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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT UNVEILS CITYWIDE VISION FOR CONNECTED NETWORK OF TRAILS AND CORRIDORS**

*Mayor's vision highlights network of trails that will connect to transit, housing, and parks citywide, creating new outdoor assets and catalytic community investment, as well as more than \$15 million in funding to advance key trails and green corridor projects*

**CHICAGO** – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) Commissioner Gia Biagi, Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Commissioner Maurice Cox, and Chicago Park District Interim General Superintendent and CEO Rosa Escareño released a citywide vision of trails and open spaces that will contribute to a network of community-led green infrastructure projects that promote the health and well-being of Chicago residents and visitors.

“Our residents enjoy world-class parks, an unparalleled Lakefront Trail, and many open space assets along the river and our historic boulevards. An expansion of trails and open spaces is sorely needed across our neighborhoods to benefit existing residents and for the city to achieve health, economic, climate, and transportation goals,” said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. “This vision and investment also positions Chicago very well to receive federal funding to complete many of these projects over the coming years.”

The [citywide vision map](#) is intended to add 48 miles of new assets to an existing 79-mile network. The individual projects will be spearheaded locally with planning and visioning support from DPD, CDOT, and the Chicago Park District. The City is working closely with the community stakeholders to plan each project and identify funding for engineering and construction, including applications for competitive federal grants in the recently passed bipartisan infrastructure package.

“Trails and parks are key to meeting many of CDOT’s Strategic Plan goals around mobility,” said Commissioner Gia Biagi. “I am excited to partner with communities and provide CDOT’s expertise to get more projects funded, create local jobs, and bring vital economic development opportunities to more neighborhoods in the city. This vision will also greatly enhance the biking and pedestrian experience in



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Chicago as we invest in on- and off-street connections that create a seamless network around our city that is connected by our historic boulevard system.”

This vision also features Mayor Lightfoot’s \$15+ million commitment to jumpstart key projects citywide. These projects include:

- **Englewood Nature Trail:** City agencies will continue working with local stakeholders to complete a framework plan and start phase 1 design for a linear park along the 1.5 mile long 59th street rail embankment, funded in part by \$6 million in local funds and pending federal assistance.
- **African American Heritage Trail:** The City and its partners will continue to work with the community to leverage \$1.5 million in Climate Recovery bond funding for trail development needs along this 2-mile corridor.
- **Chicago Boulevards System:** CDOT will reopen its "Open Boulevards" program in the summer of 2022 to reallocate street space for community events while also planning for the future of the historic 22-mile-long boulevards system that helps connect several parks and trails systems seamlessly.
- **The 606/Bloomingdale Trail:** CDOT and Cook County will work to extend the trail ½ mile eastward from Ashland to Elston avenues through a private partnership with developer Sterling Bay, a major area landowner.
- **Weber Spur:** CDOT is actively looking at alignment alternatives as part of the Phase 1 design process for this 1.5-mile corridor that would connect an existing trail in Lincolnwood to the Sauganash Trail and North Branch Trail at LaBagh Woods.
- **Chicago Riverwalk Extension to Ping Tom Park:** CDOT to begin Phase 1 design in the second half of 2022 for this 2-mile corridor.
- **The Wild Mile:** DPD will work to expand a 2.5-mile floating boardwalk within the North Branch Canal through \$1.7 million Open Space Impact Fees.
- **Major Taylor Bike Trail:** The Park District will work with City agencies to identify and develop at-grade open spaces for recreational uses adjacent to the 5-mile trail.



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- **Indian Ridge Marsh:** The Park District and CDOT will work with stakeholders to enhance trail connectivity between the Pullman National Monument, the marsh, and nearby open spaces.
- **Big Marsh:** The Park District will prioritize the construction of a three-mile trail within the marsh, with the first phase to open in summer 2022, along with improved connections with nearby open spaces.
- **Hegewisch Marsh:** The Park District will begin planning for a trail within the marsh.
- **North Branch Parks:** The Park District will continue to allocate up to \$7 million in approved financing for waterfront and trail improvements near the confluence of the North Branch and North Branch Channel, specifically at Ronan Park, Kiwanis Park, Legion Park, and River Park.

In addition to these transformative projects enhancing the outdoor experience in neighborhoods, they will also assist in building community wealth.

“DPD will work with the Department of Housing to incorporate anti-displacement strategies along each corridor as we develop framework plans of trails projects across the City,” said Commissioner Maurice Cox. “We will ensure that community needs are front and center of these investments and that we put guardrails in place to curb gentrification forces.”

“Chicago is known for our world-class parks and outdoor spaces,” said Alderman Nick Sposato, Chairman of the Committee on Special Events, Cultural Affairs, and Recreation. “These investments improve the quality of life for our residents and help communities to develop and grow.”

“Creating more green spaces and improving green infrastructure is vital for Chicago and for Black Chicagoans in particular,” said Anton Seals, Lead Steward of Grow Greater Englewood. “Residents of Englewood and other South and West side neighborhoods should not live ten years less than other more affluent communities in Chicago. The intersection of health and economics as an outcome of green infrastructure will be the transformative action needed to protect and grow communities impacted by years of divestment.”

“The Chicago Park District is home to over 50 miles of multi-use trail that connect neighborhoods through parks in addition to hundreds of miles of trails within parks. These features support physical activities like walking, running, and cycling but also allow us to connect with our natural environment,” said Chicago Park District



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Interim General Superintendent Rosa Escareño. “We are excited to join Mayor Lightfoot in announcing the plan to construct, extend and enhance trails in our parks and across the city. Investments like these are important in making vital recreation opportunities and experiences accessible to the children and families of Chicago.”

The City will continue to advance and update the Mayor’s trails vision in the coming years to take advantage of local, state, and federal green infrastructure funding opportunities. CDOT plans to submit a USDOT RAISE grant application in April for design and engineering

funding to build the Englewood Nature Trail. If successful, the City could receive up to \$45 million of federal funds to assist in the completion of this transformational project.

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