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MAYOR EMANUEL JOINS CTA, CDOT AND ALDERMAN BURNETT TO LAUNCH NEW PROGRAM TO PRIORITIZE BUS SERVICE ON POPULAR ROUTES

New initiative delivers on recommendations made by the Mayor's New Transportation and Mobility Task Force

Mayor Rahm Emanuel was joined today by Alderman Walter Burnett, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) to announce plans for the first of a series of projects to be completed in 2019 that will prioritize CTA bus service, enhance pedestrian safety and improve the flow of traffic along some of the City's most heavily traveled corridors.

Recognizing the vital role of bus service to Chicago's robust transportation network and its value to the local economy, Mayor Emanuel allocated \$5 million toward unsnarling bus slow zones at bottlenecks and pinch points to improve service along entire bus routes. This new initiative, the Bus Priority Zones program, complements the Mayor's commitment to extend the City's transit oriented-development policy to high capacity bus corridors, and is one of the first projects to be implemented based on recommendations made by the Mayor's New Transportation and Mobility Task Force in March. Importantly, the commitment to prioritize bus service has been a leading initiative of the City in support of the effort to meet its climate goals under the Chicago Climate Charter and as part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' American Cities Climate Challenge.

"Chicago has a world-class transportation system and a key part of our success is CTA's bus service that provides almost 250 million rides each year," Mayor Emanuel said. "We can encourage even more people to ride CTA buses and make Chicago a greener City by making targeted improvements along some of our most heavily traveled routes.

Improvements made under the Bus Priority Zone program may include street resurfacing work and establishing designated bus-only lanes along certain stretches of the corridor to improve bus service during weekday rush periods or all-day, depending on the specific location. The designated lanes will be indicated with new pavement marking and signage.

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Other program elements include queue jump signals to give buses a head start to get in front of regular traffic, optimizing the location of bus stops, as well as improvements that support pedestrian safety and overall traffic flow for all vehicles.

The first project to be started under the Bus Priority Zone program will be at the intersection of Chicago/Milwaukee/Ogden – one of the busiest bus boarding locations in Chicago during rush periods, on one of the highest ridership and highest frequency bus routes in the CTA system. The eight-week project will begin immediately and include street resurfacing, new signage and the reconfiguration of May Street into a cul-de-sac, which will improve the safety and flow of traffic at the intersection and also provide an extended and safer bus boarding area for riders.

“Improving the speed and reliability of bus service has been one of my top priorities, and this new funding will help us accomplish that goal on two of our busiest routes the #66 Chicago and #79 79th,” said CTA President Dorval R. Carter, Jr. “With our buses providing roughly half of our system ridership, it’s vital that we make these investments and find ways to keep Chicago a thriving and livable city on the move.”

“By making these targeted investments, our goal is to speed up bus service, improve reliability, increase ridership and customer satisfaction and lower costs for the CTA,” CDOT Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld said. “By doing a better job of organizing bus movements, we can also improve pedestrian safety and the overall traffic flows on Chicago Avenue, 79th Street, Western Avenue and other high-volume locations.”

The #79 79th Street bus route, with 7.8 million rides in 2017, and #66 Chicago Avenue bus route, with 6.9 million rides, were selected for the initial improvements based on CTA and CDOT studies that looked at a host of factors, including service coverage, ridership, operations, population/employment and feasibility.

In addition to the Bus Priority Zone work on 79th and Chicago Avenue, additional targeted investments have been identified for other high volume locations, such as Western Avenue and downtown intersections that serve multiple bus routes, as part of the Mayor’s proposal to extend transit oriented-development for buses. Transit signal priority on Western Avenue is also planned to be completed by the end of 2019.

Chicago is one of 25 cities nationally working to accelerate its efforts to reduce carbon emissions and promote a sustainable future through the American Cities Climate Challenge. Chicago is advancing a suite of ambitious actions in transportation, including encouraging low-carbon mobility options, developing policies that support transit ridership, and defining and expanding the high-frequency public transit network. With the support provided through the Climate Challenge, the city is working to identify additional corridors for improvements under the Bus Priority Zone program, which directly supports the speed and reliability of the city’s most heavily traveled corridors.

The expansion of transit-oriented development incentives have been developed in coordination with the Department of Planning and Development. They are targeted to enhance development around busy bus corridors and key bus-bus and bus-rail

connections, supporting the expansion of affordable housing options and complementing other commercial development initiatives like the nearby Retail Thrive Zones on Chicago and 79th.

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