

ON THE BI-LEVEL



Metra's Monthly Commuter Newsletter

April 2015

Survey measures rider satisfaction

Results tell Metra what we do right, and where we need to do better

Metra customers are satisfied overall with the service they are getting, but not as satisfied as they were in 2011, and they pointed to areas where we know we fell short of expectations and already are addressing.

That's the bottom-line summary of a customer satisfaction survey that was conducted last spring in conjunction with a related origin/destination survey that asked customers where they board, how they get to and from our stations and the purpose of their trips.

Safety is our No. 1 priority, and we are most proud that our commitment to safety and security is reflected in the results

of this survey. More than 90 percent of respondents said they were satisfied with how safely trains are operated (95 percent) and how safe they feel on the trains (94 percent), at boarding stations (92 percent) and at destination stations (92 percent).

Overall, nearly three out of four customers (73 percent) said they were satisfied with Metra service, and 71 percent said they were satisfied with the value of service for the fare paid. Similar percentages of customers said they were satisfied with on-time performance (71 percent), the number of rush-hour trains (75 percent) and the total travel time (75 percent). And more than 87 percent of respondents said they were highly likely to recommend Metra service to others.

Metra personnel also received
(Continued on Page 2)

Top Reasons for Riding Metra

Customers were asked to identify their top five reasons for using Metra, and these reasons were most commonly cited:

Avoid road congestion	27%
Convenience	13%
Cost savings	12%
Preferred travel option	10%
Only travel option	10%
Can work/read/nap	8%
Less stress	8%
Time savings	5%
On-time reliability	2%
Environmental concern	1%
Enjoy relaxing	1%
Safety	1%
Social time	<1%

A message about the state budget and mass transit

We know many of you have seen news stories about Gov. Bruce Rauner's proposed budget and its potential impact on the region's mass transit system. We want to assure all of our riders that we are fully engaged with the governor's office, members of the Legislature, the RTA and our fellow service boards and

are doing everything we can to stress the importance of mass transit to the Chicago region and to reach the best outcome for Metra.

Working with the RTA, CTA and Pace, we determined that the governor's proposal would cut a total of \$170 million from the region. Of that, Metra's proposed

cut would be \$20.8 million. Most of the rest – about \$130 million – would hit the CTA, while Pace would see a \$10 million cut and ADA service would be cut \$8.5 million.

It is early in the budget process and is too soon for Metra to be offering specific examples about how we would close such

a significant shortfall, should it pass the Legislature. We will not only work to minimize the cuts but we will also try to identify new sources of revenue to help with our funding needs.

We are committed to working with the governor throughout this process and keeping the lines of communication open.

Metra

On the Bi-Level

Published by Metra's Media Relations Department. Send letters, questions or feedback to On the Bi-Level, Metra, 547 W. Jackson, Chicago IL, 60661-5717. Or e-mail onthebilevel@metrarr.com.

We can't guarantee all letters will be printed or answered. Please keep letters to less than 200 words and include your first name, hometown and what line you ride. (Names are not required but strongly encouraged.) We reserve the right to edit letter for length and grammar.

Board of Directors

Martin J. Oberman
Chairman
Chicago

Jack E. Partelow
Vice Chairman
Will County

John Plante
Treasurer
Suburban Cook County

Rodney S. Craig
Secretary
Suburban Cook County

Manuel Barbosa
Director
Kane County

Romayne C. Brown
Director
Cook County

Norman Carlson
Director
Lake County

Don A. De Graff
Director
Suburban Cook County

Marc J. Munaretto
Director
McHenry County

Brian K. Reaves
Director
Suburban Cook County

John P. Zediker
Director
DuPage County

Don Orseno
Executive Director/CEO

1,000 cars and counting...

Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno spoke last month during ceremonies to mark the 1,000th car built by Sumitomo/Nippon Sharyo in the United States. The 1,000th car was one of the 160 new Highliners for the Metra Electric Line that are being built by Nippon Sharyo in a factory in Rochelle, Ill.



Survey

(Continued from Page 1)

high marks for being good ambassadors for Metra – 85 percent of customers were satisfied with the courtesy of onboard workers and 83 percent were satisfied with the courtesy of station agents.

And customers like our website. More than 86 percent of recent visitors found the site easy to read, and 77 percent found it easy to navigate. Customers also rated the site high for timely, understandable and easy-to-find information.

However, customer satisfaction rated higher in nearly all categories during the last customer service survey in 2011. Several factors likely contributed to the reduction.

First, the 2011 survey came before a Metra fare increase in 2012 and the elimination of the 10-ride discount in 2013. (The discount was restored this year.) And the 2014 survey came in the spring after the worst winter in Metra history, which negatively impacted on-time performance in the early part of last year, particularly during the “polar vortex” in January. Mechanical problems related to our aging equipment compounded the performance issues.

In addition, the survey was conducted while a major track construction project was snarling the BNSF Line, which is by far Metra’s most heavily used line. That project was likely responsible for the fact that only 43 percent of BNSF customers said they were satisfied with its on-time performance. And since BNSF riders represent 21 percent of Metra’s customers, their dissatisfaction with its on-time performance brought down the system’s overall results in that category.

That said, we don’t need the survey results to tell us we need to improve on-time performance. It’s something that we work on day in and day out, with a goal of operating at least 95 percent of our trains on time. We didn’t meet that goal in 2015, but we worked hard after the severe winter and we came close, hitting 94.3 percent.

BNSF Railway also has taken a variety of steps to improve its performance. Overall, our on-time performance in the first two months of 2015 is significantly better than the first two months of last year.

Customers also were less satisfied with our communications in 2014. For example, many thought alerts were too numerous and not specific enough. Again, we monitor customer concerns

daily, and we recognize the need to improve. Even as the survey was being conducted, we were taking a variety of steps to improve communications.

For example, we improved our email alert system so customers can choose a window of time during which they want to receive alerts about their line. That limits the number of alerts they receive and makes the ones they do receive more relevant and useful. We also started using more “blanket” alerts to cover major disruptions.

In addition, we upgraded our train tracker and made several changes in our GPS Center, including more training for employees and allowing them to make service announcements directly to trains.

Another improvement was Metra’s introduction this year of a plan to prevent overcrowding at Union Station during service disruptions, a change driven by customer input.

We will continue to monitor important service attributes through biannual online surveys starting this year. We really want to know what our customers are thinking.

For the full results of the survey, including lots of interesting data about Metra customers, please go to www.metrarail.com.

SOUND OFF

Gesundheit

I have been a rider on the UP Northwest Line for 25 years. Two issues continue to grind on me: 1) It is the height of disgusting when people sneeze without covering their mouths. I see it everyday. And it is no better when people pretend to “catch” the uncovered sneeze with their newspapers. Really? And I have seen people tell them to please cover their mouths when they sneeze, and the jerk gets very hostile. 2) Seat hogs. I am so disgusted when these jerks hear the announcement to remove their stuff and not block a second seat. Especially in the Quiet Car where I sit. Then they pretend not to hear it, and ignore it, very often when there are no seats available and people are standing in the aisles. And they act SOOO surprised when someone actually confronts them (not all that often) and asks them to move their stuff, and they pretend like, “Oh, WHAT an accident! I didn’t even realize my crap was blocking a seat!” The look of disgust they give, just because they actually have to share a seat! Want to stop seat hogs? Announce that if you block a seat, you will be charged an additional fare. No exceptions. And then enforce it! I guarantee it will stop right away. And if you worry that Metra would offend some selfish passengers, then realize that many others are offended by these jerks. Many will stand rather than risk a confrontation. That’s the reality. Maybe offer a grace period where the jerks will be warned 30 days before the new policy is implemented, like the Quiet Car introduction.

And btw, perhaps complaint No. 3: these same seat hogs always wait until the train pulls into the station, then immediately jump up and cut in front of passengers who were forced to stand

the whole trip! This rude conduct is not reserved just for seat hogs. I shake my head everyday when I see seated passengers cut in front of those forced to stand the whole trip.

Ira

What do you think, riders? Would charging double stop seat hogs? And what do we do about sneezing improperly?

More rude people

It really angers me when I see rude people with their feet propped up on the seats not having a care in the world that others have to sit in these seats. The crew doesn’t say one word. These are the same people who will get on the train and have the gall to look for a clean seat. I have seen seats with so much salt

and dirt from the snow that it’s really ridiculous. This is not your personal property nor is it an ottoman. Keep your feet on the floor where they belong.

Leesah

You wouldn’t think that would be something that needs a reminder, but it does: Feet go on the floor, not on the seat.

App for Windows?

In regard to the article on a mobile app, I want to know if there are plans to include a Windows phone app. I think you are missing out on a number of people by not including a Windows phone app initially.

Brian

We started out with Android and Apple because they domi-

nate the market – more than 90 percent of smartphones. We will be adding a third platform, which could be Windows, at a later date, though at this point we can’t give you a specific timeline.

Hands off it’s mine

Why do certain passengers have the mindset that they own a certain seat? To the group of women who are acting like teenagers when someone else is sitting in one of the four seats, there is no need to make derogatory remarks or kick the passenger the whole ride into downtown! You will have to find someone else to beat up in the morning as I have no desire to be involved in the drama that you so desperately want. It’s a shame that in today’s society the respect for your fellow passengers is nonexistent.

Kathie

We’re not sure your targets will recognize themselves here. So we’ll just issue a reminder to all to be polite out there, OK?

Wheelie bad

Briefcases and backpacks with wheels that have an extendable handle and convert into a “roller” seem to be getting more popular but also seem to be causing more problems. These are often present on already crowded rush-hour trains (and platforms) causing a serious trip hazard. If someone wants to be lazy on an open city sidewalk, that’s up to them – but they really need to be CARRIED on a rush-hour train, platform and/or station! Real and dangerous trouble is in store for someone unable to see a relatively small case being dragged.

Tripped and Ticked Off

While we can’t agree that using these is lazy, we can endorse your call to be careful with them.

Spring Travel Notes

Coming soon: vote for "People's Choice"

Metra wants you to choose your favorite among this year's Safety Poster Contest winners. Beginning Monday, April 20, voting for the annual People's Choice Award will be opened. Just follow the link on our website, select your favorite and vote. The winner will receive a \$250 gift card and will be honored along with the first-place winners in each grade level (K-12) at the June meeting of the Metra Board. More than 4,800 students from northeast Illinois participated in this year's contest, submitting posters and essays around the theme "Unplug for Safety." The contest, in its ninth year, helps Metra raise awareness among young people about the importance of safe behavior around trains and railroad tracks. Voting will begin April 20 and end May 29. To vote, go to Metra's website www.metrarail.com and follow the links to the voting page.

Metra wins another advertising award

Metra's online campaign promoting the rail service as the gateway to summer fun in Chicagoland was recently honored with a Silver ADDY award from the American Advertising Federation. The ads, created by Staples Marketing and Metra's marketing team as part of the "Metra Summer Fun" campaign last spring, won in the category of "Banners Standard." The federation's Madison, Wis., chapter announced the award Feb. 20. It's the second year in a row that a Metra campaign has received a Silver ADDY Award.

New commuting option in Downers Grove

Metra, Pace, the RTA, the Transportation Management Association of Lake Cook and other partners worked together to introduce a new commuting option for employees at the Esplanade office complex in Downers Grove. Starting April 6, Pace began Route 465 Belmont Station - Esplanade, offering four morning and three evening trips between the Esplanade and the Belmont Station on Metra's BNSF Line. Route 465 represents an expansion of the Shuttle Bug program, a public-private partnership between Pace, Metra and the TMA of Lake Cook resulting in the operation of several similar Pace routes in Cook and Lake counties. The three partners worked together for the development of Route 465 and were joined by the RTA, which provided grant funding and planning assistance. The remainder of the funding for the route's operations is coming from Hamilton Partners, the company that manages the Esplanade. Metra adjusted the timetables of two BNSF Line trains so they stop at the Belmont Station and coordinate with the new Pace bus route.

Contact Metra

If you have a complaint, compliment, service issue or any other issue, we want to hear from you. You can call a Passenger Service Representative at (312) 322-6777 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays) or send email to metrarail_feedback@metrarr.com.

READY, SAVE, GO!

Seniors 62 and up receive **15% off**.
Kids ages 2-12 receive **50% off**
regular adult fares, and kids
under 2 ride **free**.

VISIT AMTRAK.COM
OR CALL **1.800.U.S.A.RAIL**

 **AMTRAK**
Enjoy the journey.®

Restrictions apply.

Amtrak® and Enjoy the journey are registered service marks of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation.

5th ANNUAL
PASTORAL'S ARTISAN
PRODUCER FESTIVAL
AT THE **CHICAGO FRENCH MARKET** 131 N. CLINTON
SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2015 11AM-3PM • FREE TO THE PUBLIC
PRESENTED BY: The Specialty Food Association

visit PASTORALARTISAN.COM for more

free to the public
chef and artisan
food demonstrations
meet over 90 producers
taste artisan foods, craft beers,
spirits and wines from
around the world



Metra Union Pacific trains take you directly there!
Ride all weekend long for just \$8
Conveniently located in the Ogilvie Transportation center, just blocks from Union Station!

 **PASTORAL**
ARTISAN CHEESE, BREAD & WINE

presented by
CHICAGO
French Market
A BENSIDOUN MARKET

 **specialty food**
association™