



CTA Red Line trains along the Dan Ryan Expressway. | John H. White/Sun-Times

[NEWS](#) [POLITICS](#) [CITY HALL](#)

Aldermen demand that IDOT clean up cesspool along Dan Ryan Expressway

By Fran Spielman | Mar 26, 2018, 4:43pm CDT

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Email](#) [SHARE](#)

A pair of South Side aldermen demanded Monday that the Illinois Department of Transportation clean up the embarrassing mess left behind on the shoulder of the Dan Ryan Expy. by motorists who cavalierly toss their trash out the window.

Ald. Mike Zalewski (23rd) and Ald. Matt O'Shea (19th) said the southbound Ryan in particular is a pigpen that provides an ugly impression of Chicago, even though the city is powerless to stop it. That's because the expressway is IDOT's jurisdiction and the state's responsibility to keep clean.

“Southbound all the way from the Loop to 95th Street, there is just an excess amount of debris on the road,” Zalewski said.

“It’s not the Department of Streets and Sanitation’s or the city’s responsibility. It’s more the (Illinois) Department of Transportation’s responsibility. But the perception is you’re in the city and there’s garbage out there. People don’t know the difference.”

O’Shea’s far Southwest Side ward is home to scores of police officers and firefighters.

He noted that the shoulder of the Ryan was noticeably clean for last month’s funeral procession for slain 18th District Police Commander Paul Bauer.

But once that somber ceremony was over, it was back to being a cesspool again.

“It’s despicable that a world-class city like Chicago looks that way. That our own citizens would throw garbage out the window like that to the point where from the roadway up the embankment, it’s filled with debris and garbage,” O’Shea said.

O’Shea referred to Chicago’s \$2.25 billion bid for Amazon’s second world headquarters and the city’s quest for similar projects by Google and Apple.

“We’ve got some major companies looking at us. I hope they’re not coming down the Ryan. The impression is this is a dirty city,” O’Shea said.

IDOT spokesperson Gianna Urgo said a “massive litter removal operation took place in District 1” during early March as soon as “there was a lull in winter weather.”

“During that operation, all garbage was removed from Chicagoland expressways. Any debris on the shoulder or side of the road now is new garbage as of March 15,” Urgo wrote in an email to the Chicago Sun-Times.

Other sources noted that IDOT has 23 maintenance yards in District 1, which includes Cook and collar counties, that are responsible for snow removal, pothole patching, guard rail repairs and litter pickups on state highways.

During snow and cold winter months, their primary responsibility is to keep expressways “safe, clear and passable.” Litter pickup takes a back seat.

“We are committed to providing a positive impression of Illinois throughout the year by keeping our roadways as clean and clutter free as possible. Our job is certainly easier (and less costly) when the public is properly disposing their trash,” Uργο wrote.

O’Shea acknowledged that it’s “a lot harder” for IDOT to “keep up” with trash removal during cold and snowy winter months. But he said, “We haven’t had snow in a couple of weeks. Get some crews out there.”

Five years ago, South Side Ald. Howard Brookins (21st) proposed stiff fines and vehicle impoundment for Chicago motorists who open their car and SUV windows, dump their trash and turn Chicago streets into a dumping ground.

Brookins was promptly accused of giving police “another tool to demonize, imprison and punish black men.”

Mayor Rahm Emanuel subsequently got behind the crackdown, but only after Brookins watered it down considerably.

Instead of towing every vehicle used for the driver version of fly-dumping, the softer ordinance gave Chicago Police the “discretion” to tow instead of penalizing every single litterer.

And instead of dramatically increasing the fines — to \$1,500 a pop — Brookins agreed to raise the minimum fine from \$50 to \$150. The maximum fine was raised to \$1,500, but that stiff penalty was not imposed on every trash-dumping motorist.

On Monday, O’Shea and Zalewski said there’s no use getting tougher on motorists because it’s too difficult to catch them.

“It’s like graffiti. You’re never gonna catch the people. You’ve just got to get it cleaned up. If you leave graffiti out there for more than a day, it makes an area look gang-infested. This just makes the city look dirty,” Zalewski said.

Streets and Sanitation spokesperson Marjani Williams said newly appointed Commissioner John Tully agrees with the alderman and has “expressed our concerns to the Rauner administration.”

“It is the state’s responsibility to maintain the expressways. We have helped them perform the work at times, though doing so is not ideal or sustainable,” Williams wrote in an email.

M
O
V
I
E
S
A
N
D
T
V

N
e
t
f
l
i
x
l
o
o
k
s

t
o
c
u
r
b
p
a
s
s
w
o
r
d
s
h
a
r
i
n
g
,
c
o
n
s
i
d
e
r
s
a
d
s

CORONAVIRUS

Aiming to predict COVID, future pa

n d e m i c s b e t t e r , C D C o p e n s i n f e c t i o u s d i s e a s

e s t o r e a s t i n g c e n t e r

S U B U R B A N C H I C A G O J o i e

t
f
a
r
m
e
r
s
w
r
a
n
g
l
e
c
o
w
s
t
h
r
o
w
n
f
r
o
m
s
e
m
i
t
r
a
i
l

**e
r
a
f
t
e
r
c
r
a
s
h
o
n
i
n
t
e
r
s
t
a
t
e
8
0**

V
ie
w
M
o
r
e
S
t
o
ri
e
s
In
N
e
w
s

CHICAGO SUN*TIMES

[Terms of Use](#) • [Privacy Notice](#) • [Cookie Policy](#) • [Contact Us](#) • [Masthead](#) • [Terms of Sale](#)
