

ON THE BI-LEVEL

Metra



Metra's Monthly Commuter Newsletter

May 2016

Construction season underway

Metra and its railroad partners will be making a variety of improvements to stations, track, bridges and road crossings this year to ensure safe and reliable service and maintain a state of good repair systemwide. Construction work has already started and will continue through the fall, weather permitting.

“Now that spring is here, we plan to take full advantage of the construction season by making improvements where we can with our limited funding,” said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno. “Our goal is to be as efficient as possible with the resources we have and limit the impact of construction activity on our customers.”

A portion of the work is being done by Metra crews, who are dispatched to make repairs to stations and carry out other smaller jobs, as well as contracted firms for larger projects.

Stations

Improvements are planned for 27 of Metra's 241 stations this year. That includes Union Station, where the Madison Street entrance leading to the north platforms will be renovated in an \$826,000 project that will repair the pavers, stairs and ceiling and make other cosmetic improvements. The work should start in June and take approximately four months to complete.



Assistant Track Foreman Benjamin Contreras oversees the replacement of ties on the Rock Island Line near Mokena last month. The machine is a tie inserter that pushes new ties under the rails.

Heritage Corridor

Lemont – Platforms will be replaced.

Milwaukee North

Northbrook – A \$325,000 makeover will include new roof shingles, new windows, doors and floors and repairs to the concrete around the station.

Grayland – Metra is replacing the platform and adding 75 parking spots.

Glenview – The village will be overseeing a project to replace the station's doors and air conditioning unit.

North Glenview – Doors will be replaced.

Mayfair – The replacement of lighting and construction of two new shelters will be com-

pleted this spring.

Metra Electric

Calumet – A full, \$5.5 million renovation of the station will include rebuilding the platforms, constructing a new elevator and replacing the stairs at both ends of the station. Construction should start this spring.

111th Street/Pullman – This station will be given a \$150,000 face lift starting this month.

Most of the wooden components, such as the platform, stairs and warming house, will be repaired or replaced, and other cosmetic improvements, including painting, will be made.

115th Street/Kensington – This station will see a variety of repairs.

27th Street – New deck boards on the platform will be installed.

Stewart Ridge – New deck boards on the platform will be installed, the staircases will be rebuilt and the warming shelter, platform lighting and fencing will be replaced.

West Pullman – Project includes installing new deck boards on the platform, renewing the platform lighting and rebuilding the staircase. Repairs to the warming house will include ceiling and door replacement and interior and exterior painting.

59th Street – Construction of a new warming house is underway.

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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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Milwaukee West

Big Timber – Platforms are being replaced.

North Central Service

Buffalo Grove – Metra plans to replace the platform surface.

UP North

Ravinia – Metra is replacing the roof and abating for lead paint as part of a \$500,000 project that should be completed in the summer.

Waukegan – Metra will be renovating the bathrooms and replacing concrete.

UP Northwest

Mount Prospect – Rehabilitation will include repairing the roof, replacing windows and doors, painting the interior and exterior of the station and warming shelter, replacing the exterior lighting fixtures with new LED lights and tuck pointing. The \$400,000 project is scheduled to begin in the spring.

Cumberland – UP is finishing work on the platforms.

UP West Line

Villa Park – Platforms are being replaced.

Winfield – Platforms are being replaced.

BNSF

Riverside – The historic clay tile roof on the depot will be rehabbed.

Rock Island

LaSalle Street – Metra will be replacing pavers on the platform and the structural steel supports. The \$2 million project will go out for bid in the third quarter of this year.

103rd Street/Washington Heights – Platforms are being replaced.

123rd Street – Metra is experimenting with heated platforms in a \$700,000 test at this station. The new technology will be installed this year and tested

next winter.

Prairie Street – Platforms will be replaced.

Track

Metra and its railroad partners plan to replace more than 120,000 railroad ties this year as part of the following railroad track improvement projects:

A-2 – Metra will replace ten switches at this major switching point near Grand and Western that serves Metra's Milwaukee West, Milwaukee North, North Central Lines, and Amtrak service, as well as Metra and Union Pacific rail yards used for passenger service.

Amtrak – Amtrak will rebuild turnouts and switches on Track 1 near Roosevelt Road south of Chicago Union Station in a \$1.8 million project.

Metra Electric – Metra will replace 10,000 ties from Kensington to University Park.

Milwaukee North – Metra will replace rail between Wilson Avenue in Chicago (just past Mayfair) to Elm Street in Morton Grove (just south of the station).

Rock Island – Metra is now replacing 10,000 ties between Gresham and Blue Island and between New Lenox and Joliet.

UP North – Union Pacific in April replaced 21,000 ties between Lake Bluff and Kenosha and carried out rail repair and replacement at various locations from Evanston/Davis Street to Zion.

UP Northwest – UP is replacing ties in an area beginning about a half mile north of Ogilvie and from Des Plaines to Barrington. In September and October, UP also plans to replace 9,000 ties between Mt. Prospect and Barrington and 11,000 ties on its McHenry branch line.

UP West – UP is replacing ties from Kress Road in West Chicago to Peck Road in Geneva and between West Chicago and Elburn. Also, pending the release of funding by the state, Metra and Union Pacific plan to begin

a project that will remove two bottlenecks on the UP West by installing a third set of tracks in the only remaining double-track segments along the UP West Line from UP's Vale Interlocking Facility in River Forest (just east of the Des Plaines River) to 25th Avenue in Melrose Park from Kress Road in West Chicago to Peck Road in Geneva.

BNSF – BNSF will replace about 19,000 ties between Chicago and Lisle. In addition, they will replace 440 switch ties, 1,600 platform ties and ties on four bridges along the line. Switches and switch heaters will be replaced at two control points near Aurora. There will be resurfacing, undercutting and joint elimination at various locations in the corridor and about 1.5 miles of rail will be replaced at various curves.

Other improvements

Improvements are planned for 21 bridges across the Metra system. This includes the resumption of the **UP North bridge replacement** project on the north side of Chicago and the start of work on the final half of the new **Ravenswood Station**.

Metra and its railroad partners have already started improvements to **24 road crossings** systemwide in 2016.

Additionally, in 2016, BNSF plans to reconstruct the retaining walls at Hamlin Avenue in Chicago and replace the grade crossing warning device at Cass Avenue in Westmont.

Metra plans to begin a \$5.5 million project to upgrade an electrical facility in Riverdale used to supply power along the Metra Electric Line. Work is also scheduled to proceed on a similar project to upgrade the power supply facility at 51st Street.

For a detailed map showing the locations of the 2016 work, please go to www.metrarail.com and find our press release in the Newsroom.

SOUND OFF

Eau de commute

Having allergies and asthma, I am very sensitive to perfume. Since the Heritage Corridor is now unloading on the south side of Union Station, a number of folks have moved to the front of the train. This used to be a haven and safer place to breathe for me. Now there are stinky interlopers cutting off the fresh air supply. I'm not alone; it's a health hazard for me, while for others an annoyance. Unfortunately, our friends on the Heritage, both women AND men, seem to not know when to stop spraying the stuff on, and we then experience four or five women and several men fogging the entire car with their various scents of cologne, causing nausea, burning eyes, sinus passages and yes, asthma attacks. Would Metra consider a scent-free car for those who would like to at least breathe a little easier on their commute? Between the perfumes, aftershave and body lotions, along with the train fumes, breathing can be difficult for some of us.

Kate

While we sympathize with your plight, you'll have to settle for us asking everyone to wait until they're off the train before spraying themselves with perfume and cologne. Your fellow riders, especially those with allergies, will appreciate it.

Ultra seat hogs?

Even worse than the seat hogs who put their stuff on the seat next to them, I'm seeing a new trend of single people or couples flipping the seat and taking four seats during rush-hour trains. Can conductors do something to stop these ultra seat hogs? I asked one to flip the seat and was accosted as if I was the rude one.

Straight Talk



Dude, you're overdoing it.

That's taking seat-hogging to a whole new level. You should politely ask them to make room, and if they won't, ask for a crew member to assist.

Quick reaction

Monday morning I caught the 9 a.m. train out of Crystal Lake into the city. Another uneventful ride, until we were pulling out of the Jefferson Park Station. At that point, within literally a split second after pulling out of the station, the engineer hit the emergency brake and stopped the train. It seems as if someone had attempted to jump under the train in an effort to kill himself. Within 10 or 15 minutes, police were dealing with the individual and we were on our way again. How in the world this engineer was able to recognize the urgency of that situation and effect emergen-

cy measures in the short amount of time that he did is beyond me. This engineer and the entire train crew should be applauded for their literal lifesaving measures taken this morning. I personally waited for and thanked each one of them for their outstanding performance in handling this situation after we arrived at Ogilvie but wanted to make sure that they got all the credit that they deserve.

Job well done.
Michael

Thanks for the kind words. Our engineers are top-notch professionals and we appreciate your recognition of their work.

Out of the way, please

To the three to five gentlemen who wait every morning by the door of the train car closest to

the building on BNSF Train No. 1224 arriving in Chicago at 7:28 a.m.: You are blocking commuters who are trying to get off the train in a timely manner. You cause a bottleneck by standing in the walkway. If you waited inside the building until we all got off, it would help. I'm sure the train won't leave without you. Are you that excited to get on the train? I know the new seats are exciting, but...

Brian

Those new seats are exciting, aren't they? But this is common-sense advice. Let them off please, and don't block the way.

Key recovery

Thank you, whoever you are, the person that was so gracious to turn in my set of keys that I dropped on the SouthWest Service. Just as I stood up to get off of the train, I dropped my keys, and had a few seconds to look for them. With no conductor nearby to alert, and no one else getting off to perhaps delay the doors closing for an extra second or two, I decided to get off the train because I fully expected that I had simply dropped the keys into my large bag – since I did not see them on the floor. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. Just wanted to let the person who turned them in to the Lost and Found know how much I truly appreciated their extra effort to do so. Thank you so much!

Dee

Metra would like to add its thanks to the key recoverer. We have keys and phones and umbrellas and other lost items turned in to us all the time, so if you lose something it never hurts to check with the Lost and Found Offices in each downtown terminal.

Spring Travel Notes

Metra, Cook County partner to improve Police

The Metra Board of Directors last month approved two agreements with Cook County that will allow the agency's Police Department to put more officers in the field and operate more effectively and efficiently. In the first agreement, tickets issued by Metra Police officers for violations of ordinances that protect Metra passengers and property, including vandalism, theft, disorderly conduct and trespassing, will be adjudicated by the Cook County Department of Administrative Hearings. Currently, Metra Police officers make arrests for misdemeanor violations of state laws and the cases are adjudicated in the Circuit Court of Cook County. In the second agreement, Metra will pay the Cook County Sheriff to provide 24-hour dispatching service to Metra for 911 calls. "These new arrangements will free up officers to spend more time on active patrols, which will provide more protection to our customers while also reducing overtime costs," said Metra Police Chief Joseph Perez. "This is just one more way that Metra is reinvigorating its Police Department to make it a more modern, efficient and effective force."

Metra testing cameras on trains

Metra Electric Line customers may have noticed some small cameras inside one of their cars – it's part of a very preliminary test to determine how camera technology can be used on Metra trains. Eleven new cameras have been installed on the car to test functional-

ity, location and range. They will gather data through May, and the test results will be used to help identify the camera technology that works best on Metra trains to inform a future procurement, should funding become available. "This is the first step Metra needs to take before we can move forward with a plan to buy cameras for more of our cars," said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno. "If we could, we would install cameras on our full fleet, but there is no funding to do that now."

Help pick "People's Choice" poster

Metra's Annual Safety Contest needs your help to pick the best of this year's entries for the People's Choice Award. Please go to www.metrarail.com, follow the link for the People's Choice Award and vote for your favorite poster. The first-place artists in grades K-12 for this year's contest, themed "Make Safety Your Focus," are eligible to win the award. Voting opens May 2 and ends June 10. The winner will be recognized with an additional \$250 prize during the Board of Directors meeting on June 15. This marks the tenth year for the contest that asks students from across the region to create images that promote safe behaviors near railroad tracks and trains. Prizes are provided by the Hubbard Radio Group, owners of Chicago radio stations 97.1 FM The Drive, 100.3 WSHE and 101.9 The Mix. Information about the campaign is available at www.metrarail.com and www.facebook.com/MetraContest.

Metra to launch small business initiative

Metra next month will launch a new initiative to help small businesses have a fair opportunity to do business with the agency and work on Metra projects. The Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program is designed to increase the number of competitively awarded contracts to small businesses, maximize contract opportunities and minimize contract bundling. To qualify as an SBE, companies must: be an independent for-profit business; have an owner whose personal net worth is \$1.32 million or lower; meet the Small Business Administration's size standard, and not exceed \$23.98 million in gross annual receipts. Starting in June, Metra's Office of Business Diversity and Civil Rights will identify contract opportunities valued at \$40,000 to \$100,000 to set aside specifically for small businesses that have been verified by the agency. Areas of opportunity may include landscaping, auto parts, etc. Metra anticipates identifying between 10 to 20 contracts to be set aside under this program in its first year. For more information, please go to www.metrarail.com.

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