



Metropolitan Planning Council

November 28, 2018

Alderman Joe Moore
Chairman
City of Chicago Committee on Housing and Real Estate
City Hall
121 N. LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Alderman Moore:

The Metropolitan Planning Council is writing in support of ordinance 02018-8400, which authorizes the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) to acquire property from the Chicago Terminal Railroad Co. (CTR) and others within the North Branch Industrial Corridor for a multipurpose trail that would provide numerous public benefits, including the extension of the 606 Trail and the North Branch River Trail as outlined in the North Branch Framework Plan.

The CTR line follows street right of way for most of its 1.8 mile-length. It no longer serves any rail customers. The City filed a request for rails-to-trails use of the abandoned line in February 2018, and the Surface Transportation Board issued a Certificate of Interim Trail Use for the line, which allows the railroad to negotiate with the City as a potential trail sponsor. By acquiring the railroad's interest in the corridor, the City can proceed with planning for future uses as recommended in the North Branch Framework Plan, including restoration of the street network, pedestrian and bicyclist trail use, and potential transit use in the future, pending further study, conceptual design, and project funding.

MPC was the lead author on the vision for *Our Great Rivers*, which calls for a continuous river trail and increased accessibility between the river and the rest of the city's bike and pedestrian network. Additionally, MPC is an advocate for improved livability and active in every corner of the city. Therefore, MPC encourages the city to continually seek out ways to increase public space for multimodal transportation and recreation, and we are supportive of this property acquisition. This 1.8 mile segment will create connectivity between future projects that will also deliver real estate development, habitat enhancements along the river, and open space.

The City commonly acquires unused rail right of way to protect it for future public uses, including the Major Taylor Trail and the Burnham Greenway on the Far South Side, the 606/Bloomington Trail on the North Side, the New Era Trail on the South Side, and the Orange Line extension on the Southwest Side. These corridors are valuable assets that benefit communities, providing potential future alternatives to auto use. As this acquisition moves forward, and significant planning for a future trail connection begins, it will be very important to proactively collaborate with community stakeholders to identify means to both create more comprehensive community benefits and wealth from this project, as well as to mitigate potential causes of community displacement. MPC looks forward to working with CDOT and other partners on those important discussion.

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World Business Chicago

We encourage the City Council to approve this ordinance, which will allow the City to preserve a valuable transportation corridor and continue its planning efforts related to future transportation improvements serving the North Branch Industrial Corridor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Ellis', written in a cursive style.

Josh Ellis
Vice President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Audrey Wennink', written in a cursive style.

Audrey Wennink
Director of Transportation

CC:

Deputy Mayor Robert Rivkin
Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld, Dept. of Transportation