

ON THE BI-LEVEL

Metra®



Metra's Monthly Commuter Newsletter

September 2015

Mobile ticketing coming soon with Ventra App

Metra customers will soon have a convenient new way to buy and display tickets with their smartphones – the new Ventra App. No need to stand in line or wait for the mail – buy your mobile tickets on the go, anytime, anywhere. It'll be like having a ticket vending machine in your pocket.

The app will be available for free in the App Store or Google Play. It'll let you use your smartphone to buy any Metra ticket with a credit or debit card or a Ventra account. The mobile ticket will be stored on your phone, and you'll activate it when you board and display it to the conductor when he or she checks for tickets.

And if you create an account in the app, you can buy mobile tickets even faster and recover them if your phone is ever lost, stolen, damaged or replaced.

The app will also let you manage and add value to Ventra accounts, purchase CTA and Pace passes and track Metra trains, CTA buses and trains and Pace buses and much more.

Stay tuned...It's coming soon.



CHARGE!

Metra installing outlets at downtown stations for your phones and laptops

Metra is installing charging stations at Millennium Station, Van Buren Street Station, LaSalle Street Station and the Ogilvie Transportation Center to provide customers with a convenient and free place to recharge electronic mobile devices including smartphones, tablets and laptops.

Charging stations at Millennium were installed last month and the others stations should have the outlets this month. Metra also anticipates installing charging stations in the coming months in its ticketing area at Chicago Union Station.

"We've heard from our customers that charging stations

would be a useful amenity for people waiting for trains and we stepped up to the plate and got it done," said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno. "Our goal is to convince more drivers that Metra offers a safe, efficient travel option that enables commuters to access the technology they want and deserve."

A recent study by the Chadwick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University indicated more than three times as many Metra riders are performing electronic tasks such as texting and reading emails today compared to five years ago. Fewer than 14 percent

of passengers were performing such tasks in 2010, compared to 44 percent this year.

The study also indicated that commuter dependence on electronic devices may be boosting Metra ridership, which has grown despite fare increases that have boosted the cost of travel. This suggests that other factors – including the value passengers place on using electronic devices while traveling – may be offsetting some of the effects of rising fares.

"Making the right investments so that riders have access to technology is a good business

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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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Executive Director/CEO



Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno stands next to one of the new genset diesel engines that is being installed into Metra's fleet of 27 MP36 locomotives to power the onboard systems and improve passenger comfort and boost the locomotives' reliability.

Metra begins work to modernize engines

Metra has just begun an in-house program to upgrade 27 locomotives that were put in service between 2003 and 2005. The work is being done at our 47th St. locomotive shop along the Rock Island Line.

The program calls for replacing the existing head-end power system in our MP36 engines. Head-end power, or HEP, is the part of the locomotive that provides the electricity for the onboard lights, heating, air conditioning, exhaust fans and door

motors.

The new system is an independent diesel engine driving a generator. It's a more reliable, more modern system that puts us on par with rest of the industry. With this new generator set system, HEP can continue operating even if the locomotive develops problems that prevent train movement.

The genset system replaces a system that was unique to Metra and is at the end of or beyond its useful life. The total cost of the

program is \$18.6 million, or about \$689,000 per locomotive.

The work requires removing all the existing equipment, adding new pieces to subframe to support the new diesel engine, and lots of welding work.

Motive Power Inc., which built the engines, developed an installation process and parts kit for our forces to do this modernization work. We are now working on our first engine, No. 401. Our goal is complete one engine about every 30 days.

Charge

(Continued from Page 1)
decision for Metra," Orseno said. "It helps us attract and retain the riders we need to keep ticket revenues up and fare increases

down."

Metra has taken other notable steps to cater to passengers who use technology by installing power outlets in railcars and pursuing the mobile ticketing app, expected to launch this fall.

The charging stations were

fabricated using manpower and resources available at Metra's rail yard shops at an estimated cost of between \$6,000 to \$7,000 for all four station installations. Metra is also exploring ways to provide free Wi-Fi service in waiting areas at the downtown stations.

SOUND OFF

Chime time

What's the deal with the new chimes every so often on the trains now? I've been hearing these for a few days now and they are overly loud and annoying...sorry to say that. Everyone on the cars who is attempting to sleep is nearly rattled out of their seats by these "chimes"... What's the purpose?

Matt

The Federal Railroad Administration during its investigation of the Amtrak accident in Philadelphia made several recommendations to railroads that handle passenger trains of proactive means to insure against recurrences, and this was one of them. The chimes are tied to our GPS location system, and sound whenever a train is approaching a location where the maximum authorized speed drops by 20 mph or more. The purpose of the chimes is to remind the train crew (who may be in any car at any given time) that the train is approaching one of these areas so they can remind the engineer and be prepared to take action should the train fail to slow down for any reason.

Tweezer fever

I thought I'd seen it all. Muddy, wet shoes, boots on seats. A passenger asleep across two seats with a blanket draped across. Paying for one seat and using two seats and not allowing a fare-paying rider to sit down, because she actually has her eyes closed and no one wants to bother her. I've seen passengers clipping nails, filing nails, polishing nails, applying make-up from basic touch-up to a full facial application.

And now today: A woman holding a compact, magnifying mirror in her left hand, head



back on the seat, tweezers in her right hand! Eyebrows, maybe? She was already on the train when I boarded in Geneva, so she was well into her tweezing job. Next stop. Let's get those nose hairs! Oh, no! And from there, down to the chin and other stray facial hairs. Gosh. I couldn't believe my eyes. This tweezing went on for the entire 40-mile trip in. Disgusting? You bet.

J.S.

Maybe we should count ourselves lucky that the trip didn't last more than 40 miles....

Backpack backlash

So many people use backpacks and they are great for hauling your stuff, but when you get on the train PLEASE remove them. I can't tell you how many times I have been hit, as well as others when the commuter spins around looking for a seat. Show a little consideration and take it off and carry your backpack when you get on the train.

Dan

Thanks for the reminder that what serves as a practical carry-all for a lot of us can also be an unintentional mallet to innocent riders standing behind us.

Peeve potpourri

When did eating on the train (and bus for that matter) become OK? This used to be banned and for good reason. The train smells terrible. Maybe, along with the "Quiet Car," you could have a "Eating Car" and then a "Dog Car." And a "Take-Up-As-Many-Seats-As-You-Want Car." Or maybe just put them all together in one car. Just sayin'.

Tony

But only if we get to have a "Bagpipes Car," too.

Reverse reproach

I am a reverse commuter. I regularly take the 7:01 a.m. train out of Union Station to Aurora. The train I ride arrives at Union Station around 6:45 a.m. and is very full of inbound riders. I don't understand why some of my fellow reverse commuters insist on getting on the train before the inbound commuters get off. I wait in the station until most of the passengers have cleared the platform. This makes my trip down the platform much easier. Being a reverse commuter I never have a problem finding a seat so I don't understand why some reverse commuters insist on forcing their way down the

platform. One reminder to my fellow reverse commuters: even if the train is late coming into Union Station, it's not going to leave before all the inbound passengers have left the train. So hang back and relax – then we will all have a better trip.

Mark

Seems like some common sense advice to us.

Podiatric protest

On my weekday train ride home to Naperville I have seen two grown men put their bare feet on the seat in front of them, on the single seats upstairs. UGH!! Why? Besides being gross, I don't really want to see your "naked" feet – and for the one man who had red/white/blue nail polish on his toes, I'll pitch in and buy you a pair of socks!!!

Arlene

While we can understand the urge to want to show off patriotic toes, we agree that the train, more specifically a seat, is not the best place to do so.

Express exaltation

Thanks so much for introducing express trains on the Rock on the weekends. Now, for those who board in Joliet and points east of there, it is only 12 stops to LaSalle Street Station. It used to be 23!!! I had taken to finding other means of getting back and forth due to the long and boring (and jolting) rides. Now I am back on the Rock with joy. And the ridership seems tremendous. Well done!

Douglas

We're glad to have you back and we're glad you like the new service. It's a trial project that will last through November, funded in part by the RTA.

Fall Travel Notes

Use Metra to see the Bears play

Going to see the Chicago Bears this season? Metra can help make the trip to Soldier Field a whole lot easier for you, your friends and family. On the Metra Electric Line, the "Bears Extra" train will once again serve fans during home games. On Sundays when the Bears are scheduled to play at Soldier Field, an extra train will depart University Park at 9:40 a.m., making all stops to the Museum Campus/11th Street Station. Fans should get off the train at the 18th Street Station (10:31 a.m.) a short walking distance from Soldier Field. An extra outbound train will depart the Museum Campus/11th Street Station about 30 minutes after the game. Fans riding Metra into Chicago Union Station or Ogilvie Transportation Center can board the CTA's No. 128 Express and No. 130 Museum Campus buses for a quick trip to Soldier Field. CTA service starts two hours prior to kickoff and resumes for one hour after the game on a load-and-go basis. Fans arriving at LaSalle Street Station should walk east on Van Buren to State Street and take the CTA No. 146 bus to Soldier Field. Fans can also take advantage of Metra's \$8 Weekend Pass for Sunday games, and Metra's "Family Fares" allow up to three children age 11 and under to ride free. For more information, visit www.metrarail.com.

Metra awarded safety grant

Metra has received a grant from Operation Lifesaver, Inc. to help promote rail safety awareness in the region. Operation Lifesaver, in

partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, awarded more than \$200,000 in grants to 13 state Operation Lifesaver programs for a variety of highway-rail grade crossing safety public education projects, in conjunction with the group's ongoing "See Tracks? Think Train" public awareness campaign. Under the grant program, Metra received \$20,000, which will be used to produce and place banners with the slogan "See Tracks? Think Train!" on the outside of commuter rail cars and on electronic signs at the Ogilvie Transportation Center in Chicago.

Homewood Station rehab moves forward

The Metra Board of Directors has approved an \$585,000 amendment to the agency's 2015 capital program to fund design for a rehabilitation of the Homewood Station on the Metra Electric Line. The funding includes a \$468,000 grant from the federal Surface Transportation Program, which was secured by Homewood through the South Suburban Mayor and Managers Association, and \$117,000 in matching funds from the south suburban village. Metra will use the funding to procure design and engineering services for a major station rehabilitation. Engineering work is expected to begin in 2016 and take about one year. The timeline for construction will depend on the engineering work and the availability of construction funding. In the meantime, Metra has begun interim repairs in several areas of the facility, including the stairs, ceiling tiles, painting, lighting and stucco.

Metra moving ahead with seat test

The Metra Board of Directors at its August meeting approved a \$2.4 million purchase of a new style of seat that will be tested on 30 cars on all lines starting near the end of the year. There is a trade-off between the current seats and the new seats: the new seats are more comfortable, with armrests and cup holders, but are fixed in place; the old seats flip so they can always face forward. The plan is to put the new seats on a limited number of cars, test them in service and then ask riders for their feedback before moving forward. These seats will be put into cars as cars are rehabbed, so rather than replace old worn-out seats with new flip-style seats they will be replaced with the new style. The cost of the two styles of seats is comparable.

Use Metra for World Music Fest

The 17th Annual World Music Festival Chicago is taking place September 11-22 in various locations throughout the city. Celebrating diverse music from nations across the globe, this free festival is produced by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and is the largest festival of its kind in the United States. The full schedule with locations and times of each performance may be viewed at worldmusicfestivalchicago.org.



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