

Board picks Orseno as interim leader

The Metra Board of Directors on August 27 selected Deputy Executive Director/Chief Operations Officer Donald A. Orseno, a lifelong railroader, as the interim Executive Director/CEO of Metra. His understanding of the most complex railroad system



Don Orseno

in North America will ensure that Metra operates safely and efficiently, and his no-nonsense approach

will move Metra forward.

Orseno has worked for the railroad industry for 40 years. A native of the Chicago area, he began his career as a Rock Island Railroad trainman. Since joining Metra in 1984, he has quietly risen through the ranks based upon his performance and work ethic.

Orseno has held progressively responsible management positions throughout his career at Metra, including Senior Trainmaster, Director of Mechanical, Director of Suburban Operations, Director of Safety & Rules, Chief Customer Service Officer and Chief Transportation Officer, prior to his position as Chief Operations Officer.

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Winners of Metra's 2013 Safety Poster and Essay Contest pose with members of the Metra Board and leadership team.

Safety contest winners honored by Metra Board

Winners in the 2013 edition of Metra's Safety Poster and Essay Contest, designed to promote and reinforce railroad safety messages and keep children safe around trains, were honored at the August meeting of the Metra Board of Directors.

Hundreds of students from across the six-county region participated by creating artwork or writing essays around the theme "Take Care, Be Aware, Look Listen Live."

Each year, Metra's Safety

Contest invites students in grades K-12 throughout its six-county service area to submit poster designs and essays highlighting the importance of railroad safety. Tasked with selecting the winners were a panel of 20 judges, including government officials, representatives from safety and education advocacy groups, business and community leaders, media and railroad professionals.

"Safety is Metra's highest priority and this contest al-

lows us to bring the discussion of rail safety into our region's classrooms so that we educate our future riders as well as our current riders," said Metra Deputy Executive Director Alex Z. Wiggins. "We could not be more proud of the contributions made by these students to our mission to promote the importance of safety near our trains and tracks."

First-, second- and third-place winners were chosen from each

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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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Students win with safety message: *Take care, be aware, look listen live*

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grade level for the Metra Safety Poster Contest. One winner from each grade group – elementary school, middle school and high school – was chosen for the Safety Essay Contest. First-place poster and essay contest winners received an iPad, while second- and third-place poster contest winners received \$250 and \$100 gift cards, respectively.

A People's Choice winner also was selected via voting on Metra's website www.metrarail.com/2013postercontest. The winner, who received an additional \$250 prize, was selected from the first-prize winners through the online poll.

Metra also recognized the school with the most entries in the

poster contest. This year's winner is Chicago's Mozart Elementary. The school received a computer for use in the classroom.

The first-place poster designs will be printed and distributed to more than 2,000 schools in north-east Illinois. The posters will also be featured in station displays, in Metra's 2014 safety calendar, on monthly tickets and on the Metra website. Winning safety essays will also be featured in the safety calendar, the Metra website and Facebook page. The second- and third-place posters will also be featured on the contest's Facebook page.

The contest, which is in its seventh year, would not be possible without the support of its sponsors, whose generous contri-

butions have helped Metra defray the costs of the contest prizes as well as the production of the safety posters. This year's contest sponsors include the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and Hubbard Radio Group, owners of Chicago radio stations 97.1 FM The Drive, 100.3 Chicago's Rewind and 101.9 The Mix.

To date, campaign outreach efforts include the distribution of more than 300,000 safety posters and 12,000 Metra Safety Calendars and more than two million pencil kits to schools throughout the region.

Information about the campaign, along with all of the Safety Contest winners, is available at www.metrarail.com and www.facebook.com/MetraContest.

Metra Safety Poster and Essay contest winners

The following students were chosen as the 2012-2013 Safety Poster Contest's first-place winners:

- Tristan Mehra, Kindergarten, White Eagle Elementary School, Naperville
- Pranav Agrawala, 1st Grade, Steeple Run Elementary, Lisle
- Yebin Park, 2nd Grade, The Art School in Glenview, Glenview
- Alyssa Meza, 3rd Grade, Winnebago Elementary, Bloomingdale
- Ashley M. Roy, 4th Grade, The Art School in Glenview, Glenview
- Mia Reynes, 5th Grade, Roosevelt School, River Forest
- Jorge Casas, 6th Grade, Richard E. Byrd School, Burbank
- Jasmine Meza, 7th Grade, Marquardt Middle School, Bloomingdale
- Danielle Murawski, 8th Grade, Jack Hille Middle School, Oak Forest
- Cameron Chen, 9th Grade, Libertyville High School, Libertyville
- Elizabeth Adams, 10th Grade, Crystal Lake Central High School, Crystal Lake
- Joshua Moy, 11th Grade, Deerfield High School, Deerfield
- Karen Nguyen, 12th Grade, Glenbard North High School, Carol Stream

The following students were chosen as the 2012-2013 Safety Poster Contest's second-place winners:

- Alex Gourley, Kindergarten, Copeland Manor School, Libertyville
- Gwyn Lockwood, 1st Grade, Lowell Elementary, Wheaton
- Samantha Chen, 2nd Grade, Copeland Manor School, Libertyville
- Jacob Szczudrawa, 3rd Grade, Winnebago Elementary, Bloomingdale
- Ivey Fowler, 4th Grade, Oak Grove School, Green Oaks
- Montserrat Jimenez, 5th Grade, J Shields Middle School, Chicago
- Aryaman Agrawal, 6th Grade, Kennedy Junior High School, Lisle
- Joy Lin, 7th Grade, The Art School in Glenview, Glenview
- Jasmine Raudys, 8th Grade, Homer Junior High, Homer Glen
- Oran Dillon, 10th Grade, Crystal Lake Central High School, Crystal Lake
- Tyler Chen, 11th Grade, Libertyville High School, Libertyville
- Danny Caplice 12th Grade, Lyons Township High School, LaGrange

The following students were chosen as the 2012-2013 Safety Poster Contest's third-place winners:

- Lupita Delgado, Kindergarten, Mozart Elementary, Chicago
- Caroline Trob, 1st Grade, Copeland Manor School, Libertyville
- Veronica Stastna, 2nd Grade, Pheasant Ridge Elementary School, Glendale Heights
- Jieun Chung, 3rd Grade, The Art School in Glenview, Glenview
- Olivia Ho, 4th Grade, The Art School in Glenview, Glenview
- Mary Wettlerling, 5th Grade, Copeland Manor School, Libertyville
- Eha Srivastava, 6th Grade, Winnebago Elementary, Bloomingdale
- Julie Kupperman, 7th Grade, Lincoln Middle School, Mt. Prospect
- Hannah Johnson, 8th Grade, Homer Junior High, Homer Glen
- Molly Anderson, 10th Grade, Cary Grove High School, Cary
- Alex York-Solano, 11th Grade, Glenbard North High School, Carol Stream
- Nicole Shepherd, 12th Grade, Reavis High School, Burbank

The following school submitted the most entries in the Safety Poster Contest:

- Mozart Elementary School, Chicago

The following students were chosen as the Safety Essay Contest's first-place winners:

- Manya Davis, 1st Grade, White Eagle Elementary School, Naperville
- Justin Kim, 6th Grade, Hinsdale Middle School, Hinsdale
- Nam-Joong (Peter) Hwang, 11th Grade, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire

The following student was selected as the "People's Choice" award winner:

- Cameron Chen, 9th Grade, Libertyville High School, Libertyville

Campaign aims to boost transit benefits

Metra has launched a major outreach campaign to encourage Chicago area businesses to offer transit benefit programs and help their employees save as much as 40 percent on commuting costs. Metra's outreach is focusing on small- and medium-sized companies with a mix of downtown and select suburban locations.

Internal Revenue Service approved transit benefit programs are designed to reduce the cost of commuting by allowing employees to set aside up to \$245 per month, pre-tax, for their transportation costs. Benefits apply to a host of public transit options, such as Metra, CTA, Pace and even water taxi.

According to a 2010 study, transit benefits are now ranked among the top benefits offered, with 35 percent of companies of all sizes offering some type of the benefit. Employers also save by offering transit benefit programs. In addition to reduced payroll taxes, employers may recognize improvement in em-

ployee retention and employee morale. This can be a great perk when recruiting and retaining quality employees. Programs can be easily managed through a third-party agency.

Employers have a variety of pre-tax transit benefit providers to consider, including the RTA, WageWorks, Benefit Resources, ADP, AON/Hewitt, Wired Commute and other vendors.

Employees appreciate the program because of the savings and the plan flexibility that allows them to opt in or out according to plan specifications. In addition, there is no "use it or lose it" penalty, or cumbersome records to maintain for the employee or employer. Furthermore, using transit cuts the hassle of driving, dealing with traffic jams and parking woes.

Metra is focused on reaching out to small- and medium-sized businesses in the six-county region. According to a 2010 Commuter Benefit Impact Survey, research indicates that

67 percent of large companies in urban settings offer transit benefits, followed by 63 percent of medium-sized companies and 24 percent of small companies. Metra's 2011 Customer Satisfaction Survey revealed that more than 60 percent of traditional commuters (those working in downtown Chicago) are offered the benefit, while less than 40 percent of reverse commuters are offered plans. Clearly, there is a need to raise awareness among employers in both the city and suburban employment markets.

Metra's campaign includes targeted outreach to 1,900 businesses in the region to heighten their awareness of the value of transit benefit programs and to encourage these businesses to offer plans. Our goal is to help employers by referring them to qualified plans where they can compare offerings and make the best choices for their particular company needs. Following this first targeted outreach, Metra will select additional employers

to broaden its outreach.

On the consumer side, we are educating current commuters who may not be aware of the program, and potential new riders who may be more likely to use transit if they can reduce their costs. Onboard ads speak directly to commuters who may already be using public transportation but not enjoying the benefits of the program.

"While Metra does not offer its own transit benefit program, we are excited to encourage companies to offer these plans," said Metra Deputy CEO Alex Wiggins. "Providing safe and reliable transportation to our riders is our first priority, and helping them save money is a win-win situation for everyone."

For more information about pre-tax transit benefits, call 312-322-6326, send an email to TransitBenefits@metrarr.com or go to www.metrarail.com. Learn more about the RTA's benefit program at www.lesstaxingcommute.com.

Metra riders and workers donate school supplies

Metra Interim Executive Director Don Orseno presents donations from a Back-To-School Supply Drive to NBC 5 reporter Alicia Roman during the morning newscast on August 23. Metra and NBC 5 teamed up for the August 20-22 drive, collecting thousands of items from riders and employees at all five downtown Metra stations and Metra's headquarters. Proceeds are being donated to Telpochcalli Elementary School and Lawndale Elementary Community Academy in Chicago. Other partners in this effort include Telemundo, Comcast and the Chicago Police Athletic League.



Fall Travel Notes

Sunday work to close part of Rock Island line

The Metra Rock Island line will be closed north of the Gresham Station for two Sundays, Sept. 22 and Oct. 6, in order to remove two bridges at 60th and 66th streets. Passengers south of Blue Island who wish to travel downtown can take the Rock Island Line to Blue Island and transfer at Blue Island to the Metra Electric Line's Blue Island branch, where special trains will take riders along the branch line and then the main line downtown to the 18th St., Museum Campus, Van Buren and Millennium stations. Passengers at Gresham and along the Rock Island's Beverly branch who want to go downtown will have to ride south to Blue Island and make the transfer to the Metra Electric Line. Special Metra Electric trains will also make the reverse trip to Blue Island from Millennium. There will be no service at the LaSalle Street and 35th Street stations during the shutdown. Regular service on the Rock Island line will resume with the 6:25 p.m. departure from Joliet, arriving at LaSalle Street at 7:49 p.m., and the 6:30 p.m. departure from LaSalle Street, arriving in Joliet at 7:55 p.m. For more information, go to www.metrarail.com.

CREATE schedules business exchange

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

to improve the area's rail infrastructure. This CREATE business networking event will connect rail industry executives, government transportation agency heads and prime contractors with certified and experienced disadvantaged, minority, and women-owned firms 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.

Metra leader wins award

Janice R. Thomas, the Director of Metra's Office of Business Diversity & Civil Rights since December 2010, is being honored by



Janice Thomas

the Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce with the "Friend of the Chamber" Award on October 22. The award honors individuals who have given outstanding support to the chamber and minority business enterprises. It also recognizes the significant contributions that she has made to the economic development of the community. Thomas has more than 15 years of experience in government with a concentration in supplier diversity. Her career objective is to make sure all

small, minority, and female business owners are adequately motivated and provided opportunities to compete with larger businesses.

Back to Work, back to school, back to Metra

Get your routine back on track after Labor Day, the return of the five-day work week and children back in school: take Metra. Metra offers frequent and dependable rush hour service, savings over the cost of driving and parking and flexible fare programs, including daily, 10-ride and monthly tickets. Plus, you can ride all weekend long for just \$7. So when Metra's an option for you, ask yourself, "Why Drive?" To choose your line, find stations, schedules, and to order tickets, visit www.metrarail.com.

Orseno

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Well-known and respected in the railroad industry nationwide, as well as by Metra's rank-and-file and senior staff, Orseno is an active participant and member of the Safety and Operations Management Committee of the Association of American Railroads, the senior management committee for the North American railroads. He served as vice

president and then president of the American Association of Railroad Superintendents for the United States and Canada. He is an active member of the Chicago Railroad Superintendents Association, having served 10 years as president.

Orseno said he would concentrate on Metra's core mission, making sure that it continues to provide safe, reliable transportation and on delivering good customer service and value to its riders.

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.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Whether you go underground, overhead, by rail or by street, keep on keeping on public transit. You could win prizes in RTA's Car Free Week Contest.

CAR FREE WEEK!
SEPT. 22-28



*The more rides you take,
the cooler the prizes
you can win!*

DRIVE LESS

LIVE MORE

See official contest rules at drivelesslivemore.com



SIGN UP NOW: drivelesslivemore.com