The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) initiated the North Lake Shore Drive (NLSD) Phase I Study in 2013 to improve NLSD from Grand Avenue to Hollywood Avenue. The study is anticipated to continue through 2021 with many opportunities for input throughout the project process. Please visit the project website, northlakeshoredrive.org, to provide comments and view previous meeting materials.

As part of the study, the project team is working with stakeholders to develop a plan that improves safety and mobility for all users. The following is an overview of current issues and the proposed improvement concept for the Belmont Avenue junction.

There are three categories of alternatives being examined as part of the NLSD Phase I Study: Context Tailored Treatments; Transitways; and Managed Lanes. The top performing alternatives from these categories can be layered on top of one another in combination, or serve as standalone NLSD corridor designs. The following information addresses only the design features associated with the Context Tailored Treatments category.

North Lake Shore Drive Corridor
Belmont Avenue is the most congested junction within the project area and sees the highest number of crashes. The junction’s four closely spaced signalized intersections together average three crashes per week and add peak hour delays of more than 3 ½ minutes to each vehicle.

- During the AM rush hour, traffic merging from the Belmont Avenue junction to the southbound Outer Drive causes heavy congestion. During the PM rush hour, northbound traffic backs up from the exit ramp signal at Belmont onto the northbound Outer Drive. This inhibits mainline traffic flow, creating abrupt decreases in travel speeds which contribute to crashes.
- Some of the traffic drawn to Belmont Avenue via the Inner Drive originates from or is destined to the vicinity of Addison Street, which currently does not have direct access to or from the Outer Drive.
- Belmont Avenue features the most heavily used bus stop in the CTA system, located at Belmont Avenue and Inner Lake Shore Drive.
- The CTA operates the #77 Belmont, #134 Stockton/LaSalle, #135 Clarendon/LaSalle Express, #143 Stockton/Michigan Express, #146 Inner Drive/Michigan Express, #151 Sheridan, and #156 LaSalle routes at or near the Belmont junction, with over 900 buses and over 14,000 passengers passing through this area each day. There are multiple conflicts between vehicles, buses and pedestrians in this area, which leads to safety concerns, congestion for all users, and unreliable bus service. At this stop, motor vehicles often make illegal right turns in front of buses or block access to the southbound stop during the AM peak hour.
- Stakeholder feedback and project team analysis identified Belmont Avenue as a key area for improving transit access and efficiency.

- The area east of NLSD near Belmont Harbor attracts a high number of people walking and biking on the Lakefront Trail. Stakeholders identified this location as the site of numerous safety issues involving conflicts between users of all kinds.
- Belmont Avenue currently provides the only motor vehicle access to the Belmont Harbor south parking lot. This requires drivers to travel through an already congested area and intersect with the Lakefront Trail in order to reach the lot.
Ramps at Aldine Avenue, along with a new Addison Street junction, would draw traffic away from the Belmont Avenue junction, relieving congestion and improving safety. These improvements would also allow for the creation of a new bus-only area.

- A new entrance ramp from the Inner Drive at Aldine would allow motor vehicles to enter the southbound Outer Drive without traveling to the Belmont Avenue junction. The southbound Belmont exit ramp would be relocated to intersect the Inner Drive at Aldine Avenue. These reconfigured ramps would help alleviate congestion at Belmont and would significantly reduce vehicle travel delays, from about 3 ½ minutes per vehicle to roughly 60 seconds.

- A new Addison Street junction would also accommodate some traffic that would otherwise travel through the Belmont Avenue junction.

- A one-way southbound bus-only area would be created on the east side of General Sheridan Park between Belmont Avenue and Melrose Street to accommodate the high-ridership Belmont bus stop, as well as bus layovers and staging. A sheltered area for waiting bus customers would be created. An additional bus stop space would be located on the western side of the park along the northbound Inner Drive. The bus-only area and other transit improvements would enhance bus operations, reduce transit travel times, improve service reliability and add flexibility for future transit services.

- A new underpass at Briar Place would allow people walking and biking to safely access the Lakefront Trail. Motor vehicle access to the Belmont Harbor south parking lot would also be provided at this underpass, which would remove some traffic from the congested area east of the Belmont Avenue junction and reduce the potential for conflicting traffic movements.

- New trail facilities and grade-separated access points would improve safety and reduce conflicts between people walking, biking, and driving.

- A harbor overlook at Belmont Harbor and a new shoreline walkway would improve the experience of people walking on the Lakefront Trail.
COMMON QUESTIONS

Q: How will this design impact Belmont Harbor?
A: The Belmont Avenue area is one of the most constrained locations on NLSD and does not offer much room to modify the roadway or separate paths on the Lakefront Trail east or west of the Drive. There is little green space at this location, which features a paved sidewalk and path that is partially cantilevered over Belmont Harbor. The widened roadway, trail system and park space that is proposed in this area will require filling in a small part of Belmont Harbor to create sufficient space; however, the current number of boat slips will be maintained by modifying the configuration of moorings.

Q: Will these proposed improvements reduce the size of the park island (General Sheridan Park)?
A: Although the curb on the northbound Inner Drive will be shifted a few feet east into the west side of General Sheridan Park, the park will be expanded to the east to maintain its existing size or possibly to make it slightly larger.

Q: Will there still be an access point to the Lakefront Trail at Roscoe Street? The current

School/Aldine & Roscoe Greenway plan incorporates this access point.
A: There would be an underpass between Roscoe Street and Hawthorne Place. In order to provide ADA-compliant access ramps, the ramp for the underpass would begin near Aldine Avenue and Hawthorne Place.

Q: With Transitways and Managed Lanes alternatives still under consideration, what potential modifications associated with Transitways and Managed Lanes features are being considered?
Transitways: There is a possibility that dedicated bus lanes could run along the center of NLSD in this area. These lanes would be accessed from Belmont Avenue and southbound buses would be able to enter on to NLSD from the bus-only facility on the east side of the triangular park. To minimize impacts to the harbor, the landscaped median would be replaced by a concrete barrier in this alternative.
Managed Lanes: Bus-only ramps at the Belmont Avenue junction would allow buses to access managed lane facilities in some Managed Lane alternatives.

How can I comment on this proposal?
We welcome comments on the project and the Foster Avenue concept. Please visit our online comment form on the project website (northlakeshoredrive.org), email info@northlakeshoredrive.org, or mail feedback to NLSD Study c/o Civiltech Engineering, 30 N. LaSalle St., Suite 2624, Chicago, IL 60602.

For more information about the overall study, or to join our mailing list, please visit the project website northlakeshoredrive.org

We look forward to continuing to work with you to Redefine the Drive.