



Photo by Mark Llanuza

Waving goodbye to a 54-year career

Metra Engineer Wayne Radabaugh waves to a crowd of well-wishers at Chicago Union Station last month as he climbs into a Milwaukee North Line locomotive for the last time. Radabaugh, 72, of Waukesha, Wis., started working for the Milwaukee Road in 1959, well before that railroad went bust. He jumped to Metra in 1992, commuting 106 miles a day from Waukesha to Fox Lake for his job on the Milwaukee North Line. That required him to wake up at 2:45 a.m. in order to make it to Fox Lake in time for his first morning run. Radabaugh, who is married with two daughters and one granddaughter, has plans to hit the golf course a lot more often when the weather's nice. "What I am always going to miss about Metra are the people I've worked with," he said.

Metra plans drives for toys and coats

Riders who want to donate a toy or coats to needy Chicagoans will be able to do so this month when Metra hosts a toy drive and then a coat drive at its downtown stations.



Toys for Tots Dec. 11

Metra is hoping to transform its trains into Santa's sleds for the second year in a row by working with the U.S. Marines and PODS of Chicago on a Toys for Tots drive Wednesday, Dec. 11.

Metra riders are asked to consider donating new, unwrapped toys to the campaign, an annual event orchestrated by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation. The Toys for Tots program relies on the generosity of the public, and it is that generosity that brings the idea of Santa Claus to the homes of less fortunate children.

Collection boxes will be set up at Millennium Station, Van Buren St. Station, LaSalle St. Station, Chicago Union Station and the Ogilvie Transportation Center for Metra riders who wish to donate a toy to a needy child.

The collection boxes will be staffed by Marines and Metra workers from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. on

Dec. 11. Containers donated by PODS of Chicago will be used to collect and store the donated toys, and U-Haul will help with transporting the toys.

"Last year our riders demonstrated spectacular generosity, donating more than 3,000 toys and about \$3,500 in cash," said Metra Interim Executive Director Don Orseno. "We hope to do even better this year."

"Every child deserves to have a bright Christmas and have their holiday wishes come true," said Brett Schnitzius, Regional Director for PODS of Chicago. "We believe in giving back to the community and are proud to work with Metra by providing our moving and storage containers wherever needed to help collect gifts for these deserving children."

Local IHOP restaurants also will accept donations for the Toys for Tots campaign through Dec. 15.

Coat Drive Dec. 16-17

A week later, Metra will help with the annual NBC5/Telemundo/Salvation Army coat drive by placing collection boxes at the same five downtown stations all day on Monday, Dec. 16 and Tuesday, Dec. 17. Riders are asked to consider donating a new or gently worn coat.

"By locating the collection boxes right at our downtown stations, we hope to make it as
(Continued on Page 4)



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

Jack E. Partelow
Acting Chairman
Will County

Jack Schaffer
Treasurer
McHenry County

Arlene J. Mulder
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

Martin J. Oberman
Director
Chicago

John Plante
Director
Suburban Cook County

Brian K. Reaves
Director
Suburban Cook County

John P. Zediker
Director
DuPage County

Don Orseno
Interim Executive Director

Link-Up and PlusBus cards moving to Ventra In January

The transition for Link-Up and PlusBus cards from magnetic stripe cards to the new Ventra-branded cards has been delayed by one month. That means Metra Monthly Pass users who buy a Link-Up or PlusBus card for connecting travel to the CTA and Pace will receive a magnetic stripe card in December and the new Ventra-compatible cards starting in January.

The December PlusBus magnetic stripe card will look the same. However, the December Link-Up magnetic stripe card will look different: it will say "30-day pass" on the front and back, but printed on the back will be "Metra Link-Up Valid Dec. 2013." It will be valid for the entire month. These are the cards supplied to Metra by the CTA.

When the transition to Ventra Link-Up and PlusBus cards occurs in January, riders need to be aware of several changes. Riders simply need to tap the cards on the Ventra readers on CTA and

Pace buses and on CTA train turnstiles to pay their fares. They will not need to register their cards with Ventra.

The new cards will be available through Metra's usual sales channels. The price will not change, nor will the rules governing when the cards can be used.

- The Link-Up Card will still cost \$55 and will be valid for unlimited rides on Pace at all times and on the CTA on weekdays from 6 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

- The PlusBus Card will still cost \$30 and be valid for unlimited rides on Pace at all times.

Unlike the old cards, which were valid during the month printed on the back, the new cards are valid for 30 days from the first date of use and do not have a date printed on them.

Because of that change:

- Riders should remember not to use their cards before the first day of the month. To help riders keep track of their cards, Metra

will affix a sticker indicating the month and year on the cards starting in January. (We don't want riders to accidentally use the wrong card; for instance, at the end of the month when they still are using their January card but have already received their February card.)

- For CTA Link-Up users during certain 31-day months and for Pace Link-Up and PlusBus users during all 31-day months, a different procedure for paying fares will be required on the 31st day. In those months, the 30-day cards no longer will be accepted by the Ventra readers on the 31st day (assuming they were activated on the 1st day of the month). Instead, riders will need to show their Link-Up or PlusBus cards to the bus operator or CTA rail station attendant to gain entry to the system.

Link-Up and PlusBus cards are not refundable. Problems or damaged cards should be reported to Ventra at 1-877-669-8368.

SOUND OFF

Are your fellow riders still hogging (seats), clogging (the aisles), blabbing (on their cellphones), plopping (their feet on the seats), clipping (their nails) or even – say it's not so – flipping (the pages of their magazines too forcefully)? If they are, would it make you feel better to vent about it? Starting in January, you will be able to do that again when "Sound Off" makes its return.

What's the point, you ask? We can explain it no better than we did when "Sound Off" debuted in 1989:

"This compilation of (almost) verbatim complaints, remarks and quips will apply a small dose of not-so-subtle peer pressure in an effort to resolve those areas of chronic concern to you, the Metra rider. If you've got a gripe, present it in a witty, literate and slightly sardonic fashion and send it to us. ...Does something that happens on your train get your goat? Tell us. We expose goat-getters."

Or, as we said on another occasion, "'Sound Off' is a humorous (we hope!) way of confronting stress-inducing behavior in hopes of eradicating (or at least minimizing) it." Or: "Good manners can't be legislated. But bad manners can be publicized!"

So start sending us those letters again. We can have a little fun, perhaps correct some annoying behavior and maybe encourage a bit more courtesy. The address is: onthebilevel@metrarr.com

'Tis the season to ride Metra

Chicago offers a wealth of attractions, events and shopping experiences for a fun-filled holiday season. Take Metra downtown this December and celebrate with your family at one of these holiday activities. Special weekend fares include the \$7 Weekend Pass for unlimited rides on Saturday and Sunday, and Family Fares, where up to three children 11 and under ride free with any adult on weekends and select holidays.



OUTDOOR FUN

McCormick Tribune Ice Rink, Millennium Park

Enjoy free ice skating and take in the stunning Chicago skyline at the 16,000-square-foot rink. Skate rentals (\$10) are available.

When: Nov. 15 to March 9, 2014 (weather permitting)

Where: Michigan between Washington and Madison.

Caroling at Cloud Gate, Millennium Park

Bundle up to go caroling in beautiful Millennium Park with local choral groups.

When: Fridays at 6 p.m., Nov. 29 to Dec. 20.

Where: Michigan between Washington and Madison.

SHOPPING

Christkindlmarket

This traditional German-American holiday market is one of Chicago's most popular holiday attractions.

When: Daily, Nov. 26 to Dec. 24.

Where:

Daley Plaza, 50 W. Washington.
www.christkindlmarket.com

One of a Kind Show & Sale

More than 600 artists present an assortment of hand-crafted items, including jewelry, accessories, clothing, home décor and more.

When: Dec. 5 to Dec. 8.

Where: Merchandise Mart, 222 Merchandise Mart Plaza.
www.oneofakindshowchicago.com

ATTRACTIONS

Winter Wonderfest

The 170,000-square-foot Winter Wonderfest at Navy

demonstrations, holiday crafts, and much more.

When: Weekends until Dec. 22, then nightly until Jan. 5.

Where: Lincoln Park Zoo, Cannon Drive at Fullerton Parkway.

www.lpzoo.org

UL Santa House

Visit with Santa in a replica of his North Pole workshop.

When: Nov. 26 to Dec. 24.

Where: Daley Plaza, 50 W. Washington.

Christmas Around the World & Holidays of Light

This event at the Museum of Science and Industry features a beautifully decorated 45-foot Grand Tree surrounded by more than 50 smaller trees that represent different cultures and traditions.

When: Nov. 14 to Jan. 5

Where: 57th St. and Lake Shore Drive.

www.msichicago.org

THEATER

Holiday dramas abound in Chicago's world-class theaters. Visit www.choosechicago.com for details:

A Christmas Carol at the Goodman Theater.

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical at Cadillac Palace Theatre.

The Nutcracker, Joffrey Ballet, Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University.

The 29th Annual Music Box Theatre Holiday Show at Music Box Theatre.

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose at Raven Theatre.

Pier features ice skating, inflatable slides, rides, entertainment and more.

When: Dec. 6 to Jan. 12.

Where: 600 E. Grand.
www.winterwonderfest.com

Lincoln Park Zoo ZooLights

More than 2 million lights shine bright at Lincoln Park Zoo, creating a luminous setting for experiencing animal encounters and holiday happenings such as seeing Santa at the zoo, live ice carving

Winter Travel Notes

Metra Board approves 2014 budget

The Metra Board of Directors has approved a 2014 budget and 2015-2016 financial plan that does not include any changes in fares while still maintaining the same level of service. Metra's 2014 budget is \$728.6 million for operations and \$580.7 million for capital. That capital budget is higher than the \$207.3 million for capital that was in the draft budget last month. It now includes an extra \$2 million that the RTA agreed to provide Metra. It also includes Metra's remaining shares of two state bond programs: \$80.7 million from Jobs Now and \$290.7 million from Jump Start. The bond money, however, is subject to release by the state.

Getting ready for winter

Metra's winter weather plan is put into action whenever the area is expected to have a significant snowfall. The plan puts extra workers in the field to clear station platforms and nearby areas and to keep critical switches clear of snow and ice. It also calls for maintaining constant and timely communication with our riders, which is done through e-mail alerts, our website, stations and train announcements, TV and radio reports and direct communication with station and train personnel. Please remember to allow extra time to get to your station and use extra caution on roads, parking lots, sidewalks and platforms. And a reminder to our reverse commuters: Don't wait too long in the depot on the inbound side before crossing over the tracks to catch your train. Allow yourself plenty of time to safely get across the tracks before your train arrives at the station.



Metra Interim Executive Director Don Orseno on Nov. 11 addressed the Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce about Metra's recent activities and future plans. Pictured (left to right) are David Hinderliter, president and CEO of the group; Metra Board Members Brian K. Reaves and Romayne C. Brown; Maureen Kelly, Director of Governmental and Community Relations for Governors State University; Orseno; and John Currier, a CPA and the group's immediate past chairman.

Coats

(Continued from Page 1)

easy as possible for those who want to donate a coat to this

worthy cause," Orseno said.

Donations can also be made at the NBC Chicago Studios, at 401 N. Michigan, on Wednesday, Dec. 18 from 4:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



Mike Curry, 8, of Chicago loves trains, and he loves to walk over to his neighborhood Norwood Park Station and watch the Metra trains roll by. So when it came time to pick his Halloween costume he knew just what to be. Many thanks to his parents, Michael and Kelly, for creating the costume and sending this photo our way.

Think Safety for the Holidays!

Holiday season activities have us rushing around to school and family events, and we can unintentionally put safety on the back burner. That's why understanding and observing safety rules around our region's railroad tracks are important, especially at this time of year. Getting our region's children involved in Metra's Safety Poster and Essay Contest is a great way to reinforce safety lessons. We're currently accepting entries for the 8th Annual Metra Safety Contest. Students in grades K-12 from the six-county region Metra serves are invited to create a poster or essay using this year's theme, "Get Smart: Look, Listen, and Live." They could win an iPad or cash prizes! The deadline for entries is Jan. 31, 2014. Contest rules and information are available at www.metracontest.com. Also, remember to become a fan of the Metra contest Facebook page for exclusive news and announcements. You can also reach us with any questions at metracontest@metrarr.com.

Use "Family Fares" this holiday season

Metra will extend its popular "Family Fares" to all weekdays from Monday, Dec. 23 through Friday, Jan. 3. Normally available only on weekends and major holidays, the Family Fares program allows up to three children 11 and under to ride free with a fare-paying adult. On weekends, families can realize additional savings with Metra's \$7 Weekend Pass for unlimited Saturday/Sunday rides.

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 metrail_feedback@metrarr.com.