



CDOT TRAFFIC ALERT:

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CONTACTS:

Mike Claffey
312.744.0707

Michael.Claffey@cityofchicago.org

Susan Hofer
312.742-2006

Susan.Hofer@cityofchicago.org

**CDOT: WESTERN AVENUE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT TO BEGIN MARCH 1
WESTERN AVENUE AND BELMONT INTERSECTION CLOSED FOR FIRST WEEKEND
*Accelerated demolition schedule shortens project length by one month; reduces full
road closures to only three days***

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) announced that the Western Avenue viaduct, which opened in 1961, will be permanently closed on March 1. The viaduct will be demolished and replaced by a new five-leg at-grade intersection at Western, Belmont and Clybourn and is expected to be substantially complete by summer 2017. The demolition of the viaduct will occur during the first weekend of the project and will require the full closure of Western to through traffic between Nelson and George Streets as well as the intersection at Belmont. After the weekend closure, there will be one lane of traffic open on Western Avenue in each direction for the first five months, with two lanes of traffic in each direction expected, until the project is complete.

For the viaduct demolition to be completed safely, Western Avenue will be closed to through traffic in both directions from Nelson to Roscoe beginning at 8 p.m. Friday, March 4. Northbound Western will reopen at 5 a.m. on Monday, March 7 (Pulaski Day) as will southbound Western south of Belmont. The intersection of Belmont, Western and Clybourn will also reopen to traffic at 5 a.m. Monday. Demolition work will continue through Monday, March 7, on southbound Western between Belmont and Roscoe. That stretch will re-open at 5 a.m. Tuesday, March 8.

Upon completion of the project in summer 2017, Western Avenue will have three lanes of traffic in each direction during rush hours, with the curbside lane available for parking in some areas of the corridor during non-rush hours. The project will also provide roadway improvements along a 1.27 mile stretch of Western Avenue from Logan Boulevard to Waveland Avenue.

By removing the viaduct and building the intersection at grade, the project will re-establish the fabric of the neighborhood grid and will create new opportunities for economic development and job creation in this northwest side area that borders on Lakeview and

Roscoe Village. The project will boost the commercial viability of the area, improve traffic safety and enhance quality of life for the surrounding community.

Special care will be taken during the demolition of the viaduct to reduce dust and monitor vibrations along the length of the viaduct. Vehicle traffic during the weekend closure will be detoured from Western at Diversey to Ashland to Irving Park, in each direction. Bicycle traffic on Clybourn and Belmont will be detoured via Leavitt, Roscoe, and Campbell, in all directions, and pedestrians will be directed north to cross Western at Roscoe. CTA will post information about its reroute at www.transitchicago.com. Large trucks will also be rerouted via Elston to Kedzie to Irving Park Road.

By working continuously through the weekend, no additional full road closures are anticipated for the rest of the project, easing traffic disruptions for residents and motorists. Further, the accelerated demolition process will reduce the overall project length by one month and will shorten the time period that Western is reduced to one lane in each direction from six months to five months. Also, the original demolition plan called for both a three and six day closure of Western Avenue and the intersection at Belmont. With the accelerated schedule, the decking demolition will be completed over one three-day holiday weekend.

Throughout the project, CDOT is advising motorists to take alternate routes to avoid delays. The posted alternate route will be Western to Diversey to Ashland to Irving Park, back to Western in both directions for smaller vehicles (excluding large trucks). Motorists will be able to avoid the construction zone by exiting Western south of Diversey, or north of Irving Park, and using alternate north/south routes. Bus and large truck traffic will be maintained on Western Avenue during the project.

Construction Schedule and Traffic Impacts

- **Stage 1 – five months**
 - Western Ave. reduced to one lane in each direction from George Street to Cornelia Avenue for viaduct demolition and removal, installation of temporary pavement and river bridge repairs. Access will be maintained to all businesses in the construction zone.
 - Accelerated demolition of the viaduct decking requires a full lane closure of Western Avenue on the weekend March 4-7, 2016.
 - During the first phase of construction, no left turns will be allowed from Western to cross streets between George and Roscoe Streets.
- **Stages 2-3 – approximately eight months**
 - Two lanes of traffic in each direction on Western.
 - Belmont reduced to one lane in each direction at Western Ave. intersection.
 - Roadway installation and rehab.
 - Sidewalk and curb work.
- **Stages 4-5 – approximately four months**
 - Two lanes of traffic in each direction on Western and Belmont.

- Median work.
- Repaving.

Because the viaduct has reached the end of its useful life, CDOT worked with community members and elected representatives to determine how to replace or reconfigure the intersection at Western, Belmont and Clybourn. CDOT evaluated two alternatives during the planning process: one was the replacement of the existing viaduct structure; the second was removal of the viaduct and replacing it with an at-grade intersection and corridor improvement project. The second alternative was recommended and had the support of the community and alderman from the three wards that are contiguous with the project.

In order to meet current design requirements, a new viaduct structure and adjacent frontage roads would have had to be widened. This widening would have required the displacement of a number of businesses and residences along Western. Because of these impacts, and its low benefit to cost, including higher land acquisition costs, replacement with a new bridge was not supported by the community.

Travel times are expected to be comparable after completion of the project and traffic movement will improve on Western and adjoining streets. Western will see an increase in lanes during rush hour from the current two lanes to three lanes in each direction. Traffic signals will be interconnected and will have the capacity to provide Transit Signal Priority for CTA buses, speeding up bus service.

Pedestrian safety improvements include pedestrian refuge islands, bump-outs, high-visibility crosswalks, wider sidewalks, and the addition of pedestrian countdown signals at all signalized intersections. ADA ramps are also being installed at all the corners along the project corridor.

Along this stretch, the project includes repairs to the bridge over the North Branch Chicago River, improvements along Western and at the intersections of Western with Schubert, Diversey/Elston, Belmont, Roscoe and Addison. In addition, the project will provide new lighting and install landscaped medians along much of the corridor.

The construction is expected to cost \$25.7 million and is estimated to create 128 jobs during the approximately 18 month construction period.

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