

**Oakton Street Multi-Use Path
Phase 1 Completion**

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Thursday, October 19, 2023

3:30pm – 4:40pm

6301 Oakton Street, Morton Grove, IL 60053

In a collaborative effort spanning seven years, the communities of Morton Grove, Niles, and Skokie have come together to complete the first stage of a transformative project. This project, which includes financial and endorsement support from county, state and federal sources, provides a vital multi-use path for pedestrians, cyclists, and bus commuters traveling along Oakton Street. The completion of this initial phase marks a significant milestone in improving safety and mobility in our communities, with more exciting developments ahead.

The need for pedestrian accommodations along Oakton Street was identified by retired Morton Grove Public Works Director, Andy DeMonte, in 2016. He recognized the daily presence of pedestrians and cyclists braving all weather conditions and realized that their safety was compromised due to the lack of proper accommodations. To address this issue, Morton Grove and Niles initiated discussions in 2016 to explore opportunities for improvements along Oakton Street, extending from Caldwell Avenue to Austin Avenue. Both communities acknowledged that these improvements would not only enhance safety but also benefit commuters and workers in the area. Consequently, Skokie was invited to join this vital project, and the hunt for funding sources commenced.

In February 2017 a funding application was submitted to Cook County for their Invest in Cook funding program. The design engineering funding paved the way for a competitive application for federal construction funding, leading to the project's selection for Invest in Cook funding in 2018. In early 2019, Christopher B. Burke Engineering Ltd. was appointed as the design engineer for the project. Later, in late 2019, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning awarded federal funding for both construction and construction engineering. The Illinois Department of Transportation awarded a construction contract to A Lamp Concrete Contractors, Inc. in June 2022. Utility relocation began after the contract was awarded and was not completed until the end of the construction season. Work began on this contract in March 2023. The total

estimated cost of the completed work to date is \$1.78 million, with \$1.42 million funded by the federal government. Morton Grove, Niles, and Skokie equally shared the remaining \$360,000.

The completed work under this contract establishes direct and indirect connections to numerous sites in Morton Grove and Niles, including Morton Grove's train station, the industrial district, Menard's, LoVerde Center, Barnaby's, and Tam O'Shanter Golf Course. This shared-use path will significantly enhance the daily commute experience for cyclists, pedestrians, and bus commuters in the area.

The project is far from over, as two more stages are planned. One stage will extend the path across the Metra tracks to the east, reaching Niles West High School. Additionally, the Illinois Department of Transportation will replace the bridge deck over Edens Expressway. Morton Grove, Skokie, and Niles West High School have engaged with the Illinois Department of Transportation to request widening the bridge deck to match the width of the shared use path, effectively extending it to Gross Point Road. The other stage will provide a better, alternate path on private property for cyclists at Oakton Street and Caldwell Avenue, and a segment along the north side of Oakton Street between St. Paul Woods and River Drive, offering access to St. Paul Woods.

This project exemplifies the success of a partnership between communities comprising 124,000 people. Individually, it would have been a challenging and costly endeavor. The cooperation and enthusiasm displayed by these communities have garnered support from county, state, and federal officials, bringing the project to its current stage and ensuring its completion.

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