

**2021 BUDGET STATEMENT TO THE CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
CDOT COMMISSIONER GIA BIAGI**

Good afternoon, Madame Chair and members of the City Council.

Thank you for having CDOT before you today as we work together to overcome the unprecedented public health crisis before us. I was honored to receive your confirmation in January, earlier this year. My charge from Mayor Lightfoot was – and still is -to implement a vision for a transportation system that prioritizes equity and mobility and lowers the economic and environmental burden of transportation on residents and communities. A lot has changed since January, but Chicago’s ability to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic is bound together with the promise of our streets and neighborhoods.

CDOT is responsible for more than 4,000 miles of streets; 300 bridges and viaducts; a 19-mile lakefront, and more than 150 miles of riverfront; 300,000 street and alley lights; 3,000 signalized intersections; more than 300 miles of bikeways; the Divvy bike share system; and managing activities in the public right-of-way.

These 4,000 miles of streets represent 4,000 miles of possibilities. Under Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s leadership—as we emerge from overlapping health, economic and racial justice emergencies—we have before us an extraordinary moment to reimagine our entire transportation system to create a better future for Chicago.

While many sheltered at home at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, streets emerged as the lifeline for essential workers and for businesses and service employees who are the heart of our economy and kept the city running. At CDOT, we are all essential workers and two-thirds of our workforce remained out in the field performing their duties.

CDOT, at the direction of the Mayor and working with partner agencies, responded by transforming our streets: We created shared streets for people to walk and bike on; dining streets for outdoor restaurant service; and pop-up priority lanes for CTA buses. We also provided free Divvy memberships for healthcare workers and sharply reduced fares for all Divvy users. These initiatives showed how streets can do more than move cars, and how a few parking spaces can be transformed into economically vibrant destinations for people.

This type of decisive action must also be at the heart of the expected long-term economic recovery. We look forward to working with all of you to take the type of urgent action that equips communities for a successful and a just recovery, and not merely restoring the inequities and inefficiencies that existed long before the pandemic.

I must note here an important consequence of the COVID pandemic that we must address. Our data shows and you have no doubt witnessed the dramatic increase in vehicle speeds due to fewer cars on the road. Across the country, cities of our size are experiencing both increases in speeds and crash-related fatalities. Chicago is no different. Citywide, we have vehicle speeds that are 109 percent of where they were a year ago – pre-COVID. At the same

time, we are seeing an increase in cyclists and motorists killed in vehicle crashes. This is a crisis. And this is why we are using all the tools in our toolbox to combat speeding and unsafe driving in concert with our Vision Zero traffic safety program. This includes lowering speed limits anywhere we can; investing in rapid delivery infrastructure projects to make streets safer for everyone; and using our automated speed enforcement program to deter speeding.

Other achievements from this year I want to highlight include:

- **Divvy Far South Side Expansion:** We launched a major expansion of CDOT's bike share system this summer starting on the far South Side, expanding our footprint by almost 60 miles and taking the first step towards the full citywide expansion of Divvy. We also launched Divvy's new e-bikes, with more than 3,500 e-bikes deployed to date. Despite the pandemic, Divvy recorded its highest month of ridership ever in August with more than 600,000 rides, primarily taken by our residents to travel in a socially distanced manner.
- **Chicago Smart Lighting Program:** We have installed 240,000 new LED streetlamps through the CSLP, and are on track to complete the conversion of 270,000 outdated lights by mid-2021. We are also creating a lighting management system to streamline maintenance and repairs. The CSLP will reduce electricity use by more than 50 percent and is projected to save \$100 million in the first ten years.
- **INVEST South/West:** CDOT is proud to support the Mayor's INVEST South/West program. Our projects to date CDOT has completed approximately \$6M in sidewalk, curb and gutter, and bus pad repairs on the main street corridors total \$6M,; a good first step in this effort to create a better economic future for residents on Chicago's South and West Sides.

As all of you know, it is the day-to-day **Neighborhood Services** CDOT provides that are critical to quality of life in your wards and for your constituents. By the end of this year, CDOT will have:

- Completed the resurfacing of 145 miles of streets and alleys.
- Installed 30 miles of new bikeways, double the 2019 number, and re-stripped 50 miles of existing bike lanes, five times the number of miles in 2019.
- Issued and coordinated more than 100,000 public-way work permits. Improved coordination of permits has saved an estimated \$180 million since 2012.
- Repaired or replaced more than 145 blocks of sidewalks.
- Installed or replaced 60 blocks of new curbs and gutters.
- Installed 7,300 ADA sidewalk ramps in coordination with other agencies and third parties city-wide, bringing the total to 120,000 ADA compliant ramps across the city since 2006.
- Installed 250 blocks of new residential and arterial street lights, almost 100 more blocks than in 2019.
- Painted crosswalks and stop bars at more than 1,000 residential intersections, especially around parks and schools.
- Installed, replaced or repaired nearly 45,000 traffic and street signs.

- Performed more than 20,000 bridge lifts on Chicago's rivers.
- Filled more than 320,000 street potholes.

Critically, we have made progress in creating opportunities for people of color, women, and other disadvantaged groups through contracting and jobs in the transportation sector – though we must continue to push for more inclusion everywhere, especially as we move toward transportation equity. Our contracts, consultants, and workforce must be diverse and reflective of our city.

An example of that effort is our new Target Market DUR contracts, launched last year, exclusively for M/WBE firms to be prime contractors for design and construction management projects. We have awarded more than \$24 million to the construction pool and the design pool will come online by the end of this year. These are forty-four M/WBE firms that will have exclusive access to bidding on critical CDOT projects.

We have accomplished much in 2020, in close cooperation with the City Council and our sister agencies and departments. And we look forward to continuing this cooperation and building on these achievements in 2021.

Thank you