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Chicagoans find it tougher to get jobs close to home, report says

Becky Yerak | March, 24, 2015



Traffic makes its way into downtown Chicago during a typical morning commute. (Antonio Perez, Chicago Tribune)

Finding a job close to home isn't as easy as it used to be.

The number of jobs within typical commuting range in the Chicago area declined 14 percent from 2000 to 2012, a decline far worse than the national average.

A new Brookings report says the number of jobs within the typical commute distance in major U.S. metropolitan areas overall fell by 7 percent within the same time frame. Those distances ranged from 12.8 miles in Atlanta to 4.7 miles in the Stockton, Calif., area.

The Chicago area's typical commute is 10 miles, the researchers said.

Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program examined the nation's 96 biggest metro areas. Only 29 — many in the South and in the West — saw the number of jobs increase within a typical commute distance for the average resident.

Metro areas with the greatest growth in jobs near the typical resident: McAllen, Texas; Bakersfield, Calif.; Palm Bay, Fla.; Allentown, Pa.; Raleigh, N.C.; Baton Rouge, La.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Riverside, Calif.; Oxnard, Calif.; and Ogden, Utah. Those growth rates ranged from 58 percent to 9 percent. All of those areas also saw job growth overall in their metro areas.

The metro areas with the biggest drops in jobs near typical residents: Cleveland; Detroit; Dayton, Ohio; North Port, Fla.; New Orleans; Memphis, Tenn.; Phoenix; Toledo, Ohio; St. Louis; and Atlanta. Their drops in jobs within commuting distance ranged from 26 percent to 15 percent. All but Phoenix and Atlanta also lost jobs in their metro areas overall.