



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2015

Mike Claffey, CDOT
312.744.0707
Michael.claffey@cityofchicago.org

CTA Media Relations
312.681.3090
CTAMedia@transitchicago.com

CITY TO START CONSTRUCTION ON LOOP LINK TRANSIT PROJECT MARCH 16

*Bus Project to Ease Congestion, Modernize Traffic Flow, Improve Loop Connections to Neighborhoods;
Spring Construction Also Set for Union Station Transit Center and Washington-Wabash CTA Station*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced the City will soon begin construction on three major transit infrastructure projects that will redevelop and modernize transportation from Union Station to Millennium Park – the benefits of which will be felt in neighborhoods throughout the city.

The three projects, estimated to create approximately 650 jobs, include the newly named Loop Link Bus Rapid Transit, a new CTA bus terminal at Union Station, and a new Washington-Wabash CTA ‘L’ station. Construction of the Loop Link and the Washington-Wabash station will begin in mid March and the Union Station Transit Center will begin construction later this spring.

“Every resident in every neighborhood of Chicago deserves fast, safe, and reliable access to the vast array of economic and cultural opportunities that exist across the city and this effort takes an essential step toward achieving that goal,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “From Austin to South Shore, Little Village to Logan Square, these projects will create new jobs, open up new opportunities, and build a better quality of life in neighborhoods far beyond downtown.”

Through the Loop Link, the City is improving bus routes that connect Chicago neighborhoods and downtown, ensuring residents who commute downtown for work each day by bus, train, bike or car have a modern, more reliable way to get where they need to go.

The Loop Link will improve bus service to six bus lines by eliminating downtown bottlenecks on the most congested portion of the routes and speeding their passage through downtown. By improving reliability downtown, service quality will increase on the entire route, benefiting neighborhoods throughout the City. Those six lines are the J14, 20, 56, 60, 124 and 157.

“We thought it was important to distinguish this project with a name and brand that highlights the service improvements we are delivering to CTA riders and everyone who relies on the downtown transportation system,” Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld said. “The name Loop Link conveys the key benefits of this project: improved

connectivity, fluid movement, and simplicity. The new Loop Link will not only bring people to and from the downtown transportation hubs, but also from neighborhoods across the city to and from our Central Business District."

"The Loop Link will provide faster, more reliable bus service to one of the most congested corridors throughout our entire bus network, serving thousands of customers each day," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "Improving the customer experience will both benefit existing bus riders and help attract new ones."

As part of the Loop Link project, CDOT conducted an extensive stakeholder outreach process -- including more than 70 meetings with more than 150 stakeholders -- to provide updates, collect feedback and make any necessary modifications to accommodate curbside needs and to minimize operational impacts. The outreach process will continue during the construction phase to provide updates and address any issues that may arise.

Mayor Emanuel thanked Illinois' three members on Congressional appropriations committees, Senator Dick Durbin, Senator Mark Kirk and Rep. Mike Quigley, along with Rep. Danny Davis, who were instrumental in securing funding for all three important infrastructure projects.

LOOP LINK TO IMPROVE TRANSIT RELIABILITY

The Loop Link project is designed to make bus travel more reliable and appealing for the roughly 30,000 bus commuters that travel across the corridor and at Union Station each day, and provide a balanced separation of bus, bike and regular traffic lanes. Improvements designed to make bus travel more reliable and appealing include: colored pavement markings and enhanced signage clearly delineating the bus lanes; raised station platforms to provide easier level-boarding; early green lights for buses at key intersections to get ahead of traffic; distinct bus stations with large canopies; bus tracker screens, and generous amounts of seating for waiting customers.

The buses on the Loop Link serve a number of Chicago neighborhoods, including South Shore, Little Village, Austin and Logan Square to name a few, and the services make critical links to Union Station, Ogilvie Transportation Center, CTA subways and Navy Pier.

Red-colored bus only lanes will be created on two miles of streets: Madison, Washington, Canal and Clinton on a circuit extending from Union Station to Millennium Park. The new traffic configuration, expected to be in place by the end of 2015, will include two dedicated lanes for cars and trucks and provide balanced separation of bus, bike and regular traffic. More than 1,000 bus trips will traverse the Loop Link each day.

Eastbound Washington will feature a bold red bus-only lane that will be serviced with island bus-boarding platforms. Two general traffic lanes will remain for traffic through the Loop. A bike lane against the southern curb on Washington will be protected from auto and bus traffic. Madison Street will have similar lane configurations and bus-boarding platforms. The current westbound bike lane on Madison will be relocated to Randolph Street, where a new protected bike lane will be installed for westbound bicyclists.

Canal and Clinton Streets will feature red color-coded bus only lanes and two general traffic lanes. A two-way bike lane will be installed on Clinton, similar to Dearborn Street. Existing bike lanes will be removed on Canal and Madison.

The effort to tackle downtown congestion has long been supported by a number of business and civic organizations and downtown stakeholders, including the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), the Active Transportation Alliance, the Chicago Community Trust and the Chicago Loop Alliance.

"Whether you're riding transit, walking or riding your bike, getting across the Loop can be frustratingly slow," said Ron Burke, Executive Director, Active Transportation Alliance. "The Loop Link will make those trips faster, safer and more convenient for the thousands of Chicagoans who move through the Loop every day, and it's a great step forward in continuing to improve and expand our rapid transit system."

"A hallmark of a thriving city is the ability for people to move quickly and comfortably from place to place", said Terry Mazany, President and CEO of The Chicago Community Trust. "The city has led an impressive and extensive community conversation to design a BRT system that makes sense and reflects the needs of residents, transit riders, and businesses."

"The Loop is the center of this city and the heart of our economy, and we need dependable transportation downtown to ensure our city continues to grow and thrive and that all Chicago's neighborhoods have access to jobs and educational opportunities that the city offers," said Michael Edwards, President and CEO of the Chicago Loop Alliance. "These critical transportation improvements will move people easily to and through the central business district – from the transportation hubs on the west side of the Loop, to the shopping and businesses on State Street and Michigan Avenue."

"As an organization with offices located throughout the city, BMO Harris Bank recognizes that fast, reliable transit service will provide us with greater access to a diverse workforce and strengthen the local economy by improving access to jobs and attractions downtown," said Kyle Barnett, Regional President, Chicago Metro North, BMO Harris Bank.

"Public transportation is integral to the success of the entire downtown area," said Gary Platt, general manager of La Quinta Downtown. "Ninety-nine percent of our employees take public transportation and we encourage our guests to do the same. I think this project will do a lot to relieve congestion and make mass transit more appealing."

Much of the civic work and advocacy for bus rapid transit and the development of the Loop Link has been supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. The Foundation has been committed to the success of the city's effort to address downtown congestion and make bus service more appealing, by providing support for technical analysis, education, branding and communications.

"The Rockefeller Foundation praises Chicago's ambitious approach to bringing bus rapid transit to the heart of the city," said Dr. Judith Rodin, president of The Rockefeller Foundation. "The Loop Link is a major step forward in developing a world-class public transit system that will serve people in every corner of the city and lay the foundation for continued economic growth."

LOOP LINK CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN MARCH 16.

Construction on the Loop Link is scheduled to start March 16, and CDOT is pursuing an aggressive construction schedule to lower costs, minimize long-term impacts and deliver completion of the project as quickly as possible.

Construction will begin with lane closures initially on westbound Madison Street at State Street and on southbound Clinton at Randolph. Traffic will be reduced to two lanes in the construction zone and the closures will extend west on Madison and south on Clinton, one block at a time over several weeks. Construction is scheduled to start later this spring on eastbound Washington at Canal and northbound Canal at Van Buren. The reduction to two lanes along the entire stretch will be phased in, as on Madison and Clinton.

Streets under construction will be reduced to two lanes during weekday business hours. There will be the need for periodic additional lane closures overnight and on weekends.

People driving downtown can expect delays in areas where lanes are reduced to two lanes and motorists are sharing lanes with buses during construction. Although no detours are planned and all garages and alleys will remain accessible, those driving should allow extra time when traveling through the construction zone and to consider using alternate routes through the Loop.

The Loop Link is scheduled for substantial completion by the end of 2015.

UNION STATION TRANSIT CENTER

Construction on a second project, the Union Station Transit Center, will begin later this spring, creating a new off-street CTA bus-boarding center just south of Union Station and relieving traffic congestion around the train station that serves 120,000 people each day.

The a new off-street bus boarding center just south of Union Station, will provide key connections with other modes of transport to the Loop Link. The transit center will be located south of Jackson between Canal and Clinton, and will provide sheltered staging areas for CTA buses and a vertical connection, with an elevator, to an existing Amtrak underground pedway, allowing commuters to access Union Station without crossing at street level. The transit center is scheduled to be open for service in the spring of 2016.

WASHINGTON-WABASH

Also in March, CDOT will begin construction of a new Washington-Wabash CTA station to replace two century-old stations at Madison and Randolph with a single modern, fully accessible station with wider platforms and a striking architectural design. This project will require the full closure of Wabash between Washington and Madison during construction, beginning Monday, March 9 and lasting for roughly 18 months. The first stage of the station reconstruction project will entail closing the Madison/Wabash 'L' station on March 16. Customers can use the Randolph/Wabash and Adams/Wabash stations, both two blocks away.

Two Chicago companies were awarded the contracts on the three projects, which CDOT is managing on behalf of the CTA. Capitol Cement of Chicago was the low bidder on the Loop Link project with a bid of \$31.8 million. The company estimates that 75 percent of its workforce and payroll hours will be made up of Chicago residents.

F.H. Paschen, also of Chicago, was the low bidder on both the Union Station Transit Center, at \$20.1 million, and on the Washington-Wabash CTA station, at \$74.85 million. City residents are expected to work 45 percent of the workforce hours on both of those projects.

For more information on the Loop Link, go to www.ChicagoLoopLink.com

###

