

September 2, 2010



Janet Attarian  
Project Director, Streetscapes and Sustainable Urban Design Program  
Chicago Department of Transportation  
30 N. LaSalle Street Room 500  
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Navy Pier Flyover Project

Dear Ms. Attarian:

Thank you for your presentation of the Navy Pier Flyover Project to the SOAR Neighbors Action Task Force on May 11 and to the community in general on July 15. We value the opportunity to interact with city officials and learn of new projects, with the Navy Pier Flyover Project being one many residents have anxiously awaited.

Overall, we applaud you for your hard work in bringing this project a step closer to reality. The pedestrian and bike path stretching from Ohio Street Beach to the south bank of the Chicago River is perhaps the most confusing, congested and dangerous section of the entire lakefront bike path. Daily, we witness confused tourists, near misses between bikers and pedestrians, and apprehension on faces as they traverse a narrow, dim, and visually unpleasing piece of Chicago. Your project addresses these current issues and will benefit visitors and residents alike.

The design for an elevated path that follows the structure and lines of Lake Shore Drive is unobtrusive and light. The minimal support columns that will be lit will add a nice glow and prevent the area from becoming a forest of pillars. The panel system proposed for the area where the path runs along Lake Point Tower provides protection to Lake Point Tower's residents while simultaneously adding an interesting architectural element to the path and to Lake Shore Drive. The gradual grade and incorporation of ramps will ensure that people of all capabilities have the opportunity to experience the lakefront.

While we welcome this project, we have some questions and concerns regarding the initial design. We seek clarification on how the bifurcation point of the existing path and the flyover will look on the north end at Ohio Street Beach. This area is very congested with a narrow path currently in place. We need to better understand how the beginning of the flyover at its north end will interact with the existing area and the path leading to the beach and Jane Addams Park. In addition, there are some concerns about where the Ohio Street pedestrian underpass meets in this same area. Recent weather has caused significant flooding in the underpass and the plaza at its east end, and we want to find out how this will be addressed and fixed as part of this construction. Also, several ideas were discussed regarding the underside of the flyover where it is adjacent to the underpass, including the use of pavers or perhaps a storage area. We need to understand the specific design and use for that area, for it is of great concern to us as it relates to safety and general appearance.

Another area of concern is where the flyover, Grand Avenue and the northbound Lake Shore Drive ramp intersect. The small island that currently exists is dangerous with the traffic light pole, and adding a flyover support structure will make it more congested. Please confirm that the plans call for only one support column on this small island, which could act not only as a structure support, but also as a place to mount traffic signals and signage. Making the island slightly bigger or more visible would also increase its safety.

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Maintenance of areas along the lakefront, where responsibility is shared among many entities has always been a concern. We request that the specifics of how the flyover will be maintained be written into the public record to avoid disagreement about those responsibilities years from now. Our understanding from your presentation is that structure maintenance will be the responsibility of CDOT, while everyday maintenance in the spaces below the flyover in the confines of the Park District will be the responsibility of the Chicago Park District. It would appear that the sidewalk along the east side of lower Lake Shore Drive between Grand Avenue and the junction of the flyover near the Chicago River bridge will continue to be maintained by CDOT.

One issue that did not appear to be resolved in your presentation and in the Q&A period of the public meeting was how snow removal on the flyover path will be accomplished, and who will have that responsibility. It does not seem practical to move snow off the flyover onto ground below, since the space below is predominantly pedestrian sidewalks. We trust that CDOT is addressing this issue to provide a solution. This information, including the specifics of what happens when a CDOT snowplow clearing upper Lake Shore Drive pushes snow onto the flyover after it has been cleared off, should be documented with copies provided to the Alderman and SOAR. We need to ensure that all parties are aware of their long-term responsibilities.

In summary, we greatly appreciate your efforts on this project and can visualize already how important this will become to the lakefront. We look forward to future discussions on this project, and to one day helping you celebrate the completion of a long overdue fix to problems on one of Chicago's prime lakefront areas.

Sincerely,



Gail Spreen  
Immediate Past-President and  
Chair, Neighbors Action Task Force

Cc: Alderman Brendan Reilly  
Commissioner Tom Byrnes, 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  
Mable Buckner, Streeterville Chamber of Commerce  
Jill Heise, SOAR Executive Director  
SOAR Board of Directors