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MEDIA RELEASE

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The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority Kicks Off Its *"Small Contract Business Program"*

(June 11th, 2008 – Chicago, IL) Juan Ochoa, CEO of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA), owner and operator of the McCormick Place Convention Center and Navy Pier, welcomed local businesses, chambers of commerce, and community and civic organization leaders as MPEA kicked off its new **Small Contract Business Program** in the McCormick Place West Building.

MPEA's overall goal is to promote programs and policies that support small business development in order to foster growth and sustainability. "We are encouraging more small businesses to seek State of Illinois certification, which could lead to additional opportunities with other municipalities and state government departments," explained Rosalinda "Rusty" Castillo, Director of Procurement for MPEA. "Being in the state's data base makes the program even more viable to small businesses, because they are eligible to receive information on procurement opportunities through U.S. mail or email."

In 2007 CMS reported that a total of $57 million was expended through the state's small business program. MPEA's program is designed to provide opportunities for small businesses, within the state of Illinois, to obtain procurements awarded by MPEA for less than $10,000 in goods and services and $30,000 for construction. Typical opportunities include, but are not limited to, door hardware, promotional items, granite replacement, entertainment, signs, miscellaneous electrical and medical supplies.

Joining MPEA's effort to help promote and implement program initiatives are the following state agencies: Department of Central Management (CMS); Department of Employment Security; Department of Human Services; and the Illinois Tollway. "Having all of the state agencies present was a good idea and a convenient," said Beatrice Gantt, Westside resident and business owner. "It saves valuable time not having to visit each agency individually. The one-stop-shop was helpful."

For information regarding state certification by CMS visit www.sell2.illinois.gov or call 866-ILL-Buys. For information on doing business with MPEA visit www.mpea.com.

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