

Metra ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, October 2013



Metra is moving forward

The following is a letter from Interim Executive Director Don Orseno to Metra riders.

A lot has been said and written about Metra this summer, but little of it had to do with the 4,400 men and women who work hard every day to make sure our trains operate as safely and as reliably as possible. I was recently honored to be chosen to



Don Orseno

lead Metra on an interim basis, and I feel it is important for riders to know that throughout this summer those dedicated professionals kept their focus on providing or supporting the best possible commuter rail service. That might not make for juicy headlines, but it is good news for anyone who rides Metra or cares about public transportation.

Take, for instance, our on-time-performance record. We have acknowledged that June was a difficult month. We had unusual weather that delayed many trains, and a freight derail-

ment that significantly impacted one line, but we also had a host of other nagging problems that brought our on-time rate down to 92.4 percent, well below our goal of 95 percent. We found that as unacceptable as our riders did, and immediately started working on doing better. In particular, we worked with the management of BNSF Railway, the busiest Metra line, to identify ways to cut delays attributable to mechanical, switch, signal or other issues.

As a result, that rate has improved every month since June – to 94 percent systemwide in

July, 95.2 percent in August and above 96 percent in September. The BNSF Line did even better each month than the systemwide average.

Here's some other evidence that Metra staff has not been distracted from its mission this summer:

- Metra ridership has been up year-over-year for the past four months.

- New cars for our Metra Electric Line continue to roll out of the factory at a rate of four to six a month. And it's not just

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Contest asks kids to 'Get Smart' with safety

Metra launched its annual safety poster and essay contest last month during a rally at Mozart Elementary on the Chicago's north side. The theme for the 2013-2014 edition of the contest will be "Get Smart: Look, Listen Live."

Metra has been conducting the Safety Poster and Essay Contest since 2007 to promote safe behaviors around trains and railroad tracks – especially among the region's children. The contest is open to all students in grades K through 12 living or attending school in the railroad's six-county service area. The deadline for all entries is Jan. 31, 2014.

"Chicago is the nation's rail hub and the entire metropolitan area is crisscrossed with railroads," said Metra interim



Metra Operation Lifesaver Educator Larry Green (left to right), Metra Emergency Preparedness Manager Tom Donegan, Mozart Elementary student Lupita Delgado, Metra Director of Safety Hilary Konczal and CBS-2 Meteorologist Ed Curran introduce the theme for Metra's next Safety Poster and Essay Contest.

Executive Director Don Orseno. "It is imperative that we teach our youngsters the paramount

message of safety and the skills that will stay with them throughout their lives."

At the rally, Mozart received a laptop computer and was honored for submitting more entries than any other school in last year's contest. Lupita Delgado, a student at the school, was also recognized for her 3rd-place winning entry. To inspire and inform the students so that they can participate in the next contest, Metra's Operation Lifesaver educator Larry Green presented a lesson on rail safety.

The Safety Poster Contest is a key part of Metra's ongoing effort to increase public awareness about lifesaving railroad safety practices. One first-, second- and third-place winner will be selected from each grade, K-12, and awarded the following prizes:

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Metra

On the Bi-Level

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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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Don Orseno
Interim Executive Director

Metra

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any factory – it's a new Nippon Sharyo facility in Rochelle, Ill., that our order – and the state of Illinois' leadership – helped to build.

- We've continued to renovate 176 cars into like-new condition for our diesel lines in-house, which has saved us money and allowed us to add electrical outlets and intercoms for passengers. It has also provided jobs right here in Chicago.

- Major projects such as the UP North bridge work, the Englewood flyover bridge and rehabilitations of the Ravenswood, Cicero and Fox River Grove stations remain on track.

- We have launched marketing campaigns to increase our ridership and inform our customers about transit benefits programs that will help employers and employees save money.

- Just last month, we partnered with NBC 5 in a successful back-to-school supply drive for students at two Chicago schools.

- We carried out another successful school safety poster contest. Our next contest, in fact, just got underway.

- We are installing technology on our locomotives that will automatically shut them down if they've idled too long and/or restart them as needed, which helps reduce pollution and noise. We expect two-thirds of our fleet to be equipped soon.

- We have increased our advertising revenue by 34 percent, and we have developed new advertising products – such as external train banners and waiting room wraps – to provide additional ad revenue opportunities.

- Finally, our year-over-year revenue through July is up by \$6.9 million, or 4 percent, which is helping us to operate under budget for the year so far.

In addition to those initiatives, Metra has a variety of other plans



in the works to benefit riders. We know we need to restore the public trust in Metra, and we know the best way to do that is to concentrate on operating safely and reliably and on spending public dollars wisely. Beyond that, we also want to explore such things as Wi-Fi, an enhanced train tracker and integration with the CTA's Ventra fare card, among other things.

And we want to work on providing the best customer service, whether our customers are riding a train, buying a ticket, viewing our website or carrying out any other interaction with Metra. We will soon be introducing an annual customer experience survey and a Mystery Shopper Program to ensure our riders are satisfied.

I certainly will not argue that Metra is without challenges.

Perhaps the biggest challenge, and one that will impact many of our plans, is our need for more capital money to invest in our system. We estimate Metra will need about \$9.7 billion over the next decade to achieve a state of good repair on the system, and we expect to receive about a fourth of that amount from traditional federal and state sources. Riders need to understand that fares help us cover our operating costs but have never been a significant source for capital expenses – we must rely on Washington and Springfield for that funding.

I will argue, however, that Metra has a solid team in place to meet those challenges, and that we are fully committed to doing everything within our means to do so. Our riders, and the public, deserve no less.

Take a Metra ride to fall fun

All kinds of celebrations, festivals, fairs and just plain fun happen along Metra lines year-round. The fall season – everyone’s favorite – is a great time to grab a friend or round up the kids, and hop on Metra for an adventure waiting right outside your door. Here’s just a small sampling of what’s going on this fall, all just steps from a Metra station.

UP Northwest Line

*The Haunted Square
Woodstock Square*
Fridays and Saturdays through Nov. 2, plus Oct. 17, 24, 27 and 31
Open most weekend nights from 7 p.m. to midnight
\$12 for adults, aged 14 or older
Check out the incredibly terrifying haunted house named Madness Manor in Woodstock Square, near the Metra Station. Proceeds go to help restore the courthouse on the square.

Milwaukee District West Line

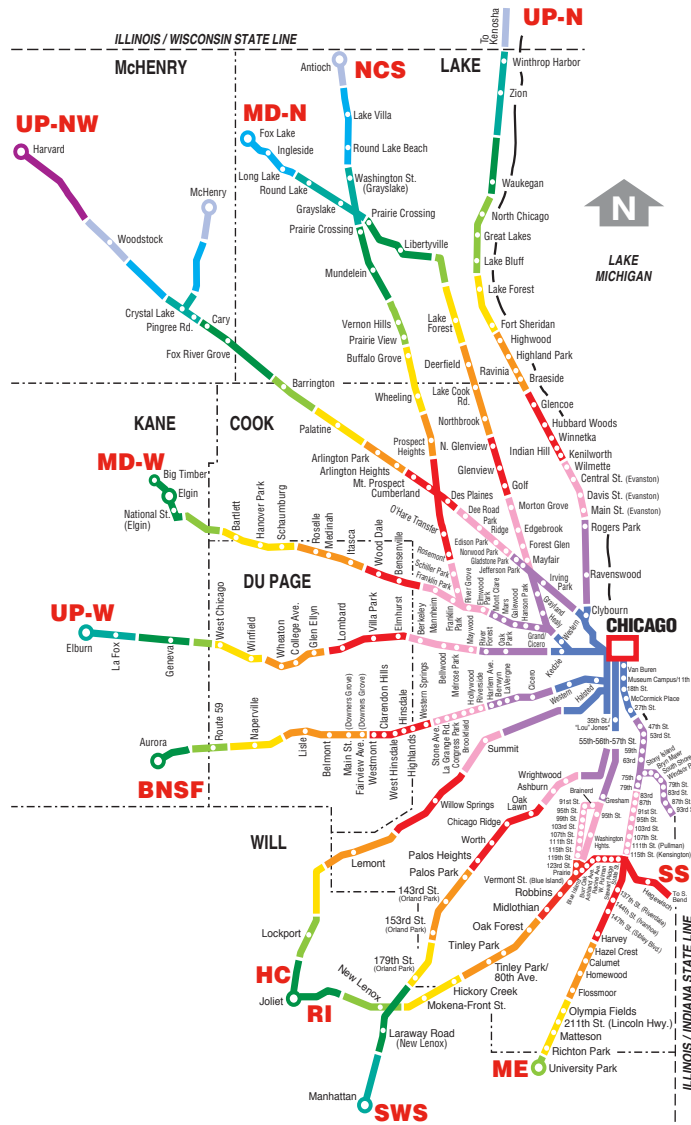
Wood Dale Tree Lighting
Dec. 7, 2 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Free
Singing, entertainment and an appearance by a man in a red suit at Wood Dale’s annual tree lighting ceremony at City Hall. A block from the Metra station.

UP West Line

Spooktacular Fall Festival
Downtown Lombard
Oct. 16, Noon to 6 p.m.
Free
Live entertainment, spooky scientific experiments conducted by Glenbard East High School, pumpkin patch with carving and decorating, scarecrow building, trick-or-treating and more.

BNSF Line

Basement of the Dead
42 W. New York St., Aurora
Open through Nov. 2
Days and hours of operation vary; but 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays
\$18 for one haunted house, \$25 for two
Voted No. 1 haunted house in 2012 by Haunted House Chicago and ranked Top 13 3-D Haunt in the world by Haunted Attraction Magazine. Recommended for children 13 and older.



Rock Island Line

Light up the Holiday Festival and Parade, Joliet
Nov. 29
Activities begin at 10 a.m., with tree lighting at 5:15 p.m. followed by the parade at 5:30 p.m.
Free
The annual festival, parade and tree-lighting ceremony steps off just a few blocks from Joliet Union Station. Plenty of activities for the whole family.

SouthWest Service

*Pumpkin Festival
Oak Lawn Village Green*
Oct. 19
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Free
This is a terrific event for the whole family, featuring pumpkins for sale, hay rides, apple bobbing, food vendors and a variety of other activities. On the Village Green, just a few blocks from the Metra station.

UP North Line

Highwood Pumpkin Festival
Downtown Highwood
Oct. 17-20
Hours vary
\$2 suggested donation
Highwood will be attempting to break two Guinness World Records this year: most people carving a pumpkin simultaneously and most lit jack-o'-lanterns on display. This event also features hay rides, a pet costume contest, a pie-eating contest, live music, pony rides, a petting zoo and a variety of food vendors and many other activities.

Milwaukee District North Line

Halloween Hoopla
Deerfield, Jewett Park
Oct. 25, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Oct. 26, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Visitors can enjoy Friday and Saturday nights' Haunted House, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. There will also be a bonfire, outdoor movie in the park, DJ and more. A fee applies only to haunted house. On Saturday, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., enjoy outdoor inflatable rides, hayrides, indoor and outdoor games and other activities.

Metra Electric Line

Holiday Lights
Downtown Homewood
Dec. 6, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Free
Holiday Lights has become a treasured event in Homewood, capturing the joy, excitement, and traditions of the season in just one memorable evening. Featuring a musical trolley, costumed characters, carolers and more. A parade of antique cars will precede Santa's lighting of the tree. Downtown Homewood, two blocks from the Metra station.

Fall Travel Notes

Zediker joins Metra Board

John P. Zediker joined the Metra Board of Directors last month after he was appointed to the board by DuPage County Board Chairman Dan Cronin.

Mr. Zediker is currently partner and chief operating officer of Ruettiger, Tonelli & Associates, Inc., a design firm with emphasis in civil engineering, planning, surveying and GIS. He is a licensed real estate broker and holds certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners.

Mr. Zediker brings executive experience in both the public and private sectors, having worked as the Director of Transportation, Engineering and Development for the city of Naperville and as president of Moser Enterprises, Inc. He has extensive experience in land acquisition, development, construction oversight and strategic planning.

In addition, Mr. Zediker represented the residents of Aurora, Naperville and Lisle as a commissioner on the DuPage County Board from 2009 to 2012. He has also served as a director of the Choose DuPage Economic Development Agency and as a member of the City of Naperville's Transportation Management Advisory Committee. He currently serves on the North Central College Board of Trustees Associates and as a director of the Naperville Development Partnership.

Mr. Zediker holds an M.B.A. from the University of St. Francis and a Master of Science, Urban and Economic Geography from Northern Illinois University. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Carroll College.

He is involved in numerous charitable and service organizations, including the Naperville Sunrise Rotary, Naperville Heritage Society and the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry.

He lives with his family in Naperville.

Barbosa also added to Metra Board

Manuel Barbosa was appointed to the Metra Board of Directors by the Chairman of the Kane County Board, Chris Lauzen.

Mr. Barbosa retired in 2013 from the U.S. Federal Court for the Northern District of Illinois in 2013 where he had served as a

bankruptcy judge since 1998. He began his legal career in the Kane County State's Attorney's Office as an assistant state's attorney from 1977 to 1979 and was in private practice until his appointment to the federal bench.

In 1980, Mr. Barbosa was appointed to the Illinois Human Rights Commission and served as chairman throughout his tenure on the commission. He was reappointed to the commission three times and served until 1998.

He is a 1969 graduate of Benedictine University (formerly St. Procopius College) and received his Juris Doctor from John Marshall School of Law in 1977.

Mr. Barbosa has received numerous awards from civic and legal groups including multiple awards from the Illinois Hispanic Lawyers Association, including its Vanguard Award in 2011. He is presently involved in the Club Guadalupano's Annual Scholarship Banquet and is on the Board of Visitors of the Northern Illinois University Law School.

He was born in Mexico and has lived in Elgin for the past 56 years. He and his wife, Linda, have three children.

Don't forget CREATE event

The second CREATE "Get-on-Board" Business-to-Business Exchange specifically tailored for the rail industry and CREATE partners will be held October 16 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Ford Chicago Assembly Plant, 126th at Torrence Ave. CREATE, which stands for Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program, is a consortium of major railroads, including Metra, and the state of Illinois and city of Chicago that is working together to improve the Chicago area's rail infrastructure. This CREATE business networking event will connect rail industry executives, government transportation agency leaders and prime contractors with certified and experienced disadvantaged, minority, and women-owned businesses seeking contracting and subcontracting opportunities in engineering, design, construction, and support services with CREATE and other rail projects. For more information, go to www.createprogram.org.

Safety

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First Place: iPad

Second Place: \$250 gift card

Third Place: \$100 gift card

Winning designs will be sent

to more than 2,000 schools in northeastern Illinois, featured in Metra's Safety Calendar, on the contest website, in station displays and on monthly tickets.

Metra will also recognize the school with the most entries in the 2013-2014 Safety Poster Contest by awarding it a new computer compatible with the

school's system. Each school's entries will be totaled after the deadline on Jan. 31, 2014. Please note the new deadline.

Students are also encouraged to enter the 2013-2014 Metra Safety Essay Contest. Contest participants are asked to describe in 300 words or less why it is important to "Get Smart" near trains and railroad tracks. First-place winners in the essay contest will also receive an iPad.

For more information about the contest rules and guidelines, as well as downloadable entry forms, logos, and poster templates, go to the contest website

www.metracontest.com. You can even submit your completed contest entry through this site. Also, become a fan of the contest Facebook page for exclusive news. Any questions about the contest or materials can be directed to metracontest@metrarr.com.

Teachers will also find useful information in the Teachers Sec-

tion of the website. There they will find materials such as fact sheets, coloring pages and bulletin board displays to help them integrate railroad safety messages into their lesson plans. In addition, the site includes games and information sheets designed for parents and driver education instructors.

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.