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MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore helps unveil “greenest street in America”

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Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Commissioner Debra Shore, Chicago Department of Transportation Commissioner Gabe Klein, Streetscape and Sustainable Design Program Director Janet Attarian, 25th Ward Alderman Daniel Solis, Federal Highway Administration Ecologist Kevin Moody and Benito Juarez Community Academy principal Juan Carlos Ocon unveiled the “greenest street in America,” a two-mile stretch of Blue Island Avenue and Cermak Road in the Pilsen neighborhood on Tuesday.

The project is an unprecedented demonstration of cutting-edge sustainable design and will achieve quantifiable results in stormwater management, material reuse, and energy reduction. This groundbreaking project is the first in the country to incorporate a wide spectrum of sustainable performance into a single urban roadway project. The project borders Benito Juarez Community Academy.

“The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District is happy to have had the opportunity to participate in the Sustainable Streetscape project,” said Commissioner Shore. “We first became involved with the Sustainable Streetscape in 2008. Our role was to evaluate numerous best management practices for the City and their ability to reduce stormwater flows and loads to combined sewers.”

The sidewalks and part of the roadway have been reconstructed with permeable pavements in parking/bike lanes and sidewalks, vegetated planters, bioswales or rain gardens, and below ground infiltration basins. The MWRD began monitoring rainfall and collected wastewater samples from the collection system and groundwater samples beginning in 2009.

“Simulated results indicated that for a Chicago storm of .75 inches in five hours, up to 80 percent of the rainfall could be captured by the sustainable streetscape project,” Commissioner Shore explained. “The MWRD will be collecting and analyzing wastewater samples from the combined sewer and catch basins and treated water from the overflows during wet weather events to determine system efficiencies.”

Additional information about the sustainable streets can be found at www.cityofchicago.org, or brochures can be found at select locations throughout the city.

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