

February 10, 2011

Ms. Linda Searl, Chairman
Chicago Plan Commission
121 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago, IL 60602



Dear Chairman Searl and Members:

On behalf of the residents of Streeterville, SOAR, the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents, is pleased to offer its strong support of Lakefront Protection Ordinance Application 594, commonly known as the Navy Pier Flyover project. We believe this project will enhance public safety and provide a public benefit to three distinct groups: Lakefront Trail users, Navy Pier patrons, and residents of Lake Point Tower and the surrounding area.

Lakefront Trail users will benefit from the Flyover by the elimination of a design flaw in the trail system that is a contributing factor in more injuries in a one mile segment of the trail, than any other point in the entire 18 mile right of way. Although it is not part of the official route, the conflict point with motor vehicles on Grand Avenue and Lower Lake Shore Drive is particularly dangerous where a blind corner exists and traffic entering the Drive is traveling at high speeds. This one mile segment also contains the most narrow and among the most congested parts of the trail along the approach to the Lake Shore Drive Bridge over the Chicago River. This is also the only point on the entire 18 mile trail where there is no separation or barrier of any kind between the trail right of way and Lake Shore Drive.

Navy Pier patrons will benefit from the improved east/west traffic flow that will result by a significant diversion of north/south pedestrian traffic that currently crosses the Grand/Illinois corridor at grade. This will be especially noticeable during fireworks, special events, and other peak usage times at Navy Pier, when both inbound and outbound traffic can become severely congested.

Lake Point Tower residents will benefit by the Flyover's mitigation of the hazard presented by the unique configuration of Grand Avenue that allows access to Lake Point Tower by a narrow eastbound lane on a primarily one-way westbound road. The right turn that is required to access this lane will be much safer for motorists without also having to deal with a high volume of Lakefront Trail traffic. The residents from the surrounding area are also beneficiaries of the Flyover as residents use the lakefront extensively and are some of the highest users. Creating a safe environment for everyone is a positive.

We commend CDOT and Alderman Reilly for an inclusive planning process that provided residents of Lake Point Tower with numerous opportunities to offer feedback and suggestions. The Flyover design was modified as a result of this dialogue, and we believe the valid privacy and security concerns raised by Lake Point Tower residents have been met and resolved.

We have three remaining concerns:

First, we would request that the dialogue with Lake Point Tower residents and SOAR continue as the plans are finalized for a public art/graphics feature on the span above Grand and Illinois. Although we recognize this is a matter of taste, Lake Point Tower residents will look at these graphics on a daily basis, and they should be entitled to express their opinions before any artistic design is selected.

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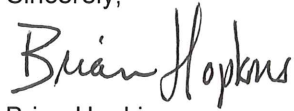
Working to Keep Streeterville a Neighborhood

Second, we wish to see a higher level of coordination between the planning for the Flyover, and the redesign of Jane Addams Park. We understand the need for tree removal as part of the Flyover construction, but any replacement of trees in Jane Addams Park must be done in conjunction and conformity with the still evolving plans for major improvements to the park.

Third, we request a special effort be made to provide wayfinding and caution warnings at either end of the Flyover where wheeled traffic such as cyclists and skaters will pick up speed on the descent. We believe this added speed, on what is otherwise a very flat 18 mile trail, presents a hazard to all users and justifies highly visible and illuminated warning signage.

Thank you for your consideration of our suggestions. We look forward to completion of this valuable and necessary public works project.

Sincerely,



Brian Hopkins
President, SOAR

cc: Alderman Brendan Reilly
Janet Attarian, Project Director, CDOT
Commissioner, Chicago Dept. of Transportation
Timothy Mitchell, Chicago Park District
Erma Tranter, Friends of the Parks
Paul Zalmezak, Dept. of Community Development
Benet Haller, Dept. of Zoning and Land Use Planning
Phil Levin, GNMAA
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