

BRENDAN REILLY
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CITY OF CHICAGO
CITY COUNCIL

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER
ALL COMMITTEES

April 10, 2023

Chairman Laura Flores
Chicago Plan Commission
121 North LaSalle Street, 10th floor
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: Metra Van Buren Street Station Renovation; Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance

Dear Chairman Flores,

Please be advised that I have been informed of the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance application submitted by the Commuter Rail Division of the Regional Transportation Authority ("Metra"), for the property located at 132 E. Van Buren St. and 401-407 S. Michigan Ave. Approval of this project will allow Metra to rehabilitate the Van Buren commuter rail station. I have reviewed the proposal and have no objection to it.

The site is currently zoned IPD No. 677, T District, POS-1 and is within the Public Use Zone of the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection District. The station was constructed below grade, and sits within the boundaries of Grant Park, east of the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Van Buren Street.

The Van Buren Street Station was designed in 1896 and is one of the oldest stations in the Metra system. Due to water infiltration in both the pedestrian tunnel and the waiting room area, various components of the station facilities are deteriorated, and need repair. Additionally, the station only has one ADA-accessible entrance today. The renovation project will add two additional points of ADA access, as well as replace an existing elevator. A new above-ground landscaped enclosure "pop up" will house the new stairway and elevator, east of Michigan Avenue.

To accommodate the new ADA accessible entrance, the Guimard Métro sculpture will need to be removed and permanently relocated. This sculpture, a replica of the original Art Nouveau designs by Hector Guimard in the 1900's, was gifted from the City of Paris (via the Parisian Transportation Authority, RATP) to the City of Chicago through the Sister Cities Program. Metra has committed to funding the removal, repainting, and cleaning of the Guimard sculpture, before ultimately reinstalling it in a new location, to be determined by DCASE. It is my strong preference that this sculpture remain downtown, within the boundaries of the 42nd Ward, and I look forward to collaborating with necessary agencies to find a suitable permanent home for this important art piece.

Finally, Metra has facilitated a robust community review process and continues to coordinate with community stakeholders, including the Grant Park Advisory Council. I look forward to continuing these conversations to improve wayfinding in areas around Grant Park and the Station, following the renovations.

Your favorable recommendation of this project would be greatly appreciated. Please feel free to contact my office at (312) 744-3062 should committee members or you have any remaining questions about this matter.

Sincerely,

Brendan Reilly
Alderman, 42nd Ward
President Pro Tempore