CHICAGO – Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn today announced the completion of the Interstate 55-Lake Shore Drive interchange reconstruction, remaking a vital gateway to Chicago. The project rebuilt a critical connection and improved access to McCormick Place, Soldier Field, Museum Campus, University of Chicago and other landmarks and attractions along Lake Michigan.

“Investing in infrastructure creates jobs, economic opportunity and long term benefits for everyone in Illinois communities,” Gov. Rauner said. “The rebuilt I-55-Lake Shore Drive interchange immediately makes life easier for commuters and businesses that rely on it each day, but the benefits will be felt far into the future.”

The Illinois Department of Transportation project involved rebuilding the six bridges that make up the elevated interchange. To improve traffic flow, a second lane was added to the ramps connecting Lake Shore Drive to outbound I-55.

“This interchange is one of the most important pieces of the state’s transportation system and a big reason why Illinois is the transportation hub of North America,” Secretary Blankenhorn said. “By modernizing I-55 and Lake Shore Drive, we are providing safer trips, more reliable travel times and enhanced quality of life throughout the region.”

Construction on the $135 million project started in 2015, with the outbound ramps opening earlier this year and work on the inbound ramps wrapping up in recent days. Temporary lane closures still will be necessary into next year for miscellaneous tasks, such as landscaping and painting.

The interchange was first built in the 1960s. Prior to the project, the location was prone to frequent emergency repairs due to pavement failures, resulting in unscheduled closures, safety concerns and unplanned backups. Approximately 125,000 vehicles use the interchange each day.

To keep traffic flowing during the project, IDOT employed an innovative construction technique by building a temporary bridge to accommodate inbound I-55 traffic. By doing so, IDOT avoided closing ramps and creating severe congestion leading up to and in the work zone.

“Lake Shore Drive and Interstate 55 are key arteries that guide many of our 2.5 million guests here annually, “said David Causton, General Manager of McCormick Place, North America’s largest

I-55, Lake Shore Drive Interchange Project Finished
convention center. “These roadways are critical to our success and the ease of access to Chicago and our great lakefront. About 90 percent of our visitors travel from out of town, so their ability to get here safely and conveniently is a competitive advantage for us.”

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