



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release

September 14, 2021

## Irving Park underpass completes 312 RiverRun connection

*Land and clean water from MWRD attract latest waterway trail on North Branch*



*From L to R: CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman, Friends of the Chicago River Executive Director Margaret Frisbie, 47th Ward Ald. Matt Martin, MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, MWRD Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos, Chicago Department of Transportation Commissioner Gia Biagi and Chicago Park District General Superintendent/CEO Michael Kelly cut the ribbon on the completed Irving Park Road Bridge and underpass behind them that connects the 312 RiverRun trail along the North Branch of the Chicago River.*

Commissioners with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) joined Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, city officials and partners unveiled the new Irving Park Road Bridge and underpass to link a final segment connecting the 312 RiverRun trail along the North Branch of the Chicago River.

The 312 RiverRun provides a recreational amenity that connects three parks along one river for nearly two miles from Montrose to Belmont avenues via the Riverview Bridge that was completed in 2019.

“The Chicago River has long been considered Chicago’s backyard, while Lake Michigan has always been the front yard. With this new trail and improvements to our water quality



*MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan addresses reporters with Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Chicago Department of Transportation Commissioner Gia Biagi, Chicago Park District General Superintendent/CEO Michael Kelly and others before cutting the ribbon on the completed Irving Park Road Bridge and underpass behind them that connects the 312 RiverRun trail along the North Branch of the Chicago River.*

in the river, I would say this is an impressive backyard,” said MWRD Vice President McGowan. “We thank Mayor Lightfoot, Alderman Martin, the Chicago Department of Transportation, Chicago Park District, Friends of the Chicago River and CMAP for their vision and our commissioners and staff at the MWRD for their hard work to protect our waterways and make this land available for all.”

The MWRD prides itself on developing meaningful land use opportunities that promote the agency’s mission as a responsible neighbor to protect the health and safety of the public, improve regional water quality, mitigate flooding and manage water as a vital resource. The MWRD leases large parcels of land to park districts, municipalities, and forest preserve districts for a nominal fee to enhance public access to waterways, develop parks, hiking and bicycle trails, and passive recreational use along the waterways, including the 312 RiverRun, Cal-Sag Trail and Centennial Trail near Willow Springs. In total, the MWRD makes more than 8,000 acres of available for recreation and green space.

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## Irving Park underpass completes 312 RiverRun connection, *cont.*



*From L to R: Friends of the Chicago River Director Margaret Frisbie, Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos helped unveil the new Irving Park Road Bridge and 312 RiverRun trail.*



*The new Irving Park Road Bridge and 312 RiverRun trail*

That demand for waterway access would not happen if not for the MWRD's work to improve area water quality.

"The Chicago River and Chicago Area Waterway System has arguably never been healthier. It has taken years of investment, testing and innovation to improve the quality of the water to the level we see today," said MWRD Commissioner Spyropoulos. "We are proud to play a small role in helping unveil today's trail. It is a fine addition to our riverfront, and terrific connection to nature for bike riders and walkers alike."

The project included construction of an under bridge along the riverbank that provides an off-street, multi-use trail linking California Park to Horner Park on additional land made available by the MWRD, and recently restored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Chicago Park District.

"We are thrilled to celebrate the completion of this transformative project, which not only modernizes one of our city's major bridges but also creates a safe and aesthetically-pleasing connection between California Park and Horner Park," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This is a great example of the kind of infrastructure projects our communities need, as they improve our parks and transportation systems to make it easier for our residents to exercise and enjoy the outdoors."

The Irving Park Road Bridge was more than 100 years old and was used by more than 34,000 vehicles per day. When replacing, planners and engineers with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) had the foresight to provide space for an under bridge as well to both accommodate trail users and vehicles.

"This project, and all of 312 RiverRun, demonstrate the importance of investing in infrastructure creatively," said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. "Not only did we replace and improve a major bridge that was more than 100 years old, but we are linking existing recreational spaces in a way that makes it safer and more fun for everyone, no matter their age or ability, to enjoy the outdoors and pursue a healthy lifestyle."

The project was designed by Gannett Fleming and the prime contractor was Granite Construction Company, with construction management services by Omega Associates. The Riverview Bridge to the south was completed in 2019 and connects California Park to Clark Park. At more than 1,000 feet in length, the Riverview Bridge is the longest pedestrian river bridge in the city.

"The transformational 312 RiverRun project enhances the quality of life of community members with access to recreational amenities that are truly second to none," Chicago Park District Superintendent & CEO Michael P. Kelly. "In addition to major investments like the Clark Park Boathouse, Kerry Woods Stadium and the McFetridge Sports Center expansion along with riverfront restoration, soccer mini pitches and more, the vision and execution of the 312 RiverRun will forever change the face of the riverfront on the north side for generations to come."

The \$18.1 million Irving Park Road Bridge project was also the result of increasing demand for access and clean water, thanks in part to the MWRD's partners at Friends of the Chicago River.

### ***Recovering Resources, Transforming Water***

*Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at [mwrdd.org](http://mwrdd.org).*