



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WELLS STREET BRIDGE NORTH LEAF RECONSTRUCTION COMPLETE
*CTA Train Service Returns to Normal; Coordination Between Agencies Saved \$500,000
and Significantly Reduced Service Interruptions*

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) trains resumed their normal service schedule today as the reconstruction of the north leaf of the historic Wells Street Bridge over the Chicago River was completed early this morning.

"These were critical repairs performed with strong coordination between agencies. The result is that our infrastructure will be top-notch for generations and our commuters will be able to expect outstanding service as they travel to and from work," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "I thank Chicagoans for their patience during these brief periods of service interruptions, and congratulate the construction crews for a job well done."

CTA service into the Loop had been interrupted for a second nine-day period last week while the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) put into place new sections of the double-decker movable bridge.

"While train service was interrupted, this was a great opportunity to fully restore the historic Wells Street Bridge. It has outlived its useful life and was in need of a complete reconstruction," said CDOT Commissioner Gabe Klein. "It has been in service since 1922 and has been a key transportation link for cars, trains, bikes and pedestrians for the past 90 years."

The first detour was in early March to replace the south section of the bridge; the second service break was April 26th through May 5th, as the north section of the bridge was replaced. The bridge will remain closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic until late November when the entire reconstruction project is complete.

“We appreciate our customers’ patience during this major project,” said CTA President Forrest Claypool. “Coordinating CTA track work with the city’s bridge reconstruction ultimately creates a safer, more reliable infrastructure that benefits all Chicagoans.”

During the two brief bridge shutdowns, construction crews dismantled and replaced the movable leaves on the bridge with new pre-fabricated sections, which were assembled off-site and floated up the river on a barge. At the same time, the CTA rebuilt the Loop ‘L’ junction at Lake and Wells Streets, known as Tower 18, and performed additional track replacement at the curve over Hubbard Street between Wells and Franklin Street.

The Tower 18 work was originally scheduled to be part of the ongoing Loop Track renewal project. But by performing the work while CDOT made the Wells bridge repairs, CTA significantly reduced the combined duration of the work by eight days. Additionally, combining the work saved CDOT and CTA a total of \$500,000 in construction coordination costs.

“With nearly 700 trains passing over it every day, this 91-year-old bridge is both critically important to Chicago’s transit system and well due for an upgrade,” said Senator Dick Durbin (D-Illinois). “Thanks to a multi-million dollar federal investment, this project will help ensure the safety and convenience of Chicago’s commuters and visitors for many more decades to come.”

In the first two years of Mayor Emanuel’s administration, CTA has more than \$4 billion in projects under way or planned. These projects will improve safety, enhance the customer experience and boost overall reliability of the bus and rail system.

CTA’s ridership in 2012 was at its highest level in decades. Slow zone remediation work systemwide, which also includes the Blue and Red Lines, will eliminate 70 percent of current slow zones by the end of 2015, providing relief to 85 percent of affected rail riders.

The Red Line South reconstruction will begin later this month. Hundreds of jobs have been created for new bus drivers related to the project, and design work continues for a brand new 95th Street Terminal on target to begin construction in 2014. Finally, CTA is focused on upgrading and replacing its entire bus and rail fleets. The entire fleet is expected to be either repaired or replaced by the end of the decade.

Building a New Chicago is a \$7 billion infrastructure program and one of the largest investments in infrastructure in the City’s history. The program will touch nearly every aspect of the city’s infrastructure network and create more than 30,000 jobs. Building a New Chicago involves an unprecedented level of coordination between City Hall, multiple city departments and sister agencies, private sector utilities, and the public.

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