



**TO: Board of Directors**

**FROM: Jim Derwinski, CEO/Executive Director**

**SUBJECT: September 2023 Ridership Trends**

**DATE: October 11, 2023**

This memo describes ridership patterns in 2023, including ridership and service recovery by line and service period. The data in this report is preliminary and will be finalized at the end of the year.

In September 2023, Metra provided 2.9 million passenger trips, an 8% decrease from the previous month attributed to September having three fewer weekdays as well as the impact of Labor Day. Compared to August, September had three fewer weekdays, one additional Saturday, and one additional Sunday/holiday.

**Estimated Passenger Trips by Month**

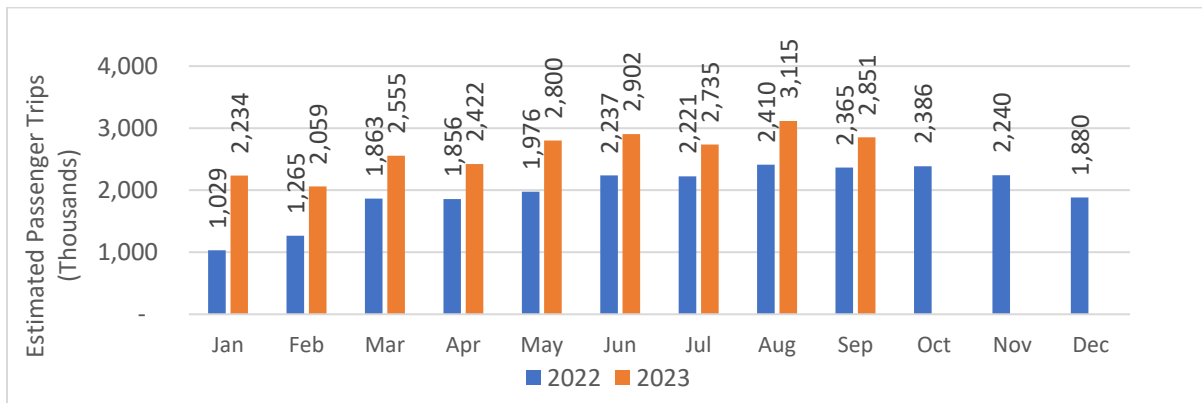


Exhibit 1

**Estimated Passenger Trips by Line (September 2022 vs. September 2023)**

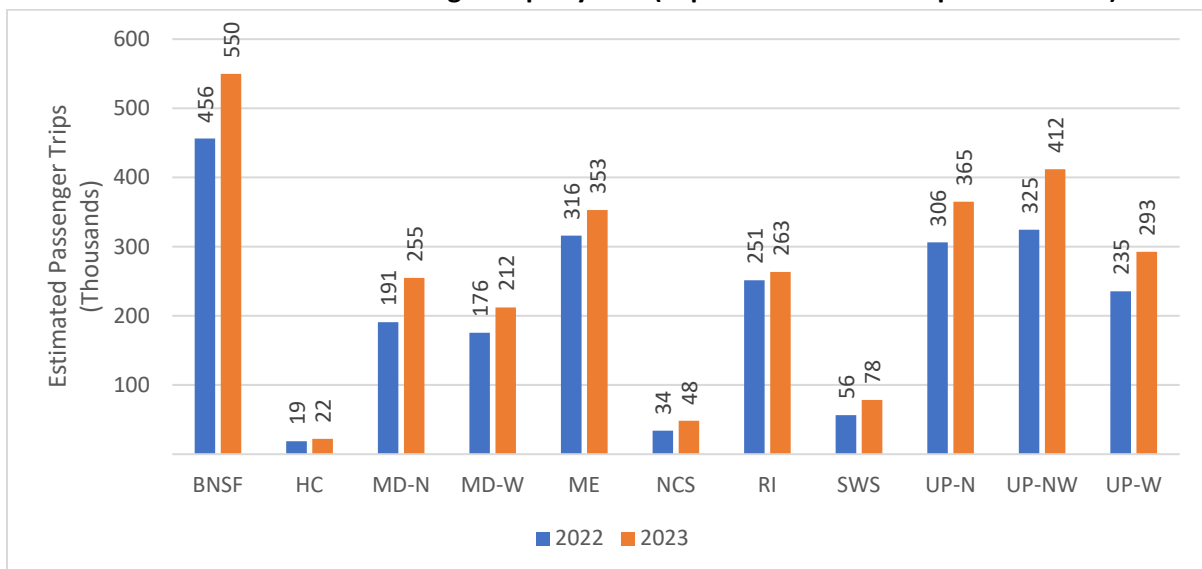


Exhibit 2

## Weekday Riders

September average weekday ridership was 153,900, which was -2% lower than August and 54% of 2019. This decrease is attributed to the impact of Labor Day as well as the high ridership days in August due to Lollapalooza. After accounting for these events, September average weekday loads experienced a slight increase of 2% from August.

**Metra Average Weekday Ridership by Week (October 2022-September 2023)**

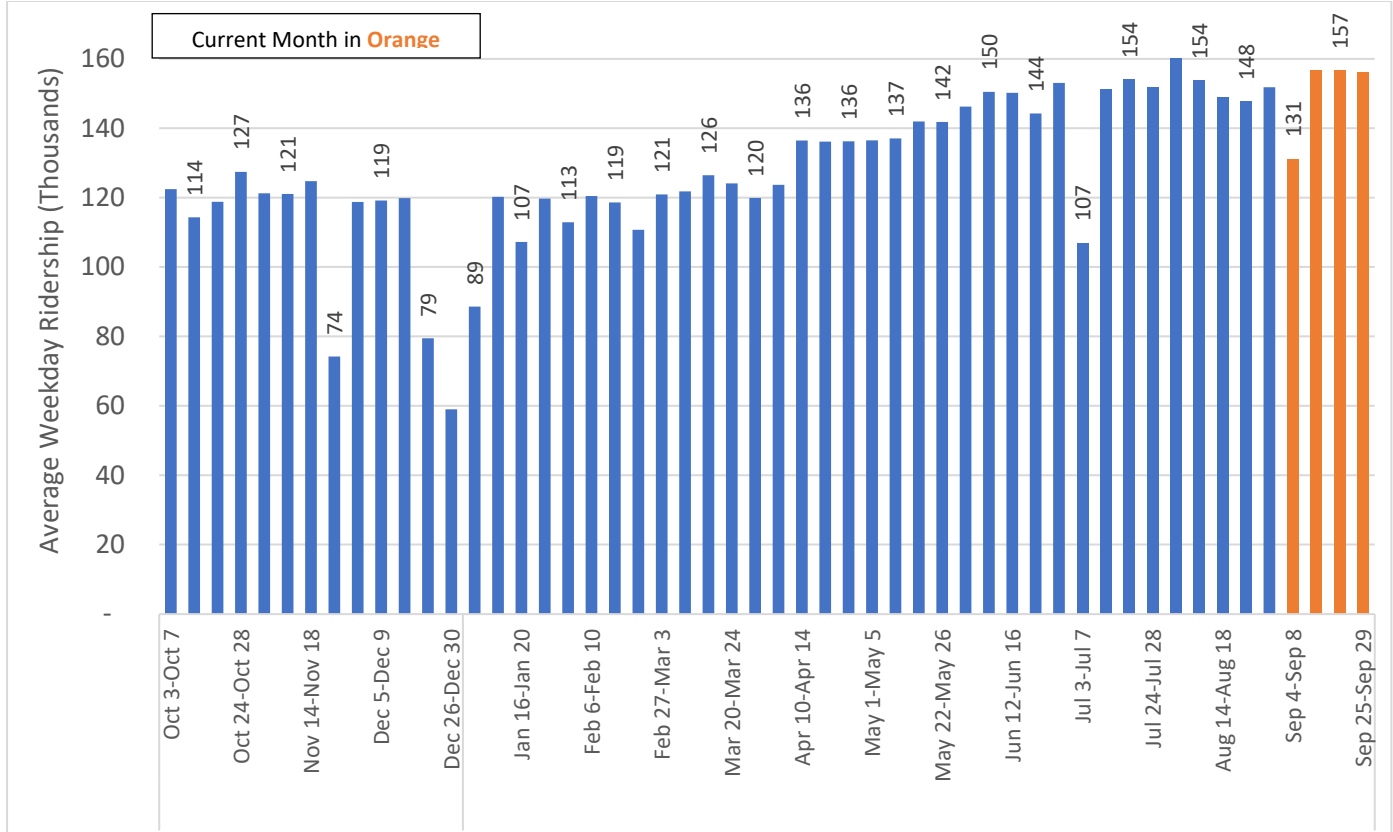


Exhibit 3

	2022			2023								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
Avg Weekday Load Chg. from Prior Month	1%	-2%	-12%	10%	3%	5%	9%	6%	5%	-2%	8%	-2%

**Weekday Passenger Loads for Month** (Fridays shown with grey bars)

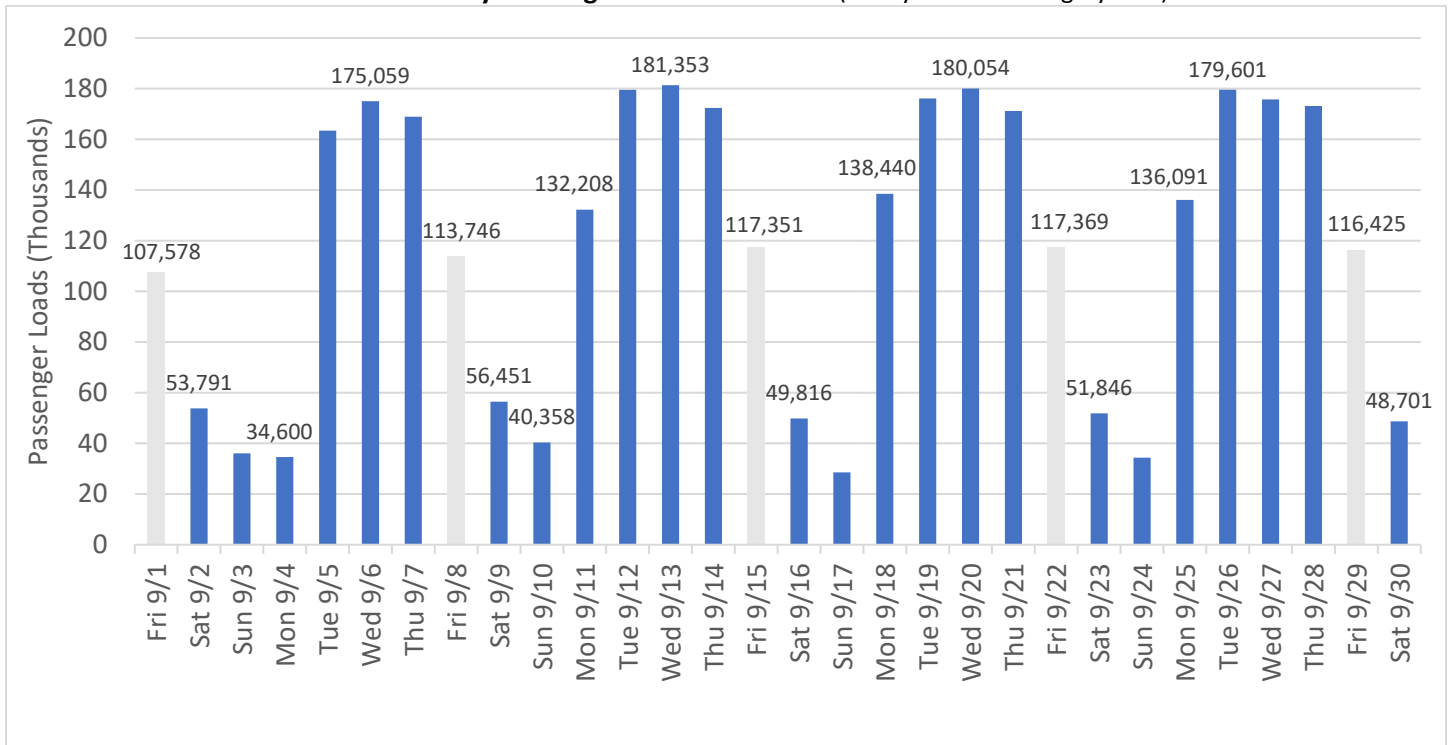


Exhibit 4

**September Ridership Highlights**

- After accounting for the impacts of Labor Day which depressed ridership during that week and Lollapalooza which inflated ridership during the first week of August, September average weekday loads experienced a slight increase of 2% from August.
- Installation of Metra’s new ticket vending machines began at downtown stations in September. For the first time, the machines offer tickets for all reduced fare customers, as well as the \$6 and \$10 Day Pass, previously only available on the Ventra app. The installation also marks the return a cash option to vending machines, as well as monthly passes.
- Metra added four trains to the BNSF and UP-NW lines for Bike the Drive on Sunday, September 3, equipped with bike cars. BNSF conductor counts indicate 49% of passengers on the line’s extra trains were carrying bicycles.
- The “Bears Extra” train returned to the Metra Electric on Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, carrying 367 passengers to Soldier Field.
- BNSF trains made extra stops at Western Ave for Riot Fest on Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, attracting an estimated 750 additional riders to the station compared to other weekends (based on Ventra app activity). Outbound passenger loads to Aurora were 14% lower than inbound passenger loads.
- Family Fares ended on Labor Day.

**Service Status**

Metra continues to restore service in different capacities on its lines, as ridership recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Schedules for four lines (BNSF, Metra Electric, Rock Island, and Union Pacific North) were redesigned to standardize stopping patterns and to increase midday service as part of a 2021 pilot schedule initiative. The UP-NW 2022 pilot schedule was further enhanced in April 2023 which included implementing hourly midday service, a level not reached even in the pre-COVID schedule. These lines have demonstrated a stronger midday recovery compared to the overall recovery of those lines and compared to the system’s midday as a whole. For example, the Union Pacific Northwest and Metra Electric each have recoveries of 99% and 93% during the midday compared to the system’s recovery of 78%.

Metra staff continually monitors ridership, operations data, and customer feedback on all lines to explore any opportunities for improvement.

**Ridership Recovery by Line & Service Period (Sep 2023 as a percentage of Sep 2019)**

Line	Peak	Rev Peak	Midday	Evening	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
BNSF	44%	43%	68%	59%	<b>47%</b>	74%	78%
HC	46%	-	-	-	<b>44%</b>	-	-
MD-N	51%	38%	70%	47%	<b>51%</b>	77%	83%
MD-W	40%	51%	70%	66%	<b>45%</b>	88%	87%
ME	42%	141%	93%	96%	<b>56%</b>	121%	119%
NCS	39%	32%	90%	0%	<b>42%</b>	-	-
RI	43%	85%	79%	54%	<b>48%</b>	86%	85%
SWS	41%	42%	51%	18%	<b>40%</b>	0%	-
UP-N	61%	61%	83%	100%	<b>66%</b>	91%	78%
UP-NW	55%	59%	99%	82%	<b>62%</b>	87%	106%
UP-W	60%	73%	60%	70%	<b>62%</b>	97%	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>90%</b>

Exhibit 5

**Monthly Pass Sales**

As area schools resumed class for the new school year, Metra sold over 40,000 Super Saver monthly passes, nearly quadrupling the number of customers on the pass since before the promotion started.

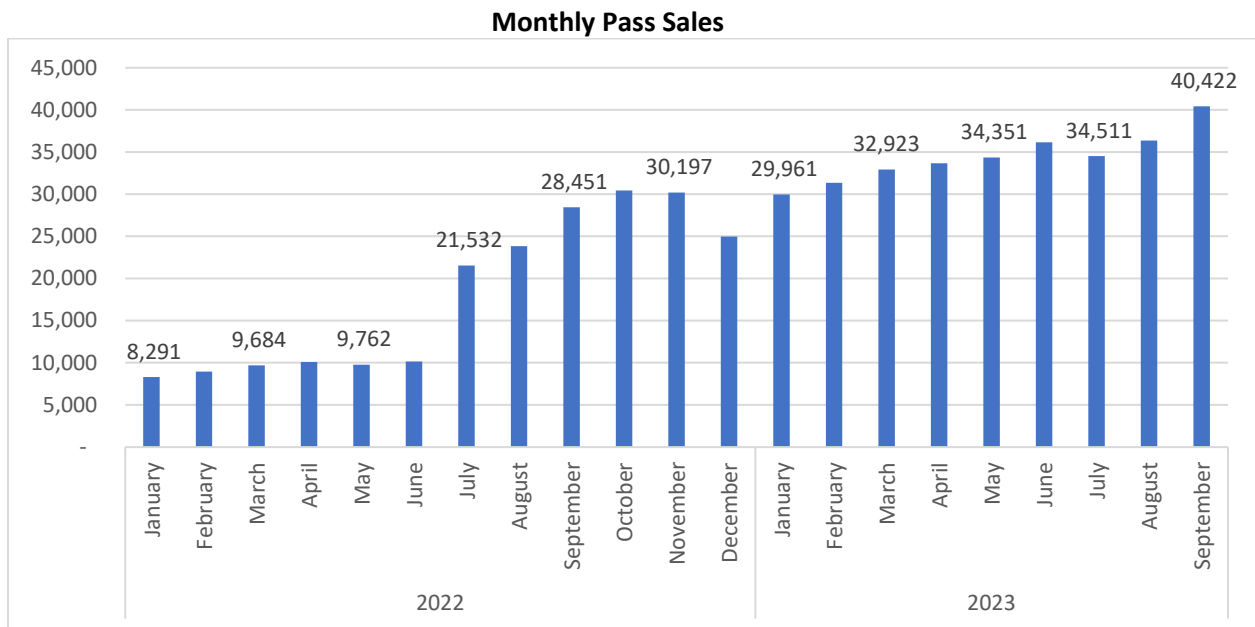


Exhibit 6

**Ridership by Ticket Type**

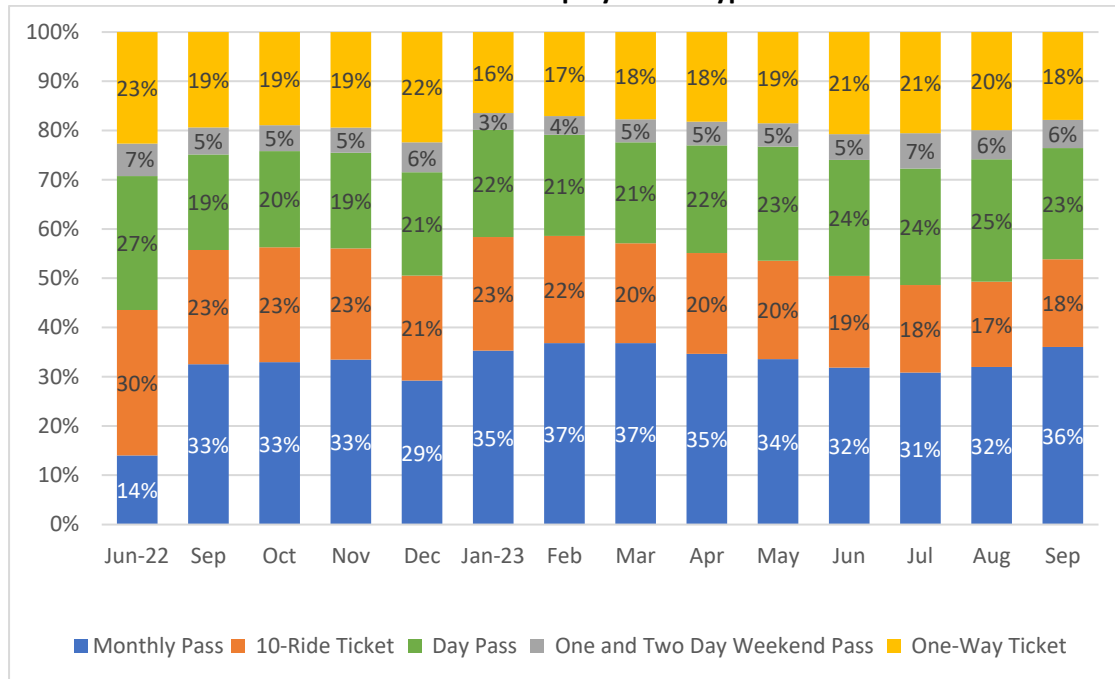


Exhibit 7

Note: Exhibit 7 excludes free trips

**Ticket Sales**

The following tables show ticket sales and ridership by ticket type and sales channel.

**Ticket Sales and Ridership by Ticket Type (thousands)**

Ticket Type	Ticket Sales				Ridership			
	Sep 2019	Sep 2023	Sep 2019 Share	Sep 2023 Share	Sep 2019	Sep 2023	Sep 2019 Share	Sep 2023 Share
Monthly Pass	85	40	7.8%	4.0%	3,667	1,012	59%	35%
10-Ride Ticket	151	50	13.8%	4.9%	1,508	500	24%	18%
One-Way Ticket	767	502	70.3%	49.3%	767	502	12%	18%
Weekend Pass	88	-	8.1%	0.0%	220	-	4%	0%
One Day Weekend Pass	-	74	0.0%	7.2%	-	123	0%	4%
Two Day Weekend Pass	-	18	0.0%	1.8%	-	37	0%	1%
Day Pass	-	333	0.0%	32.7%	-	635	0%	22%
\$6 Day Pass	-	112	0.0%	11.0%	-	211	0%	7%
\$10 Day Pass	-	221	0.0%	21.8%	-	424	0%	15%
RTA Ride Free Permit	-	-	0.0%	0.0%	77	43	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,092</b>	<b>1,017</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,240</b>	<b>2,851</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Exhibit 8

**Ridership by Sales Channel (thousands)**

Sales Channel	Ticket Sales				Ridership			
	Sep 2019	Sep 2023	Sep 2019 Share	Sep 2023 Share	Sep 2019	Sep 2023	Sep 2019 Share	Sep 2023 Share
Conductor	191	85	17%	8%	259	97	4%	3%
Commuter Benefit	34	6	3%	1%	1,161	111	19%	4%
Ventra App	583	817	53%	81%	2,878	2,230	46%	78%
Ticket Agent	254	93	23%	9%	1,672	344	27%	12%
Ticket Vending Machine	31	12	3%	1%	195	19	3%	1%
RTA Ride Free Permit	-	-	0%	0%	77	43	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>1,013</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,243</b>	<b>2,844</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Exhibit 9

Note: Values in Exhibits 8 and 9 do not add to total ridership due to Group Sales, Marketing Sales, and Refund Adjustments; 2019 data may not match previously reported totals due to late-reporting sales and refunds; 2023 data are preliminary and subject to revision as data is continuously reviewed throughout the year. Sales of incremental tickets are not included.

Prepared by: Daniel Miodonski, Senior Manager, Operations Planning & Analysis  
 Steven Mannella, Manager, Transportation Planning, Operations Planning & Analysis  
 Cody Wolcott, Principal Transportation Planner, Operations Planning & Analysis