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MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL TAKES FIRST STEP TO RECONFIGURE CONGESTED AND UNSAFE DAMEN-ELSTON-FULLERTON INTERSECTION

Mayor Focusing on Crucial Infrastructure Project that will Relieve Congestion, Create 100 Jobs and Spur Economic Opportunity in the Elston Corridor; Construction to Begin in Fall of 2014

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today that the City is taking the first step to reconfigure the congested and accident-plagued six-way intersection of Damen, Elston, and Fullerton Avenues, improving traffic flow and safety for all modes of transportation. The project is also expected to create 100 construction jobs and spur economic development in the corridor. The Mayor submitted a proposal to City Council to acquire a total of nine parcels of land to complete the project.

“For more than a decade, the City has been planning to make improvements to this congested and dangerous intersection. Residents have been waiting for this project for some time – just as they wait for lights at the intersection – it’s time that we move the project forward,” Mayor Emanuel said. “By reconfiguring the roadway, we will alleviate congestion by improving the synchronization of traffic signals and greatly improve safety at this intersection. The entire corridor will benefit from this work, which will create jobs and make it much easier to conduct business in the area.”

The properties are located between 1875-2002 W. Fullerton Ave., 2357-2501 N. Damen and 2301-2447 N. Elston Ave., and fall within or adjacent to the North Branch Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. TIF funds would be used to acquire the properties and complete design work for the reconfiguration. Companies that would be impacted by the intersection improvements are already working with the City on their individual relocation

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needs and the City is committed to ensuring that all companies in the area are able to continue to conduct business as these essential improvements take place.

Plans for the intersection include: making right-of-way improvements that eliminate or ameliorate traffic congestion and improve the synchronization of traffic signalization at all of the six-way intersections, as well as other applicable intersections, within the North Branch North TIF Redevelopment Project Area with multiple benefits to the adjacent area and general public.

Currently, more than 70,000 vehicles pass through this intersection daily, and traffic traveling through the intersection sometimes encounters delays of nearly seven minutes to just make a turn, or get through the intersection. It consistently ranks in the top five intersections for the most number of traffic accidents each year.

Since 2002, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) has been actively designing an improvement plan to address the safety and congestion problems of the six-way intersection. After pursuing design of a Fullerton underpass for several years, a value planning study was completed in 2006 with the evaluation that a reconfiguration of the at-grade intersections, including a realignment of Elston to the north and west of the current intersection, would be most efficient, cost effective, and best solution.

CDOT, in conjunction with the Department of Housing and Economic Development (DHED) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) started design and engineering of Damen-Elston-Fullerton Intersection improvement in 2006.

IDOT and the Federal Highway Administration approved the proposed alignment plan in September of 2012, finalizing the footprint of private property required to complete this project. Construction of the improvement is estimated to begin in fall of 2014.

The current traffic conditions at this intersection prevent prime riverfront real estate from being developed. Undeveloped or underutilized parcels exist adjacent to all streets. Repurposing Elston south of Fullerton will allow for pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development.

Three renderings of the proposed work are attached.

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