

**CLIFF NOTES****Transit benefits offer savings to Metra riders**

We all know April is tax season and we all know it's no fun, but what some of you may not know is that

there's an easy way for mass transit users to shave their tax bills.



Alex Clifford
Metra CEO

Transit Benefits programs allow you to set aside up to

\$245 in pre-tax dollars a month to pay for your public transportation costs. What does that mean? In short, it means you don't pay taxes on the money you spend to get to and from work – up to \$2,940 a year. The savings depend on your tax bracket, but it's a good deal any way you calculate it.

This year the deal is even better for Metra riders, because the \$245 threshold is a significant increase from previous years. That amount now covers the cost of every monthly pass except those for our M Zone.

We learned in a recent survey that most of you take advantage of Transit Benefits programs if one is offered at your job. What we need to do now is convince the rest of you to sign up for the program if

(See Benefits on Page 4)

CHAIR CHAT**Metra to add to website to boost transparency**

Metra's website already offers a great deal of information to anyone interested in our agency, but it's about to offer a great deal more.

I've asked Metra staff to make some significant additions to the site in a variety of areas to be sure we are as transparent as we can possibly be. The



Brad O'Halloran
Chairman

website for Orland Park, where I serve as a trustee, was recently awarded a 100 percent score in the Illinois Policy Institute's Local

Transparency Project, and I want Metra's site to score just as highly.

As the institute's website says, the organization "promotes transparency and accountability as a first step towards good and effective government." As part of their project, they've created a handy 10-point checklist for governments to use to help them become more transparent. We'll be using the checklist in the coming months to add content to our site and make sure riders and taxpayers have full access to critical information.



Metra is taking steps to add information to its website to boost transparency.

"For democracy to work, citizens need access to the information about what government does," the group's website states. "Proactive transparency is the best way to educate society about the actions of government."

Some of the information on their checklist is already on

our website, but there are some areas where we can beef up the site and others where we can provide info that isn't already there. Here's a summary of their checklist and therefore a list of some of the information we'll be adding:

- Contact information for *(See Website on Page 4)*