increase development opportunities in the Southland, create jobs, attract businesses, strengthen Illinois' economy, and enable the region to be a lead in innovation, technology, and green investment. The SSA will be funded by private companies, not taxpayers. It is time for the state to move forward NOW.

Priority 2: Regional Connectivity & Infrastructure

Support investments in the infrastructure network to strengthen the Southland's connectivity to regional, national, and global markets, including state funding for interstate highway corridors (I-80, I-57, IL 394, and I-94 east from Dolton to Crete), freight rail modernization, and intermodal facility upgrades.

Priority 3: Workforce Development & Talent Pipeline

Support targeted funding to help Southland businesses strengthen the talent pipeline for today's and future jobs, including employer-led apprenticeship programs and investment in career pathways that align regional education institutions with emerging workforce needs.

Priority 4: Competitive Business Environment & Tax Reform

Support tax reforms that foster a competitive environment for business growth and investment in the Southland to increase the commercial, logistics, and industrial tax base, reduce property tax burdens, and encourage homeownership. Increase direct state funding to schools, with oversight, to lessen burden on taxpayers.

Priority 5: Affordable Healthcare for Businesses & Families

Support a market-based system that provides quality, affordable, and cost-effective healthcare options. Oppose unnecessary state regulation, benefit requirements, and operational mandates that increase the cost of employer-sponsored healthcare and prescription drugs.

Priority 6: CSCC to be the Southland's Lead Economic Development Organization

Advocate for grants and funding opportunities that will empower CSCC to lead and accelerate regional economic growth.

Why the Southland Needs Economic Opportunities

More than 50 years ago, the Southland began losing its heavy industrial and manufacturing base. That trend of economic decline steadily continued and worsened over the decades, as nothing replaced these industries. The impacts of losing our economic engines eventually spilled into our retail sector, resulting in many local malls shutting down -- long before COVID and e-commerce hit.

A result of the exodus of industries and retailers was that homeowners were left to shoulder the burden of paying for nearly all municipal services, such as police, fire, schools, and libraries. That's not sustainable for towns – or homeowners. The job loss was bad enough, but when industry and retail also stopped paying property taxes, the local tax bills for homeowners soared to some of the highest in the nation.

There is good news. In recent years, the Southland has seen a surge in the logistics and distribution industries. Today, the Southland is home to the most logistics centers in North America – as well as the country's largest network of railroads, highways and inland barges. We believe that logistics can replace manufacturing and heavy industry as the Southland's economic engine. The key to growing the Southland from a “national” to a “global” logistics hub is the South Suburban Airport. That airport could singlehandedly transform the Southland into the world's greatest logistical hub and make us a vital link in the 21st Century global economy.

Without the South Suburban Airport, the Southland will continue to lag far behind other parts of Metro Chicago in terms of income, education, homeownership, and economic opportunity.

Please support the priorities of the Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce – including fighting for the South Suburban Airport and other economic growth opportunities for the Southland.