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Mayor Emanuel, Chicago Park District Announce New Funding to Complete Lakefront Trail Separation Project

Kenneth Griffin makes major gift to separate Lakefront Bike and Pedestrian Paths from Edgewater to South Shore along 18-mile pathway

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago Park District Superintendent Michael P. Kelly and Kenneth Griffin today announced a \$12 million donation from Griffin to the Chicago Park District to fund the completion of the lakefront trail separation project. Mayor Emanuel originally announced plans to separate the trail from Fullerton to Ohio streets and 31st to 51st streets in March when he unveiled Building on Burnham, a comprehensive vision to invest in Chicago's parks and open spaces. Now the split trail will provide separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians along the entire 18-mile pathway.

"This is an important step in making the Lakefront Trail safer, more accessible and more enjoyable for the thousands of Chicagoans and visitors that travel the path each day," Mayor Emanuel said. "It would not have been possible without Ken's philanthropy to the City of Chicago, with this gift being the most recent. Trail separation does more than address issues of overcrowding; it builds a better future for one of the city's greatest assets by ensuring more people are able to experience what the lakefront has to offer."

The project is designed to alleviate areas of congestion by separating the Lakefront Trail into two distinct paths. The bike trail, made of asphalt, will measure 12 feet in width and will be located closest to Lake Shore Drive. The pedestrian trail will measure 20 feet in width with 14 feet of asphalt and 6 feet of soft surface mix on either side.

"Chicago is one of the world's most vibrant cities, and our lakefront is unparalleled," said Kenneth Griffin. "On a beautiful day, the Lakefront Trail should be a place where cyclists, runners and walkers can enjoy their activities without having to navigate around one another."

Chicago's Lakefront Trail is one of the busiest in the United States. Used by bikers, joggers and people enjoying the scenery, it is estimated that more than 100,000 people per day use the trail during summer weekends according to a recent study by Chicago Area Runners Association (CARA) and the Active Transportation Alliance (ATA).

Today's announcement helps to further support the Chicago Shoreline Protection Project, and it fulfills Daniel Burnham's plan, which envisioned a lakefront accessible to the public for active and leisure use. The new design helps maintain safe access to the shoreline while preserving its historical and aesthetic value. Creating two separate trails- one for bike commuter traffic and another for pedestrian traffic- would reduce pinch points and help get trails users to their desired destinations.

"The Chicago Park District is grateful for this generous contribution to the improvement of one of our most treasured park amenities," said Chicago Park District Superintendent and CEO Michael P. Kelly. "By creating new bicycle and pedestrian paths, more people will have access to use and enjoy the lakefront and its surrounding open space."

Trail separation from 31st Street to 35th Street Harbor has been substantially completed and resurfaced to meet the newly opened 35th Street Bridge. Currently, work is being completed on the segment of the 18-mile stretch from 35th Street to 41st Street, which will include access to the Burnham Prairie.

The lakefront trail also underwent paving in recent months. In total, approximately seven (7) miles from Ardmore Avenue to Oak Street Beach were resurfaced, removing cracks and adding new striping and trail markings.

Improving the lakefront trail is a key component in Building on Burnham, the Mayor's comprehensive plan to invest in the Lakefront, the Chicago River, natural areas and recreational opportunities in neighborhoods across the city. This plan follows the Mayor's successful expansion of Chicago's park system in his first mayoral term, which has already added 750 acres of new parkland, 256 new playgrounds and more than \$800 million in capital investment from neighborhoods and private sources.

The Chicago Park District currently manages more than 65 protected natural areas, encompassing more than 1,400 acres. Building on Burnham will underscore the expansion of natural areas, setting a goal of 2,020 acres of protected natural areas in the City of Chicago by 2020.

The entire Lakefront Trail separation project is expected to be complete in 2018.

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The Chicago Park District is the 2014 Gold Medal Award winner, recognized for excellence in park and recreation management across the nation. For more information about the Chicago Park District's more than 8,700 acres of parkland, more than 585 parks, 26 miles of lakefront, 11 museums, two world-class conservatories, 16 historic lagoons, nearly 50 nature areas, thousands of special events, sports and entertaining programs, please visit www.chicagoparkdistrict.com or contact the Chicago Park District at 312/742.PLAY or 312/747.2001 (TTY). Want to share your talent? Volunteer in the parks by calling, 312/742.PLAY.