

my Metra

THE HOLIDAY TRAIN HAS ARRIVED

OUR FARE PLAN
An Update for Riders

WINTER COMMUTING
Hot Tips for Travelers

TRACK INSPECTORS
Keeping You Safe

Look for your
FREE TOY TRAIN
inside this issue



my message

James M. Derwinski, CEO

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We're excited to be spreading even more holiday cheer this year with our expanded Holiday Train activities.

Last year, when we offered Holiday Trains only on the Metra Electric Line, we were pleasantly surprised at how quickly they sold out. For me personally, I was also pleasantly surprised at how the spirit of *My Metra* resulted in dozens of Metra employees volunteering their time to work on the train and at Millennium Station during the busy holiday season. I think I speak for everyone involved when I say it was a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience.

That's why we're expanding the program to additional lines this year. You can read all about it on **Page 4**. We think it's a great way to celebrate the season and bring this year to a satisfactory close.

Looking past the holidays to the New Year, Metra customers can expect some big changes. Assuming the Board of Directors approves, we will launch the restructuring of our fare system, with fewer zones and different fare products, starting in February. You can read an update on **Page 6**. Meanwhile, a group of experts are working on recommendations for Springfield to solve COVID-related funding issues and other longstanding public transportation challenges. Turn to **Page 7** to read about that.

Winter is coming, of course, and we want you to be prepared for winter travel. Check out our tips on **Page 13**.

Metra has to be ready for winter, too, of course, so we can get you where you need to go safely and reliably. Among the many employees who work behind the scenes to make that happen are Metra's track inspectors. Turn to **Page 14** to learn about the important, detailed work they do to keep the rails safe for you, in hot weather and in the cold.

In this issue, we also wrap up our introductions to members of the Metra Board of Directors. Turn to **Page 8** to meet Metra Board Chair Romayne C. Brown and our newest Board member, Director Mimi L. Rodman.

And finally, our annual list of holiday places and events that are accessible via Metra can be found on **Page 16**.

We wish everyone a safe and happy Holiday Season.



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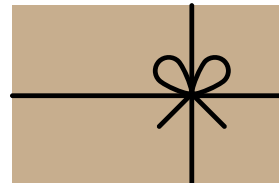
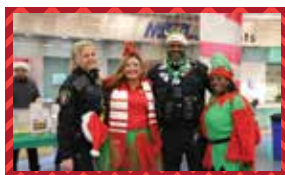
SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON OUR MAGAZINE

My Metra is your magazine. So, of course, we want to know what you think of it. Do you like the content? Do you find it informative? What would you like to see in future issues? We want to hear from you.

The survey will take just a few moments. And with your help, we can create a magazine that is even more informative, engaging, enlightening, and fun.

Thanks for your help!

METRA EXPANDS HOLIDAY TRAINS TO spread more joy



Metra will be bringing holiday magic to its rail lines on three Saturdays this December with special holiday train rides with Santa and Mrs. Claus and other holiday characters.

Holiday train trips will be offered on the Metra Electric, BNSF, Milwaukee District West, Rock Island and Union Pacific Northwest lines. Families will enjoy making memories, creating a new holiday tradition on trains specially decorated for the holidays and spending some quality time with that jolly old elf and his Mrs.

“This is our way to bring the spirit of the holidays and the spirit of *My Metra* to our riders,” said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski. “Our trains are already safe, reliable, and comfortable, but they can be fun, too. We encourage everyone to climb on board and make Metra part of their holiday tradition.”

To spread even more holiday cheer, Metra is also donating tickets so children from Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago can ride holiday trains. On the Metra Electric Line, the experience will also include a visit to a North Pole winter wonderland at Millennium Station, where families can enjoy treats, holiday music, face painting and other fun activities. Other downtown stations will be decorated to spread holiday cheer to participants as well as regular riders, and the holiday trains will also be used in regular service.

Holiday trains are planned on the Metra lines listed below on the following dates:

- Dec. 2** – Metra Electric, BNSF, and Milwaukee District West
- Dec. 9** – Rock Island and Union Pacific Northwest
- Dec. 16** – Metra Electric

For all trains, participants can ride the holiday trains back to their starting point or stay downtown and use their holiday train ticket to return on any scheduled train that day.

So, make plans to bring the family to join us for this holiday treat! Tickets for Metra’s holiday trains will go on sale on Nov. 1st at shop.metra.com and are expected to sell out. Tickets cost \$5 each and must be purchased in advance.

More details can be found at metra.com/HolidayTrains



Toys for Tots drive to be held Dec. 12



‘Tis the season of giving, and with that spirit, Metra’s elves will be out in force at all five of our downtown stations on the morning of Dec. 12 collecting toys and donations for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve’s annual Toys for Tots drive.

For more than seven decades, Toys for Tots has helped make the holidays brighter for children by collecting and distributing toys to families who otherwise could not afford holiday gifts. In 2022, the Chicago area Toys for Tots campaign distributed nearly 70,000 toys. Metra riders and employees

contributed more than 1,500 toys and \$10,000 to this effort.

So, join us in bringing some holiday joy to families across Chicagoland! Metra employees and members of the U.S. Marine Corps will be soliciting donations of new, unwrapped toys or cash at Chicago Union Station, Ogilvie Transportation Center, Millennium Station, Van Buren Station and LaSalle Street Station during the morning rush period (6 - 9 a.m.) on Tuesday, Dec. 12. All donations go directly to the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation for distribution to those in need.

NEW, SIMPLIFIED FARE STRUCTURE MOVES FORWARD

Metra is moving forward with a proposal to create a fare structure that customers can easily understand, that will encourage ridership, that will simplify onboard fare collection, and that meets Metra's financial and technical constraints. The plan was incorporated into the 2024 budget proposal and, if the Board of Directors approves, the new fares would start Feb. 1.



Metra spent this past summer gathering public feedback about the plan, with more than 14,000 riders taking our survey or sending us emails. While some riders expressed concerns about the proposal, 58 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the proposal is easily understandable.

Under the plan, fares would be set at or below prepandemic fares, and the promotional fares introduced during the pandemic — the \$6 and \$10 Day Passes and \$100 Super Saver Monthly Pass — would be discontinued. The number of fare zones would be reduced to four from ten.

Major changes include:

One-Way Tickets to the downtown zone, Zone 1, would cost \$3.75 from Zone 2, \$5.50 from Zone 3 and \$6.75 from Zone 4.

The weekday **Day Pass** would be priced at twice the cost of a One-Way Ticket and would be valid for unlimited rides for a single day within the zones selected.

A **Day Pass 5-Pack** would be priced at 9.5 times the cost of a One-Way Ticket and would only be available via the Ventra app. The passes in the pack can be used on any five days in a 90-day period. The 10-Ride Ticket is discontinued.

A **Monthly Pass** would be priced at 20 times the cost of a One-Way Ticket: \$75 for Zone 2, \$110 for Zone 3 and \$135 for Zone 4. This pricing is below the cost of pre-COVID Monthly Passes.

Metra would no longer allow riders to pay “incremental fares” — a surcharge to travel beyond the zones indicated on their ticket. Instead, riders would be required to buy a ticket valid for the trip they are taking.

More details can be found at metra.com/2024FarePlan.

WORK TO SOLVE THE 'FISCAL CLIFF' CONTINUES

The fare restructuring we're implementing in February aims to make our system easier to understand, particularly for new riders, but it does not solve the “fiscal cliff” we are facing in 2026.

What fiscal cliff? Since the start of the COVID pandemic, Metra (and public transportation agencies across the country) have relied on federal relief to cover the loss of fare revenue caused by the sharp decline in ridership. In the Chicago region, that relief is expected to run out at the end of 2025. If ridership has not recovered by then — and it is not expected to — then there will be a significant cliff between our expenses and available revenues.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has been assigned the task of recommending solutions for the fiscal cliff and other complicated public transportation issues. It has created a Plan of Action for Regional Transportation (PART) that will be presented to the General Assembly by the end of this year.

The key issue is funding, not only to address the fiscal cliff but also to pay for other desirable improvements, such as fare integration, more frequent service, improved accessibility, better safety and security, etc. PART has recommended a variety of funding sources, including road system revenues (parking fees, new tolls, vehicle registration fees, etc.) or changes to sales taxes. PART also suggested changes to the regional governance structure for public transportation. To learn more go to www.cmap.illinois.gov.

MEET THE METRA BOARD

In the conclusion of our series, we introduce you to our newest member, Mimi L. Rodman and Romayne C. Brown, Metra Board Chair.

MEET DIRECTOR MIMI L. RODMAN

Mimi L. Rodman is the newest member of the Metra Board, joining in April 2023 after her appointment by north suburban members of the Cook County Board. A resident of the Chicago area since college, Ms. Rodman most recently served as the Executive Director of Stand for Children Illinois, a national advocacy organization fighting for education equity and racial justice. She also was senior legal counsel at Tribune Company and a partner at Kirkland & Ellis. She is married with two adult children.

Why did you want to join the Metra Board?

Access to safe, affordable, and reliable public transportation is vital to public safety, equity, and our environment.

What gives you hope about Metra's future?

As part of my Board orientation, I toured the air brake shop, learned about the railcar and locomotive overhaul programs, and more. I am so impressed by the layers of skill and commitment from everyone I met and the conductors and ticket agents I interact with as a passenger. Metra's future is bright because of them.

What are you looking forward to in the next 12 months?

I have professional experience working with the state legislature, albeit on education policy. I would like to use those skills and my legal background to help make sure public transportation is well funded.

Tell us something surprising about yourself.

There's a little bathtub in our house that rarely gets used. When my kids were little, they won goldfish at the school carnival. The fish quickly outgrew the fishbowl, so, taking inspiration from the book, *A Fish Out of Water*, we moved the fish to that bathtub. Over the years, people would give us more fish. When our kids went to college, we returned the remaining two, Bubba and Savannah, to the pet store.

What hobbies or activities do you enjoy?

I love gardening, especially vegetables. I picked corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and a lot of herbs this weekend.



What's your favorite restaurant?

Le Colonial but you can't go wrong at the food court at H Mart.

Cubs or Sox?

Actually, it's the New York Mets; it was part of the pre-wedding negotiation with my now husband of 33 years.

What do you like best about living in the Chicago area?

I chose to go to college and law school in Chicago and to work and raise my family in this area. I love its diversity, activism, culture, and change of seasons.

A friend who has never been to the Chicago area is in town — where do you take them

If the weather is good, a walk to the very end of Navy Pier, then the Chicago River Walk and back along Lake Michigan to the Harbor. Of course, after that, we hop on a Metra train to any number of destinations!

What does My Metra mean to you?

As a board member, *My Metra* is a call to action to make sure we are serving our ridership well and being responsible stewards of public funds.

MEET CHAIR ROMAYNE C. BROWN

Romayne C. Brown was appointed to the Metra Board by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle in September 2013, was elected Vice Chair of the Board in October 2016, and was elected Chair in September 2020. Ms. Brown had a long career at the Chicago Transit Authority, starting as a rail conductor in 1978 and working her way through the ranks, finishing in 2010 as the VP of Rail Operations. A native of Chicago's South Side, she has lived in Dolton for more than 20 years.

What do you like most about being a Board Member?

I think that Metra, and public transportation in general, is vitally important to our region. For economic, environmental and mobility reasons, it's a "must have." Because of that, I feel that my role as Chair allows me to make a difference for others.

What gives you hope about Metra's future?

I would say three things. First, as I said, Metra is just so important for our region. And where we have need, there will always be support. Second, the people at Metra. Their dedication to the service they provide is unwavering. And third, our passengers.

What are you looking forward to in the next 12 months?

We started something called the Metra Electric Community Initiative. It's a multiyear program that demonstrates our commitment to the communities along the Metra Electric Line. We are renovating 13 stations to bring greater comfort to riders, while creating thousands of jobs. And I always look forward to spending more time with family.

Tell us something surprising about yourself.

Well, to be honest, I'm actually an introvert who works hard to be an extrovert. I'm sharing this because I want to help others realize that anything is possible — and within your power.

What hobbies or activities do you enjoy?

I have to admit that I'm a bit of a solitaire addict. I love playing it digitally. I also like crafting my own special greeting cards. I may have missed my calling there.

What's your favorite restaurant?

I'm actually more of an eat-at-home person. My sister is an amazing cook and I can eat her cooking just about every meal.



Cubs or Sox?

I'm not really much of a baseball fan. But, since my beloved brother loved his White Sox, I'll have to go with the Southsiders.

What do you like best about the Chicago area?

Chicago is a magical city. We are one of America's great melting pots. We definitely have our challenges. But, when you get right down to it, show me a city with more opportunity, culture, and diversity than the Windy City.

A friend who has never been to the Chicago area is in town — where do you take them?

Anywhere Metra goes! Actually, that's the hardest question to answer. We have a city filled with restaurants, museums, concerts, theaters and sporting events. Next question, please.

What does My Metra mean to you?

My Metra is our North Star. It's about taking personal responsibility for our riders and each other. But I also think it's how we want people to feel about Metra. Metra belongs to everyone. We provide an essential service to the region and, no matter who you are, we will get you to the places you need to be and the people you need to be with.

FOR COMPLETE METRA BOARD INTERVIEWS VISIT:
metra.com/MeetTheBoard

SAVE BIG WITH THE REGIONAL CONNECT PASS

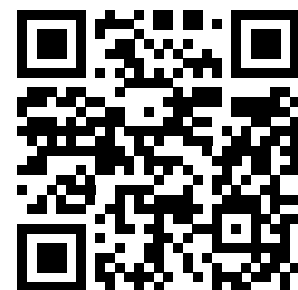


Are you a Metra monthly pass holder? Well, we have good news! Metra has partnered with CTA and Pace to make every mile of your commute as seamless and cost-effective as possible. Metra Monthly Pass holders can get unlimited monthly rides on CTA and Pace for only \$30 with the Regional Connect Pass. If you use CTA or Pace for the first or last mile of your commute, this pass is a perfect way to save big all month long.

The Regional Connect Pass is an example of how Chicagoland transit agencies are working together to ensure riders can commute easily, safely, and affordably throughout their work week. However, there are no time or day restrictions, so you can use it any time, not just for commuting, but for whenever or wherever you travel around northeast Illinois. Now you can have complete flexibility in your travel plans so you can get out and explore all the fun winter activities this holiday season.

Metra remains committed to providing cost-effective, safe, and efficient transportation to all Chicagoland communities. The Regional Connect Pass makes public transportation even more cost effective and convenient, so you can travel quickly and comfortably for even less money. So, whether you're traveling for work or for play, you can save big at every stop, all month long.

The Regional Connect Pass can be purchased from ticket agents or in the Ventra app.



Download the Ventra app today!

UNSUNG HEROES: TRACK INSPECTORS



Metra trains traverse more than 1,100 miles of track every day, sharing many of those track miles with freight trains carrying goods to markets across the nation. Track inspectors play a critical role in keeping traffic flowing safely in this fast-paced environment. These unsung heroes work diligently behind the scenes examining and evaluating the condition of the railroad tracks to maintain the safety of Metra's rail system.

Track inspectors conduct daily inspections of tracks, bridges, and other related structures to identify potential hazards or defects. "We're out there inspecting the track under Metra's standards and federal laws and regulations," said Salvador Huichapa, a third-generation railroader and track inspector for the Rock Island Line. The work involves a meticulous examination of the rails, ties, ballast, switches, and crossings, among other components.

Equipped with their knowledge and expertise, Metra's inspectors thoroughly inspect every inch of the tracks, often covering hundreds of miles a day. They use various tools to measure track alignment and gauges and detect

flaws that are not visible to the naked eye. Regular inspection allows them to identify everything from weak spots, cracks, missing spikes, damaged ties or faulty switches to overgrown foliage that can obstruct visibility and compromise the safety and reliability of train travel.

Track inspectors also assess the impact of weather conditions on the tracks.

"Track is metal, so everything expands and contracts with heat and with cold," explained Jose Arevalo, a track inspector with five years' experience. "We have to inspect anytime the temperature outside is above 90 degrees. We do a hot and cold weather inspection to make sure we don't have any kinks that are going to affect the safe passage of trains."

Once an inspection is complete, inspectors document their findings, including any defects or areas in need of maintenance or repair. Maintenance crews rely on this information to address areas of concern promptly. By communicating their findings effectively, track inspectors contribute to Metra's proactive approach to maintaining and improving railroad infrastructure.



Senator Tammy Duckworth has been a champion of accessibility for public transportation, sponsoring legislation that provided millions of federal dollars for Metra's efforts.

STRIVING TO MAKE OUR SYSTEM ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Making transit accessible is a key part of our mission. Since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990, public transit agencies across the U.S. have invested and continue to invest millions of dollars to make transit vehicles and facilities accessible to people with disabilities, and Metra is no different.

Accessibility is more than simply providing ramps, elevators and wheelchair lifts. It's looking at multiple ways to make our system easier and safer to use. This includes creating accessible signage, rider guides to help people with disabilities navigate the Metra system, an ADA-compliant website and resources for our riders to use when issues arise.

Adapting a rail system inherited from multiple private operators is an expensive process. Metra has made a concerted effort over the past three decades to incorporate accessibility into all major capital projects, and all Metra trains are now equipped with at least one accessible railcar. Work continues, however, to bring all of Metra's 242 stations into compliance. To date, nearly 80% of Metra stations, accounting for 96% of our ridership, are fully accessible, but we still have work to do.

Less than half of the Metra Electric Line's stations are fully accessible. The Metra Electric Community Initiative is directly addressing this gap through a multiyear program to rehabilitate

and improve 13 stations along the line. ADA improvements for another 12 stations are included in Metra's 2023-2027 capital program.

Each investment in projects like station elevators and ramps brings us closer to the goal of removing barriers for people with disabilities and improving the transit experience for all. We know we can't be *My Metra* for all unless our trains and stations are accessible and our rail system easy to use.

More information about how Metra complies with the ADA and links to guides to Metra services can be found on our website at metra.com/accessibility.

COMMUTE WITH CONFIDENCE THIS WINTER



Winter weather means snow, ice, and subzero temperatures that can make commuting challenging. At Metra, we know how important it is for you to get where you're going quickly, comfortably, and safely. That's why we've put together some winter commuting tips to help you travel with ease throughout the snowy season.

Use Metra Tracker to Track Your Train: Our real-time train-tracking website allows you to see exactly where your train is and when it will reach the station. It also offers a trip planning function, so you can plan your commute before you're even out the door. Visit metratracker.com to start tracking today!

Get Updates on the Latest Weather: Visit the National Weather Service website for the latest weather and storm-related information or watch local television and listen to local radio stations for Metra travel and service updates.

Give Yourself Plenty of Time: Snowy and icy conditions mean heavier, slower traffic. Make sure you allot extra time to travel to the station and park.

Stay Safe: We know you're in a hurry, but inclement weather means dangerous conditions — especially around train tracks. Remember to use caution when walking on wet or icy station platforms.

Listen Carefully: If you are already traveling, make sure to listen for announcements at stations and on board trains concerning travel times, weather conditions, and more.

For more winter commuting tips visit metra.com/guide-winter-weather-travel.

THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE!

Metra Can Take You to All the Festivals & Fun

The holidays can be stressful, but getting around during holiday season doesn't have to be. Metra makes it easy to get to all the bright lights, music, parades, festivals, food, shows, and shopping without the hassles of driving or the expense of parking. This past year, we've expanded our schedule and introduced metratracker.com to help you plan your holiday getaways.

So, get on board. Metra offers an array of money-saving fares. Our Saturday and Sunday Passes are only \$7. Our \$10 Weekend Pass (Ventra app only) gives you unlimited rides on both weekend days. And our \$10 Day Pass gives you unlimited rides on weekdays. Children under 11 even ride for FREE.

Check out just some of the events listed here, then let us be your sleigh to the best that our area offers.



EVENT / ATTRACTION	DATE(S)	LOCATION
Walnut Room Dining	Nov. 4-Jan. 7	Macy's State Street
Christkindlmarket	Nov. 17-Dec. 23 Nov. 17-Dec. 24 Nov. 17-Dec. 31	Daley Plaza RiverEdge Park (Aurora) Wrigley Field
Ice Skating	Nov. 17-March 10	Millennium Park Maggie Daley Park
Zoolights	Nov. 17-Jan. 7	Lincoln Park Zoo
Illumination: Tree Lights	Nov. 18-Jan.6	Morton Arboretum
A Christmas Carol	Nov. 18-Dec. 31	The Goodman Theatre
Magnificent Mile Lights Festival	Nov. 19	North Michigan Avenue
Chicago Thanksgiving Parade	Nov. 23	State Street, from Ida B. Wells Drive to Randolph
Holiday Sing-Along	Nov. 24-Dec. 15	Millennium Park
Holiday Magic	Nov. 24-Dec. 31	Brookfield Zoo
Joffrey Ballet – The Nutcracker	Dec. 2 - 27	Lyric Opera House
TBOX Twelve Bars of Christmas Bar Crawl	Dec. 9	Wrigleyville
Chicago Symphony Orchestra Merry, Merry, Chicago!	Dec. 15-23	Symphony Center
Hamilton	Until Dec. 30	Nederlander Theatre
How The Grinch Stole Christmas!	Dec. 19-31	Cadillac Palace Theatre
Twas The Night Before... By Cirque Du Soleil	Dec. 7-28	Chicago Theatre
Icelander A New Musical	Nov. 29-Dec. 17	Chicago Shakespeare Theater



GAME ON

Let Metra be your designated driver.

With the Bears, Bulls, Blackhawks, Blue Demons, and Wildcats all in action, Metra makes it easy to get into the game.

Don't miss kickoff! Metra makes getting to Soldier Field easy. From the south: take the Metra Electric Line and exit at 18th Street. From Downtown: catch the No. 128 Soldier Field Express bus at either Ogilvie Transportation Center or Union Station. The bus starts two hours before the game and runs for an hour afterward.

Be there for the tip-off or face off! Bulls and Blackhawks fans can catch the No. 19 United Center Express Bus that connects with Millennium, Ogilvie, and Union Stations. Bus service begins 90 minutes before game time and runs up to an hour after the game.

Big Ten fan? Take the UP North Line to Northwestern's Ryan Field and Welsh-Ryan Area, both are just a short walk from the Central Street Station.

DePaul Blue Demon fans can get to Wintrust Stadium via our Electric Line, which has a station right at McCormick Place.



Mrs. Claus

Mrs. Claus, a North Pole resident and master toymaker, is an avid Metra rider. Although she and her husband usually travel by sleigh, Mrs. Claus relies on Metra to get her where she needs to go throughout her busy holiday season.

How long have you been taking Metra?

Oh, I've been taking Metra since I was a young girl tending to reindeer up in the North Pole.

Why do you take Metra?

Whether I need last-minute paint and materials for my toymaking, or some time for myself away from the elves, Metra is the fastest way to travel whenever the sleigh is in the shop.

What do you like most about taking Metra?

I love seeing all the friendly faces ready to greet me and the smiles of the children excited to be on board. Everyone is so jolly! And have you seen their holiday train? I couldn't have decorated it better myself!

Do you take Metra on the weekends with your family?

Of course! My husband and I love traveling around trying new cookies,

seeing everyone's Christmas decorations, and, if we're lucky, listening to local carolers. Every neighborhood and town has such lovely holiday traditions, and Metra allows us to explore each and every one of them.

Do you have any big plans for after the holidays?

Mr. Claus and I have been saving for a tropical vacation—tiki drinks with little umbrellas, sand on our feet... we can't wait. Don't tell the elves though! They'll get jealous.



Eduardo Jasso

Why did you decide to work for Metra?

Before coming to Metra, I worked at various warehouses. I worked at Pepsi for five years. Although I liked those jobs, it didn't feel like a career to me. I came to Metra for my career. Right off the bat you get a livable wage, especially with all the high prices these days, and at the same time you have opportunities to grow.

What is something passengers don't know about your job?

Coach cleaning can be challenging work at times. Normally I clean five to six cars. I clean windows, heater guards and all the stainless steel. I make sure there is nothing on the seats, making sure passengers have clean seats to sit on. I make sure the floor is nice and shiny because when people take public transportation, they want it to be clean. The trick is to work hard to keep the trains well-

maintained, clean, and sanitized to ensure that all the customers see a clean train every time they ride.

Did you choose the railroad or did the railroad choose you?

This is my first railroad job. I chose the railroad because it's a career that is never going to go down. People will always need to ride the trains, and I feel comfortable and safe knowing that my job is safe.

Do you like your job?

I like coming to work. It's important to take pride in your work because it makes you feel better about yourself knowing that you make a difference in what the passengers see and honestly when you have pride in what you do, it makes work a happier place to be.

Meet Eduardo Jasso, a husband and father of three, who after years of feeling unfulfilled decided it was time to seek a position that aligned with his values. His search for a job that feels like home, where passion and hard work converge, led him to Metra, where he works as a coach cleaner in the Mechanical Department.



HONEYBEAR CAFE

7036 N. Clark St. in Rogers Park

In this issue, we take you to Rogers Park Station on the Union Pacific North Line to visit a delectable breakfast, brunch, and lunch spot — Honeybear Cafe.

Our first rider-submitted restaurant, it's easy to see why Honeybear Cafe has such loyal customers. Whether you're looking to sip on a honey coconut latte or delve into a plateful of cookie butter and banana French toast, Honeybear Cafe is sure to knock your socks off.

A family-owned restaurant in the heart of Rogers Park, Honeybear Cafe remains focused on community. When Prudence and George Faklaris founded the restaurant in 2020, their goal was simple: provide high-quality food within a welcoming, friendly space.

"We wanted to focus on creating a nice space that people really feel comfortable in, and that's a special part of the restaurant. It's very diverse and attracts people from all walks of life," said owner Prudence Faklaris.

With an unbeatable breakfast, brunch, and lunch menu, Honeybear Cafe has something for everyone. Looking for a savory breakfast? Try the RP Strong

Biscuit stuffed with Andouille sausage and crumbled chorizo, topped with two over easy eggs and chorizo gravy. Craving something on the sweet side? Tuck into Granny's Apple Butter Pancake with house-made apple butter melted into the cakes, cinnamon apples, candied pecans, topped with homemade whipped cream.

"Everything we source is fresh, and everything is made in-house. So, all of our sauces, our gravies, our soups, our compotes — all of it is made every day from scratch," said Prudence.

A favorite among locals and families, Honeybear Cafe is a Rogers Park staple. The warm and welcoming atmosphere complete with tables of families, smiling servers, and delicious smells is sure to excite you the moment you step through the door. We all know a good day starts with a good breakfast, so start yours at Honeybear Cafe.

For more information, visit them online at honeybearrp.com.



THE THING TO TRY: ROGERS PARK EXTREME FRENCH TOAST

Fresh Challah bread layered with sweet cream topped with fresh bananas, blueberries, candied pecans, sea salt caramel sauce, house-made berry compote with homemade whipped cream & powdered sugar.

If you have a favorite restaurant near a Metra station, let us know by emailing marketing@metrarr.com, and it could be featured in our next issue!



IDOT PARTNERS WITH METRA ON ROCKFORD SERVICE

In early July, Gov. J.B. Pritzker stood on the banks of the Rock River with a Metra train on the bridge above to make a very special announcement. For the first time in 40 years, passenger rail service would once again be available between Rockford and Chicago.

"This is a major step for Metra to expand outside our six-county service area, but it is something we are well-prepared to do," said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski. "We have ample experience connecting Chicago region residents to work and recreational opportunities through reliable, safe, and exceptional rail service and are excited to have the opportunity to serve the residents of Rockford, Huntley and Belvidere."

Metra was selected by IDOT to partner with them and operate the service, which will initially provide two daily roundtrips between Rockford and Chicago with stops in Huntley and Belvidere. The route will use Metra's Milwaukee District West Line to Elgin and tracks owned by Union Pacific Railroad between Elgin and Rockford.

Operations are planned to start by the end of 2027. The project is funded through \$275 million from Gov. Pritzker's Rebuild Illinois capital program.

Before service can begin, upgrades are needed along the Union Pacific tracks to make them safe for passenger service, including improvements to signal systems and road crossings. Track conditions on the UP portion of the line will also need to be upgraded to enable the speeds required for passenger service. Sidings to allow trains to operate past each other and a flyover to connect the Milwaukee District West Line to the UP tracks at Elgin will be part of the improvements as well as new stations serving Huntley and Belvidere.

Travel time between the two cities is expected to be less than two hours, with two round trips per day planned. Boarding locations in Chicago and Rockford, as well as a fare structure and schedule, are still to be determined. If you are interested in learning more, an overview of the project can be found at www.chicagotorockfordrail.org.



In this photo from left to right: Hilary Konczal, Metra's Chief Safety and Environmental Officer; Alejandra Reyes, Assistant Principal; Letisha Miller, art teacher; Anthony Mills, Metra Public Safety Coordinator; and Veronica Morales, Principal.

CICERO SCHOOL WINS COMPUTERS IN SAFETY POSTER CONTEST

In a remarkable display of creativity, students from Cicero West Elementary School secured top honors as the school with the highest participation in Metra's Annual Rail Safety Poster and Essay Contest.

The contest, organized by Metra's Safety Department, aims to encourage grades K-12 school students to learn about the importance of staying safe around railroad tracks. With more than 500 student entries from schools across the area, Cicero West Elementary stood out with 35 entries. Their essays, artwork, and commitment to promoting rail safety earned them brand new computers for their school.

Principal Veronica Morales expressed her pride in the students and their dedication to rail safety,

"We are very excited and grateful to have won these laptops." Morales said.

The new computers arrived at Cicero West Elementary in early fall. With their newly acquired tools, students can research projects and pursue artistic endeavors, all while continuing to spread the crucial message of rail safety.

GIVING STUDENTS A LIFT—AND A BREAK

Did you know K-12 students can ride Metra for less?

Metra offers reduced fares for students enrolled in a grade school or high school. Student fares are in effect at all times.

When purchasing a ticket, students must present a valid school I.D. or a valid letter of certification from their school (on school stationery bearing the student's name,

school name and authorized signature). The student identification card or letter of certification must be displayed along with the ticket to the conductor.

Children aged 7-11 are also eligible for reduced fares, and children 7 or under ride free with a fare-paying adult. For more information, go to metra.com/fares.



FAN PHOTO

We're always excited to see photos of our trains taken by Metra riders—often featuring beautiful sunsets and the colors of the changing seasons. If you have a photo you'd like to share, send it to us at social@metrarr.com. Each week, our social media accounts post a rider-supplied photo for #MetraFanPhotoFriday. Then, each month, we choose one entry to win a FREE round-trip ticket. So enter today.

Be sure to follow us on social!



Photos taken by @EricAllixRogers



Transit Benefit Fare Program



Transit is the answer to your commute

The RTA Transit Benefit Mastercard® is your one stop shop for all transit purchases and parking. Sign up to receive a reloadable, prepaid debit card that allows you to pay for commuting costs with a pre-tax payroll deduction.



Employers: Use promocode **TRANSIT2024** to waive the first month of fees. Register by December 31, 2023. mytransitbenefit.com

ASK US ANYTHING



Do you have something you'd like to ask us? It could be about our service, trains, stations, any question you have. Just submit your question to mymetra@metrarr.com

Why do Metra train cars have different sized windows? Do cars with smaller windows have different interiors?

– Matt

The size of windows in our cars depends on when they were built, who built them and what the safety standards were at the time. Essentially, the bigger the windows are, the newer the car. The interiors are similar, but not identical; the oldest cars with the smallest windows have different seats and bathrooms (and no accessible seating area).

Is there any possibility or planning for a suburban railway ring going north-south that bypasses the city of Chicago while being able to go through the collar counties? While we know Pace exists, it is not as convenient for traveling long

distances between the suburbs. Is it too late to look at the possibility?

– Michael

We had proposed and studied such a route, which we named the STAR Line, back in the 2000s, ultimately completing a study that you can read about at metra.com/project-studies. That study is more than a decade old. The STAR Line was never built because we never had the financial means to build it, and we still don't, unfortunately.

Most railroad signs and signals are self-explanatory. However, I have never understood what the small signs with one, two, or three black horizontal bars mean. Can you please clarify?

– Ronald

That's a great question and we did

not know the answer ourselves, so we asked our colleagues in our engineering department. They said the bars stand for incremental miles. One bar equals one-quarter mile, two is one-half mile and three is three-quarter mile. Whole miles are indicated by numbers.

I was riding through Rondout and saw what looked like a Metra caboose. I've seen it or one like it before at Western Ave., and I was curious how they came to be Metra's and what they are used for.

– Mack

The cabooses at Rondout and Western are used in work train service. When a work train, such as a string of flat cars full of ties, needs to move in reverse, the conductor will be on the caboose giving the engineer instructions.

METRA BY THE NUMBERS

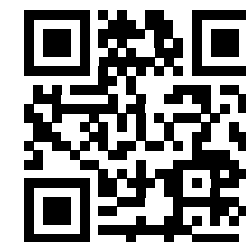
If you're looking for a convenient, stress-free, and economical way to get around this holiday season, Metra is a great choice. Just consider how many trains we operate each week:



And don't forget, Metra has a 95% on-time record!

SUDOKU

		2	3					9
				6		3		5
5					9	1	2	
		3		9		5		
		1			3	7	8	
		5		7		2		
	5			2				
	9	8			6			1
				5	1			



Scan the QR code to find the solution to this month's puzzle or go to metra.com/sudokusolution.



STATION BREAK: BLUE ISLAND VERMONT STREET

One of the oldest stations in the Metra system, the Blue Island Vermont Street Station on the Rock Island Line was built in 1868, replacing a structure that was built when the Rock Island Railroad first established service in the area in 1852. The station and railroads have played a critical role in Blue Island's history, including as a flashpoint in the 1894 Great Pullman Strike. Metra recently completed a \$3.7 million renovation of the facility that included a full interior and exterior restoration.



'TIS THE SEASON

Get on board a Metra Holiday Train



SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER THROUGHOUT CHICAGOLAND

This year Metra will be running holiday trains along multiple lines, so you and your family can enjoy even more decorations, holiday activities, and your favorite Christmas characters.

Our special ME Line Holiday Train ends at Millennium Station, which will be transformed into the North Pole—complete with holiday treats, face painting, music, and plenty of family fun.

December

2

BNSF & MDW

December

9

RI & UPNW

December

2, 16

ME LINE

SOLD OUT LAST YEAR! GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

- Tickets are **\$5** and must be purchased in advance
- Available **Nov. 1st** at shop.metra.com

Make sure to grab them quickly before they sell out!

