

Central Business District

CBD at a Glance

- › 92% of weekday riders travel to the CBD
- › Nearly 90,000 travel to downtown stations on a typical weekday
- › 85% downtown Metra riders walk to their destination
- › 624,080 workers are employed in the CBD
- › 113,705 residents live in the CBD
- › Union Station is in the midst of the CUS Master Plan to reduce station crowding and boost capacity, among other major improvements
- › Van Buren St. Station is undergoing design for major station reconstruction, including the rebuilding of the tunnel, roof, platforms and canopies



As part of a regional transportation network, Metra provides safe, reliable, efficient commuter rail service that enhances the economic and environmental health of northeast Illinois.

- Metra's Mission Statement

TABLE 1: DOWNTOWN STATION RIDERSHIP

Station	Total Alightings	Share of Alightings	AM Boardings	Lines Served
Union Station	55,979	45%	1,542	BNSF, SWS, HC, MD-N, MD-W, NCS
Ogilvie	43,796	35%	1,251	UP-N, UP-NW, UP-W
LaSalle	12,739	10%	96	RI
Millennium	8,755	7%	358	ME, South Shore (NICTD)
Van Buren	3,484	3%	44	ME, South Shore (NICTD)
Total	124,753		3,291	

Source: Metra, "Commuter Rail System Station Boarding/Alighting Counts," Fall 2018

ON COVID-19 AND HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The information presented in this chapter is representative of Metra’s operations prior to the onset of COVID-19, which upended almost every aspect of daily life. While Metra’s pre-COVID services may not be replicated in the same manner going forward, the transportation services Metra continues to provide are essential to the vitality of the Chicago region.

There are certain elements of Metra’s situational and operational environment that are unlikely to change in the short or medium term. These are: the location and capacity of each rail line, the location and physical characteristics of each station, the general characteristics of the communities around each station, Metra’s history in each community, and Metra’s mission to provide safe, reliable, efficient commuter rail service that enhances the economic and environmental health of northeast Illinois. On the other hand, there are operational and situational factors that are likely to be quite different. These may be: the number of riders, the time and duration of peak travel demand, the public’s perception of the relative safety of various transportation modes, the way riders access and depart from stations, and the location preferences of people and businesses.

The challenges posed by the pandemic were significant and likely will result in the emergence of a very different operational environment. Even so, understanding Metra’s past performance, pre-COVID service levels, and established community baselines is vital to making informed decisions about the reality that is taking shape. Through this process Metra will continue to achieve Metra’s mission, realizing its vision, and pursuing its strategic goals.

Overview

Metra’s network is laid out in a hub-and-spoke configuration, with 11 lines serving five downtown stations: Chicago Union Station (CUS), Ogilvie Transportation Center (OTC), LaSalle Street Station, Millennium Station and Van Buren Street Station. The system is oriented to serve Metra’s principal customer base: suburban residents working in downtown Chicago. The majority of Metra riders alighting at the five CBD stations travel to the area known as the Loop—generally south and east of the Chicago River, north of Ida B Wells Drive and adjacent to Grant Park—in the heart of the CBD. Figure 1 shows the CBD stations and a heat-map of total downtown riders’ destinations.

The economy of the Loop and the CBD, as a whole, is vitally important to Metra. Chicago’s CBD is the second-largest in the country, after Midtown Manhattan in New York. The district is a major center for financial, legal, government, and corporate services; the headquarters of numerous Fortune 500 companies; and home of many of the region’s civic, cultural, and educational institutions.

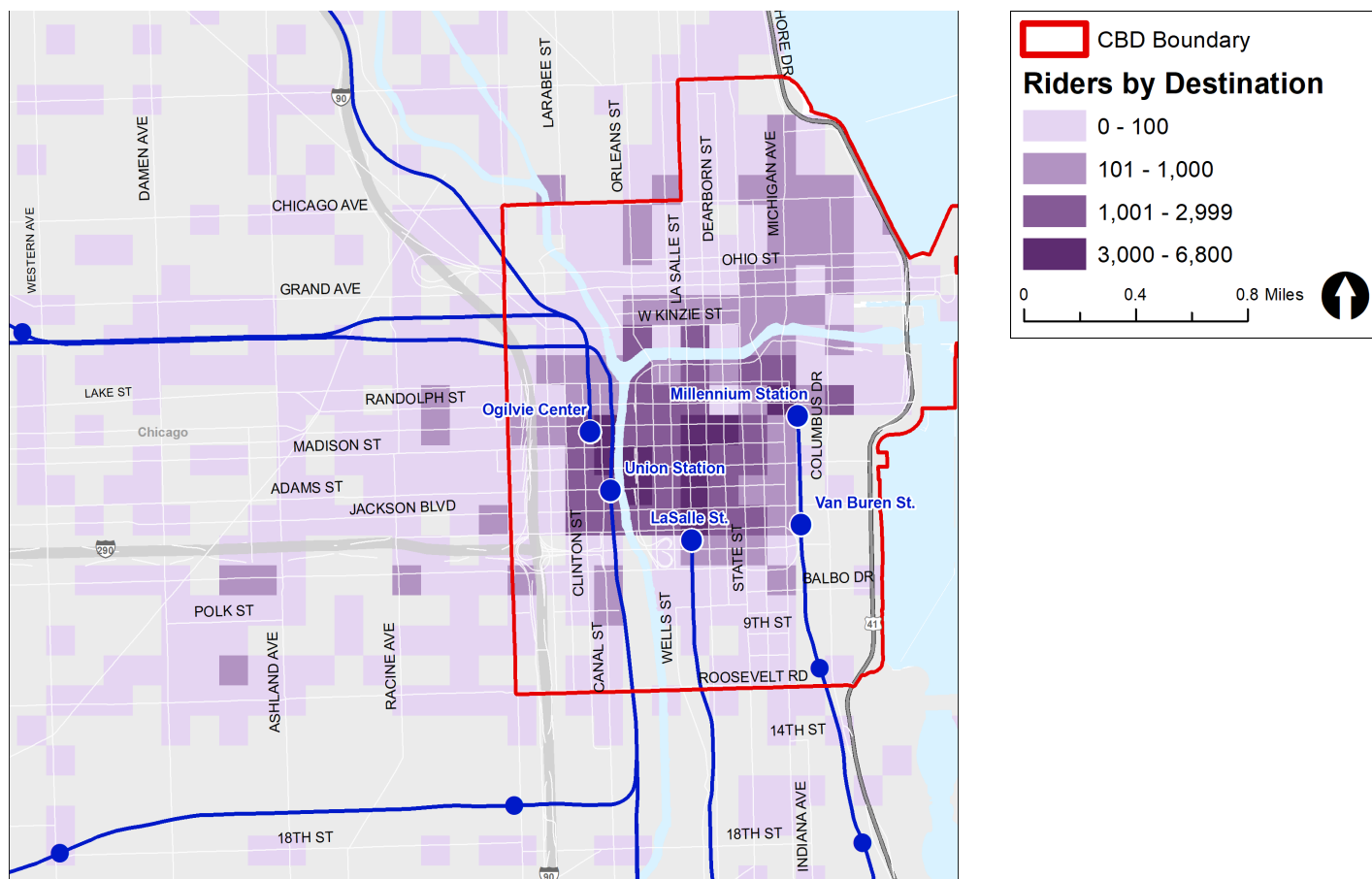
Commuter trips represent 92% of Metra rides, and Metra ridership is correlated with employment rates and the general economic health of the region. This relationship is strongest in the downtown market. Despite the historic migration of office growth to the suburbs and the recent recession, Chicago’s CBD is

expected to continue adding jobs into the foreseeable future. In recent years, a number of large employers, including Google, McDonald's, Conagra, and Kraft Heinz, have opened headquarters or satellite offices in the CBD, in some cases relocating from the Chicago suburbs. Many of these new offices are in the eastern portion of the West Loop (shown in Figure 1 between Racine Avenue and the Chicago River), a short distance from OTC and Union Station.

As seen in Figure 1, the highest concentration of employment destinations in the CBD for Metra riders is the west portion of the Loop. This area contains the bulk of the Loop's federal government, financial industry, and business services jobs. The next most common CBD destination for Metra riders is immediately west of the river. This area has overtaken the east portion of the Loop in attracting Metra riders. Smaller concentrations of Metra riders travel to areas near North Michigan Avenue and the Northwestern Memorial Hospital complex, and to areas west of the CBD, near the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and the Illinois Medical Center complex.

While Metra's system is oriented to serve its primary market of CBD workers who live outside of the CBD, primarily in suburbs, Metra's system also allows workers living within the city to travel outbound to outlying stations, as seen in Table 1's AM Boardings values.

FIGURE 1: DOWNTOWN RIDER DESTINATIONS



MODE OF EGRESS FROM DOWNTOWN STATIONS

Figure 2 dives into the mode of egress data for each station in more detail. The phrase “mode of egress” refers to the manner in which riders depart their destination station. The overwhelming majority of riders walk from their downtown station to their final destination; however, the mode of choice can vary based upon the distance one needs to travel. 8% of Metra riders transfer to another form of public transportation. In recent years a growing number of Metra riders have taken private shuttle buses to their final destinations. These riders are typically travelling to the Illinois Medical District, Streeterville, and the West Loop. Figures 3 - 7 show the relative quantities and destinations of riders by mode.

CAPITAL PROJECTS AT DOWNTOWN STATIONS

Following are brief descriptions of current and/or upcoming major capital projects at the downtown stations. Note that Ogilvie Transportation Center and LaSalle St. Station do not have any major upcoming capital projects.

Chicago Union Station

The Chicago Union Station Master Plan, completed in 2012, made recommendations to address passenger crowding within the station, ease street-level congestion, and accommodate additional commuter and intercity passenger service (including high-speed rail). Metra, Amtrak, CDOT, and RTA funded designs to carry out elements of the master plan, including: improving station ventilation, renovating concourses and widening platforms, and adding vertical circulation. To assist in funding these improvements, Amtrak selected a master developer to add retail, office, hotel, and

FIGURE 2: MOE FROM DOWNTOWN STATIONS

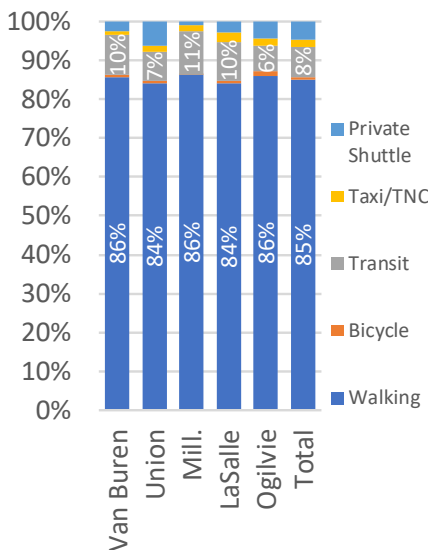
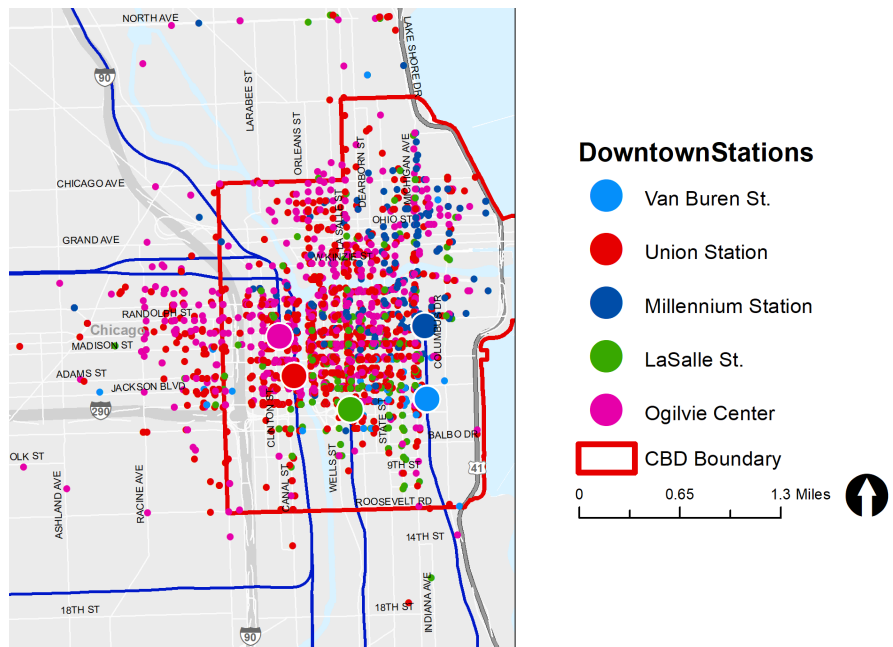


FIGURE 3: WALKING DESTINATIONS



residential space.

Millennium Station

Metra has plans to redesign the entrance serving South Water Street.

FIGURE 4: TRANSIT DESTINATIONS

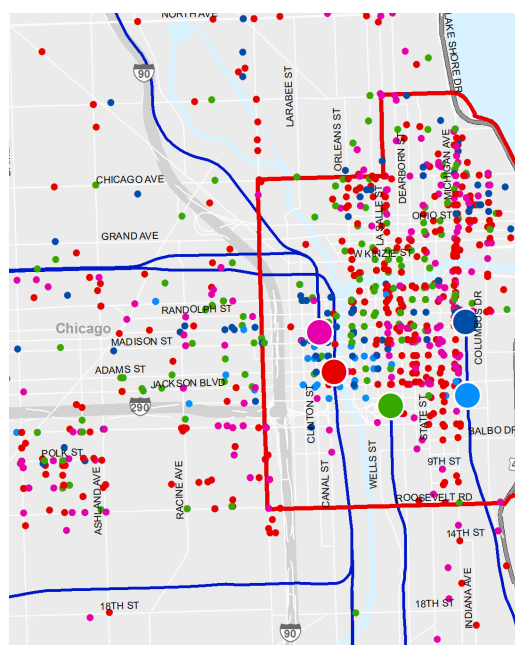


FIGURE 5: BICYCLE DESTINATIONS

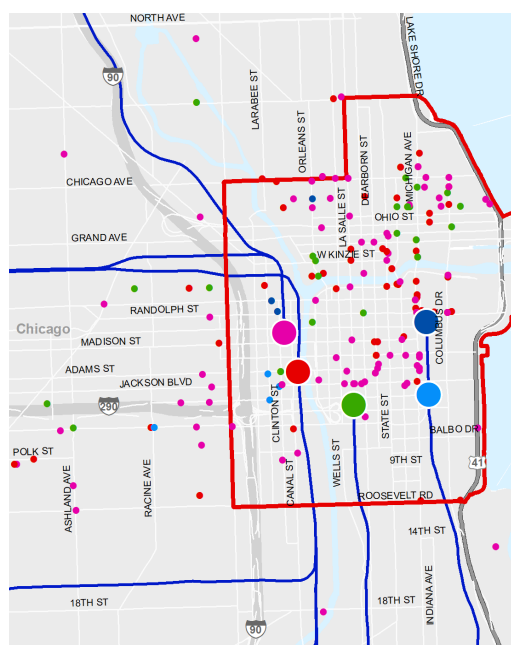


FIGURE 6: TAXI/TNC DESTINATIONS

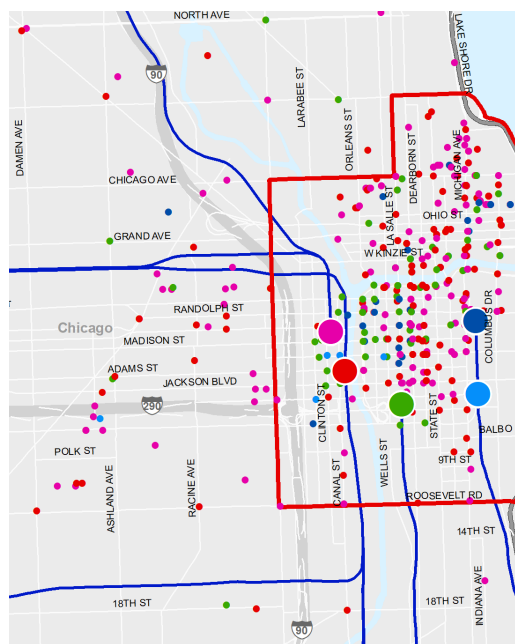
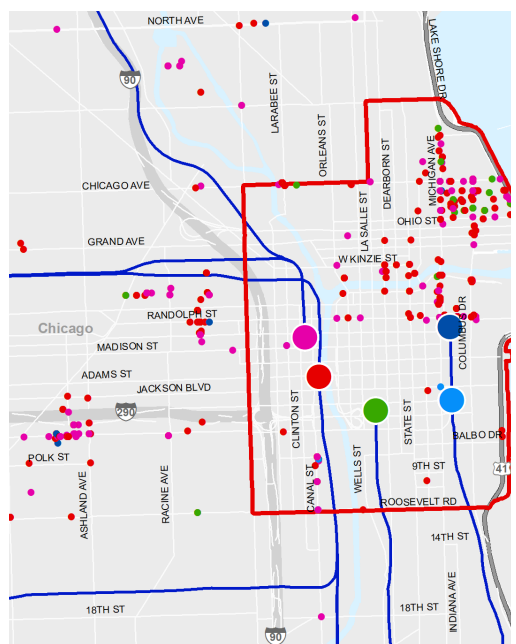


FIGURE 7: PRIVATE SHUTTLE DESTINATIONS



DowntownStations

- Van Buren St.
- Union Station
- Millennium Station
- LaSalle St.
- Ogilvie Center
- CBD Boundary

0 0.65 1.3 Miles

Van Buren St. Station

Van Buren St. Station is undergoing design for complete reconstruction over the next few years. The work will include rebuilding the tunnel and roof inside the historic station. Platforms and canopies will also be reconstructed. This work will be done in conjunction with a NICTD project that will include extending a platform at the station.

OWNERSHIP & MAINTENANCE OF DOWNTOWN STATIONS

Similar to other components of Metra’s system, such as its 11 rail lines and outlying stations, Metra’s ownership and maintenance responsibilities vary for its five downtown stations.

Chicago Union Station (CUS)

CUS is owned by Amtrak. Metra’s access to CUS is controlled by a lease agreement that governs all operations, use, and fees. A fixed facility agreement between Metra and Amtrak governs Metra-funded capital improvements at CUS.

Ogilvie Transportation Center (OTC)

OTC’s platform and track area are owned by Metra and operated and maintained by Union Pacific. Metra owns the Suburban Concourse and is responsible for its maintenance.

LaSalle Street Station

LaSalle Street Station is owned, operated, and maintained by Metra.

Millennium Station and Van Buren St. Station

Millennium Station and Van Buren St. Station are owned, operated, and maintained by Metra. Both stations include some elements, such as certain elevators, that are owned by the city of Chicago and can affect other Metra assets. Also, because both of these stations serve South Shore trains as well as Metra trains, Metra uses fixed facility agreements with NICTD to determine which capital improvements are to be paid for by NICTD.