



## **North Lake Shore Drive Phase I Study**

### **Public Meeting #1 Responses to Public Comments and Questions**

November 2013

Written questions and comments regarding the North Lake Shore Drive Phase I Study were submitted by individuals and groups from throughout the Chicago region at the project's public meetings held August 6, 7 and 8 at Gill Park, Truman College and Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum respectively. In addition, public comments and questions were submitted directly to the project team via e-mail, the website's electronic comment form and postal mail through August 30, 2013.

All of the questions and comments have been collected and compiled to provide a comprehensive review of the topics raised along with project team's responses. Every question, comment, and suggestion submitted during the public comment period has been compiled and is available for viewing on the [NLSD project website](#). Collectively, the public comments and preferences will be considered in the evaluation of alternatives and concepts introduced through the public involvement process.

The comments received included many topics beyond just the roadway and bridges of Lake Shore Drive. Frequent topics included the Lakefront Trail, transit and park issues. Many of the comments received were similar in nature. As a result, comments have been summarized and their responses have been grouped by topic to avoid duplicative responses. To understand some terms used in the comments and responses, it may be helpful to review the original presentation materials which are posted at [www.northlakeshoredrive.org](http://www.northlakeshoredrive.org)

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## Public Involvement Process

**Q. I am interested in sharing and learning how these concerns will be addressed, solved and implemented. How can I stay informed about the project?**

**A.** The Phase I Study will offer extensive opportunities for stakeholder input. In addition to the plan to conduct three general public meetings and a public hearing, seven task forces were created to serve as conduits for stakeholder input to the Project Study Group from special interest stakeholders. Opportunities to provide input will exist at all times during the Phase I Study through the project's website. All public outreach materials will be available on the website located at [http://www.northlakeshoredrive.org/involved\\_meetings.html](http://www.northlakeshoredrive.org/involved_meetings.html)

## Phase I Study Process and Project Scope

**C. This project should look to the future to develop a long-term plan to solve problems along Lake Shore Drive, the Lakefront Trail, and in the park.**

**R.** Analyses of existing conditions have identified the need to reconstruct much of the 80-year old infrastructure along NLS, as well as the need to address substantial traffic, safety and congestion problems. How these needs will be addressed, however, has not been determined at this time. The scope of improvements will be developed utilizing input from this series of public meetings and early task force meetings.

**Q. Does this project include investigating extending North Lake Shore Drive to Evanston?**

**A.** No, the scope of this study terminates at Hollywood Avenue.

## North Lake Shore Drive

**C. Concerns were expressed for numerous issues related to Lake Shore Drive including congestion, safety, and accessibility. Along with these concerns many suggestions were made as to how to address these issues.**

**R.** Portions of North Lake Shore Drive carry as many as 155,000 vehicles per day. Though North Lake Shore Drive is not an expressway, it is one of the most heavily traveled roadway segments in the region. The roadway design combined with the heavy travel demand results in significant safety issues as well as severe congestion during peak periods along many segments of the Drive.

Analyses of existing conditions have identified the need to reconstruct much of the 80-year old infrastructure along NLS, as well as the need to address significant traffic safety and congestion problems. How these needs will be addressed, however, has not been determined at this time. The project team will utilize all public comments to assist in developing the purpose and need statement for this project and ultimately the geometric alternatives.

**C. A number of questions and comments were received about either raising or lowering the posted speed limit on NLSD. In addition a large number of comments were made regarding excessive speeding along the Drive.**

**R.** As part of this project, a speed study will be conducted to determine the frequency and magnitude of speeding in the project corridor to determine its impact on the safety and operation of NLSD.

**Q. Will the accessibility needs of elderly and handicapped persons be addressed as part of this project? There are many barriers in the project corridor for these individuals.**

**A.** The needs of these individuals will be considered as part of the project and all proposed improvements will meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Q. What are the fatality statistics for the LSD and how do these compare to other roadways?**

**A.** Crash data on North Lake Shore Drive is posted on the project website ([http://www.northlakeshoredrive.org/pdf/2013-08-06\\_PublicMeetingMaterials/09-2007-2011%20Crash%20Data%20Exhibit.pdf](http://www.northlakeshoredrive.org/pdf/2013-08-06_PublicMeetingMaterials/09-2007-2011%20Crash%20Data%20Exhibit.pdf)) Additional information regarding crashes in Illinois can be found on IDOT's website at <http://www.dot.state.il.us/trafficsafety/crashreports.html>. Each year, the State of Illinois produces a report that describes highway locations that exhibit the most pressing safety needs. This report, called the Five Percent Report, helps provide guidance on where safety investments are needed. In 2012, 80% of the study area was considered to be in the top 5% high crash segments in the State of Illinois for similar roadways.

## **Junctions**

**C. Numerous concerns were expressed regarding safety, accessibility, and congestion at the Oak Street Curve, Chicago Avenue, North Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Irving Park Avenue, Montrose Avenue, Wilson Avenue, Lawrence Avenue, Foster Avenue and Hollywood Avenue.**

**R.** Although many locations along the Drive have substantial crash histories, the Belmont Avenue Junction and the Oak Street curve experience significant safety problems with approximately 800 crashes occurring at each location for the five-year period from 2007 through 2011. Predominant crash types along Lake Shore Drive include rear-end and sideswipe collisions, which can be indicative of severe congestion. On the Oak Street curve, just over half of the nearly 800 crashes involved a vehicle collision with either the inner or outer barrier wall.

The project team will review data and comments at all junctions and investigate options to address these safety and accessibility issues during the Phase I study process.

### **Bridges and Pedestrian Underpasses**

- Q. Many of the bridges along NLSD are in poor condition. Will they be repaired?**
- A. Analyses of existing conditions have identified the need to reconstruct much of the 80-year old infrastructure along NLSD including many of the bridge structures.
- Q. Will easier and safer pedestrian access be included as part of the project? The existing underpasses do not seem safe as they are dark and small and have steep ramps.**
- A. The accessibility and safety of pedestrian accommodations throughout the study area will be reviewed as part of the Phase I Study.

### **Lakefront Trail**

- Q. Will the Lakefront Trail be expanded to provide separate paths for bicyclists and pedestrians? Is it possible to provide a high speed or commuter path along Lake Shore Drive?**
- A. The Lakefront Trail is the showpiece of Chicago's world-class trail system and an important commuter bike route. Approximately 31,000 users per day are attracted to the most heavily used portions of the trail. Its immense popularity, however, has resulted in a number of safety issues. This is partially due to the fact that the trail accommodates all kinds of users, including pedestrians, parents with strollers, dog walkers, runners, bikers, and skaters.
- This study will look to balance the safety and operational needs of all users. A wide range of alternatives for the Lakefront Trail will be evaluated.
- Q. Pedestrian and bicycle access to the park is currently very difficult because of vehicle traffic. Will this study improve east-west accessibility?**
- A. The accessibility and safety of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations throughout the study area will be reviewed as part of the Phase I Study.

### **Inner Drive**

- C. Several questions were asked as to whether or not the Inner Drive is considered part of the study and numerous suggestions for specific improvements were made.**
- R. This study will include an evaluation of alternatives for improvement along the Inner Drive, as well as portions of Cannon Drive and Marine Drive.

### **Park Issues & Impacts**

- C. Concern was expressed by a number of people regarding the loss of parkland that may occur as a result of roadway improvements. Comments reflected the desire for more green space and beautification of the park.**
- R. This project must adhere to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, which protects publicly owned recreational facilities. The Act states that in order to use Section (f) land, it must be shown that there is no feasible or prudent alternative and that the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm resulting from the use.**

Therefore, any alternative that is developed as part of this project will require an extensive analysis to determine its impact on the park's recreational facilities. Alternatives will be investigated to determine the feasibility of replacing park land that is lost.

### **Transit**

- C. Numerous comments stated that transit needs to be improved along this corridor and numerous suggestions for specific improvements were made. Ideas ranged from improved bus service, light rail, tram or trolley, monorail, personal rapid transit and bus rapid transit.**
- R. North Lake Shore Drive is an important transit corridor. A total of nine bus routes serve the Inner and Outer Drives and carry nearly 69,000 riders per day. A range of alternatives for transit improvements will be explored as part of the Phase I Study process.**

### **Non-motorized Vehicles/Activities**

- C. Several comments stated that this study should encourage the integration of alternative transportation options including bikes, walkers/joggers, rollerbladers, etc.**
- R. This study will look to balance the safety and operational needs of all users and will evaluate a wide range of alternatives for various types of users.**

### **Harbors**

- C. Several concerns were raised regarding access to and from the harbors on the weekends. When the roadway network becomes congested with vehicles and pedestrian volumes are large, delays become significant resulting in motorized vehicles performing unsafe maneuvers.**

- R.** This study will investigate alternatives for improving the safety and operation of vehicular and bicycle/pedestrian traffic along the entire project corridor including access to and from park facilities.

### **Parking Facilities**

- C.** **Various comments were received that parking should either be reduced, supplemented or improved along the North Lake Shore Drive corridor and in Lincoln Park.**

- R.** As part of the development of alternatives for this project, modifications to parking will be a consideration and close coordination with City officials, aldermen, and the Chicago Park District will occur to ensure that parking needs for both Lincoln Park and the adjacent neighborhoods are met to the extent possible.

### **Economic & Environmental Impacts**

- Q.** **What will be done as part of this project to protect water quality in Lake Michigan?**

- A.** This study is being conducted under the guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which requires coordination with state and federal regulatory agencies to ensure that environmental regulations and policies are followed. These agencies include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

As alternatives are developed, the opportunities to address water quality will be incorporated into those designs.

- Q.** **What will be done to preserve various historic features along the Drive and in Lincoln Park?**

- A.** This project must adhere to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, which protects publicly owned recreational facilities and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which protects features included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Lincoln Park, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is protected by Section 4(f) and Section 106. Therefore, any alternative that is developed will require an extensive analysis to determine its impact on the historic nature of the park as well recreational activities.