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 Foster 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
The Foster Avenue junction is heavily traveled by people walking, biking, and driving, which has led to congestion and created safety concerns in this area.

- On a busy day, over 1,000 bicyclists and pedestrians travel along Foster Avenue to access the lakefront. Along the south side of Foster Avenue, these users must cross the southbound ramp, which is unsignalized, and the northbound ramp, which is stop sign-controlled. This leads to conflicts between people walking, biking, and driving.

- The Lakefront Trail crosses Foster Avenue at grade on the east side of the junction, which has been cited as a safety hazard by both the project team and members of the general public.

- The northbound ramp intersection at Foster Avenue is often congested and traffic can back up onto the Outer Drive during the evening rush hour. This area was identified as one of Illinois’ most severe crash locations in 2012 and 2015, with 20 injury crashes involving bicyclists or pedestrians during a five-year period.

- Transit service is provided by the #92 Foster Avenue bus, which currently stages on city streets and does not enter the park.

- The #147 Outer Drive Express bus enters NLSD at Foster Avenue and must compete with other vehicles to access the Drive.
A new intersection would be created that realigns Marine Drive with Simonds Drive, and realigns Foster Avenue with the southbound entrance ramp.

- **At-grade, signalized pedestrian crossings** would be featured at all four legs of this new intersection. This would improve pedestrian safety and provide a convenient way to access Foster Beach, basketball courts and other nearby attractions.

- **The Lakefront Trail would be grade separated east of the Foster Avenue junction.** This would allow trail users to cross over Foster Avenue without interacting with vehicular traffic or east-west pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

- **The northbound entrance ramp intersection would be signalized**, which would provide improved traffic control (as compared to existing conditions) and reduce vehicle queues by up to 7%.

- **A bus turnaround facility** would also be located east of NLSD along Simonds Drive. The turnaround would improve transit operations and enhance access to the park, allowing for “bus to beach” service.

- **Bus priority signals and bus-only queue jump ramps** would be added to entrance and exit ramps to and from the south. This would allow buses to bypass traffic and quickly enter and exit the Drive.

- **The northbound ramp would be moved closer to NLSD**; the tighter configuration would increase usable green space in the park.
Q: Would the signals slow down traffic?
A: The existing signal at Marine Drive and Foster Avenue would be shifted east and would provide similar levels of traffic operations at the northbound ramps. The proposed signal at the northbound ramps would be a substantial improvement over the existing stop sign.

Q: Why wasn’t a pedestrian underpass chosen for this location?
A: Signalized intersections create less potential for crossing against free-flow traffic. If an underpass was implemented west of the Foster Avenue junction, there would be a possibility that some pedestrians would go around the facility to more directly reach their destination. As a result, these individuals would cross Foster Avenue against free-flow traffic, without the benefit of a signal.

Q: Does the proposed design feature fewer general purpose lanes on the Drive than there are today?
A: Yes, from Irving Park Road to Bryn Mawr Avenue, there would be three general purpose lanes in each direction. As there is less motor vehicle traffic in this area and motor vehicles tend to travel at higher speeds, reducing the number of general purpose lanes “right sizes” the Drive. This provides the extra benefit of converting existing pavement to green space.

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 in the center of the Drive south of Foster Avenue. Access to these lanes would be provided by signalized bus-only entrance and exit ramps to and from the south.

Managed Lanes: Similarly, bus-only ramps could also provide access to managed lane facilities in some Managed Lane alternatives. Though managed lane facilities would affect the configuration of the Drive, managed lane access for regular motor vehicle traffic is not currently proposed for the Foster Avenue junction.

Q: Would this design add pavement to the area?
A: The pavement area would essentially be the same; the tighter design for the northbound ramp creates a net increase in green space that is contiguous to the park.

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.