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WELLS STREET BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN FULL EFFECT

Coordination between agencies saves \$500,000;

Reduces service interruptions significantly

Mayor Rahm Emanuel was joined by CTA President Forrest Claypool and CDOT Commissioner Gabe Klein this morning to discuss ongoing repair work on the CTA's Brown Line that will revitalize the 91-year-old Wells Street Bridge.

"These are critical repairs being performed with strong coordination between agencies," said Mayor Emanuel. "The result is that our infrastructure will be top-level for generations and our commuters will be able to expect outstanding service as they travel to and from work."

As part of the reconstruction of the historic Wells Street Bridge over the Chicago River, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) service into the Loop will be interrupted for two nine-day periods while the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) puts into place new sections of the double-decker movable bridge. The first detour started on March 1 and goes through March 10 to replace the south section of the bridge; the second service break will be April 26th through May 5th, as the north section of the bridge is replaced.

During the shutdown, construction crews will dismantle and replace the movable leaves with new pre-fabricated sections, which are being assembled off-site and will be floated up the river on barges. At the same time, the CTA will rebuild the Loop 'L' junction at Lake and Wells Streets, known as Tower 18, and perform additional track replacement at the curve over Hubbard Street between Wells and Franklin Street.

“While train service will be interrupted, this is a great opportunity to fully restore the historic Wells Street Bridge. It has outlived its useful life and is in need of a complete reconstruction,” said CDOT Commissioner Gabe Klein. “It has been in service since 1922, and has been a key transportation link for cars, trains, bikes and pedestrians for the past 90 years.”

On weekdays, Brown Line trains will alternate between terminating at Merchandise Mart or continuing into the Loop through the State Street subway. Bus shuttles will be available at the Chicago Avenue rail stop as well as special shuttle service on the Loop Elevated to make sure passengers can efficiently reach their usual destinations. Purple Line trains will not run south of Howard.

During weekends, service on the rail lines that serve the Loop will be impacted. Brown, Pink and Green Line (Lake Street) trains will terminate just outside the Loop. Orange and Green Line (South) trains will terminate at different stops in the Loop. Shuttle buses and a Loop shuttle train will operate.

The Tower 18 work was originally scheduled to be part of the ongoing Loop Track renewal project. But by performing the work while CDOT completes the Wells bridge repairs, CTA will reduce the duration of the work by eight days. Additionally, combining the work will save CDOT and CTA \$500,000 in construction coordination costs.

In the first two years of Mayor Emanuel’s administration, CTA has more than \$4 billion in projects are under way or planned. These projects will improve safety, enhance the customer experience and boost overall reliability of the bus and rail system. CTA’s ridership in 2012 was at its highest level in decades. Slow zone remediation work systemwide, which also includes the Blue and Red Lines, will eliminate 70 percent of current slow zones by the end of 2015, providing relief to 85 percent of affected rail riders.

In a few months, the Red Line South reconstruction will begin. Hundreds of jobs have been created for new bus drivers related to the project, and design work continues for a brand new 95th Street Terminal on target to begin construction in 2014.

Finally, CTA is focused on upgrading and replacing its entire bus and rail fleets. The entire fleet is expected to be either repaired or replaced by the end of the decade.

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