

# ON THE BI-LEVEL

Metra®



Metra's Monthly Commuter Newsletter

June 2015

## Weekend express trains coming to Rock Island

Starting June 6 and lasting through Nov. 29, Metra will launch a trial program to enhance weekend service on the Rock Island Line by adding express trains that will speed the trip from suburban stations to downtown Chicago by about 20 minutes.

On weekdays, the Rock Island Line has trains that use the Beverly Branch as well as express trains that use the mainline tracks to bypass Beverly. But under the current weekend schedule, all trains on Saturdays and Sundays use the Beverly Branch to and from downtown. That creates a slower trip for riders who board in Blue Island or stations further south between Blue Island and Joliet.

Under the new trial service – which is timed to coincide with the months of peak weekend ridership – six mainline express trains will be added to the schedule in each direction on Saturdays and Sundays, creating speedier service for suburban riders without affecting service to those along the Beverly Branch. Suburban cus-

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IDOT Deputy Director of Transit David Spacek (from left), U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, Metra Director of Community Affairs Lynne Corrao, Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno, Metra Chairman Martin Oberman and RTA Regional Administrator Marisol Simon toured the new outbound half of Ravenswood Station before it opened last month.

## Metra gets to work in construction season

Metra has a variety of construction work planned for its tracks, stations, parking lots and other facilities this year, some of which is already underway.

The work is part of Metra's \$330 million capital budget, which covers infrastructure improvements. It is funded primarily by federal and state grants but also includes a small amount of

fare revenue (most fare revenue goes to a separate budget, the operating budget, to help cover our day-to-day operating costs). This year, for the first time, that budget includes \$100 million in Metra borrowing, which will be paid back with fare revenue.

As we have frequently pointed out, Metra does not have enough resources in its

capital budget to cover its huge infrastructure needs. The latest estimate from the RTA is that Metra needs \$11.7 billion over the next decade to achieve and maintain the system in a state of good repair. We can optimistically expect about a fourth of that from traditional federal and state sources.

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## 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](mailto: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.

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## Work

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Faced with such a shortfall, we try to make do with the funding we do have. Below is a summary of some of the more significant work.

### Stations

Last month we opened the new outbound side of the Ravenswood Station and the renovated platforms at Flossmoor, and Geneva opened the third level of the parking deck at that station. One other major station project is nearly complete: the construction of a pedestrian tunnel in Lombard and related platform and shelter improvements.

We are also finishing work on the platforms at Downers Grove Main St., doing masonry repairs at Oak Park and Glencoe, repairing the roof and interior at LaGrange Road and replacing the platforms at Deerfield, 91st St. and Mokena. Other planned work includes a minor rehab for the Villa Park depot, rehabilitation and other related work at Waukegan, platform and shelter work at Mayfair and Grayland and the reconstruction of the Healy Station.

We also will continue our beautification work at several stations, which consists of significant cosmetic improvements to shelters, platforms, stairs and other station features. Among the

stations scheduled for this year are Racine, Ashland, State St., Stewart Ridge and West Pullman.

### Track

This year we will be replacing about 38,000 ties total on the Metra-owned lines and yards. We've completed a 12-mile section from North Glenview to Libertyville on the Milwaukee North Line, and are now finishing a 4.5-mile, three-track stretch north from Canal St. near Union Station to the junction of the Milwaukee North and West tracks in the Hermosa neighborhood of Chicago.

We also will be building a new section of track near Van Buren St. Station downtown and replacing ties in two Metra Electric yards. Work will then move to a 20-mile stretch from Robbins to Joliet on the Rock Island Line.

### Other work

This year we are completing the third bay of a bridge on the Englewood Flyover, which will give us room to add a third track to the bridge if necessary in the future.

We will be renewing about 30 of our 571 grade crossings.

We will be undertaking a variety of signal and switch projects, including upgrading several switching locations and making them compliant with the federally mandated Positive Train Control safety system.

We also will begin installation of Visual Information System

signs at the last 49 stations that don't have them.

And we'll be doing assorted work along the Metra Electric Line to boost the power for that line's new Highliner cars. That work includes building new electrical substations and upgrading smaller tie stations to substations.

### Work on the horizon

We have three new stations being planned: Peterson Ridge (about 90 percent designed), Auburn Park (65 percent designed) and Romeoville (10 percent designed)

Design is underway for adding a third track to two sections of the UP West that now have only two. One section is from the River Forest Station to 25th St. in Melrose Park and the other is from Kress Rd. in West Chicago to Peck Rd. in Geneva. We would expect to start that work next year. Adding the third track will remove two bottlenecks along the line so that commuter trains and freight trains can move more fluidly, reducing delays.

We are also in the design phase for the next part of our UP North bridge replacement program. Work is expected to begin next year on new bridges for the inbound tracks over 11 streets between Balmoral and Grace and the inbound half of the Ravenswood Station.

Lastly, we have major rehabs planned for the Calumet and Hazel Crest stations.

## Rock

(Continued from Page 1)

tomers going to a Beverly Branch station and branch riders heading to the suburbs will need to transfer at Blue Island. The schedule has been designed to make that transfer easy and convenient. (Riders making such a transfer should tell their conductor on the first leg of their trip so their ticket can be marked appropriately.)

The trial is being funded with a \$313,000 grant from the RTA's Innovation, Coordination and Enhancement program and \$313,000 in Metra funds.

"We have heard from riders over the years that they're discouraged from riding on weekends because it takes too long to get downtown," said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno. "We're expecting that this significant enhancement will encourage more people to come

on board, where they'll discover we have fast, reliable, comfortable and safe service. Many thanks to the RTA for helping us fund this project."

New timetables are now available on Rock Island trains and stations. The new schedule also can be found at [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com). Send us an email to let us know what you think about this new service at [onthebilevel@metrarr.com](mailto:onthebilevel@metrarr.com).



# SOUND OFF

## No reservations

I was curious as to where it is that one can purchase a ticket with seat assignments? Surely you have them, right? You must, because I was accused of STEALING someone's seat, so I asked where the seat assignment was located on her ticket, but she didn't seem to want to share that information! Seriously, it is ridiculous already with the seat hogs and the sense of entitlement. I mean, there are people on my train who actually REFUSE to let people sit. And the "Sorry, this seat is saved" does not fly either. I watched a man turn four people away the other day because he was saving the seat.

Many, many years ago when I first became a commuter, someone did that to me and I felt like a jerk walking away, like I did something wrong. I mean, the nerve, right? To actually ask to sit in an unoccupied seat that the purchase of your ticket allows for? Four people turned away. And another group on my train will SAVE seats and ridicule the person who has to walk away. The rude behavior is getting out of hand. I realize that charging extra for the seat hogs will not pass muster, but maybe reminders that seat-saving is



not allowed and bags do not pay fares, people do!

Lyn

*We do issue reminders about seat-saving and seat-hogging and we'll continue to do so. And we here at On the Bi-Level have been fighting this battle almost since our first issue more than 30 years ago. Some people, unfortunately, refuse to heed the message.*

## Photo evidence

Attached is a picture worth it all (above). Will people ever learn? The train is NOT your living room! Also, I am in TOTAL SUPPORT of charging people twice who take up two seats.

Maybe that will get them to stop hogging seats, and doing what this rider in the picture is doing.

Your fellow riders

*It's not only rude to take up two seats, it's doubly rude to do it with your stinky feet.*

## Hushing the husher

To the lady on the Friday night ride home on the BNSF who just had to complain about people whispering in the Quiet Car and making a big deal out of it to the conductor: Your fellow passengers noticed your action and have deemed you the "Ge-stapo" lady. We see you all the time and have seen you complain in the past. We think you must

have a really lousy life, as all you ever seem to do is complain. Ever consider driving so you don't have to see other people?

Mitch

*We do want our riders to help police the Quiet Car. But we also want everyone to remember: it's Quiet Car, not a Silent Car. And please remember also to be nice about asking other passengers to be quiet.*

## What's lost is found

On May 5, I lost my wallet on the Rock Island train that departed LaSalle Street Station at 2:55 p.m. I called Metra's Lost and Found at about 4:30 p.m. By 5:29 p.m. I received a call from Melody Stateman at Lost and Found alerting me that my wallet had been found and would be available at LaSalle Street Station. I picked up my wallet the next morning. Everything was intact! I would like to thank the honest person who found my wallet and turned it in and Melody who acted so quickly to call me once the wallet had been found.

Mary

*Thanks for the nice note. The person who turned in your wallet was Trainman Adam Haywood.*

## Give a thought to safety during National Safety Month

We interrupt this "Sound Off" for an important message: June is National Safety Month, which gives us a handy reason to reemphasize the importance of safety at Metra.

You may rarely think about safety, but at Metra we think about it all the time. Even though railroad travel is one of the safest forms of transportation, potential dangers are always present. Metra has learned through years

of experience that most accidents can be prevented if customers use caution in and around rail stations and parking lots, when boarding, exiting or riding trains and during emergency situations.

We know: Much of our advice is common sense. But it never hurts to get a simple reminder about safety guidelines.

We'll cover one area here: what passengers should do in emergencies. First, it is impor-

tant for passengers to familiarize themselves with the onboard emergency evacuation procedures and exits. A sign illustrating the exits is posted in the vestibule of each car.

In the event of an emergency, remain calm and seated. Follow the instructions of the train crew or emergency responders. If you see smoke or fire, notify the crew immediately and move to another car. If another passenger

is in distress, notify the crew and they will call for assistance. If you notice a suspicious package or activity, notify the crew. Do not move or disturb the package. Exit the train only when directed; danger exists until all train traffic has been stopped and hazards have been eliminated.

For a full list of safety advice and a look at Metra safety initiatives, go to [www.metrarail.com/safety](http://www.metrarail.com/safety).

## Summer Travel Notes

### We want to hear from you

Metra is committed to providing the best possible commuter rail service, and we continually seek your input, which helps us in refining service and allocating our resources. Metra appreciates and values your opinions; therefore, we would like you to complete a brief online Customer Satisfaction Survey, available via our website at [www.metrarail.com/customersurvey](http://www.metrarail.com/customersurvey). This short, easy-to-complete online survey will only take a few minutes of your time. It asks you to rate Metra on our timeliness and reliability; how safely we operate trains and your personal safety on the train and at stations; our information and communications; the cleanliness and comfort of our trains and stations; the performance of our onboard and station employees; and the cost and availability of parking. It also asks you to pick the three features that are most important to you when taking a trip on Metra. Finally, it gives you a chance to give us general comments about anything of importance to you. Your feedback will help Metra evaluate its performance and understand your travel needs. The information obtained from riders will assist us in meeting our commitment to you to provide efficient and cost effective transportation. The survey will be open for the month of June. Thank you for your cooperation and thank you for choosing Metra!

### Use “Family Fares” to ride this summer

Metra’s “Family Fares” program, usually available only on week-

ends, is being extended to summer weekdays beginning Monday, June 15 through Friday, Sept. 4. “Family Fares” allow up to three children age 11 and under to ride free with a fare-paying adult. Families can realize even greater savings with Metra’s \$8 unlimited ride Weekend Pass, which can be used in conjunction with “Family Fares.” To make summer travel on Metra an even better deal, Metra has teamed up with a number of the city’s attractions and tours to create its Summer Fun Kit. The kit contains information about summer events and lots of different discount coupons that could help extend your entertainment budget even further. To order a Summer Fun Kit, simply send us an e-mail at [funinthecity@metrarr.com](mailto:funinthecity@metrarr.com).

### First-time rideshare users can save \$

Coming downtown to enjoy Chicago’s summer activities? Our partners Uber and Lyft can help you get from our downtown stations to all the fun, and first-time rideshare users can save money. To take advantage of Uber’s offer, download the Uber app on your smartphone and enter promo code METRACHI to get \$10 off each of your first two rides (new users only). Lyft first-time users can get up to \$20 off by downloading the Lyft app at [Lyft.com](http://Lyft.com) and entering promo code METRA15

### Metra earns 3rd annual safety recognition

For the third consecutive year, the Association of American Railroads has honored Metra for its safety initiatives, this time for an employee-produced newsletter that promotes safety and operational excellence among engineers and crew members on the Rock Island Line. The recognition came at the recent Railroad Safety Leadership Forum in Fort Worth, Texas, an annual event that brings together railroads from around the country to highlight achievements in personal safety and injury prevention and provide a venue to share best practices. Metra was honored for “The Partnership,” a monthly newsletter promoting safety and operational excellence among engineers and crew members. The newsletter was the brainchild of J. J. Balonek, general chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and James Grogans, Metra Road Foreman of Engines. Together they explored ways to improve safety, reduce rule violations and increase communication and awareness among the engineers who operate on the district

### Get this newsletter electronically

Did you know you could get a digital edition of *On the Bi-Level* delivered to you every month? Just create or log into your “My Metra” account and in the section headlined, “Additional Email Notification Preferences” check the box that says, “On the Bi-Level Commuter Newsletter.” You’ll get all the content of the printed version – and sometimes more – in color!

### 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](mailto:metrarail_feedback@metrarr.com).

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