For City Council meeting of October 17, 2016 **Item SP1**
Sheridan Road Improvements
For Action

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: David Stoneback, Public Works Agency Director
Erika Storlie, Deputy City Manager/Administrative Services Director
Lara Biggs, Bureau Chief – Capital Planning/City Engineer
Sat Nagar, Senior Project Manager
Katie Knapp, Transportation & Mobility Coordinator

Subject: Sheridan Road Improvements

Date: October 13, 2016

Recommended Action:
Staff recommends that City Council review the information provided by staff for the Sheridan Road Improvement Project and provide direction.

Discussion:
Staff will give a presentation of the plans and construction schedule for the upcoming rebuilding of a 1.9-mile stretch of Sheridan Road.

Additionally, 1st Ward Alderman Judy Fiske and 7th Ward Alderman Eleanor Revelle have requested to discuss reducing the speed limit on Sheridan Road to 25 miles per hour from the current 30 miles per hour.

Representatives from Northwestern University will also discuss campus bicycle safety measures and future plans.

Background:
Since 2014, City staff has worked with alderman, Northwestern University and other concerned members of the Evanston community in order to develop plans for the Sheridan Road/Chicago Avenue Improvements project (see attached project location map). This project includes the following features:

- Complete reconstruction of the road on Sheridan Rd, Chicago to Lincoln
- Resurfacing of the road along the remainder of the project
- Installation of bike lanes, both protected and buffered, depending on the project area

- Widening of the road in the areas where protected bike lanes are to be installed and the four lanes of traffic are maintained
- Traffic signal upgrades
- Designated bus pull-off areas
- Water main improvements (2018)

Schedule:

Currently, the design phase of this project is coming to completion, with the final plans due to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) on October 17, 2016. It is important to meet this deadline as it allows the City to receive bids in January 2017, which has the following benefits:

- Meets the schedule requirements necessary to obtain grant funding from Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)
- Increases the chances of receiving favorable bid pricing (versus receiving bids later)
- Allows the contractor adequate time to meet the project construction schedule constraints.

Because of the use of ITEP funds, this project will be advertised for bid by IDOT. The construction schedule is as follows:

2017 Construction

- Chicago Avenue, Davis St to Sheridan Road: April 1 – June 12
- Sheridan Road, Chicago Ave to Lincoln Street: June 19 – mid Sept

2018 Construction

- Sheridan Road, Lincoln St to Ridge Ave/Wilmette: April 1 – late October

Funding:

The estimated cost of the project is approximately $13.3 million, with most of the funding coming from the City and the State of Illinois. Last year, $500,000 of Northwestern University's $1 million "Good Neighbor Fund" contribution to the City was earmarked to help pay for the project and $500,000 of the second year funds will also be directed towards the project.

Bicycle Safety Improvements:

One of the goals of this project was to provide greater protection for bicyclists, but also to provide greater channelization of bicycle traffic so as to increase safety for all roadway users. This was accomplished through the following:

1. Installation of protected bike lanes in high conflict areas

   A primary feature of this project is the installation of a two-way protected bike lane through the downtown area and adjacent to the NU campus. The protected bike lane is installed on Chicago Avenue, Davis to Sheridan, and on Sheridan Road, Chicago to Central. This bike lane not only separates the bicyclists from pedestrians and motorized vehicles, it includes several features to channel bicycle traffic in a way to minimize conflicts with other roadway users. These include:

   - A 3-ft wide raised concrete median between bicycles and motorized vehicle lanes

- Limited openings onto Sheridan Rd to channel bicycles into fewer key crossing areas
- Dedicated bicycle traffic signals
- Designated bike lane crossing areas at signalized intersections, separate from pedestrian crosswalks

2. Installation of buffered bike lanes and bike routes
   Buffered bike lanes and bike routes will be utilized north of Central Street to safely provide a route for bicyclists moving beyond NU's campus area. The northbound buffered bike lane remains on Sheridan Road, Central Street to Sheridan Place, where it transitions to a bike route that continues on Sheridan Place to Sheridan Road. The southbound bicycle lane is routed as a marked bike lane on Sheridan Rd from the Sheridan/Ridge Avenue intersection to Euclid Park Place where it transitions to a bike route. The bike route follows Euclid Place to Ingleside Place, then continues as a bike route on Ingleside Place to Sheridan Rd where it rejoins the buffered bike lanes on Sheridan Road south to Central Street. Because of the reduced traffic north of the campus, a protected bike lane is not needed.
3. Providing a designated north/south connection to existing bike routes
   The combination of bike lanes installed on this project will provide a connection to two major existing bike lane corridors:
   - Sheridan Road bike lanes in Wilmette
   - Church Street/Davis Street bike lanes in downtown Evanston

Pedestrian Safety Improvements:

Another concern to be addressed by this project is that of pedestrian safety. The existing Sheridan Road adjacent to the NU campus has several characteristics that make it less pedestrian friendly:

- High traffic volume
- Designated truck route
- Four-lane cross-section
- Relatively few traffic signals

These attributes, combined with the fact that there is significant pedestrian population of NU students, create a number of conflicts between pedestrians and other users of the roadway. This project will incorporate several features in order to address these issues:

1. Channelization and control of bicycle traffic
   As described above, bicycles will be channeled into their own lanes. This will encourage bicyclists to not ride on the sidewalks. In addition, bicyclists will have dedicated traffic signals at pedestrian crossings located at signalized intersections. Bicycle crossing lanes at signalized intersections have been marked separately from pedestrian crosswalks.
2. Decrease in the number of traffic lanes
   Adjacent to NU's campus, the existing Sheridan Road cross-section is four lanes. This creates a long distance for pedestrians to navigate when crossing the street, which can be challenging to complete during the limited duration of the walk signal. In the new design, the cross-section is being reduced where the traffic volume allows, decreasing down to three lanes on Sheridan Road, Northwestern Place to Lincoln Street (Sheridan Road is already only three lanes wide north of Lincoln Street).

3. Upgrades of existing traffic signals
   Existing traffic signals along Chicago Avenue and Sheridan Avenue will be upgraded to include dedicated bicycle signals at the following locations (note that existing Sheridan Road traffic signals already have pedestrian countdown timers):
   - Chicago Avenue at Davis Street (includes additional upgrade of pedestrian countdown signals)
   - Sheridan Road at Chicago Street
   - Sheridan Road at Northwestern Place
   - Sheridan Road at Noyes Street
4. Installation of replacement traffic signals
   The existing traffic signals will be replaced at the following high-pedestrian traffic intersections:
   - Chicago Avenue at Church Street
   - Chicago Avenue at Clark Street

   The new signals will have larger LED signal lights, which will be more visible to roadway users.

5. Better designation of pedestrian crossing areas
   Pedestrian crosswalks will be clearly marked. Courtesy walks in the parkway which allow pedestrians to easily access Sheridan Road in places where there is not a marked crosswalk will be removed.

Bus Loading/Unloading Areas:

The project also includes bus loading/unloading areas on Sheridan to enable Northwestern shuttle buses and CTA buses to pull in at designated stops without blocking traffic. For added safety, the bike lanes will be routed east of the pull-in areas and will have their own dedicated traffic signals.