



Gov. Pritzker, Mayor Lightfoot Announce The Return Of The Chicago Auto Show At McCormick Place

May 4 2021 11:39 AM

CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker and Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined elected officials, tourism backers and labor leaders to announce the return of the annual Chicago Auto Show, a marquee event that draws tourists from around the world. While the Auto Show marks the first large convention to take place since the COVID-19 pandemic began, officials expect to welcome other conventions and tourist events this summer with safety precautions.

The Chicago Auto Show will be held at McCormick Place from July 15 to 19 and will incorporate several innovative safety features – including being held indoors and outdoors for the first time since it was held in Chicago in 1901. It is the nation’s largest and longest-running auto show.

“With strong public health protocols in place, the Chicago Auto Show will be the first large convention to take place in Illinois since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, setting the stage for the safe return of big events in the months to come,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “The lifesaving power of vaccinations and the hard work by the people of our city and state has led us here. In recent weeks, we have seen our statewide COVID case rates and hospitalizations flatten and begin to fall, demonstrating a surge far short of the one we saw over the fall and winter. To be clear, our fight against the virus isn’t over yet – but things are getting better.”

“Around this time last year, McCormick Place was turned an alternate care facility that significantly aided our city during the first wave of COVID-19—making today's announcement all the more special,” said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. “In the same spirit of collaboration between government, healthcare, community, and corporate partners, we are now able to bring conventions back to our beloved convention center in a way that is safe and reflective of our progress in slowing and stopping the spread of this virus. I

look forward to seeing the McCormick Place reopen its doors for the Chicago Auto Show this July and further enhance our city's ongoing Open Chicago initiative.”

McCormick Place and the Chicago Auto Show have worked closely with health and tourism officials to detail mitigation strategies to ensure the safety of every attendee, starting with a lower overall capacity for attendees. Among the safety measures in place:

- a move to Hall F in West Building with 470,000 sq ft of indoor space and 100,000 sq ft of outdoor space;
- timed entrance windows and staggered entry to prevent congestion on the show floor and at arrival;
- requirement to wear face masks at all times;
- sanitization stations throughout the event;
- contactless delivery for tickets;
- temperatures will be scanned, and a medical questionnaire must be filled out before entry is allowed into the event.

As the State of Illinois prepares to move into the less restrictive “Bridge Phase,” this announcement is also part of the broader “Open Chicago” initiative to safely and fully reopen the city.

Given the continuous downward trend of the COVID-19 numbers, the state of Illinois and City of Chicago have aligned on guidance for conventions returning later this summer. This news follows last week’s announcement of Expanded Phase 4 regulations and the City’s Bridge to Phase 5 of reopening. Chicago has made significant progress in reversing the rise in COVID-19 metrics that started in March and caused the City to pause the reopening plan. Since last week’s announcement, COVID-19 test positivity rate has continued to drop and is now under 5%.

“The trends are encouraging, but we must be cautious as we move forward,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “As more venues reopen, it is critical that we increase the number of people who are vaccinated. Immunity is how we stop transmission of this virus, but we need greater community immunity and that requires as many of us as possible getting vaccinated as soon as possible.”

“We have seen steady progress in recent weeks with a downward trend in our leading COVID metrics and more and more people stepping up to get vaccinated, which is so important in getting us out of this pandemic,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady M.D. “That has made this exciting day possible.”

Statewide, 55 percent of individuals 16 and over and 79 percent of individual 65 and over have been vaccinated, helping bring down increases in new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. As these metrics continue to stabilize and decline, the state could soon move into the “Bridge Phase” of the Restore Illinois Reopening Plan. For conventions, this will mean events with the lesser of 1,000 people or 60 percent capacity. Following a 28-day period of continued stability or decline in key COVID-19 metrics, the state would then move into Phase 5, with all capacity limits lifted. The State is on track to be in Phase 5 in July.

“From day one, our priority has been to ensure the health of our guests and our employees, and as we re-open we will continue to be relentless in this area,” said Larita Clark, CEO of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA), owner of McCormick Place. “Importantly, these health measures will not take away from the experience. We know that our guests, whether it is a family wanting to check out the new Jeep Bronco or a doctor seeking the latest clinical trial data, come here for a reason. We are glad that we are able to continue to provide the outstanding experience our customers expect without compromising on health and safety.”

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, McCormick Place has been worked closely with public health officials and followed all guidance regarding meetings and events. In 2020, the entire McCormick Place campus was awarded GBAC STAR accreditation, the gold standard for health and safety in the industry. In January 2021, Choose Chicago and McCormick Place launched [Healthy Meetings Chicago](#), a virtual experience illustrating the new convention experience.

“Prior to COVID, McCormick Place operations generated more than \$1.9 billion in economic impact to the city and state,” said Glenn Eden, Chair of the Choose Chicago Board of Directors. “As we take this step forward and move toward reopening, not only is this a positive development for the health of our city, but also for the health of our economy.”

“We stand committed to providing a safe environment for all involved and will carefully adhere to the health and safety protocols and guidelines set forth by city and state officials,” said Dave Sloan, Chicago Auto Show general manager. “McCormick Place is an important economic engine for our city and state, and we take very seriously the responsibility that comes with helping to get it running again.”

Based on the trajectory of public health metrics, officials are confident that the Auto Show and other conventions can be safely held this summer in line with best practices. However, if conditions change significantly in an unforeseen way, these plans will need to be adjusted, including the announced guidelines.

If CDPH or IDPH determines that case rates or hospitalization rates are too high to allow for the events outlined above, the guidelines will be modified.