

# Metra

# ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, August 2009



Rep. Bobby L. Rush (center), flanked by Metra Chairman Carole Doris on the left and Director Larry Huggins on the right, joins other dignitaries, including IIT President John Anderson (third from left) and Ald. Pat Dowell (next to Huggins) to break ground on the new Lovana S. "Lou" Jones/Bronzeville Station on the Rock Island Line.

## Metra starts work on new station

Metra has started work on a new station in Chicago at 35th St. along the Rock Island line, a project that promises another mass transit alternative for White Sox fans, Illinois Institute of Technology students, local workers and neighborhood residents.

The station is being funded with \$4.9 million in federal money secured by U.S. Rep. Bobby L. Rush (D-Chicago), a longtime supporter of the project, and an additional \$6.8 million from the federal stimulus bill, known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Construction is expected to be completed by the fall of 2010.

"I supported the economic recovery package because I believed that money and

resources would come to Illinois to help the people and communities I represent," said Rep. Rush. "This Metra station is one such project that will benefit both students and commuters going back and forth to work. It will open doors for employment and contracting opportunities for hardworking people in the 1st Congressional District who are struggling economically in these hard times."

"I can't emphasize enough that everyone here today truly owes a debt of gratitude to Rep. Rush, who went above and beyond to ensure that this project became a reality, and that the benefits of this station will not only extend to the community it will serve but to the 100 workers from this region who will

build it," said Metra Chairman Carole Doris.

The Metra Board of Directors voted in June to name the stop the Lovana S. "Lou" Jones/Bronzeville Station, after the longtime Assistant Majority Leader for the State of Illinois who represented the area for nearly 20 years. She died in 2006.

IIT provided Metra an easement on its property to facilitate the construction of the station.

"We are delighted to cooperate with Metra to build a new station at 35th Street," said John Anderson, president of IIT. "It will provide a new way for our students, faculty, staff and visitors to come to our campus, as well as provide access to the surrounding communities of

Bronzeville and Bridgeport."

In addition to U.S. Cellular Field to the west and IIT to the east, the station also will serve Chicago Police Headquarters, De La Salle Institute and the redeveloping Stateway Gardens housing complex. And it will serve anyone wanting to avoid frequent traffic congestion on the Dan Ryan Expressway to get to the area.

The station also will provide a convenient link between CTA and Metra service on the South Side.

The new, fully accessible station will feature heated ramps, stairways, eight-car platforms, heated platform shelters, bicycle racks, benches, Metra's audio and visual information system, lighting and landscaping.



## 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 letters for length and grammar.

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# SOUNDING BOARD

Got a question, we've got an answer

## Painful to the ears

I know in today's day and age it's far too much to ask that intercom systems work without static and ear-bleeding screeching, and that the operators of such systems be aware that certain intercoms in certain cars are left on the whole ride with LOUD static resonating through the ears of passengers during the grueling 45-minute ride first thing every morning, but, please please tell the announcer on the 7:30 a.m. train from Flossmoor to Randolph to **TURN HIS MICROPHONE DOWN!!!** Everyone, EVERYONE in every car on the train squinches when he speaks, and he speaks A LOT. He repeats everything he says, and hearing him at that volume, in contention with all other loud screeching and static is enough to push ANYONE over the edge!

Sincerely,  
Long-term rider who  
deserves his voice to be heard,  
and for something to be done  
about this issue!

*We've had a word with the conductor in question. He's been advised to turn the volume down. We hope you notice a difference.*

## Crossing troubles

I was told by a Berwyn alderman that it is Metra's decision to close the crosswalk on the BNSF that's two blocks east of Harlem for "safety reasons." As we know, the inbound rush hour trains travel on the south track. Myself and fellow commuters who live north of the tracks find this to be a nuisance and since the crosswalk was recently demolished, I have already seen four instances of people running and crossing at

Harlem with gates down and in front of express trains! Yes, you are actually endangering people.

Metra's answer? Probably "they should leave earlier." C'mon. There are these mid-track crosswalks at Glenview (which has Glenview Ave just a couple of wee blocks south of these two crosswalks), North Glenview, Mayfair, Grayland, etc....the list goes on.

When's the last time someone got hit near Harlem? Uh, about four years ago I saw someone get hit AT Harlem, NOT the crosswalk, by a two-car slow-moving automated engine fleet because she was not paying attention.

So what's the "Sounding Board" answer you got?

John  
BNSF

*The decision to close that crossing was made by BNSF with Metra's OK. It is for safety reasons. And we can hardly be blamed for endangering people who willfully go around crossing gates. Having to cross at Harlem is a bit inconvenient, but it's a small price to pay for a safety improvement.*

## That's a wrap

What is up with these new "Metra Wrap" passenger cars? I've seen two different ones; the Enjoy Illinois one with the presidents and the Supercuts one. What goes into wrapping a passenger car? What is the wrap made of, some sort of a vinyl plastic? How is it applied, with heat or does it just stick on? If it just sticks on, I would be scared to get a wrinkle in it!

Just curious, how much does one of these moving adds cost? Are more of these on the way? I

think they make the train a little more colorful and interesting to watch roll into the station.

Matt  
BNSF

*These wraps are a pilot project Metra is conducting this year. So far we've done the two you mentioned but more are coming. The wrap is a self-adhesive vinyl that is applied very carefully, in sections, lest there be wrinkles. Then heat guns are used to smooth things out. So far the project has brought in tens of thousands of dollars. Metra also is taking ads for train interiors, stations, schedules, Ticket By Mail program and this newsletter. E-mail our Marketing Department at marketing@metrarr.com for more information.*

## Stormy question

After last night's storms, a number of the traffic lights were knocked out and flashing red. How do power outages affect RR crossings? Is there any way to tell if the signal has lost power? Is there an emergency backup? What if the gates haven't the power to go down, the lights haven't the power to flash?

John

*The highway crossing gates and signals all have backup batteries in the event of power failures. Many of them also have a "power on" light that indicates whether it has power. Our train signals and switches also have backup batteries or generators. The exception is the Metra Electric, whose switches and signals are powered by the catenaries that also run the train. If they go out, so does the train, so backups aren't needed.*

# SOUND OFF

“...the snarky, snotty observations by Metra’s customers about fellow commuters ... offer some of the best free entertainment around.” - SouthtownStar, March 13, 2009

## Seathogs, Part 144

The June Sound Off was amusing, as usual and, yes, the Northwest riders are (for the most part) a congenial lot.

I have a suggestion for solving the “seathog” problem. Let’s designate one month “Oust the Seathogs” month and we (non-seathogs) can all participate in teaching our fellow passengers (seathogs) the art of good manners. If we (non-seathogs) all do our part to occupy seats cluttered with bags, boxes and other debris, I am sure they (seathogs) will get the message. We (non-seathogs) can even offer to relocate their possessions in an effort to make the process more palatable.

Who (seathogs?) could possibly object to the offer of help from a fellow (non-seathog) passenger?

Metra could even sponsor a special design for the monthly tickets reminding people (seathogs, iPod players, cell phone users, litterers, and any others with annoying habits) this is public transportation and they (the aforementioned) are not the only passengers on the train.

Keep up the good work!

Cheryl  
UP Northwest

*Now that’s the spirit. Except we don’t need a special month. We can set about educating those seathoggers any time, all the time.*

## Bloody nails, etc.

Responses to the last Sound Off:

To Ann of Milwaukee North (the nail-biter): Just as long as you swallow and have bandages to wrap up the bloody fingertips – CHEW AWAY!



### Darned if we do

Every issue there are complaints about cell phone users. The loudest, most annoying person we have to deal with on the 604 Northwest line inbound train is one of the conductors. Today he loudly, and poorly, sang happy birthday to a passenger.

He has also rooted for his favorite sports teams and has the occasional rambling announcement for items not related to Metra. Based on the groans and grimaces I saw today I am far from the only passenger that is tired of this.

Signed,

The PA system is not a toy

*We forwarded your complaint to the right people at Union Pacific. They had a word with the conductor to remind him that singing happy birthday, while a nice gesture, is not an appropriate use of the intercom system. A few days later, we got the following e-mail:*

To Rochelle (the loud headphone-wearer): Don’t let people who don’t have enough sense to know when to use their “inside voice” cause you to lose your



### Darned if we don’t

Few riders on No. 604 out of Mount Prospect are alive or lively. Most of us, me included, ride the train downtown as if it is our own personal morgue, in a silent zoned out stupor. On Tuesday, one of the conductors had the audacity to bring a moment of levity to our trip by singing the happy birthday song over the intercom to a passenger named Sue. For this offense, at least one of my fellow travelers felt the need to complain to Metra, who then in turn chastised said conductor to prevent any further outbursts of light-hearted behavior. This zombie rider is not anti-life and hopes our conductor will one day be able to sing again.

Jim

*Sheesh, we can’t win. We don’t want to be killjoys – or music critics, for that matter – but PA does stand for “public announcements” and not “public annoyance.”*

hearing. All of that incessant chatter is annoying, especially first thing in the morning; but there are some people who would rather die than be quiet.

We have to share this planet, and the train, with them. Sad to say, but we have to be the “bigger person” and learn to tune them out.

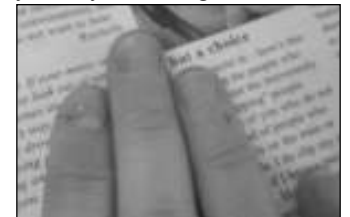
To the anonymous Plus-Sized Rider: People who can’t stand (or sit, in this case) in your presence, are hating. You know, and I know, you’re not invading their space. Therefore, don’t take it personally. They’ll always find something to be miserable about.

Pam  
BNSF

*We’re sure all plus-sized, headphone-blasting, fingernail-gnawing passengers appreciate your thoughts.*

## Nailing it

Thanks so much for publishing my letter on biting my nails! So far most people agree with the editor’s comments LOL. It’s a horrible addiction I’ve been trying to stop for years, but lately I’ve been doing much better. I even took a picture to show you! My index finger’s nail is



growing out (I bit it from the nail bed up – that was a very BAD, BAD day).

Funny thing is, with me, I only bite when a nail is uneven, so I only will clip, bite or file with one nail enough to get it even.

Thanks so much for your great advice and I always love your comments and look forward to reading your “baby” every month.

Ann

## Summer travel notes

### Metra Board gets two new members

Two new members have been appointed to the Metra Board of Directors.

Willis E. Pennington Jr. was appointed by the president of the Cook County Board and confirmed by County Board members. He replaces Elonzo Hill, who died in February. He has served on the Olympia Fields Board of Trustees since he was first elected in 2005. Mr. Pennington has more than 30 years of experience in the insurance industry and is currently employed by Global Resource Managers as a reinsurance consultant and transactional auditor.

John E. (Jack) Partelow of Naperville was appointed to the Metra Board by the Will County Executive. He replaces Michael Smith. Mr. Partelow was Chairman of the Will County Republican Party from 1998 until 2008. He retired in 1994 after a 32-year career at Dunn and Bradstreet, where he rose to the position of senior vice president, national field operations.

### Update on MetraMarket

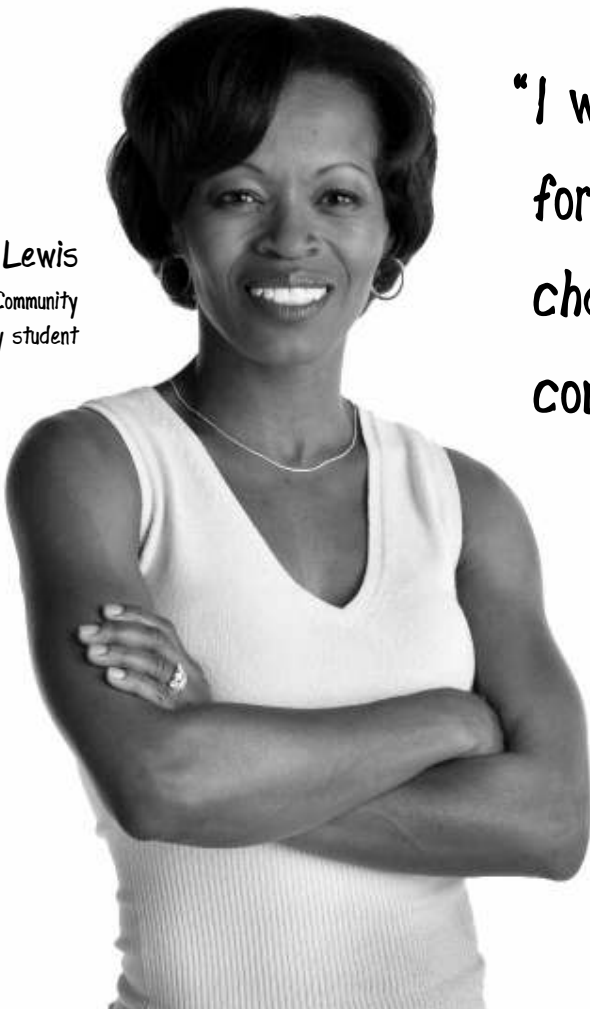
Espression by Lavazza, a genuine Italian café, has announced plans to open a location at MetraMarket – the restaurant, retail and marketplace development now under construction at Ogilvie Transportation Center. Lavazza is Italy's leading coffee company and its unique concept café at MetraMarket, Espression by Lavazza, will be the third of its kind in North America, joining the other Chicago locations at the John Hancock Observatory and the Drake Hotel. The café is expected to open this fall.

Other MetraMarket tenants includes CVS, the nation's largest pharmacy retailer, which will open in September, and the French Market, Chicago's first year-round French market, also slated to open later this fall. The 15,000-square-foot market will feature dozens of local vendors offering an array of foods, including fresh produce, meats, cheeses and baked goods, as well as an assortment of prepared meals.

The work at OTC also includes installation of new energy-saving lights, a new family restroom and new electronic train schedules. For more information, visit [www.metramarket.com](http://www.metramarket.com).

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