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MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT ANNOUNCE EXPANSION OF SAFE PASSAGE PROGRAM TO SUPPORT CHICAGO YOUTH YEARROUND

Mayor Emanuel and Chicago Park District today announced the expansion of the Summer Safe Passage program to support Chicago youth throughout the year. This summer, Summer Safe Passage will expand to include 40 parks across Chicago, a 25 percent increase from the previous summer.

“Safe Passage routes not only strengthen the well-being of Chicago’s children before and after the school bell rings but also after the school year ends,” said Mayor Emanuel. “Thanks to the dedication of our Summer Safe Passage workers, our young people will have a safer journey to their summer activities and a stronger relationship with the community members who look out for them all year.”

The Summer Safe Passage program ensures more than 2,000 teens can travel safely back and forth as they participate in summer recreational programming. The Summer Safe Passage pilot program was launched in 2016, and expanded in 2017 to cover 31 parks, four days per week.

“Whether it’s summer programming or seasonal jobs, our neighborhood parks are a hub for children and teens during the summer,” said Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO Michael Kelly. “The expansion of Summer Safe Passage helps us ensure that our young people arrive to these activities and return home safely.”

First launched in 2016, the Safe Passage Program employs over 1,300 community members and is partnered with 20 community organizations, and provides safe commutes, both to and from school, for nearly 80,000 students in 160 schools. In the 2016-17 school year, Safe Passage routes saw a nine percent drop in crime, and there has yet to be a serious incident involving a student during operational hours while Safe Passage workers were present.

Summer Safe Passage will serve teens participating in the Chicago Park District’s Summer Teen Sports League and Windy City Hoops program. The Summer Teen Sports League runs four nights a week Tuesday – Friday for youth ages 13 – 18. Windy City Hoops is offered year round for youth ages 13 - 18. Games are played twice a week that culminate in playoffs and a championship each season. Both programs are free and offered at multiple parks across the city.

Summer Safe Passage builds on the Chicago Public School Safe Passage program, the city's collaborative effort that has proven to reduce crime and keep students safe during their daily commutes to and from school. This school year, Safe Passage will serve 76,000 students at 160 schools throughout the city – nearly five times the number of schools served in 2012. More than 1,300 Safe Passage personnel and 20 community-based organizations work to ensure CPS students travel safely to and from school every single day.

In addition to protecting students, Safe Passage has been shown to increase attendance at CPS schools. As the district expands the successful Safe Passage program, data from the 2017-18 school year shows that attendance climbed from 92.8 during the 2016-17 school year to a near record high of 93.3 percent this past year. The 2017-18 rate nearly reaches the district record 93.4 percent rate achieved by students in 2015-16.