

BELMONT AVENUE TO ADDISON STREET AREA PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OVERVIEW

March 2022

This part of Chicago's lakefront is home to numerous recreational and natural amenities and is a valued and essential component of the Lakeview community. These features include the Lakefront Trail, tennis courts, playgrounds, field houses, Marovitz Golf Course, Belmont Harbor and Dog Beach, Chicago Yacht Club, Jarvis Bird Sanctuary, and the AIDS Garden. The project team recognizes the value of these resources and is working closely with the Chicago Park District to respect these existing assets while improving conditions for people walking, bicycling, taking transit and driving to and from these destinations as well as along the entire North Lakefront. This handout provides an overview of the existing conditions in the area as well as proposed improvements. The project team welcomes feedback at any time. Please explore the [project website](#) and email comments to the project team at info@ndlsd.org.



HOW DOES THIS AREA RELATE TO THE OVERALL NORTH DUSABLE LAKE SHORE DRIVE (NDLSD) STUDY?

The proposed improvements in this area are one part of the larger NDLSD Study, which extends from Grand Avenue to Hollywood Avenue. Since the study began, the project team has hosted four corridor-wide public meetings, 12 task force meetings, over 70 one-on-one meetings with stakeholder groups, and various location-specific community meetings along the North Lakefront. Three of these community meetings have focused on the Lakeview area. These meetings were held in 2019 and 2021 and co-hosted with Wards 44 and 46. The NDLSD Study process continues to be guided by the project Purpose & Need Statement as developed based on community input at the beginning of the study. It calls for improving safety for all users, improving mobility for all users, addressing infrastructure deficiencies, and improving access and circulation throughout the entire NDLSD corridor. Details on the Purpose & Need are available in this [Study Spotlight](#).



The most recent community meeting in Lakeview was held in June 2021. It focused on the area between Belmont Avenue and Addison Street. The meeting presentation and interactive map are available on the [meeting website](#). Frequently asked questions and responses from the Lakeview community meeting can be found on the [project website](#). The project design in this area is still in development and the latest refinements to the proposed design, along with corridor-wide improvements, are expected to be complete in late 2022.

WHAT ARE THE EXISTING CONDITIONS IN THIS AREA OF NDLSD?

Conditions for People Walking and People Bicycling



- Over 15,000¹ people walking and bicycling use the three existing Lakefront Trail access points in this area (Barry Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Roscoe Street) daily during the warmer months. These are the most heavily used pedestrian and bicycle access points between Diversey Parkway and the northern terminus of the Drive at Hollywood Avenue.
- There are no continuous pedestrian accommodations along the east side of Inner Drive north of Melrose Street in this area despite bus stops and Lakefront Trail access points being located on the east side of Inner Drive.
- Bicyclists using neighborhood greenways on Aldine and Roscoe west of the Drive must interact with other modes of traffic when crossing the Inner Drive to access the Lakefront Trail. Additionally, there are no north-south accommodations for bicyclists along the Inner Drive aside from riding in mixed traffic.
- The combination of significant pedestrian and bicyclist activity with inadequate accommodations can lead to conflicts between motorized and non-motorized road users and a challenging environment for traffic safety.
- Only two of the six lakefront access passageways in this community area currently meet ADA accessibility requirements. Of the eight walkways that provide access to and from the lakefront, only two currently have adequate width to comfortably accommodate all users at times of peak demand. The pedestrian tunnel access ramps at Roscoe Street and Addison Street are only 5 feet wide and confined to a 10-foot wide strip of land between Inner and Outer Drives.
- **Improved facilities for people walking and bicycling to the lakefront in this area will reduce conflict points, increase comfort levels, improve traffic safety, and bring Lakeview area lakefront access into compliance with ADA standards.**



¹ Based on 2013 pedestrian and bicyclist counts.

Conditions for People Taking Transit



- Most of the northbound bus stops along Inner Drive in this area are confined to a 10-foot wide strip of land between Inner and Outer Drives.
- The intensive demand for bus transit service within the existing roadway configuration results in conflicting traffic movements that lead to traffic safety issues as well as travel delays for bus riders and motorists alike.
- **Separation of transit and motor vehicle movements when entering the Drive will improve traffic safety and reduce delays.**

Belmont/Inner Drive is the most heavily used bus stop in the CTA system

Express and local buses that enter and exit the Drive at Belmont:

AM HOURS

PM HOURS

47

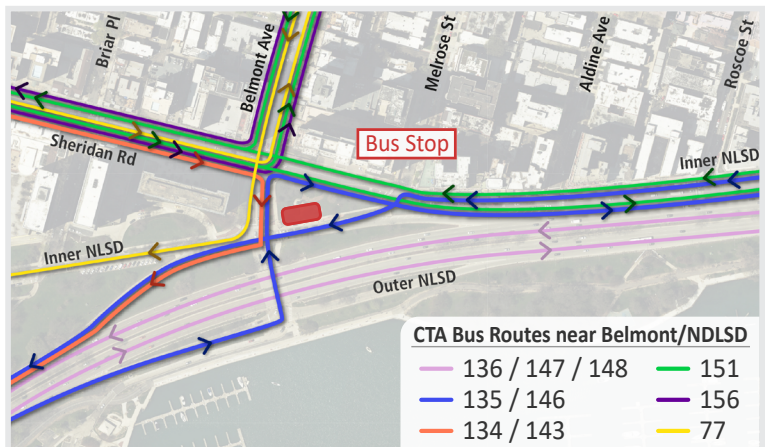
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10 bus routes travel through this location



During the A.M. peak hour, up to 1,700² southbound bus riders board here.

² Based on 2013 ridership data.



Conditions for People Driving

- Access between the greater Lakeview community and NDLSD is highly concentrated at the Belmont junction because the nearest junctions, at Irving Park Road and at Fullerton Avenue, are approximately 1-mile to the north and south.
- By comparison, other junctions along NDLSD are typically spaced approximately a half-mile apart. Major local streets in this part of Chicago are also typically spaced on a half-mile grid, which helps to evenly disperse traffic across these roadways and through intersections.
- The concentration of travel demand at the Belmont junction leads to high traffic volumes, increased delays, and reduced traffic safety along Belmont Avenue and the Inner and Outer Drives. These delays then cause some motorists to seek shortcuts which burden side streets with additional traffic during periods of peak travel demand.
- **Allowing the traffic demand at Belmont to be distributed across more than one set of NDLSD access ramps will reduce traffic congestion, delays, and traffic safety challenges affecting Belmont Avenue, the Inner and Outer Drives, and nearby side streets.**

Belmont junction is **the highest crash location along NDLSD** with an average of **more than 160 crashes per year**.

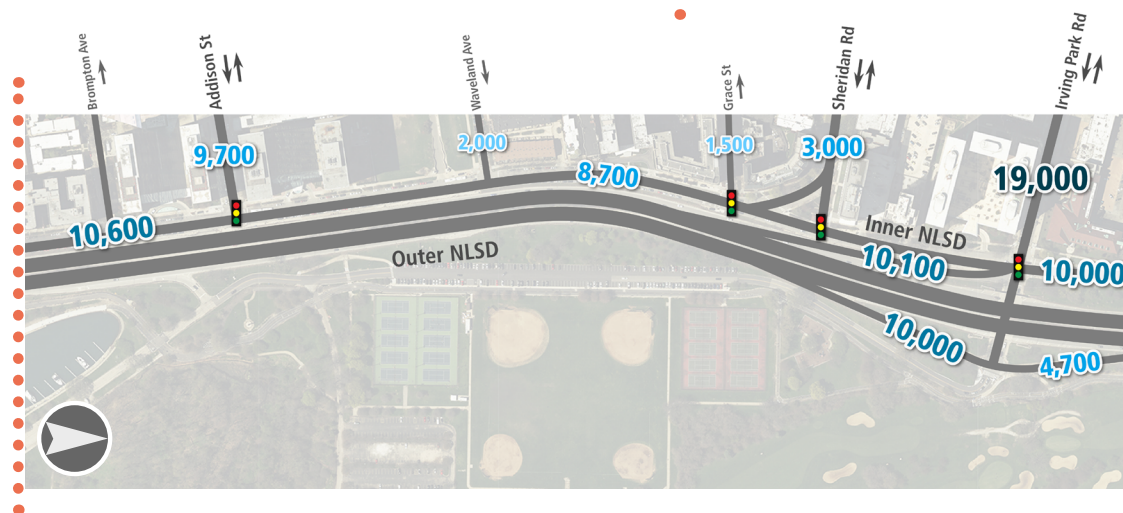
Belmont is also **the most congested junction** within the NDLSD project limits.



During the A.M. peak hour, delays at Belmont junction's four signalized intersections add an average of nearly **3 ½ minutes of travel time to every car and bus** approaching NDLSD.



Average Daily Traffic Volumes



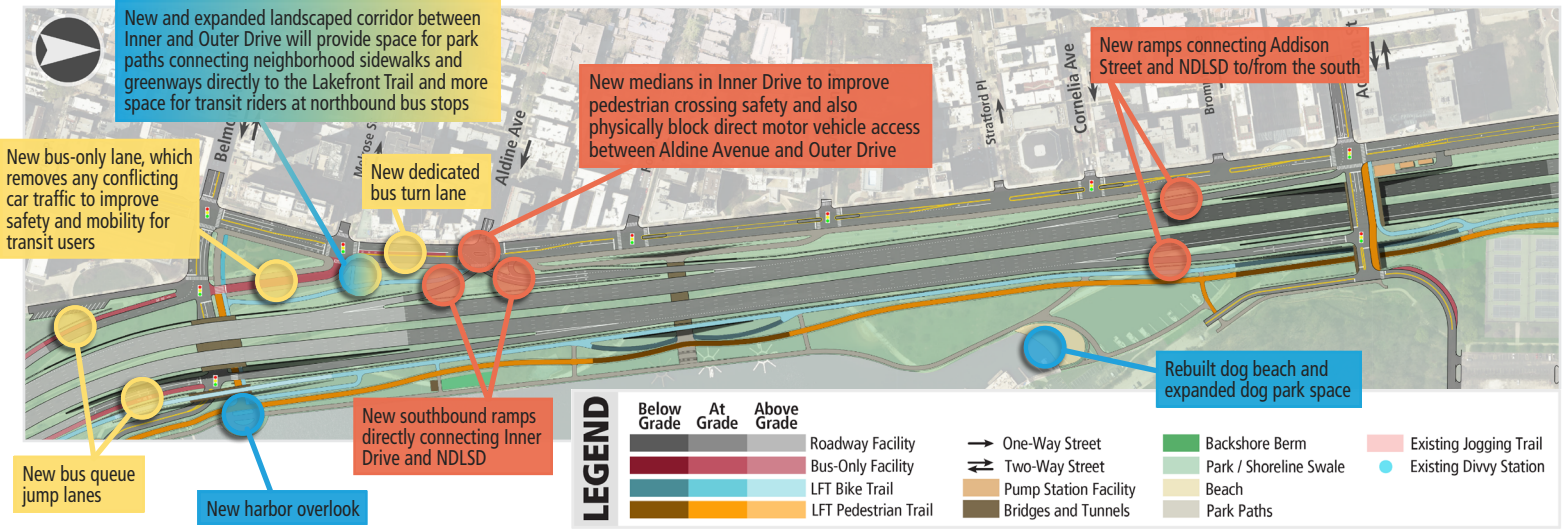
Physical Conditions

With the urban edge immediately to the west and Belmont Harbor immediately to the east, this is the **most physically constrained area within the entire NDLSD corridor**.

- These constraints limit the space available to address the multi-modal transportation infrastructure challenges described above. They also limit the potential for expanding park and green space in this area.

WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS?

Overview Map of Proposed Improvements in the Belmont-Addison Area



Improvements for People Walking and People Bicycling



Park space is proposed to be added east of the Drive in this area to accommodate separated bike and pedestrian trails along Belmont Harbor. The additional park space would also allow for a harbor overlook on the edge of the water near the pedestrian access point at Belmont. The dog beach would be rebuilt near its current location and would include expanded dog park space adjacent to the beach.

West of the Drive, an expanded and landscaped corridor would be created in the space between Inner and Outer Drives. New wide park paths through this space would connect directly from an expanded Lakefront Trail access tunnel to the Roscoe and Aldine greenways, reducing conflicts between people walking and driving. At key intersections along Inner Drive pedestrian and bicyclist crossings would be enhanced and traffic signals would be added or improved. Bike accommodations could potentially be added along Inner Drive with an off-street shared-use path to provide safer and more comfortable north-south access.

Inner Drive at Hawthorne Place (looking south)



Improvements for People Taking Transit



The proposed expanded and landscaped corridor between Inner and Outer Drives would provide more spacious and comfortable accommodations for people using northbound bus stops on Inner Drive.

Reconfigured travel lanes approaching the Belmont junction would significantly improve southbound bus operations. Buses approaching the Drive would continue to utilize the bus stop on the east side of Sheridan Triangle, but this would become a bus-only space without any conflicting car traffic. Additional proposed improvements for bus operations along the entire NDLSD corridor are described in further detail in the [Transit Improvements Study Spotlight](#).

Improvements for People Driving



As noted above, under existing conditions the one southbound NDLS D entrance ramp at Belmont must handle traffic from a broad geographic area. This includes:

1. Car traffic from Addison (via Inner Drive)
2. Car traffic from residential streets between Addison and Belmont (via Inner Drive)
3. Car and bus traffic from Inner Drive
4. Car traffic from Belmont
5. Car traffic from south of Belmont (via Sheridan and Belmont)

All traffic from the first three areas must now converge on the east side of Sheridan Triangle between Melrose and Belmont and then merge with southbound traffic exiting the Outer Drive at Belmont. All traffic from the last two areas converges at the Belmont/Sheridan intersection before traffic from all five areas intersects at the Belmont/Southbound ramp intersection. These closely spaced intersections have limited capacity to handle all of these traffic movement demands, which causes delays and traffic safety challenges.

To improve safety, reduce pedestrian/automobile/bus conflicts, and reduce congestion, it is proposed to separate and redistribute traffic movements from the five areas listed above.

- Traffic to/from the first area would be served by new ramps connecting NDLS D to and from the south at Addison and would no longer need to use Inner Drive.³ This new junction at Addison would also improve access to the north Belmont Harbor parking area, golf course, tennis courts, and ball diamonds located east of the Drive between Addison and Irving Park Road.
- Car traffic from the second and third areas would be served by a new southbound entrance ramp that would connect Inner Drive to Outer Drive at Aldine Avenue. However, direct access from Aldine to the new entrance ramp would be physically blocked so that Aldine could no longer be used as a shortcut to access Outer Drive as it is today.⁴ Bus traffic from Inner Drive would continue to use the existing southbound entrance ramp at Belmont, but via a new dedicated bus lane on the ramp and on the east side of Sheridan Triangle. The existing southbound exit ramp from the Outer Drive would be moved one block north to intersect Inner Drive at Aldine Avenue so that exiting cars would no longer have to merge with entering buses and cars on the east side of Sheridan Triangle as they do today.
- Traffic to/from the fourth and fifth areas would continue to be served by the existing ramps at Belmont.

BENEFITS OF DISTRIBUTING TRAFFIC DEMAND AT BELMONT

Distributing traffic demand at Belmont across more than one set of NDLS D access ramps would provide the following traffic safety and operational benefits:



Reduce vehicular conflicts with pedestrians at the Belmont/Inner Drive intersection.



Allow bus signal priority transit advantages to be implemented at the junction with without adversely impacting overall traffic operations.



Allow more time in each signal cycle for eastbound traffic on Belmont to turn on to the entrance ramp. This will reduce delays on Belmont that currently cause some motorists to seek shortcut routes on nearby residential streets.



Reduce overall traffic demand along Inner Drive between Addison and Belmont.



Eliminate conflicts between buses and right-turning cars at the Belmont bus stop.

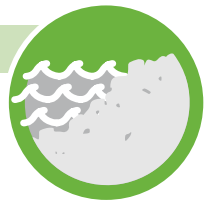


Reduce traffic demand on westbound Belmont between Inner Drive and Sheridan Road that presently result in traffic backups on westbound Belmont and the northbound exit ramp from NDLS D.

³ In response to community concerns about potential impacts to driveway access along Addison west of Inner Drive the study team has modeled proposed traffic in this area. Using expected traffic volumes (based on pre-COVID data and **The Essential alternative**), the anticipated “worst case scenario” for eastbound traffic backups in this area would result in no change during the A.M. peak hour and an increased queue of three to four cars during the P.M. peak hour. A new traffic signal at Pine Grove and Addison is to be installed in advance of NDLS D construction and will ultimately be interconnected with the signals at Broadway and Inner Drive. These signals will create gaps in traffic for vehicles to exit from the driveways along Addison Street. Pedestrian crossing times will also be maximized to enhance walkability in this area.

⁴ In response to community concerns about potential impacts to Aldine west of Inner Drive the study team has modeled proposed traffic in this area. The analysis predicts that this proposed configuration would result in approximately 115 fewer cars per hour on Aldine during the A.M. peak period than there are today.

Belmont Harbor Reconfiguration



The proposed design would improve the Lakefront Trail along Belmont Harbor by increasing the amount of park space between the northbound Belmont ramps and the Harbor. It would also improve access to and from the lakefront by increasing the space separating the Inner and Outer Drives. These park improvements would require shifting the seawall on the west edge of Belmont Harbor to create additional land where there is currently water. The overall harbor layout would be reconfigured to minimize loss of boat slips through harbor entrance jetty improvements to reduce wave action inside the harbor and replacement of space-intensive mooring cans with space-efficient boat slips served by piers. The project team has been actively coordinating with Chicago Park District to develop a preferred layout for the harbor.

HOW WOULD GREEN SPACE BE AFFECTED?

The project team is currently conducting the Level 3 Screening of the [five remaining corridor-wide alternatives](#). As part of this screening, the project team will compare changes in green space as well as impacts to trees for each alternative. The Level 3 Screening results are expected to be presented at the next public meeting in late 2022. Proposed design plans for the NDLS project will continue to be refined to avoid or minimize impacts to trees and other natural resources. Upcoming discussions will also provide opportunities for public input into mitigation strategies for affected trees, including tree preservation where possible, replacement where necessary, and new potential areas for tree planting that may become possible as part of the proposed improvements.

The Chicago Park District is working in close coordination with the project team on the potential designs for all changes to park space. This will be a key focus for the NDLS study over the next year, and the project team looks forward to receiving your input. As part of this effort, in spring 2022 the project team will be distributing a public survey about lakefront access and the park user experience. For additional information, we invite you to review the project team's Study Spotlights regarding [Lakefront Trail and Park Access Improvements](#) and [Environment & Climate Change](#).

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Continued input on the proposed Lakeview improvements is welcome and encouraged. All materials from past Task Force and public meetings are available on the project website, and we welcome your feedback at any time throughout the project. If you are not yet on our newsletter list, please send us an email to receive project updates!

