

Metra ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, November 2013



No fare increase in 2014 budget

The Metra Board of Directors has approved the release of the agency's preliminary 2014 budget and 2015-2016 financial plan. The 2014 budget does not include any changes in fares while still maintaining the same level of service. The budget now will be the subject of a series of public hearings on Nov. 6 and 7 before the board votes on a final budget on Nov. 15. (See schedule below.)

For 2014, Metra's total proposed budget is \$935.9 million, including \$728.6 million for operations and \$209.3 million for capital needs.

Operating Budget

The proposed budget of \$728.6 million for operations represents an increase of \$12 million, or 1.7 percent, over the

2013 budget, reflecting projected price increases in labor, benefits, rents, materials, and other costs associated with operating the service. The increase also reflects costs associated with meeting maintenance and inspection requirements related to equipment and infrastructure.

Metra staff concentrated on identifying efficiencies and constraining expense growth where possible in order to draft a balanced budget without the need to raise fares. The budget still fully funds operations, maintenance, support and other activities crucial to providing train service.

Total revenues were projected to be \$364.2 million, a decrease of \$7 million, or 1.9 percent, from the 2013 budget. That includes a \$8.5 million drop in fares offset by a \$1.5 million

increase in revenue from capital credits and leasing. The projected decrease in fare collection reflects the fact that the actual 2013 fare collection came in lower than the budgeted amount.

It should be emphasized that while 2013 fare collections are below the budgeted amount, they still are expected to hit \$306 million versus 2012's \$298 million.

Capital Budget

Metra's proposed budget of \$209.3 million for capital needs represents a 35 percent increase over the \$154.6 million that was budgeted in 2013, primarily due to an anticipated new RTA bond program. That program is expected to channel \$45 million to Metra in 2014. For 2014, Metra is proposing to spend \$4 million in fare revenue on capital needs

(most fares go to the operating budget), a decrease of \$1.5 million from 2013.

However, the available capital funding will still fall far short of Metra's needs, even with the increase. It was estimated in 2012 that Metra would need \$9.7 billion from 2012 through 2021 to achieve and maintain a state of good repair. Optimistically, Metra might receive a little more than \$2 billion over the same period from federal formula funds and approved state bond programs. This leaves a funding gap of more than \$7 billion.

Metra is scheduled to receive an additional \$371.4 million in capital funds from two state bond programs, but that money is subject to the release of the funds and prioritization of
(Continued on Page 4)

2014 Metra Proposed Program and Budget Public Hearings

November 6
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Lake County
Grayslake Village Hall
Council Chambers
10 S. Seymour Ave.
Grayslake

North Suburban Cook County
Arlington Heights Village Hall
Village Board Room
33 S. Arlington Heights Rd.
Arlington Heights

South Suburban Cook County
Homewood Village Hall
Village Board Room
2020 Chestnut Rd.
Homewood

DuPage County
Downers Grove Village Hall
Board Room
801 Burlington Ave.
Downers Grove

November 7
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

McHenry County
Woodstock Village Hall
Council Chambers
121 W. Calhoun St.
Woodstock

City of Chicago
Metra
Board Room
547 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago

Will County
Joliet City Hall
Conference Room #1
150 W. Jefferson St.
Joliet

Kane County
Geneva City Hall
City Council Chambers
22 S. First St.
Geneva



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.

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New shelters, longer platforms part of Fox River Grove rebuild

Fox River Grove President Robert J. Nunamaker and other dignitaries were scheduled to join Metra Board Member Jack Schaffer and interim Executive Director Don Orseno early this month to dedicate the newly rebuilt Fox River Grove Station on the UP Northwest Line.

The \$3.5 million project included the complete reconstruction of the station, which dated from 1959. That work included:

- Replacement of the existing warming shelter with a larger shelter that includes vendor space and bathrooms.
- Construction of a secondary warming shelter on the east end of the station.
- The reconstruction and extension of the platforms to 640 feet from 330 feet, enough for an eight-car train.
- The repaving and restriping of the existing parking lot.
- The installation of LED lights on the platforms and parking lot.



A Metra train serves the new Fox River Grove Station last month.

Union Pacific Railroad rebuilt and extended the platforms, which cost about \$1.2 million. Path Construction of Arlington Heights was awarded a \$2.3 million contract to do the remaining work.

Metra paid for the work with proceeds from the state bond program and other capital funds; Fox

River Grove contributed \$82,400 to cover the upgrade to LED lights and parking lot work.

The result is a safe, convenient and appealing train station that will better serve existing riders and attract new ones. The longer platforms and improved warming houses will also accommodate future ridership growth.

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

New members join Metra Board

Four new members joined the Metra Board of Directors at the October meeting: Martin J. Oberman, Romayne C. Brown, John Plante and Brian K. Reaves.

Martin Oberman

Mr. Oberman was appointed by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. He comes to Metra after a long career as a lawyer and public servant, most notably serving as an alderman from Chicago's 43rd Ward from 1975



Martin Oberman

to 1987. Highlights of his career at City Hall include creating the Planned Manufacturing District concept; being the first Chicago alderman to champion community policing; and sponsoring and being the catalyst for numerous anti-corruption measures, structural reforms of government, gay rights and non-smoking ordinances.

From 1987 to 1988, he was chairman of the Shoreline Protection Commission, and in 2013 he served as a member of the Midway Advisory Panel.

Mr. Oberman graduated from Yale University in 1966 and the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1969. His legal career began in 1969, working as an associate at the firm that is now Sidley & Austin until 1972. He then served as the first General Counsel to the Illinois Racing Board from 1973-1974. He had a private, part-time law practice during his City Council tenure.

He was a partner at Gould and Ratner from 1988 to 1989. Since 1989, he has been in private practice handling complex litigation across a broad array of

matters. He is married and the father of two adult children. He lives in Lincoln Park.

Romayne C. Brown

Romayne C. Brown was appointed by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. She is a professional transit manager with more than 31 years of operational and customer service



Romayne Brown

experience at the CTA. She started as a rail conductor in 1978 and worked her way through the ranks at the agency, finishing her career in 2010 as the Vice President of Rail Operations.

In her last position, she oversaw a \$1.3 billion budget and developed and administered policies, programs and procedures necessary to ensure the timely, clean, safe and courteous delivery of rail transit service to 550,000 customers a day. She also evaluated and monitored the performance of staff and analyzed the needs related to passenger service, budget and manpower planning, training, program and personnel development and safety functions and initiatives. And she developed policies and procedures for collective bargaining negotiations and worked to maintain effective relationships with labor unions, governmental entities, transportation officials and CTA staff.

Among her professional achievements and recognitions are receiving the Kathy Osterman Award for superior public service in 1997; being featured on the cover of Mass Transit magazine in June 2009; and receiving the Presidential Employ-

ee Excellence Award in 2007.

Ms. Brown attended classes at South Suburban College in South Holland, and is a 1999 graduate of the Chicago Transit Authority's Transit Management Program at Harold Washington College. She also attended the City of Chicago Intergovernmental Executive Development Program in 2003.

She lives in Dolton.

John Plante

John Plante was appointed by the north suburban members of the Cook County Board. He also comes from the CTA, retiring this year after 35 years there.



John Plante

He began his tenure as a trial attorney, and then moved to trial supervision and then Managing Attorney. He created and managed the CTA's first in-house major litigation team.

Mr. Plante's next assignment was Managing Attorney of the Claims Department, which involved management of the in-house claims staff and all pre-litigation claims both against the CTA and those made by the CTA for losses it suffered. From this position, Mr. Plante moved to Managing Attorney of Risk Management, which entailed the identification, management and control of risks. Following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, Mr. Plante's activities became focused on external risks. As this area began to dominate his work activity, it was a natural move to his next position, Senior Manager of Emergency Preparedness.

Mr. Plante has served on a variety of transportation,

security and emergency planning committees and working groups.

He has served on the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Board of Directors and as chairman of the APTA Risk Management Committee. He continues as a member of the Risk Management Committee and all the APTA Security Emergency Management Standards Committees.

He lives in Wilmette.

Brian K. Reaves

Brian K. Reaves was appointed by the south suburban members of the Cook County Board.

Mr. Reaves is the founder and president of Integrated Warehouse Systems (IWS) located



Brian Reaves

in Romeoville, Ill. In addition to being a business owner, Mr. Reaves also serves as mayor of the Village of Lemont, Ill. He was elected mayor in 2009 after having served as a village trustee and chair of the village board's finance committee since 2003.

Mr. Reaves also serves on the Transportation Committee for the Southwest Conference of Mayors, where he chairs the Legislative Committee.

He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Will County Governmental League, where he chairs the Will County Electrical Aggregation group. He is vice president of the Northern Will County Water Agency and has been a member of the Metra Heritage Corridor Alliance since 2009. He and his wife, Sherrie, have four children and reside in Lemont.

Fall Travel Notes

Extra service offered for lights festival

Metra will be offering extra service on three lines for those who want to attend the BMO Harris Bank Magnificent Mile Lights Festival, the nation's largest evening holiday celebration, on Saturday, Nov. 23. The annual kickoff to the holiday season includes family friendly activities, concerts by top musical artists, a grand tree-lighting parade down Michigan Avenue marshaled by Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse, a fireworks show over the Chicago River and the best holiday shopping. Events start at 11 a.m. and run through the evening. In addition to our regular Saturday service, extra inbound and outbound trains will operate on the BNSF, UP Northwest and UP West lines. Please go to www.metrarail.com for details.

Students invited to participate in safety contest

Metra encourages young people in K-12 throughout the region to participate in our annual Safety Poster and Essay Contest. The current contest is now underway, and the images and essays that winners create will become part of next year's safety campaign. This year's theme is "Get Smart: Look, Listen and Live." See www.metracontest.com for all the details. Within that site, you will find a complete listing of all contest rules and guidelines as well as downloadable entry forms, logos and poster templates. You can even submit your completed contest entry through this site. Also, become a fan of the Metra contest Facebook page for exclusive news and announcements.

Change coming for Link-Up, PlusBus

Metra riders who buy a Link-Up or PlusBus card will see a change starting in December. Because the CTA and Pace are transitioning to the new Ventra system, the December Link-Up and Plusbus cards will no longer be magnetic strip cards. Instead, they will be Ventra-branded cards compatible with the new CTA and Pace system. Just tap them on the Ventra reader on your bus or CTA station. The cards will be priced the same and sold the same way. More details about the transition are available at www.metrarail.com.

Metra safety efforts outperform peers

A comparison of safety statistics between Metra and our peer commuter railroads for the first half of 2013 puts Metra at or near the top in several categories. Metra and its contract carriers, BNSF and Union Pacific, have the lowest rate of employee injuries in comparison to other large U.S. commuter railroads, including Long Island Rail Road, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, New Jersey Transit, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and Metro-North Railroad. Metra also had the second lowest rate of passenger incidents and the second lowest rate of grade crossing incidents. Metra had the fourth lowest rate of trespasser incidents. The comparisons are based on data from the Federal Railroad Administration. The results demonstrate Metra's full commitment and complete dedication to operating as safely as possible.

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AND have a car.

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Budget

(Continued from Page 1)

projects by the state of Illinois in order to meet cash flow requirements.

Public Comment

Public hearings on the budget will be held Nov. 6 and 7 at locations throughout the six-county region. (See first page.) Copies of the budget are available for review at the offices of the Metra Board, 547 W. Jackson Blvd., Room 1300, Chicago, and in the offices of the RTA, 175 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago. They also can be viewed online at www.metrarail.com and at municipalities across the region.

Any person may present views on the agency's proposed budget verbally at the hearing or by submitting written material at any time, but not later than 24 hours after the conclusion of the hearings on Nov. 7, 2013. Written comments may be submitted via U. S. mail to the attention of the Assistant Secretary to the Metra Board of Directors, 547 W. Jackson, Chicago, Illinois 60661 or via email at metrarail_feedback@metrarr.com.

Following the public comment period, the Metra Board will vote on a final budget at its Nov. 15 meeting. The budget will then be forwarded to the RTA, which will vote on the region's transportation budget in December.

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.