

# Metra ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, October 2009



## MetraMarket starts to open

The first store has opened at MetraMarket, the retail and restaurant development being built around the Ogilvie Transportation Center's suburban commuter concourse, and several more will be opening over the next few months, completing the transformation of a once-dreary chunk of downtown.

CVS Pharmacy opened Sept. 20 at the corner of Washington and Clinton. The store can be entered from Clinton or through the concourse, giving commuters a convenient place to pick up items just before or right after their train ride.

Also opening this fall at the heart of the development is Chicago French Market, a year-round, European-inspired market comprised of more than two dozen vendors. Open six days a week, this indoor market will be the first of its kind in the city.

Managed and operated by the Bensidoun family, the largest market operator in and around Paris, Chicago French Market is the latest in a growing number of Bensidoun French Markets throughout the Chicago area. To date, the family manages eleven weekly outdoor markets in the area during the summer.

Whether looking for a quick breakfast croissant on the way to the office, a new place to grab lunch, or shopping for



This is an artist's rendering of the Clinton Street entrance to the Chicago French Market at the Ogilvie Transportation Center.

fresh meats and produce to make a home-cooked dinner, Chicago French Market will have something for everyone.

Bringing together the best of the best from Chicago neighborhoods and outlying areas, Chicago French Market will be largely comprised of entrepreneurs, family-owned businesses and accomplished purveyors.

The lineup so far includes:

**Albano's Deli:** Italian sandwiches, salads, soups and deli catering.

**Canady Le Chocolatier:** Gourmet chocolate creations.

### **Chicago Organics:**

Certified organic produce, meats and dairy.

**Completely Nuts:** Variety of roasted and candied nuts.

**Espression by Lavazza:** Espresso, coffee drinks and authentic gelato.

**Flip Crepes:** Wide selection of healthy and original, all natural wheat crepes.

**Fraternite Notre Dame:** Handmade sweet and savory baked goods.

**Pastoral Artisan Cheese, Bread & Wine:** High quality cheeses, wines, breads and other related gourmet items.

### **Sweet Miss Giving's:**

Premier bakery and jobs program with 50 percent of profits benefitting Chicago House.

**Vanille Patisserie:** Award-winning French pastries, candies and cakes.

**Wisconsin Cheese Mart:** Large collection of Wisconsin-produced cheese varieties.

To stay up to date on the latest news on MetraMarket and Chicago French Market, and to join the e-mail list to receive details on opening festivities and other announcements, visit [www.chicagofrenchmarket.com](http://www.chicagofrenchmarket.com) and [www.metramarket.com](http://www.metramarket.com).



## 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 letters for length and grammar.

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# SOUNDING BOARD

Got a question, we've got an answer

## Website gripes

I just wanted to let you know that I don't like the new schedule look-up on the website. I want to be able to see the whole schedule so I can see if there are any express trains that I can take. With the way it is set up now I only get where I am traveling from (Union Station) to where I am going (Glenview).

Christine

*We heard you, and many others, who raised concerns about the schedule display, and so we're going to give you the option to see the schedules similar to the way you could on the old website. As OTBL went to press, the goal was to have the option available in early October.*

*Many others asked about a website for mobile devices. We plan to have that operational by the end of the year, at the latest.*

*Many thanks to everyone who wrote to us with suggestions, comments and constructive criticism. We really do appreciate it.*

## Line still planned

What are the latest details for the proposed extension to Crete? Many riders like me commute 20 miles or more to 115th Street/Kensington on the Metra Electric line, a trip that is even more pleasurable now that the northbound AND southbound lanes of the Bishop Ford are under construction. I know that commuters in Munster, Schererville, Dyer, St. John, Chicago Heights, Crete and other towns are eagerly awaiting additional Metra service to the south suburbs.

Joe in St. John, Indiana

*The SouthEast Service line is still in our long-range plans. We are currently doing early planning work. Its future largely depends on how quickly we can get the money we need from state and federal sources to build it. That's true for our other New Start projects, including the STAR line and upgrades to two other lines.*

## What's that sign?

On ADA accessible cars I recognize the wheelchair sign indicating this status. However, next to many (but not all) of those blue signs is another blue sign that for the life of me I cannot figure out. It looks like someone stuck a pencil in someone's ear. I have not seen anyone stick pencils in any ears lately, so I guess the sign is working. Right?

Frank



*Wrong, but we appreciate the humor. That symbol indicates that the train car is accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some of our cars have scrolling signs that make announcements about the next stop, etc.*

## Ravenswood query

I appreciate that Metra is expanding by building a station and making other

improvements on the various Metra lines. However, I have concerns about an existing (and quite popular) station.

Are there any plans to provide handicapped/ramp access to the Ravenswood Station on the UP North line? It would make bringing my young (10 mo. old) child on the train much easier.

Susan  
UP North

*A whole new, fully accessible station will be built at Lawrence in conjunction with the first phase of a project to rebuild aging bridges on the UP North line. The first phase is a three-year project that will start next year.*

## 80th Ave. to begin

I noticed in the August 2009 newsletter that there will be a new station on the Rock Island line at 35th Street. That's great for all us south side Sox fans (and students at IIT... etc.).

My question to you is: When will the work start at the Tinley Park 80th Ave. station? It was allegedly scheduled to begin in June 2009.

This station is one of the if not THE busiest Rock Island stations – both commuter-wise and ticket sales.

The climb up onto and step down from the train to the platform can cause injuries. I am one of those commuters that has had an issue.

Chris

*That station project, which is being led by the village of Tinley Park, is scheduled to begin construction next year. Part of the project calls for raising the platforms by 8 inches so the climb up and the step down isn't so bad.*

# SOUND OFF

"...the snarky, snotty observations by Metra's customers about fellow commuters ... offer some of the best free entertainment around." - SouthtownStar, March 13, 2009

## Get lost, backpackers

I have been riding the train for 29 years and my new pet peeve is the trend towards commuters wearing backpacks. First, I am getting bumped by (often heavy) backpacks daily and most passengers are unaware or unapologetic about their rudeness.

Second, adults wearing backpacks look ridiculous. Grow up. You are not in school anymore – get a briefcase. You'll look more professional.

Thank you for letting me vent.

A longtime rider

*That's what we're here for. But while you won't get much of an argument about the rudeness of being bumped by a backpack, we suspect not all will agree with the rest of your comments.*

## Please be quiet

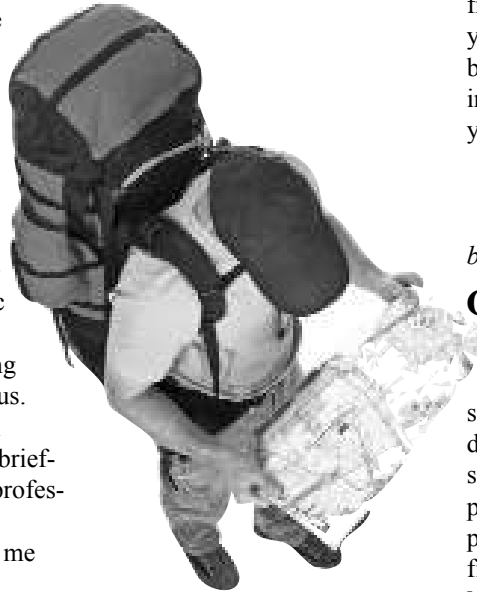
To the kids in the third-from-last car on the 10:58 p.m. train from Davis St./Evanston to Lake Forest in early August: I hate your loud voices and your loud, gaudy cellphones. If I cared about your apps I'd ask about them; there's no need for you little idiots to wave them around while shouting, disturbing all the other customers.

With love,  
Kate

*Note to those kids: What Kate is trying to say is you were being rude and obnoxious.*

## A bracing story

I routinely read Sound Off to get both entertained and



reminded of how we relate to our fellow commuters. I would like to send a public apology to the lady in the Glen Ellyn parking lot a couple weeks ago exiting the 5:09 train. This lady exited the parking lot shouting obscenities at me because I caused her to steer around my wife's car and probably delayed her exit by 5-10 seconds. She should remember me, I was the guy in the large cervical neck brace climbing into the passenger seat of the car. I am terribly sorry and assure you that in the subsequent weeks I have been healing and becoming must more adept at dealing with my lack of mobility. I especially remember this incident because last winter I helped push either this lady's little car, or a look-a-like, out of the drifted snow in the same lot. But rest assured Madame that by the time snow begins to fall I will be completely healed and

will again delay my trip home from the train to help push your car out of the snow because I now know how important your timely exit is to you.

Mike in Glen Ellyn

*Note to that lady: Mike is being sarcastic.*

## Garbage pickers

I've noticed on the BNSF Metra over the years several people and even conductors roaming the train to search for left-behind newspapers. I've seen these same people digging thru the trash to find papers. Now I know Metra can't really do anything about this, but in light of the fact that we are and have dealt with swine flu this is not the most sanitary practice. These people should pony up the 50 cents or whatever a paper costs these days, and buy one from the newsstand. I just don't understand the huge stack of papers I see some people collecting to take off the train.

So in summary, you know who you are, please stop dig-

ging in the trash to get a paper and then touching the other Metra surfaces with your dirty hands!

Brian

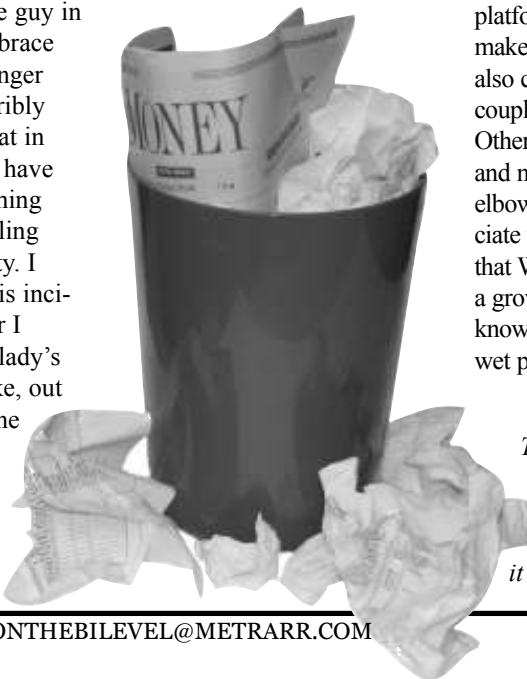
*We suspect some of those people are recycling. But really, why would they be digging in the trash for something to read when they could just be reading On the Bi-Level?*

## Good conductor

I just wanted to let others know of the courteous and helpful service provided by Will, a conductor on the Union Pacific North Line. As I raced from the CTA bus up the stairs and along the platform at the Central St. station to catch the train whose doors were closing (but within reach), instead of making a leap through the narrow opening, I found myself flat on my back on the platform. I had slipped and fallen on the yellow strip along the edge of the platform. A conductor must have had pity and the doors opened and I got up and boarded. Shortly thereafter, Will found me and instead of scolding me for running on the platform, he talked with me to make sure that I was alright. He also checked back with me a couple of times during the ride. Other than being a bit shaken and needing a Band-Aid on my elbow, I was fine. I really appreciate the kindness and concern that Will showed, particularly to a grown man who should have known better than to run on a wet platform.

Dan

*Thanks for your letter, and thanks for the reminder that it's always worthwhile to slow down, take it easy, and stay safe.*



## Fall travel notes

### Metra works with WIU on training

Metra last month entered into an intergovernmental agreement with Western Illinois University's Center for the Application of Information Technologies (CAIT) to provide computer-based training courses for employees throughout the Metra system.

CAIT will work with Metra's Workforce Education and Training team to create two interactive online courses and ultimately assist Metra in the creation of a strategic plan and documentation for the implementation of a comprehensive online training system. CAIT will also provide online hosting and maintenance services for these courses.

In addition to improving Metra's ability to track and document its training programs, the use of online training will increase Metra's flexibility in scheduling training sessions for its employees and cut costs by eliminating the need to staff training classes. The first two courses developed with CAIT will cover drug and alcohol awareness for Metra supervisors and railroad operating practices for transportation, track, signal and mechanical employees.

### Take Metra to Chicago Bears games

Metra and the CTA are a winning combination for Bears' fans who ride Metra and arrive at our Ogilvie Transportation Center or Union Station terminals. Just hop aboard the CTA's #128 Soldier Field Express for only \$1 each way. The #128 Soldier Field Express will depart from Ogilvie Transportation Center (southbound on Clinton at Madison) and from Union Station (at Jackson and Canal) and run express to Soldier Field. Service starts 2 hours prior to kickoff and resumes for 1 hour after the game on a load-and-go basis.

The Metra Electric has added a "Bears Extra" train for all Sunday kick-offs. Regular daily train service will conveniently serve the December weekday games. Just get off at 18th Street and walk to the game. For all games, the Bears Extra will depart Museum Campus/11th Street after the game.

For fans arriving at LaSalle Street Station, walk east on Van Buren to State Street and take the #146 bus south to Soldier Field. Regular CTA fares apply to #146.

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Leo Brunelle  
BA in Applied  
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"I wanted to start over.  
Get a new life. I got there in  
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I got it here.