

**NORTHWEST MUNICIPAL CONFERENCE**

1600 East Golf Road, Suite 0700  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60016  
(847) 296-9200 • Fax (847) 296-9207  
[www.nwmc-cog.org](http://www.nwmc-cog.org)



*A Regional Association of Illinois  
Municipalities and Townships  
Representing a Population of Over One Million*

**MEMBERS**

- Antioch
- Arlington Heights
- Bannockburn
- Barrington
- Bartlett
- Buffalo Grove
- Deer Park
- Deerfield
- Des Plaines
- Elk Grove Village
- Evanston
- Fox Lake
- Glencoe
- Glenview
- Grayslake
- Hanover Park
- Highland Park
- Hoffman Estates
- Kenilworth
- Lake Bluff
- Lake Forest
- Lake Zurich
- Libertyville
- Lincolnshire
- Lincolnwood
- Morton Grove
- Mount Prospect
- Niles
- Northbrook
- Northfield
- Northfield Township
- Palatine
- Park Ridge
- Prospect Heights
- Rolling Meadows
- Schaumburg
- Skokie
- Streamwood
- Vernon Hills
- West Dundee
- Wheeling
- Wilmette
- Winnetka
  
- President*
- Kathleen O'Hara
- Lake Bluff
  
- Vice-President*
- Joan Frazier
- Northfield
  
- Secretary*
- Dan Shapiro
- Deerfield
  
- Treasurer*
- Ray Keller
- Lake Zurich

**Northwest Municipal Conference  
Transportation Committee  
Agenda  
January 28, 2021  
8:30 a.m.  
Via Zoom Video Conference**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84207357310?pwd=QzB1K2RYa3JZZDVLdUl2alg1OFZjZz09>

- I. Call to Order/Introductions**
  
- II. Approval of December 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes (Attachment A)**  
*Action Requested:* Approval
  
- III. RTA Mobility Management Team Presentation (Attachment B)**  
Sarah Blair, Mobility Outreach Coordinator with the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), will give a presentation on programs and resources available to mayors and managers that can help their residents navigate public transportation.  
*Action Requested:* Discussion
  
- IV. Agency Reports**
  - a. CMAP (Attachment C)
  - b. Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (Attachment D)
  - c. IDOT Highways
  - d. Illinois Tollway (Attachment E)
  - e. Metra (Attachment F)
  - f. Pace (Attachment G)
  - g. RTA (Attachment H)
  
- V. Other Business**
  
- VI. Next Meeting**  
The next meeting of the NWMC Transportation Committee is scheduled for February 25, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. via video conference.
  
- VII. Adjourn**

*Executive Director*  
Mark L. Fowler

**NORTHWEST MUNICIPAL CONFERENCE**

1600 East Golf Road, Suite 0700  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60016  
(847) 296-9200 • Fax (847) 296-9207  
[www.nwmc-cog.org](http://www.nwmc-cog.org)



*A Regional Association of Illinois  
Municipalities and Townships  
Representing a Population of Over One Million*

**MEMBERS**

Antioch  
Arlington Heights  
Bannockburn  
Barrington  
Bartlett  
Buffalo Grove  
Deer Park  
Deerfield  
Des Plaines  
Elk Grove Village  
Evanston  
Fox Lake  
Glencoe  
Glenview  
Grayslake  
Hanover Park  
Highland Park  
Hoffman Estates  
Kenilworth  
Lake Bluff  
Lake Forest  
Lake Zurich  
Libertyville  
Lincolnshire  
Lincolnwood  
Morton Grove  
Mount Prospect  
Niles  
Northbrook  
Northfield  
Northfield Township  
Palatine  
Park Ridge  
Prospect Heights  
Rolling Meadows  
Schaumburg  
Skokie  
Streamwood  
Vernon Hills  
West Dundee  
Wheeling  
Wilmette  
Winnetka  
  
*President*  
Kathleen O'Hara  
Lake Bluff  
  
*Vice-President*  
Joan Frazier  
Northfield  
  
*Secretary*  
Dan Shapiro  
Deerfield  
  
*Treasurer*  
Ray Keller  
Lake Zurich

*Executive Director*  
Mark L. Fowler

**NWMC Transportation Committee  
Via Teleconference  
Thursday, December 3, 2020  
Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present**

Tom Dailly, President, Village of Schaumburg, *Co-Chair*  
Rod Craig, President, Village of Hanover Park, *Co-Chair*  
Nanci Julius, Senior Civil Engineer, Village of Arlington Heights  
Marie Hansen, Director of Development Services, Village of Barrington  
Lester Ottenheimer, Trustee, Village of Buffalo Grove  
Bob Benton, Trustee, Village of Deerfield  
Eric Heiker, Civil Engineer, City of Des Plaines  
Adriana Webb, Engineering Division Manager, Village of Glenview  
Ramesh Kanapareddy, Director of Public Works, City of Highland Park  
Bill McLeod, Mayor, Village of Hoffman Estates  
William Grossi, Trustee, Village of Mount Prospect  
Sean Dorsey, Public Works Director, Village of Mount Prospect  
Tom Powers, Village Engineer, Village of Niles  
Matt Farmer, Village Engineer, Village of Northbrook  
Bob Israel, Trustee, Village of Northbrook  
Lou Arrigoni, Civil Engineer, City of Park Ridge  
Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator, City of Prospect Heights  
Karyn Robles, Director of Transportation, Village of Schaumburg

**Others Present**

Dan Jedrzejak, P.E., Chastain & Associates  
Mary Weber, Assistant Analyst, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning  
Cecilia Diaz, Transportation Planner, Cook County Dept. of Transportation & Highways  
Sam Wright, Transportation Planner, Cook County Dept. of Transportation & Highways  
Joe Cwynar, Senior Project Manager, Engineering Enterprises  
Lauren Platt, Community Affairs Manager, Illinois Tollway  
Kelsey Passi, Community Relations Corridor Manager, Illinois Tollway  
Katie Renteria, Community Relations, Metra  
Jarrod Cebulski, Transportation Manager, Patrick Engineering  
Claire Serdiuk, Public Affairs, Regional Transportation Authority  
Larry Bury, Deputy Director, NWMC  
Mark Fowler, Executive Director, NWMC  
Kendra Johnson, Program Associate for Transportation, NWMC  
Matthew Pasquini, Program Associate for Transportation, NWMC

**I. Call to Order/Introductions**

President Dailly called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.

**II. Legislative Priorities for 2021**

Mr. Pasquini updated the committee on language focused on transportation-related issues to be incorporated in the NWMC state and federal legislative programs. Ms. Johnson also shared information about a sign-on letter being circulated by Transportation for America regarding the next authorization of the next major surface transportation bill.

**III. Multimodal Plan Online GIS Tools Demo**

Ms. Johnson unveiled new online GIS tools to be used to track implementation of the Multimodal Plan. She shared that two maps were created so village staff can leave updates on progress being made in building out the priority bike corridors and sidewalk gaps identified within the plan.

**IV. Agency Reports**

A. CMAP – Ms. Weber reported that CMAP has updated their transportation system analysis to take into account the impacts of COVID-19. She also reported that a video and accompanying toolkit has been created to highlight the region as a freight hub. She finally provided updates on upcoming meeting dates for the STP and CMAQ/TAP project selection committees.

B. CCDOTH – Ms. Diaz reported that the county is preparing to move forward with the south cook pilot program.

C. IDOT Highways – No report.

D. Illinois Tollway – Ms. Passi reported on a series of updates on their budget process, safety procedures and financial impacts of COVID-19. She reported that their Tentative 2021 budget is posted on the Tollway’s website and will be voted on at their December meeting. She also reported that they are continuing all-electronic tolling and all existing toll violation fines issued prior to March 9, 2020 have been reduced \$3 across the board through the end of the year.

E. Metra – Ms. Renteria mentioned the attachment included in the agenda packet. She reported that the 2021 budget was approved at their November meeting. She also reported schedule adjustments to the UP North and UP Northwest lines intended to increase capacity. Finally, she reported on the new bike car on the Milwaukee District North line and an updated public newsletter.

F. Pace – No report.

G. RTA – Ms. Serdiuk reported that RTA is holding a virtual regional public hearing for their 2021 budget at 5:00 p.m. on December 3. She also reported that RTA will be voting to approve their budget at their board meeting on December 17.

**V. Other Business**

No other business.

**VI. Approval of October 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

*Trustee Israel moved approval of the October 22, 2020 meeting minutes. Mayor McLeod seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.*

**VII. Next Meeting**

Mayor Craig noted the next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 28, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. via teleconference.

**VIII. Adjourn**

*President Dailly moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 a.m. Mayor McLeod seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.*



## Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)

The RTA believes in promoting travel independence and empowering customers with mobility options. The RTA's Mobility Management program helps customers with disabilities and older adults' access accessible transit in the RTA region.

Services Include:

- Group Transit Orientation Presentations
- Provide transit information and RTA Program assistance at outreach events and resource fairs
- One-on-one Travel Training to individuals in their Communities

The RTA is now offering online presentations during the pandemic. Topics include:

- RTA's free Travel Training program
- Accessibility of Public Transit in RTA Region
- Accessible Trip Planning
- Riding CTA/Pace Buses, CTA 'L' & Metra Trains
- Ventra®
- RTA Ride Free and Reduced Fare programs
- Safety Tips
- Local Transit Options
- ADA Paratransit
- Taxis Access Program (TAP)
- COVID-19 Precautions and Updates

### Contact Information:

Sarah Blair, Mobility Outreach Coordinator

Phone: 312-913-3167

Email: [BlairS@RTAChicago.org](mailto:BlairS@RTAChicago.org)

Website: [www.RTAChicago.org](http://www.RTAChicago.org)



**CMAP Updates – January 11, 2021****CMAP News**

In accordance with the stay at home order, the CMAP office remains closed for the foreseeable future, but [staff](#) are working remotely and are available via email and telephone. [CMAP committee meetings](#) continue to be conducted virtually.

For general questions, you can send an email through our [contact form](#) and remember to stay up-to-date by subscribing to CMAP's Weekly Update emails or [viewing online](#).

**Meeting recordings available**

Did you miss a CMAP committee meeting? You can now watch recordings of public meetings since June. CMAP will continue to post the recordings for all public committee meetings going forward. You can find them linked on each [committee page](#).

**CMAP Board Meeting**

The CMAP Board meets this on Wednesday, January 13, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. via Zoom. Find the agenda and link on the [meeting materials page](#).

**COVID-19 Response and Resources**

CMAP wants to keep you updated on COVID-19 impacts to the region. Each week, we will bring you more information and analysis to help shape decision making. You can find previous analyses on our [COVID-19 Response](#) page, as well as a [list of resources](#) to aid our partners in this uncertain time.

Since the start of the coronavirus response and stay-at-home order, transit and transportation use has significantly changed. We've [updated our transportation system analysis](#) — covering roads, trips, safety, transit, and freight rail — with the latest data.

**Program Status Updates****Regional Transportation Call for Projects**

CMAP is accepting funding applications for surface transportation projects from January 8, 2021, through March 5, 2021. Visit [cmap.is/2021callforprojects](http://cmap.is/2021callforprojects) for more information, including links to register for the second informational webinar:

Friday, January 15, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. for a webinar on how to submit an application via the eTIP website.

CMAP programs funding for these projects through three federal sources, including: the regional [Surface Transportation Program](#) (STP) Shared Fund, [Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program](#) (CMAQ), and the locally programmed [Transportation Alternatives Program](#) (TAP-L). Projects may address safety, transit, bicycle, or pedestrian improvements, as well as traffic and freight movement, bridge and road reconstruction, and vehicles and equipment that use alternative fuel sources. To learn about the transportation funding CMAP programs see our [latest video](#).

**Surface Transportation Program**

The next STP Project Selection Committee (PSC) meeting will be April 1, 2021. A full calendar of 2021 meetings is available on the [committee web page](#). Program status reports for the STP Shared Fund, based on quarterly updates submitted by project sponsors and an accounting of available, programmed, and obligated funds is for the region are available on CMAP's [STP web page](#). Questions regarding

specific projects, subregional status reports, and subregional accounting should be discussed with your planning liaison.

Staff Contact: [Kama Dobbs](#) (312-386-8710)

### **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Transportation Alternatives (TAP)**

The next CMAQ Project Selection Committee (PSC) meeting will be held virtually on January 21, 2021. The PSC will consider project change requests for the April state letting at this meeting. Change requests for projects targeting the June state letting must be submitted by March 25, 2021 for considerations by the PSC on April 1, 2021.

Staff Contact: [Doug Ferguson](#) (312-386-8824)

## **Calls for Projects**

### **Highway safety grant opportunities**

The Illinois Department of Transportation's Bureau of Safety Programs and Engineering posted notice of funding opportunities for five highway safety programs: Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program, Motorcycle Awareness Program, Non-Enforcement Program, Traffic Records Local Agency Program, and Sustained Traffic Enforcement Program. Applications close on **Wednesday, February 3, at 4:00 p.m.** Find the applications and other materials on the [Illinois Traffic Safety Grants webpage](#).

### **Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration program**

Public and private groups interested in restoring habitats, enhancing water quality, and making other ecological improvements can apply now for the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration program. This program will award about \$1.5 million in grants to public and private community partners throughout the country. Proposals are due by **Thursday, January 28, 2021**. For eligibility information, visit the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's [website](#).

### **Flood Mitigation Assistance Program**

The FEMA [Flood Mitigation Assistance Program](#) provides funding for projects that reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured by the National Flood Insurance Program. The application period closes **Friday, January 29, 2021**.

### **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities**

FEMA's [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities](#) grants support states, local communities, tribes, and territories as they undertake hazard mitigation projects, reducing the risks they face from disasters and natural hazards. The application period closes **Friday, January 29, 2021**.

## **CMAP Products and Data**

### **Sidewalk Inventories**

ON TO 2050, the region's long-range plan, encourages the development of compact, walkable communities. To support this recommendation, CMAP created the [Sidewalk Inventory](#). This publicly available tool provides data that identifies gaps or opportunities for connections in a community's sidewalk network. Watch our new [video](#) to learn how communities can use the database to prioritize sidewalk improvements in the future.

### **Improving local development incentives**

Local governments in northeastern Illinois commonly use incentives to recruit and retain businesses. However, incentives can have higher costs and lower public benefits than intended. ON TO 2050, the region's comprehensive plan, calls for local governments to reform their use of incentives. CMAP has created a new guide, [Improving local development incentives](#), with clear strategies and practices for more effective incentive use, tailored specifically to northeastern Illinois.

### **CMAP's Cohorts tool can help groups apply equity lens to funding decisions**

As the pandemic continues to expose long-standing disinvestment in communities of color and low-income communities, CMAP's partners have begun using our data-driven Community Cohorts evaluation tool to create their own equitable funding formulas. Cook County recently adapted the tool when deciding how to distribute \$51 million in federal coronavirus relief funding to suburban communities. [Read more](#) on how Community Cohorts can help ensure equitable decision-making.

### **Community Data Snapshots**

[Community Data Snapshots](#) are available for all municipalities, counties, and Chicago Community Areas in the CMAP region. The Community Data Snapshots are a series of data profiles that feature demographic, housing, transportation, employment, land use, and water data from multiple sources. The data used in the snapshots are publicly available on the [CMAP Data Hub](#).

### **ON TO 2050 indicators dashboard and data**

Since the adoption of ON TO 2050, CMAP has continued to track the many indicators chosen to measure progress toward the implementation of the plan's recommendations. Now, CMAP's new [dashboard website](#) provides an up-to-date snapshot of the trends for each indicator. Additionally, anyone interested in viewing or using the raw data can find it on our [GitHub page](#), which we will update continually over the life of the plan.

## **Public Input Opportunities**

### **Fox River Corridor Plan Visioning Workshop**

McHenry County and the City of McHenry, in partnership with CMAP will host two virtual visioning workshops via Zoom for the Fox River Corridor Plan:

January 19 at 2:00 pm - [Register](#)

January 21 at 6:30 pm - [Register](#)

Attend a workshop to share your vision and goals for the future of the Fox River and its communities, from Burtons Bridge to Johnsborg. This is a great opportunity to share your ideas with your family, friends, and neighbors. Everyone is welcome!

## **From our partners**

### **RTA highlights communities' work to improve transit**

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is spotlighting communities throughout northeastern Illinois and their efforts to implement improvements identified in RTA's Community Planning Program, which encourages transit-oriented development. RTA's recently released [story map](#) amplifies the work happening locally to create greater access to affordable transportation options in the region.



### **NACTO Releases *Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery Guide***

[Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery](#) compiles emerging practices from around the world and includes implementation resources for cities and their partners. Recognizing the rapidly changing nature of this pandemic, Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery will be revised and expanded to include new strategies, address changing conditions, and provide the best possible information on each design practice.

### **Training Opportunities**

#### **IDOT Announces January dates for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program workshops**

The Illinois Department of Transportation is hosting free virtual workshops in January as part of its Building Blocks of Success series for firms interested in participating in the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program strengthening their skills and bidding on state projects. The workshops are open to all, but some are tailored to specific districts/regions of the state.

Workshop information, including dates and times, will be made available through Eventbrite at [bit.ly/DBEworkshops](http://bit.ly/DBEworkshops). Advance registration is required.

Administered by IDOT, the DBE program provides minorities, women and other eligible small businesses an opportunity to participate in highway, transit and airport contracts that are federal and state funded. For more information on becoming a certified DBE and learning more about IDOT resources that are available, visit [www.idot.illinois.gov/dbe](http://www.idot.illinois.gov/dbe).

#### **TC3 Free Online Training Modules**

Transportation Curriculum Coordination Council (TC3) is offering free online training modules when using the below promotional code. Courses are developed using a Core Curriculum Matrix model that focuses on six technical categories: construction, employee development, maintenance, materials, pavement preservation, and traffic and safety. Each category is divided into four skill levels that define a career progression, from entry level (Level I) through management and administrative (Level IV). Additionally, more than 90 percent of the courses also qualify for professional development hours (PDHs) that can contribute to continuing education and licensure renewal. A certificate will be earned for any completed course.

To get started:

- Create an AASHTO account login at <https://register.transportation.org>
- Select Register. Then you must enter your agency email address.
- After registration is complete, you will have unlimited access to the curriculum.
- To browse and gain access to the TC3 course offerings, go to <https://tc3.transportation.org/>
- Use promotion code: D5X3-B3D9-52CB-4XCX
- For additional help, watch this YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/NcFONY2R78s>

#### **National Highway Institute (NHI) Web-based Training**

The NHI has no-cost trainings available that are recommended for engineers and construction workers. These includes topics such as such as Introduction to Safety Inspection of In-Service Bridges, Chip Seal Best Practices, Pipe Installation, Inspection, and Quality, Introduction to a Transportation Asset Management Plan and Hot In-Place Recycling. To browse courses and register visit <http://bit.ly/nhitraining> and enter your government email.

## 2021 Invest in Cook Call for Projects and Workshop Info

On January 13, 2021, the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (CCDOTH) announced a fifth round of *Invest in Cook*, an \$8.5 million program to cover some of the cost of planning and feasibility studies, engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction associated with transportation improvements sponsored by local and regional governments and private partners. This program is designed to solicit applications for improvements consistent with the five priorities of [Connecting Cook County](#).

The 2021 application period for *Invest in Cook* is January 13 thru March 12, 2021. Program information and the application can be found at:

<https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/investincook2021>.

**CCDOTH is hosting a virtual *Invest in Cook* workshop for potential applicants on Wednesday, January 27, 2021 from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.** The workshop will be held in conjunction with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development to provide information on applying for Community Development Block Grants. To attend, please RSVP at the following [Form](#). Further questions may be directed to Tim Egan at 312-603-1534 or [investincook.CC@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:investincook.CC@cookcountyil.gov)

## **IL Tollway Update – January 2021**

### **Budget**

In December 2020, the Illinois Tollway Board of Directors approved a balanced 2021 Budget with \$1.42 billion in revenue allocated to fund maintenance and operations, debt service transfers and capital investments for the 294-mile system. The 2021 Budget allocates nearly \$1.04 billion for direct funding and debt service on capital investments, as well as \$380 million for maintenance and operations – the same as budgeted in 2020. The 2021 Budget will allow the Tollway to commit \$1.53 billion in capital spending, including funding for the 10th year of the agency's 15-year, \$14 billion *Move Illinois* capital program.

### **Operations during COVID-19**

Since March 2020, extensive protocols have been in place to protect employees, keep our essential and front-line workers safe and the entire agency working. The Illinois Tollway Board of Directors has continued to meet virtually each month to keep all business and construction activity moving and, as well as to advance significant tolling reforms reflecting their efforts to modernize our approach to unpaid tolls.

The agency is continuing to work closely with contractors to ensure the proper safety precautions are taken to protect workers engaged in outdoor construction activities along our system. Tollway contractors and consultants continuing their work are always required to have comprehensive safety plans in place, and those plans have been updated to account for the safety precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, we've done all we can to keep our customers safe and we continue to prevent the thousands of potential exposures from person to person and person to surface caused by cash toll collection.

In an effort to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus in the region, the Illinois Tollway continues to implement all-electronic tolling as a precaution to limit the potential spread of coronavirus to customers, as well as Tollway employees.

Mainline toll plazas, automatic toll payment machines and in-person customer service centers are currently offline. Toll collection is currently handled via I-PASS, E-ZPass and through the Tollway's website. The Tollway Customer Service Call Center is operational and assisting customers.

### ***Reform and Relief***

In June 2020, thanks to the Illinois Tollway Board's actions, we launched our Tolling 2020 initiative which not only reduced the initial cost of missed tolls from \$20 per toll to \$3 per toll, but also reduced all outstanding \$20 and \$50 fines to three dollars through the end of the year.

Since then, the Tollway has seen unprecedented success with more than 17 percent of all outstanding notices – more than 160,000 – cleared, saving customers an estimated \$100 million in fines.

And with a recognition that there are many at this difficult time who would still benefit from these savings, the Tollway Board granted a six-month extension, doubling the length and providing an additional six months for customers with existing tolls to participate in the Violation Relief Program.

More information and assistance for customers is available on the Tollway's website [www.illinoistollway.com](http://www.illinoistollway.com).

### **Construction**

In 2020, the Tollway moved forward with all scheduled construction projects, as well as roadway maintenance and repair work systemwide.

In 2020, the Tollway awarded 31 contracts that provided opportunities for small, diverse and veteran-owned firms to take on roles as prime contractors and consultants. In all, 75 construction and professional engineering services contracts totaling more than \$1.5 billion were approved by the Tollway Board in 2020.

### **Northwest construction projects:**

- I-490 Tollway Project includes interchange construction for ramps to westbound I-90, the I-490 bridge that will carry traffic over the Touhy Avenue Reservoir and collector-distributor roads along I-90.
- Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) Project mainline roadway construction and widening continues between the O'Hare Oasis and North Avenue. Additional bridge, sewer and ramp work is underway throughout the rest of the corridor to prepare for mainline work.

###



---

Metra Media Relations 312-322-6776

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



(A video about the new cars can be found at [https://youtu.be/DYfJ\\_X3gUMI](https://youtu.be/DYfJ_X3gUMI))

# Metra Board approves purchase of up to 500 modern railcars

*Cutting-edge design will deliver enhanced passenger experience while significantly reducing operating costs*

CHICAGO (Jan. 13, 2021) – The Metra Board of Directors today approved the purchase of up to 500 state-of-the-art railcars from Alstom Transportation Inc., opting for new multilevel cars that will be more comfortable, accessible, reliable and safe than the outdated gallery cars they will replace.

“This move is truly transformational.” said an elated Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski. “We are finally modernizing one of the oldest fleets in the country and, in doing so, we will improve operations while elevating our passenger experience to an entirely new level. It’s really part of our long-term plan to evolve and serve the changing needs of today’s commuters.”

About 40 percent of Metra’s current fleet of 840 cars are rated in marginal or poor condition, although they are still safe to operate. The new cars will offer increased reliability, while reducing operating costs – a substantial improvement over the increasing expense of maintaining the older cars.

This acquisition has been part of Metra’s Board plan since 2014. The Board reviewed and discussed the need for new railcars through a lens of fiscal responsibility, while acknowledging this as the first coach fleet purchase in more than two decades. With consideration given to the impact of operational cost savings, the Board voted unanimously to approve the purchase.

The new cars will have two entranceways on each side with doors nearly level to the platform, thereby requiring only one step to enter instead of multiple steps on the old gallery cars. These changes will improve passenger flow, increase safety and reduce time spent boarding and deboarding at each station. The cars will also be wheelchair accessible for people with disabilities, deploying lifts to bridge the slight difference between the platform and entrance.

Driven by consumer research conducted in 2019, the new cars will be designed for modern-day comfort and teeming with passenger amenities, including video screens, bike racks, storage for bags, charging outlets, cupholders, arm rests and more.

From a mechanical perspective, the new cars will be significantly quieter and deliver a noticeably smoother ride. But, one upgrade that may interest today’s riders is the addition of the most advanced HVAC system available, which will scrub the circulated air – reducing staleness, allergens and airborne viruses.

“From an operational perspective, most people don’t realize that we are constantly making upgrades to tracks, bridges and our car servicing.” said Bruce Marcheschi, Chief Operating Officer/Deputy Executive Director. “But this is something that our passengers will immediately see, feel and smell. This is a real game-changer for our riders.”

The new cars will have stainless steel bodies and be compatible with Metra’s existing fleet, which means they can be coupled to current cars. They will also feature many reliability and safety upgrades, including a microprocessor-controlled braking system, electrically operated doors and passenger area cameras.

The initial order will be for 200 cars. Metra will have the option to buy up to 300 additional cars for up to \$1.8 billion total. The cars specified in the contract are a customized version of Alstom’s Coradia Duplex model and will be built at their Hornell, N.Y. manufacturing facility. It should be noted that Alstom is an Illinois company headquartered in Naperville. The company indicated that a third of the railcar contract value will be provided by Illinois-based suppliers. The first car is expected to be delivered 42 months after the contract is finalized, with the full base order complete 30 months later.

###

### ***About Metra***

*Metra is one of the largest and most complex commuter rail systems in North America, serving Cook, DuPage, Will, Lake, Kane and McHenry counties in northeastern Illinois. The agency provides service to and from downtown Chicago with 242 stations over 11 routes totaling nearly 500 route miles and approximately 1,200 miles of track.*

Connect with Metra: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [metrarail.com](#)

## **Cook County and Partners Launch Metra Fare Reduction and Improved Pace Service**

*Fair Transit South Cook is taking first steps toward more equitable transit service in south Cook and north Will counties.*

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Metra, Pace and Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) leaders today officially launched a pilot project to improve public transportation in south Cook County, starting with reduced Metra fares on the Metra Electric and Rock Island lines and extended service on Pace's 352 Halsted route.

Fair Transit South Cook, a three-year pilot project, aims to reduce costs and make transit more convenient for residents and essential workers in south Cook and north Will counties. Ultimately, the pilot seeks to provide seamless transfers between all transit operators in subsequent phases.

"Making transit an easier choice for our south Cook communities is a top priority and I am thrilled we have finally arrived at the point where we can put our vision of a regional transit partnership into action," said President Preckwinkle "This is an important component of my administration's overall focus on equitable policies and programs to ensure that our whole community has the opportunity to prosper."

Under the pilot, all riders on the Metra Electric and Rock Island lines will pay Metra's reduced fare rates – which are normally for seniors, K-12 students and other eligible groups – for all tickets. The reduced fare tickets are available now from ticket agents, ticket machines and the Ventra app. The paper and mobile tickets will be marked for use on the Metra Electric and Rock Island lines only.

Updated timetables for Pace's Halsted 352 service can be viewed from their website. Information about both pilot initiatives can be found on the County's website at: [www.cookcountyil.gov/FAIRTRANSIT](http://www.cookcountyil.gov/FAIRTRANSIT).

"I would like to thank President Preckwinkle for her leadership and financial backing for this pilot," said Metra Board Chair Romayne Brown. "With this effort, we are promoting transit equity and supporting essential workers and those most in need. We are making transit an easier choice and a better choice. It's truly a win-win situation for everyone."

Pace's Board Chair Richard A. Kwasneski said, "Pace appreciates working together with Metra and the County on this important initiative. The Halsted route is carrying more than 2,300 people each day during the pandemic and we're looking forward to serving even more people with increased frequency and extended hours."

For years, many stakeholders have helped advance the goals of Fair Transit South Cook to maximize the positive impact. The County will foster momentum through a robust public engagement campaign to raise awareness and participation in the program.

“Fair Transit South Cook is an exciting example of collaboration between agencies to improve service, lower costs and achieve real impact for residents with critical transit needs by investing in the current system,” said RTA Board Chairman Kirk Dillard. “This partnership will also provide us with invaluable lessons as we look to our transit system’s post-pandemic recovery and beyond. I commend President Preckwinkle on her and the County on their leadership on this important step forward.”

The County recently launched a Fair Transit public survey which garnered nearly 500 responses from residents and transit riders. The results and comments are being analyzed to better understand how the pandemic has shaped transit ridership and how the pilot can be most effective.

One survey respondent highlighted, “Metra Electric is an amazing and strategic infrastructure resource that unfortunately is underutilized. Lowering the fare will go a long way to helping those in need and revitalizing communities that have suffered too long under systemic disinvestment.”





## Regional Transportation Authority January Update

*As we enter the new year, the Regional Transportation Authority (“RTA”) continues to move forward on the agency’s [three-step strategy](#) for the regional transit system’s recovery from the pandemic. The RTA remains committed to sustaining critical transit. We continue to work with the CTA, Metra, and Pace to execute the [operating budget and five-year capital program](#) that the RTA Board approved on December 17.*

### Transit Federal Relief Package

A new federal COVID relief package was signed into law on December 27, 2020. The RTA and the three Service Boards are grateful for our partners’ continued advocacy of federal relief, without which system-wide operations would face a \$500 million gap in 2021. The \$900 billion COVID relief package sets aside approximately \$14 billion for transit nationwide. It stipulates that no transit system can receive more than 75 percent of its total 2018 regional operating budget when combining funds from this package and the earlier CARES Act, which provided \$1.4 billion to the RTA region. Therefore, the greater Chicago urbanized area should receive approximately \$486.2 million.

### Relief Funding Allocation

The RTA is committed to a transparent and accountable distribution policy for federal relief funds.

The goal of this process will be to establish a policy that sustains critical transit services and provide mobility for those who most need public transportation at this time, including bus riders, essential workers, residents with economic hardships across the region, and people with disabilities.

In February, RTA staff will recommend a distribution policy for that relief funding. This recommendation will be released for public comment before the RTA Board makes any final allocation decision.

We encourage all interested parties to monitor these activities at [www.rtachicago.org](http://www.rtachicago.org) and provide public comments, which are due by noon on the day before any Board meeting.



## Call for Community Planning Proposals

In addition to its impacts on transit, the COVID-19 pandemic has strained the capacity of local governments like never before. From January 20 through February 3, the RTA Community Planning program and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance program invite applications for planning assistance, with a special focus on high need and very high need communities. Starting January 20, one simple online application at [www.rtachicago.org/cp](http://www.rtachicago.org/cp) will allow a community to be considered for both programs.

## COVID Transit Dashboard

The RTA dashboard, which is updated weekly, shows that ridership as of December 5 was 66 percent less than the 2019 baseline. Explore the COVID Transit dashboard at <http://rtachicago.org/covid-dash>.