



Comprehensive Summary Diversey Parkway to Irving Park Road Community Meetings

Two Community Meetings focusing on the Diversey Parkway to Irving Park Road corridor within the North Lake Shore Drive (NLSD) project area were held on August 12, 2019 and August 13, 2019, respectively. The first meeting (held on August 12, 2019) took place at Temple Sholom in the Bettie Porter Hall from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The second meeting (held on August 13, 2019) took place at AMITA Health St. Joseph Hospital in the Lakeshore Café from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The agendas and formats of both meetings were identical. These meetings were open to the general public and were advertised through the electronic newsletters of local aldermen (Ald. Tom Tunney, Ward 44, and Ald. James Cappleman, Ward 46) and through communications from various local community organizations.

For the first thirty minutes of each meeting, attendees examined exhibit boards located around the room and asked questions of the project team in an open house format. These exhibits provided information on the project's traffic volumes and crash locations within the Diversey Parkway to Irving Park Road section of the North Lake Shore Drive corridor, as well as pedestrian and bicycle traffic volumes to/from and along the Lakefront Trail in this area. Also included were exhibits illustrating the proposed Context Tailored Treatment with Transit Advantages (CTT+TA) design alternative for the entire North Lake Shore Drive project area (in three segments, from Grand Avenue to Diversey Parkway, Diversey Parkway to Montrose Avenue, and Montrose Avenue to Hollywood Avenue). A PowerPoint presentation followed the open house period. Ald. Tom Tunney of Ward 44 provided a brief introduction to the NLSD Phase I Study process before each presentation began. The presentation featured a project overview, an in-depth analysis of the existing conditions within the Diversey to Irving Park area, and descriptions of the improvements proposed for the area as a part of the CTT+TA alternative. The discussion of the CTT+TA alternative included an examination of the improvements proposed for the following locations: Diversey Parkway, Belmont Avenue (including access to the south Belmont Harbor parking lot), Addison Street, and Irving Park Road. The presentation concluded with a description of project next steps, which include further refinement of the alternatives based on public input, continued aldermanic and stakeholder coordination, as well as additional public involvement opportunities. A brief question-and-answer period took place during the presentation.

Following the presentation, attendees engaged in discussion at five identical breakout group tables. Attendees were not assigned to a specific group and could choose to engage at any table. Guided by the facilitator, the breakout groups reviewed large scale drawings of the current CTT alternative being assessed for the Diversey Parkway to Irving Park Road section of the North Lake Shore Drive corridor. (Each attendee was provided a corridor legend in order to

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understand the different color-coded areas in the displayed maps.) Attendees were asked to provide feedback on the designs and make suggestions as to how they could be improved. Project team members were available at each table to answer questions and discuss any issues with attendees. Comments were recorded by the notetaker assigned to each table and comment forms were also available for attendees to submit more detailed feedback if desired. Additional discussions took place between project team members and community members at the exhibit boards in the back of the room.

Though attendees provided feedback on every area of the Diversey Parkway to Irving Park Road corridor, attendees offered the greatest number of comments on the two alternative designs for access to the Belmont Harbor south parking lot. Attendees were interested in how these two alternatives would affect traffic distribution, pedestrian access and area recreational facilities. Other topics of note included the proposed reconfiguration of parking facilities between Addison Street and Irving Park Road, the proposed addition of NLSD access ramps at Addison Street and at Aldine Avenue, and the effect on traffic operations from the proposed NLSD lane reduction north of Irving Park Road.

The August 12, 2019 meeting at Temple Shalom had 104 attendees. Seventeen (17) written comment forms were received at this meeting.

The August 13, 2019 meeting at AMITA Health St. Joseph Hospital had 130 attendees. Thirty-six (36) written comment forms were received at this meeting.

Combined, there were 234 attendees. Fifty-three (53) written comment forms were received at both meetings.

Elected Officials in attendance:

- Alderman Tom Tunney (Ward 44); attended both meetings
- Dionisios Manoli, Representative of Alderman Tom Tunney (Ward 44); attended both meetings
- Matthew Trewartha, Representative of Alderman James Cappleman (Ward 46); attended the August 12 meeting at Temple Shalom

The following Project Study Group (PSG) agencies were represented at both meetings: IDOT, CDOT.

Feedback and Comments Received

The following analysis includes feedback received from the breakout group discussions, the designated question-and-answer periods, and written comment forms provided at the meeting. This analysis has also been informed by comments submitted through the project's online comment portal and email address.

Belmont Harbor Access

-Of the two alternatives under consideration for Belmont Harbor parking lot access, attendees expressed the most support for Alternative 2, which would maintain vehicle access via Belmont Avenue. Alternative 1, which would combine pedestrian and Belmont Harbor vehicle access at Briar Place, received relatively little support due to concerns that it would add traffic to Briar Place and Inner Drive. Attendees who were opposed to Alternative 1 also believed this option could cause safety issues for the large senior citizen population in the area and for the children that use the nearby Tescler Playground. In addition, it was noted that Briar Place is heavily used by emergency vehicles and any added traffic could cause access difficulties for these vehicles.

-Several attendees commented favorably on the trail-roadway grade separation scheme proposed in Alternative 2 east of North Lake Shore Drive, stating that this would eliminate the existing conflicts between motor vehicles, people bicycling and people walking.

-Numerous attendees expressed a preference for retaining the existing pedestrian underpass location at Barry Avenue (rather than relocating it to Briar Place), stating that changes to the location of pedestrian access could impact the seniors who live in the area.

Belmont Avenue

-Numerous attendees were in favor of the proposed plans to separate buses from general Belmont junction traffic at the designated turnaround area, noting the important role of transit in the area.

-Attendees acknowledged the congestion that often afflicts the existing Belmont junction, and several attendees favored the proposed additional ramps at Addison and Aldine as a means to decrease traffic demand at the Belmont junction.

Aldine Avenue

-Several questions were received on the current traffic volumes on Aldine and how these volumes might change if the proposed SB entrance ramp from Inner to Outer Drive at Aldine was implemented. Multiple attendees were concerned that this new ramp could increase traffic demand on Aldine west of Inner Drive. In a related point, several individuals expressed concern that these proposed changes could impact property values in the area.

-A handful of attendees commented that Aldine residents already have difficulties exiting and entering their driveways. This issue may be exacerbated if additional traffic is drawn to the roadway.

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-Project team members explained that the existing cut-through traffic on Aldine (EB) west of Inner Drive is largely due to it serving as an alternative to congestion on Belmont west of Inner Drive. Congestion on Belmont west of Inner Drive is related to lack of capacity at the existing Belmont Junction to handle traffic demand from both the Belmont corridor as well as the area between Belmont and Irving Park Road. Adding SB entrance ramps at Aldine and Addison will take a substantial share this traffic away from the Belmont Junction, which will reduce congestion on Belmont west of Inner Drive, which in turn will reduce demand to use Aldine as an alternative to Belmont. (It was noted that motorists currently do not typically use Aldine as an alternative to Belmont at times when Belmont is not backed up approaching NLS D).

Recreation Drive

-Several questions were received regarding how people would be able to access park facilities east of NLS D and where park users would park if Recreation Drive was eliminated. Project team members provided clarity on how the proposed reconfiguration of this area would maintain and improve access and parking.

-Several attendees were opposed to relocating some of the parking currently on Recreation Drive to the area between Inner and Outer Drive, believing that the relocated lot could be aesthetically unappealing for residents whose units face this area. Project team members explained that landscaping plans will be developed and presented in future public meetings, and that it has previously been learned in other public forums that much of the demand for the existing Recreation Drive parking spaces comes from other residents in the same neighborhood west of Inner Drive.

- Some attendees also speculated that a relocated Recreation Drive parking area between Inner and Outer Drive could attract Cubs game day parking.

-Numerous attendees were opposed to relocating some of the parking currently on Recreation Drive to the area between the golf course and bird sanctuary because they believed the current parking facilities in this area are used below capacity much of the time.

-One comment received proposed retaining Recreation Drive and converting it into a single-lane, northbound roadway with diagonal parking on either side of the road. In addition to accommodating some of the traffic that currently uses Recreation Drive, this proposal was partly intended to reduce or eliminate the need for the proposed replacement parking area near the golf course and bird sanctuary.

Park Space & Aesthetics

-Numerous attendees expressed concern regarding the potential removal of trees in the area and how they would be affected by the proposed design.

-Several commenters were concerned that the Waveland Park tennis courts would be reduced or removed altogether. They urged that these facilities be retained.

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-A few comments expressed concern for potential air pollution impacts of the proposed Addison junction, specifically in regards to its potential impact on the bird sanctuary.

-A few commenters were curious as to what would be done with the artwork that is currently beneath the Belmont and Fullerton (and other) underpasses. Support was expressed for these artworks being preserved or maintained in the proposed plans.

-Several attendees and commenters expressed a desire to maintain the boulevard aesthetic of NLS D and argued that the project should focus on better accommodating all modes and users in addition to motor vehicles. Maintaining quality and accessible park facilities was also important to these attendees.

Addison Street

-Opinions were mixed regarding the proposed ramps at Addison. Attendees in favor of the added ramps noted the benefits of reducing traffic at the Belmont Avenue and Irving Park Road junctions by removing traffic to/from Addison from the ramps at those junctions. Attendees who were opposed to the proposed design were concerned that adding ramps could attract more traffic to Addison west of Inner Drive and generate air pollution. Many of the individuals who were opposed to the proposed Addison junction noted their residency near the Addison area.

-Several attendees commented that residents of the apartment buildings on Addison already have difficulties exiting and entering their driveways. Additional traffic may exacerbate this issue.

-Project team members explained that traffic on Addison is unlikely to change with the addition of ramps because its overall convenience relative to Belmont or Irving Park would not change. Congestion on Belmont and Irving Park would decrease due to the various junction improvements, so there would be no particular incentive for motorists currently using those routes to take Addison instead.

-A few attendees noted that a development has been proposed for the vacant lot at Waveland and Inner Drive and were curious as to whether this development was being considered in the design.

Irving Park Road

-Opinions were mixed regarding the proposed lane reduction north of Irving Park. Those who were opposed to the lane reduction were concerned that it would cause bottleneck issues further north. One attendee was curious to know why the lane reduction was not occurring north of Montrose Avenue instead of Irving Park Road due to the amount of traffic that exits at Montrose to access the beach. Those who supported the lane reduction saw the value in adding more green space and narrowing the road as a traffic calming measure.

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-Project team members explained that the demand for travel on NLS D was used to determine the number of lanes needed, and three lanes per direction on NLS D north of Irving Park Road is sufficient capacity for the level of travel demand today and expected in the future. This is also the area of NLS D where excessive speed is most often observed, and excessive travel lanes encourages this unsafe travel behavior.

Diversey Parkway

-Multiple commenters expressed approval for the proposed wider and longer bridge at Diversey Harbor entrance to better serve all modes of transportation.

Transit

-Several attendees wanted to know how the proposed design would affect bus routes on the Inner Drive, specifically if the number of express buses would be increased or reduced. There was also interest in how bus operations may change on the larger NLS D corridor. Project team members explained that bus routings and service levels are determined by CTA and that the proposed NLS D changes have where possible been designed to allow for but not necessarily require potential future CTA service changes.

-One commenter suggested that the Irving Park Road express buses tend to have enough capacity to pick-up the transit riders from the Belmont bus stop area.

-Several attendees requested that the project team focus on providing transit benefits and commented that the proposed design seemed to place an emphasis on motor vehicles. Project team members noted that in many locations improvements that would benefit the movement of transit vehicles would also benefit the movement of other motor vehicles.

-Multiple comments were received in favor of adding dedicated bus lanes. One attendee noted that a tolled managed lane could create equity concerns due to having to pay to use the lane.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

-Numerous attendees approved of the plan to grade-separate the Lakefront Trail from both motorized and non-motorized east-west traffic at all junctions.

-Several attendees noted that many residents in the project corridor do not use motor vehicles and requested the project place a greater emphasis on people walking or bicycling, in addition to transit users. Project team members noted that improving conditions for people walking or bicycling is a primary purpose of the overall project, and the project will continue to identify opportunities to do so.

Outreach

-Several residents in buildings within the Diversey Parkway to Irving Park Road corridor requested that the management staff of their buildings be notified of meetings and updated designs in order to pass the information on to residents.

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-One attendee expressed a desire for a more diverse age demographic to be represented at the Community Meetings, stating that many younger people live in these areas and do not appear to be represented and voicing their opinions.

Miscellaneous

-One attendee voiced concern over weaving from Grand Avenue to Chicago Avenue, commenting that traffic merging from Lower Wacker onto NLSA is currently a safety hazard. Project team members noted that the proposed changes to this part of NLSA are intended to better address this existing condition.

-Multiple questions were received regarding whether the project incorporated synchronization with local neighborhood traffic lights. It was suggested that synchronization could help alleviate some of the congestion in the area.

-A handful of attendees commented that the traffic data that is being used to analyze alternatives is several years old and suggested more current data be used if possible. Project team members noted that this is a multi-year study and that updated traffic data will be incorporated in future analyses.

-Many attendees were interested in how the corridor would be impacted during construction and if some areas of NLSA would be shut down. Project team members noted that preliminary construction staging concepts will be assessed as a part of future analyses and will also be subject to extensive review and input when segments of the project are nearer to construction.

-One comment urged the project team to follow a “green” approach, citing the imperative issue of climate change. It was noted that the CTA, CDOT and others have received funding for sustainability projects in the project area.