



**REDEFINE THE DRIVE**

## North Lake Shore Drive Small Group Discussion Common Questions and Responses Summary

The following questions were collected during the North Lake Shore Drive Public Input Opportunity small group discussions that took place on Tuesday, October 13 and Wednesday, October 14. This is not a comprehensive review of all questions posed at these meetings, but a summary of the common questions and themes.

### Lakefront Trail and Park Access Comments

#### **Why are the bike and pedestrian trails located closely to the Outer Drive? Can the trails be designed to be further away from the Outer Drive?**

A goal of the NLSD study is to improve safety and comfort for all users, including people walking and biking. One aspect of this includes moving the Lakefront Trail (LFT) bike and pedestrian paths further away from the Outer Drive where feasible. In some areas, moving the LFT further from NLSD may not be feasible due to space constraints. Overall, the project team will continue to work with the Chicago Park District and stakeholders as the planning process moves forward to refine the LFT designs and incorporate design features to further improve safety and comfort where possible. We welcome your comments if there are specific locations of concern.

#### **What is being done to address noise pollution from vehicles traveling on the Outer Drive? Traffic noise can be extremely loud on the Lakefront Trail and in park spaces that are near the Outer Drive.**

The project team is reviewing several features that could address traffic noise on NLSD. One feature is related to reducing speeds on NLSD by providing space (a clear zone) along the outside edges of NLSD for speed enforcement activities. We are also considering a short wall at the back edge of the clear zones adjacent to the travel lanes, which may also reduce some noise levels within the adjacent park. As the project moves into the next round of evaluation, we will be assessing traffic noise and potential mitigation measures in more detail.

#### **What is the anticipated amount of park space that will be added within the corridor from this project? What will the impact be on existing park space?**

At a minimum, there would be 64 acres of park space added throughout the corridor. Impacts to existing park space will be further studied during Level 3 Screening. The project team will also continue coordination with the Chicago Park District and stakeholders to achieve the goal of avoiding or minimizing impacts to existing park space.

**What is being done to separate people walking and people biking on the Lakefront Trail and at access points throughout the corridor? I often see conflicts and accidents taking place between various users.**

The proposed design would create separate pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout the LFT corridor, minimizing conflict for those traveling north and south. The biking trail is expected to feature a 14-foot wide paved path, 7 feet in each direction. The walking trail is expected to feature a 12-foot wide paved path flanked by 3-foot wide gravel jogging paths. Underpasses and bridges at the access points would also be wide enough provide enough space and separation between pedestrians and bicyclists, as illustrated in the conceptual rendering below. Additionally, all pedestrian bridges and underpasses would be ADA compliant. Where feasible, paths and roadways will be grade separated at junctions to minimize conflicts between people walking, biking, driving, and taking transit.



**How are bike lanes and routes west of the drive being integrated into access points and the Lakefront Trail? Why, at some locations, is there only one shared-use path for people walking and people biking across Inner LSD leading to the Lakefront Trail?**

At this point in the NLSD planning process, the project team has developed a basic concept that addresses access largely within Lincoln Park. Next steps in the design process will include connecting this system to the urban edge along the Inner Drive. We welcome your continued input on this issue as the planning moves forward.

Transit Comments

**What kind of transit service improvement will be expected from the five alternatives?**

The Addition, The Exchange, The Flex and The Double Flex Alternatives provide a space for either a bus only lane or a shared bus/auto lane, which would allow buses to travel reliably at free flow speed (40 mph) on NLSD. The Essential Alternative does not include a separate space for buses along NLSD, but it does include transit priority features (bus priority signals and queue

jump lanes) at the junctions (entrance/exit ramps), where much of the bus travel delay presently occurs. These features and others would also improve bus speeds. The project team will further model and assess the performance of these proposed features in the next round of evaluation.

**Are there bus only lanes in the remaining alternatives?**

Four of the five remaining alternatives (all except the Essential) include separate lanes that would allow a bus to travel at free flow speeds (40 mph) on the Outer Drive. Two alternatives (the Addition and the Exchange) include a dedicated transit lane, and another two (the Flex and the Double Flex) include a shared lane that gives priority to buses as well as autos that pay a toll.

**How would providing a dedicated bus only lane or Managed Lane impact transit ridership? Would a dedicated bus only lane cause people to shift from using private vehicles to using public transit?**

Based on the Level 2 Screening results, it is not expected that a dedicated bus lane would cause a large share of people to shift from using private vehicles to using public transit. There is already a very high level of transit usage in the corridor today (approaching 50% of trips), along with several high capacity transit facilities in the overall travel area affected by NLS (NLS express buses, CTA Red/Brown/Purple Lines, and Metra). In addition, the NLS express bus catchment area (the area where riders are generally drawn from) is significantly smaller than the catchment area for private vehicles on NLS, which limits the degree to which changes to NLS express bus service can affect overall private vehicle travel demand on NLS.

**What other options for transit were explored during the Phase I Study? Was light rail considered as an alternative?**

Light rail was considered as an early alternative at the beginning of the NLS planning process and was eliminated due to high relative costs and impacts. The other alternatives being considered were determined to meet the Purpose and Need at significantly less relative cost and impact. In addition, a light rail facility would disrupt CTA's existing express bus service along the Drive by moving bus stops further from the urban edge and requiring bus riders coming from the west to switch from bus to rail to continue their journey downtown. Lastly, a light rail facility would need to extend well beyond the current project limits to adequately serve ridership, just as the existing NLS express buses do. Note, however, that the remaining alternatives that provide or are capable of providing dedicated space for buses along NLS could also potentially accommodate future light rail transit in that space.

**What would be the footprint impacts from the alternatives that offer a dedicated transit lane or a managed lane?**

All four alternatives that provide a bus only lane or a managed lane would increase the NLS footprint from existing conditions. A large portion of the footprint increase would be at the junctions, where dedicated access ramps to/from the bus only or managed lanes would be needed. The Essential, which does not include a separate lane for buses, would have the relative smallest footprint of the remaining alternatives.

**How many buses would occupy the dedicated transit lane or Managed Lane during peak hours and how many throughout the day?**

Currently, there are 95 buses on NLSD in the AM peak and 55 buses during the PM peak. A total of 700 buses operate on the Inner and Outer Drive throughout the whole day. CTA anticipates that future bus service will be similar to existing service. It is important to note that for analytical purposes the project team also modeled scenarios that doubled the number of peak hour buses and found that the proposed managed lanes would have sufficient capacity and flexibility to handle such a level of demand if necessary.

**Are there examples of places that have incorporated a bus only lane or Managed Lane in place of a general purpose lane? Do we have data in terms of traffic times that show those impacts?**

There are several examples of managed lanes within the United States but very few have removed a former general purpose lane to create a bus only lane. The project team has been modeling traffic behavior and travel times to understand the changes that would likely occur under various conditions.

General Comments on Alternatives

**How is the project team considering maintaining the boulevard like feel and characteristics of North Lake Shore Drive?**

The overall goal of the NLSD project is to address the transportation needs within the context of historic Lincoln Park. Therefore, maintaining the aesthetic character and boulevard-like feel of North Lake Shore Drive is a top priority for the project team. As the planning process moves into the next round of evaluation, the project team will be further refining the aesthetic character of the remaining alternatives based upon stakeholder input, agency coordination and technical analyses.

**Will landscaped medians be incorporated with the five remaining alternatives?**

The designs for all alternatives provide a wide enough space to incorporate a landscaped median south of Belmont Avenue and north of Montrose Avenue. The area between Belmont and Montrose would not include a landscaped median to reduce impacts to park space in this physically constrained section of the Drive.

**How would enforcement be implemented to prevent motor vehicles from using the bus only lane? Would there be any barrier separating the bus only lane from the general purpose lanes?**

The project team has not yet developed specific designs for enforcement of the bus only or managed lanes. However, the enforcement concept would generally include measures such as cameras or other electronic methods to detect vehicles. The bus only lane would be separated by a four-foot painted buffer. A physical barrier would require a further expansion of the transportation footprint to allow for passing a stalled bus.

Technology related to traffic management is rapidly advancing, and the project team will seek to incorporate features that provide sufficient levels of enforcement while also respecting the context of historic Lincoln Park.

**Are the Exchange, the Flex, and the Double Flex interchangeable? If a managed lane was constructed, could it be converted into a bus only at a later date and vice versa?**

In its current design, the Flex and Double Flex would be interchangeable, since they have the same overall design and the same access configuration. The Flex and the Double Flex could be later converted to bus only operations. It is important to note that the Exchange has fewer bus lane access points than the managed lane alternatives and would therefore not be interchangeable with the Flex or the Double Flex unless additional space were to be provided for potential future access ramps.

**Can you explain how the managed or bus only lane would work? Will it affect bus access to the Drive?**

The managed lane or bus only lane would have special ramps in the median area at certain junctions to provide direct access to and from the lanes. The transit access ramps would be aligned with locations of existing CTA express bus entrance and exit points. Instead of being in general traffic, buses would enter and exit the Drive only on these special ramps.

In the case of managed lanes, which would allow a limited number of tolled autos to join buses in the lane, there would need to be additional access ramps beyond those needed just for buses.



**How would the price of tolling work for the Flex or Double Flex and would there be a maximum toll price that would be implemented? Where would the raised money go?**

The managed lane in the Flex and Double Flex alternatives would be managed based on a dynamic tolling system. The price of the toll would vary by demand, which would most often be at its highest price during peak travel hours and would charge the user based on the number of miles traveled. In the study models so far, this has been estimated at \$1/mile during peak hours. Thus far, the project team has evaluated tolling as a traffic management strategy to ensure buses would be able to maintain a free flow of speed of 40 miles per hour. The team has not assessed a maximum or minimum toll charge to use the managed lane. It has not yet been determined how any toll revenue would be used, although one likely use would be to help cover the costs of operating and maintaining the lane use enforcement systems. Both of these topics will be assessed during the Level 3 Screening process.

**What would be the socioeconomic impacts of having a lane that would benefit those who could afford to pay a toll?**

Project team analysis has shown that managed lane users are not necessarily those of a higher income bracket, or everyday users. Typically, the managed lane users are in need of a time savings for specific purposes on any given day, such as running late to child care pick-up where there is a potential fee, or wanting to ensure an early arrival to a job interview. Bus passengers in the managed lane, as well as autos in the non-managed lanes, would also see travel time savings at no additional cost. The project team will study this issue in greater detail in the upcoming round of evaluation.

**How would tolling affect traffic diversion onto the arterial system?**

The project team has found that a tolled managed lane would result in relatively less traffic diversion away from the Outer Drive than converting one of the existing lanes to bus only. For example, the Exchange alternative, which converts an existing general purpose lane to a bus only lane, results in relatively greater traffic diversion to the nearby arterial streets as compared to the Flex alternative, which converts an existing General Purpose lane to a shared managed lane for both buses and tolled autos.

**Explain how the bus lane or shared use lane would work? Does that affect bus access to the Drive?**

The Addition and Exchange alternatives include a bus only lane that would allow buses to travel at free flow speed (40 mph) along the Outer Drive. The Flex and Double Flex Alternatives would include a managed lane that is a shared space for buses and tolled autos. The toll rate in the managed lane would be set to limit the number of autos in the lane, which would allow buses to travel at free flow speed (40 mph). Each of these alternatives would also have direct access ramps to the bus only or managed lane in the median.

Location Specific Comments – Southern Corridor, Grand Avenue to Diversey Parkway

**Why does the proposed design separate the northbound and southbound lanes of Inner Lake Shore Drive between Division Street and Bellevue Place?**

The proposed design at this location is intended to address existing safety and operational concerns where the Outer Drive ramps merge with and diverge from Inner Drive travel lanes. Currently, the northbound Inner Drive crosses the southbound Outer Drive exit ramp at a sharp angle, which creates the potential for wrong way maneuvers and head on collisions. In addition, the existing design requires the northbound local CTA bus stop at Oak Street (#151 route) to be located in the median of Michigan Avenue, which is also a safety concern. The proposed design eliminates these vehicular safety concern by relocating the northbound Inner Drive lanes to the east. However, this design would also modify some travel patterns in this area by separating the northbound and southbound lanes on Inner Drive for several blocks, and

the project team will continue to assess these design challenges and discuss alternative solutions with stakeholders during the next round of evaluation.

**Why are you proposing to place a bus turnaround and staging area near Division Street?**

During the design process, a main priority for the project team is to improve transit performance and accommodations for buses traveling north/south and east/west. This proposed facility would reduce the impacts to bus travel times by providing a designated place for turnarounds and minimizing conflicts with motor vehicles. As it is currently proposed, enough space would be provided for only two buses to stage at a time. Coordination will continue with the CTA in order to determine how to best refine the design within the dedicated facility.

**Please explain how this project will address current issues with the “S-Curve”.**

Under current conditions, the Outer Drive near Oak Street includes sharp turns, varied lane widths, and minimal (or no) clear area beyond the pavement edges, all of which contribute to safety and congestion concerns. Each of the remaining NLSA Alternatives would flatten the S-curve in combination with lake fill and shoreline protection measures. The proposed design would also include uniform lane widths, as well as unobstructed areas adjacent to the outer travel lanes (clear zones).

Location Specific Comments – Central Corridor, Diversey Parkway to Montrose Avenue

**Why does the proposed design include a bus turnaround and layover area near the Belmont Avenue junction? This design may increase noise and air pollution as well as attract loiterers in this area.**

According to CTA, the Belmont bus area is the busiest stop in the city (with approximately 1,100 riders per day) and is also heavily congested due to vehicles exiting the Drive. The basis of the proposed improvements are to improve flow for buses at this location, as compared to current conditions, which includes congestion and idling cars and buses. Furthermore, the project team will be evaluating air quality as part of the Level 3 Screening analysis.

The project team has heard concerns from the community and anticipates a Lakeview Community Meeting to take place in 2021 to discuss the proposed designs and receive input.

**Why do the proposed plans include southbound entrance and exit ramps at Aldine Avenue?  
The proposed plans could attract unwanted traffic onto this community street.**

Under existing conditions, the junction at Belmont must serve traffic coming from six different areas:

- 1) Traffic from the west on Belmont
- 2) Traffic from south of Belmont (limited catchment area that prefers Belmont over Fullerton)
- 3) Traffic from the east (South Belmont Harbor parking lot)
- 4) Traffic from the area between Addison, Inner Drive, Aldine, and Broadway (via Inner Drive)
- 5) Traffic from the west on Addison or north on Broadway (via Inner Drive)
- 6) Traffic from north of Addison (limited catchment area that prefers Belmont over Irving Park)

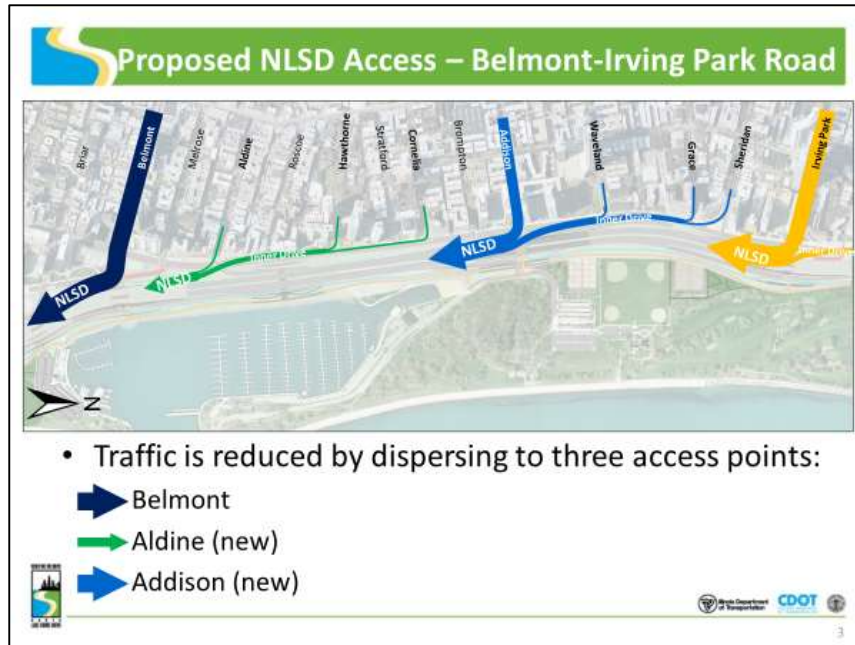


This is too much traffic for the Belmont on-ramp and nearby intersections to handle effectively, and traffic backs up regularly, affecting motorists and buses alike. These back-ups also cause some motorists to seek short-cuts using neighborhood streets; for example, some motorists from the west on Addison or the north on Broadway have been observed to cut through on Aldine to try to avoid delays on Inner Drive or Belmont.

To reduce congestion and improve safety, in the proposed configuration these six traffic movements would be re-allocated to three future on-ramps at Addison, Aldine, and Belmont (*please reference the existing traffic areas numbered above to correspond with the new movements below*).



- Belmont will serve traffic from areas (1) (2) and (3)
- Aldine will serve traffic from area (4)
- Addison will serve traffic from areas (5) and (6)



Because delays on Belmont will diminish, and traffic from Addison and points north and west will be able to enter directly at Addison without getting delayed on Inner Drive or Belmont, it is expected that there would no longer be demand for traffic to cut through from Broadway to Inner Drive using Aldine. However, the project team is developing additional alternatives for this area based on community input, and we anticipate hosting community meetings in 2021 to present this and receive additional input.

### **How will changes to the Belmont area affect the harbor's configuration and slips?**

The section of NLSD between Belmont and Addison is the most physically constrained area on the corridor, with city edge to the west and the harbor to the east. In this area there is only 15 feet between Inner and Outer Drive, and the Lakefront Trail paths converge into a space of less than 30 feet in width which creates congestion and conflicting travel movements for people walking and biking in this section of the park. All alternatives propose increasing separation between Inner and Outer Drive, as well as up to 80 feet of space created between the Outer Drive and the relocated Belmont Harbor wall.

The project team has been coordinating closely with the Chicago Park District regarding the harbor configuration and will refine this further during Level 3 Screening. The potential impact on the harbor would be between 50 and 250 feet of fill depending on the alternative. However, the harbor's boat slips can be reconfigured to keep the total loss of slips between zero and no more than 12 depending upon the alternative.

**Does the proposed plans include the Lakeview Dog Park and the Belmont Harbor dog beach?**

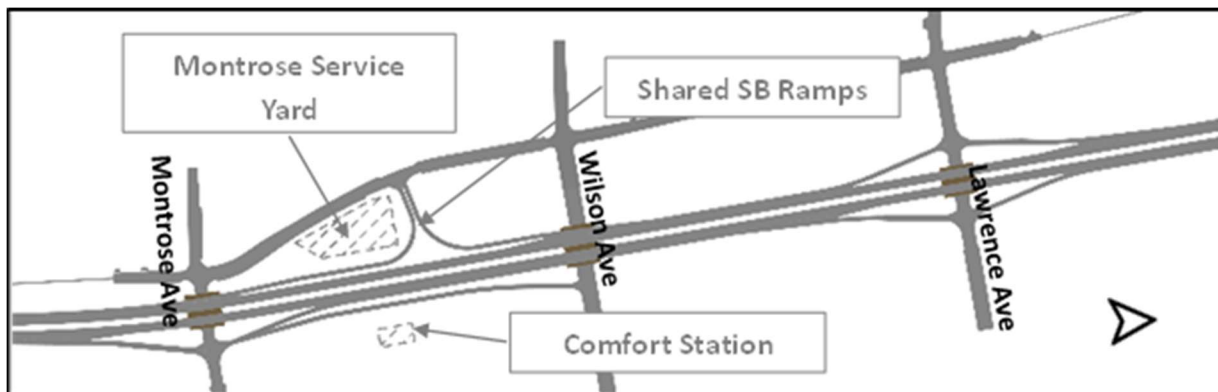
The proposed plans for the Lakeview Dog Park are being taken into consideration by the project team and will be addressed in coordination with the Chicago Park District and community stakeholders. The Belmont Harbor dog beach is proposed to be maintained but relocated to a nearby area within the reconfigured Belmont Harbor.

Location Specific Comments – Northern Corridor, Montrose Avenue to Hollywood Avenue

**How would the new junction configuration operate in the Montrose/Wilson/Lawrence corridor? What was the thinking behind that?**

The proposed lane configuration in this area was developed to better balance safety and access concerns. The current spacing between on and off ramps in this area is 300 to 400 feet, as compared to the national standard of 1,000 feet for this type of roadway, which is similar to the ramp spacing on the remainder of the NLSD project. National research has shown that when ramp spacing is insufficient, traffic safety is reduced because entering and exiting vehicles do not have enough distance to cross each other’s paths while the entering vehicle is accelerating and the exiting vehicle is decelerating.

In 2018 and 2019, the project team hosted a series of workshops in the 46<sup>th</sup> Ward to further refine the proposed design of this series of junctions. A dozen alternatives were developed and evaluated, and the layout shown above is the outcome of that process. It addresses traffic safety while also providing convenient and appropriate access to the community.



Vehicles traveling northbound would be able to access Montrose Avenue, Wilson Avenue and Lawrence Avenue. Motorists seeking to access Wilson Avenue would exit at Montrose Avenue and continue to Wilson Avenue along a new frontage drive. Southbound access would also be available at Montrose Avenue, Wilson Avenue and Lawrence Avenue, with Wilson and Montrose using a shared ramp via Marine Drive.

## Other Comments

### **How is this study addressing the issue of climate change and rising lake levels?**

All of the NLSD alternatives feature significant improvements for people walking, biking and riding on transit. All alternatives also include additional green space and shoreline protection measures that will address rising lake levels. Climate change and other environmental topics will be further considered and evaluated as part of Level 3 Screening.

### **How will this project reduce the amount of speeding that takes place on the Outer Drive? Are we able to install speed cameras to prevent motorists from speeding?**

The proposed design for NLSD would provide clear zones (unobstructed areas) beyond the edges of the Outer Drive pavement, which will allow for safer speed enforcement activities. Current Illinois law prohibits the use of cameras to enforce speeds on NLSD.

### **How will this project be paid for? What are the funding sources?**

Currently funding is only available for this ongoing Phase I preliminary design and environmental review effort, which is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022. No schedule or funding has currently been established for Phase II final design or Phase III construction. As part of the next round of evaluation, the study will consider various methods for funding the project. Multiple potential funding sources will be reviewed.

### **Would construction take place at one time or in segments?**

A project of this scale will require construction to take place in segments over many years, as was the case with South Lake Shore Drive reconstruction in recent decades. Shoreline protection construction would most likely take place first to create the space needed for improvements to the Outer Drive, especially in the southern section.

### **Are you factoring in how the COVID-19 pandemic may impact use of transit and people working from home?**

Yes. The project team is taking into consideration the impacts to motor vehicle and transit use from the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, motor vehicle use is recovering as well as transit use, however, transit use is recovering at a slower pace. The project team will continue to monitor long term impacts. In the short term, the design team will continue to design the proposed alternatives with as much built in flexibility as possible to facilitate effective accommodation of future travel needs.

### **Will views of the lake be affected with the new design?**

The project team recognizes the importance of viewsheds along NLSD. Retaining as many existing lake, park, and city viewsheds as possible is a high priority for all who use the corridor, including those who use the trails, cycle, drive and live along the Drive. Viewsheds will be assessed in detail during the next round of evaluation.