

CLIFF NOTES

Why we proposed change in 10-ride

At the November meeting of the Metra Board of Directors, Metra staff proposed to enact one of the fare scenarios that we had presented in our preliminary 2013 Program and Budget in October. That scenario would be a change in fare media policy to price the 10-ride ticket at the cost of 10 rides, instead of the current nine. The board agreed with the proposed change and authorized us to hold another round of public hearings on the idea. Those hearings will be held Dec. 11 (*see Page 4 for times and locations*) and the board will vote on the final budget at its Dec. 14 meeting.



Alex Clifford
Metra CEO

We don't propose this change lightly, especially after the fare increase earlier this year. But we believe it is the responsible thing to do, and I want riders to understand why.

As you recall from last year, there were a couple of main factors that led to the 2012 increase. The first was simply a need to cover our rising expenses. Expenses had been outpacing revenue for several years but prior administrations kicked the can down the road, putting off smaller fare increases at more regular intervals, resulting in a large increase. The second is that we ended the practice of covering operating shortfalls with money from our capital budget. We argued our capital needs were great and the diversion made things worse.

It made no sense to me that in 2011 we were using \$60 million in capital-eligible federal formula funds in the operating budget – at a time when we only receive about \$150 million in such funds a year and when our estimated capital resources over the next 10 years will be about \$5 billion short.

Thanks to last year's increase, as well as our continuous efforts to find efficiencies in our budget and manage our costs, our operating budget is in better shape. For 2013, in fact, we do not need to raise fares to cover operating costs. However, our capital budget, which covers infrastructure and rolling stock improvements and is primarily funded by federal and state grants, is still woefully short of the dollars we need to achieve and maintain a state of good repair. We must start attacking that problem.

The proposed change in the 10-ride ticket would generate
(*See Budget on Page 4*)



Brad O'Halloran, shown at the controls of a new Highliner car (see Page 3), was elected chairman of the Metra Board of Directors in early November.

O'Halloran takes the Metra throttle

The Metra Board of Directors in early November elected Brad S. O'Halloran of Orland Park to be the third chairman in Metra's history.

O'Halloran was appointed to the Metra Board in 2011 by the suburban members of the Cook County Board. He becomes the third chairman in Metra's history, following Jeffrey Ladd and Carole R. Doris. Since the departure of Doris in April 2011, Director Larry Huggins had presided over the board as acting chairman.

In addition, Director Jack Partelow of Naperville was elected vice chairman. O'Halloran and Partelow will serve four-year terms.

O'Halloran is currently a

member of the Board of Trustees for the Village of Orland Park, an office he has held since 1993. This is O'Halloran's second stint on the Metra Board, having previously represented suburban Cook County on the Board in 2003 and 2004.

In addition to his roles in public service, O'Halloran is currently the Regional Director of Development for the University of Notre Dame, furthering the philanthropic interests and objectives of the university in the Chicago area. He is also a Director of Transportation Development Corp. Inc., as well as Director of Four Leaf Properties Inc. He also serves on the boards of the

(*See Chair on Page 4*)

Metra

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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Alex Clifford



Gov. Pat Quinn was among the speakers when Metra celebrated the completion of the Belmont Road grade separation project.

Belmont Road grade separation helps riders and drivers in DuPage

Gov. Pat Quinn was among the state and local officials and representatives of Metra and BNSF Railway who recently marked the completion of the Belmont Road grade separation project in DuPage County, a massive undertaking that has many benefits for Metra riders, area drivers and the region's environmental and economic well-being.

Joining the governor at the dedication ceremony were State Sen. Kirk W. Dillard, State Rep. Patricia R. Bellock, DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin, Downers Grove Mayor Martin T. Tully, IDOT Secretary Ann Schneider, Metra Board Member Paul C. Darley, Metra CEO Alex Clifford and former Metra Board Chairman Carole Doris, a resident of Downers Grove.

The project eliminated a troublesome and dangerous intersection between the four-lane Belmont Road, a major north-south artery through Downers Grove

and DuPage County, and three BNSF Railway tracks, which carry more than 200 commuter and freight trains every day. The road and rails were separated by digging an underpass for Belmont Road and by building new bridges to carry the tracks over the underpass – all of which was done while the road and rails were still open to traffic. The project also included building a new bridge to carry Warren/Burlington Avenue over Belmont Road and feeder ramps to connect that bridge to Belmont.

This project has multiple benefits for Metra passengers as well as area drivers and residents:

- It improves safety by separating rail traffic from Belmont Road vehicles.
- It eases congestion and therefore emissions from idling vehicles on Belmont Road.
- It facilitates economic development in the area by reducing time lost to congestion. It also im-

proves the productivity of Metra and freight traffic.

- It greatly improves the flow of traffic around the Belmont Station.
- It increases safety by providing commuters and other pedestrians with an underpass under the railroad tracks.
- Metra riders also benefit from new boarding platforms and sheltered ADA ramps.
- It increases the amount of parking available at the Belmont Station by nearly 300 spaces.

Funding for the \$60 million project was provided by Metra (\$20 million), Illinois Department of Transportation (\$20 million), the Illinois Commerce Commission (\$12 million), BNSF (\$2.7 million) and the Federal Transit Administration (\$5.3 million).

Metra would like to extend a special thanks to our riders, local drivers and area residents for their patience and cooperation during construction.

Highliners enter service

Metra in mid-November debuted new Highliner cars for the Metra Electric Line and dedicated the first car to the late Board Member Elonzo "Lonnie" Hill, who was a strong advocate for public transportation and state of good repair and pushed hard for the replacement of the Metra Electric fleet during his time on the board. Mr. Hill served on the board from 2003 until his death in 2009.

At a ceremony attended by members of Mr. Hill's family and his friends, Metra unveiled a plaque in his honor that is mounted on the first new car. Attendees at the event were then taken on a brief ride in a train made up of four new cars, which entered regular service shortly after the event.

"Lonnie Hill never passed up an opportunity to remind this board of its obligation to replace the Highliner fleet as soon as we had the means to do so," said Metra Board Chairman Brad O'Halloran. "It is a fitting tribute to his career in public transportation, his longtime support of mass transit and his effective leadership on the Metra Board that we dedicate the first new

Highliner car in his honor."

Replacing the Metra Electric fleet has been a priority for Metra for more than a decade. Metra bought 26 new Highliners in 2004, at the tail end of the last state bond program, but had to wait until the next bond program was approved to acquire more. Gov. Pat Quinn and the Legislature passed a new bond program in 2009 and Metra placed the order for 160 new Highliners as soon as \$585 million in bond funds became available in 2010.

"Gov. Quinn and the courageous lawmakers who approved the new bond program to fund this Highliner car purchase deserve our everlasting thanks," O'Halloran said. "We could not have done this without their wisdom and foresight."

"As we honor the memory of Lonnie Hill, we also move forward on his vision for an Illinois public transportation system that is second to none," Gov. Quinn said. "Working together, we can update the entire Metra fleet and make other improvements that ensure our passenger rail infrastructure continues to support our growing economy."

The first 80 new cars from



Mrs. Barbara Hill, wife of the late Metra Board Member Elonzo "Lonnie" Hill, checks out the plaque in his honor that is mounted on the first new Highliner car to enter service.

the order will be put into service at a rate of four to six a month until November 2013. The final 80 will enter service between August 2014 and August 2015. They join the 26 newer cars that are already in service.

The order from Metra spurred Nippon Sharyo to build a new railcar factory in Rochelle, Illinois, providing jobs for Illinois residents for years to come.

The new cars use the latest technology and have a vari-

ety of new features, including larger windows, better seats with reversible seatbacks, brighter lighting, non-skid floors and an improved public address system. In 2011, Metra CEO Alex Clifford signed a change order to add power outlets for customer use. Half of the new Highliner cars will have bathrooms, meaning that when the order is completed every train on the Metra Electric line will have at least one bathroom, a first for the line.

Operation North Pole, Metra spread Christmas joy

Operation North Pole once again shared the magic of Christmas with 60 families who have a child or children suffering from life-threatening or terminal illnesses, taking them on a fanciful trip to the North Pole on Nov. 17.

In their fourth year of delighting families, Operation North Pole also wrapped the exteriors of two Metra train cars, as well as a partial interior, with bright holiday colors and images of Santa's workshop. The train cars will remain wrapped for the

remainder of the holiday season.

The families boarded the train in Des Plaines and took a nonstop journey to the Pingree Road station in Crystal Lake, enjoying activities led by Mrs. Claus, the Polar Express Conductor, Candy Cane Girls, and volunteer firefighters from the North Pole Fire Department. At the Crystal Lake station, they were welcomed by members from many of the McHenry County Fire Departments who provided refreshments, special treats and

small presents. On the return ride to the Des Plaines station, fire departments in the towns along the way were out with their fire engines and dressed in holiday attire holding up signs that said, "North Pole this way!"

Once back in Des Plaines, the families boarded charter buses and paraded with Santa, riding atop a fire department ladder truck, to a Winter Wonderland at the Donald E. Stephens Rosemont Convention Center. They found the 28,000-square-foot

south ballroom transformed into a child's sugar plum dream. Each child aged 12 and younger visited with Santa and received wrapped gifts selected from wish lists they wrote to Santa.

Operation North Pole is an all-volunteer organization that hosts events throughout the year to raise money necessary to fulfill the wishes of these special children and their families.

For more information about the organization, go to www.operationnorthpole.org.

Budget

(Continued from Page 1)

about \$8.3 million for next year, most of which would go to our Farebox Capital program. As I explained last month, most fares go to our operating budget, but we try to channel a small portion, usually about \$10 million, to our capital budget each year.

Our capital needs are huge, and they have grown due to the age of our system and years of inadequate capital funding. Because we can't afford to invest enough in our engines, cars and infrastructure, we have a greater risk of mechanical problems and potentially slower service.

The money we are proposing to use in our Farebox Capital program won't go far in addressing that huge need. But it will do something critical: it will give us the opportunity to compete for potential federal grants that require a local match. Those local dollars, in other words, could help us leverage even more money for our capital needs.

We are grateful our board is considering the change in 10-ride fare policy. Their decision is consistent with the fare principles we

adopted last year, one of which is to consider smaller, more regular fare adjustments to avoid significant, infrequent fare increases. It's also consistent with what we said last year, when we indicated that we may need more revenue this year and may adjust the 10-ride ticket again. And it's consistent with our peer commuter rail agencies, most of which do not discount 10-ride tickets.

We think there are still good reasons for purchasing a 10-ride ticket. For one, it's convenient; it's much easier to buy one 10-ride ticket from a machine or agent rather than having to buy

10 one-way fares. If you have a 10-ride available you can avoid having to buy a ticket on the train and potentially pay the \$3 penalty. Ten-rides can be shared with friends and family members, so you can take discretionary trips without having to plan extra time to buy more tickets. To be clear, we are not trying to force riders to pay \$3 more on the train and we are not trying to do away with the 10-ride ticket altogether.

In advance of the proposed change, Metra is adopting temporary restrictions on the 10-ride ticket in order to prevent stock-

Any person may present views orally at the hearings or by submitting written material at any time, but not later than 24 hours after the conclusion of the hearings on Dec. 11.

Written comments via U.S. mail can be sent to the attention of Ms. Arlene Mulder, Secretary of the Commuter Rail Board, Room 1300, 547 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60661.

Comments can e-mailed to 2013budgetcomments@metrarr.com or faxed to 312-322-7094.

piling of tickets at the current price. Ten-ride tickets sold between Nov. 17, 2012 and Jan. 31, 2013 will only be valid for travel through Feb. 28, 2013. Tickets bought during that time period will remain refundable for three months after the date of purchase, even if they are not valid for travel after Feb. 28, subject to a \$5 fee. And they will remain upgradable – meaning you can apply the value of the remaining rides towards the purchase of a new 10-ride ticket – for a year after the date of purchase.

You can follow me on Twitter @MetraCEO

Hearings for revised 2013 budget to be held Dec. 11 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

City of Chicago
Metra
547 W. Jackson Blvd.
13th Floor Board Room

DuPage County
Wheaton City Hall
Gamon Room
303 W. Wesley St.

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

Lake County
Grayslake Village Hall
Council Chambers
10 S. Seymour

McHenry County
Crystal Lake City Hall
Council Chambers
100 W. Woodstock St.

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

South Suburban Cook County
Flossmoor Village Hall
Village Board Room
2800 Flossmoor Rd.

Will County
Joliet City Hall
Conference Room 1 and 2
150 W. Jefferson St.



Six years and counting

Members of Metra's 47th Street Diesel Shop pose with some of the engines they maintain to mark their sixth year of working without an injury. They hit that amazing milestone in October.

Chair

(Continued from Page 1)

Old Plank Trail Bank in south suburban Mokena and the Irish Fellowship Club of Chicago.

Prior to this, O'Halloran served as Senior Vice President and Director of Corporate Development for Duty Free International and its successor company, World Duty Free, a wholly-owned subsidiary of BAA, plc.

He also has more than 20 years of experience in marketing, retailing and business develop-

ment with firms such as Horton Insurance Group, Sports Section Inc. and Colgate-Palmolive Co.

Additionally, he has served as a board member of Airport Council International - North America and the State of Illinois Architectural Licensing Board.

O'Halloran was born and raised on the Southwest Side of Chicago and was a Chicago public school student. He subsequently earned both a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Notre Dame.

Changes ahead for Link-Up, PlusBus customers

Metra riders who use a Link-Up or PlusBus sticker to pay for their connections to the CTA or Pace need to know that on Dec. 1, the stickers will be replaced with magnetic-swipe transit cards. CTA and Pace will no longer accept the stickers after that date.