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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 2016

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**MAYOR EMANUEL, CTA ANNOUNCE BELMONT BLUE STATION UPGRADES TO FEATURE
NOTABLE ARCHITECTURE**

CTA plans upgrades for Belmont Blue station and bus terminal to create attractive community gateway, modernize facility

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Transit Authority President Dorval R. Carter, Jr. today announced plans to use a new improvement project at the Belmont station on the Blue Line O'Hare branch to infuse unique architecture into the Northwest Side neighborhood.

The project will include a community gateway, architecturally enhancing the street-level entrance to the Belmont subway station, and will improve the bus arrival/departure areas to speed bus boarding and provide a safer, more comfortable environment for pedestrians. The most visible element will be an architectural canopy above the Belmont station entrance. Designed by the Chicago architecture firm Carol Ross Barney, the canopy will provide an expanded covered area for waiting customers, while creating a strong visual identifier for both the CTA and the community.

"Projects like this bring notable architecture and design that celebrates and complements the character of our communities, enhance our neighborhoods and bring economic and cultural opportunities to residents and businesses," said Mayor Emanuel. "The Your New Blue program has already created notable improvements for Blue Line customers on the O'Hare branch, and now we're expanding those to the Avondale community. We are committed to continuing our unprecedented investment in creating a world-class transit system."

The project will also include streetscape and landscape improvements which, combined with the station improvements, will create a signature gateway to the Avondale community.

"As we have done with recent projects like the 95th Street Terminal and the Cermak-McCormick Place station, our goal is create an efficient, attractive environment for our

customers while also incorporating modern, innovative designs,” said CTA President Carter. “These improvements go hand in hand with the improvements to rail and bus service that we are making across our transit system to better serve our customers.”

The Belmont Blue subway station and bus terminal is an important transit hub in the Avondale community, providing access to the Blue Line and to the busy #77 Belmont and #82 Kimball/Homan bus routes. The station provided nearly 1.8 million train rides in 2015.

The facility opened in 1970 as part of the Blue Line’s extension from Logan Square to Jefferson Park. It was designed by renowned Chicago architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, which developed a modern, functional form for the station. This will be the station’s first major renovation.

The gateway will also incorporate prepaid bus boarding, which CTA began testing this summer at the Belmont Blue station. Prepaid boarding allows customers at the station to prepay their bus fares ahead of boarding #77 Belmont buses during the weekday evening rush hours of 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. The goal of the six-month pilot program is to study how permitting customers to pre-pay their fares in a designated area customers improves the speed and efficiency of bus boarding and overall bus service.

The gateway project, which is still in the design and development phase, is expected to cost up to \$15 million. The CTA expects to begin the improvements in 2017. The CTA will work closely with local community members and elected officials to provide project updates and will strive to minimize impacts to service.

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