

**DATE: January 22, 2025**

**TO: Board of Directors**

**FROM: Jim Derwinski, CEO/Executive Director**

**SUBJECT: December 2024 Ridership Trends**

This memo describes ridership patterns in 2024, including ridership and service recovery by line and service period. Data in this report is preliminary.

In December 2024, Metra provided 2.5 million passenger trips. Compared to November, December had one less weekday, one less Saturday, and one additional Sunday/holiday. Compared to December 2023, December 2024 ridership increased 6%. December 2024 had one additional weekday, one less Saturday, and the same number of Sunday/holidays compared to last year.

**Trips by Month**

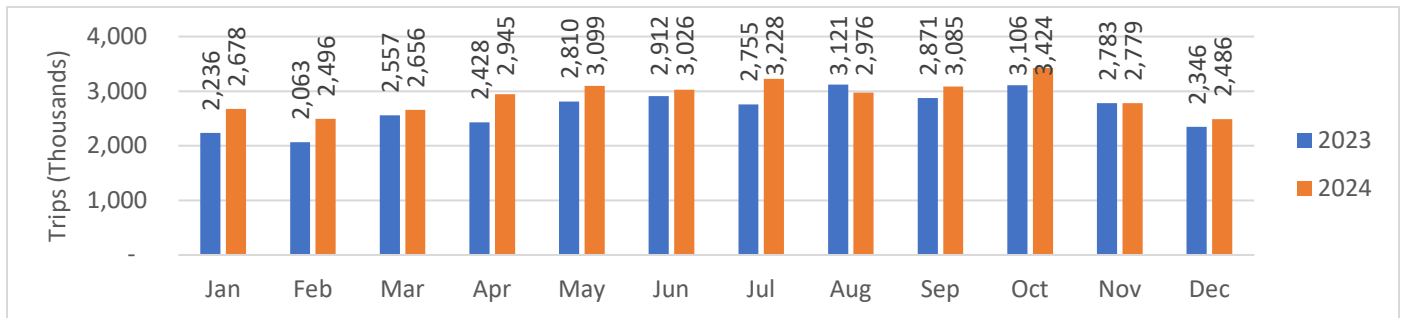


Exhibit 1

**Trips by Line (December 2023 vs December 2024)**

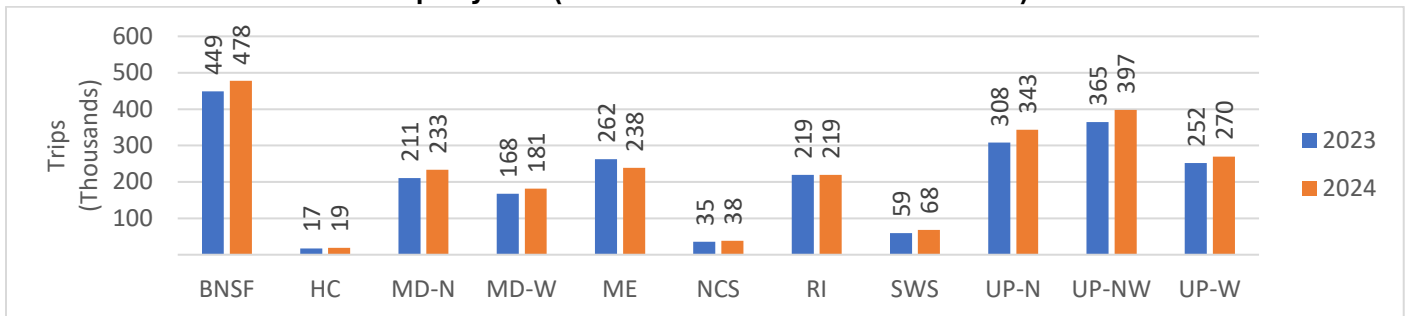


Exhibit 2

## Weekday Passenger Loads

December average weekday passenger loads were 139,600, which was 58% of 2019 levels.

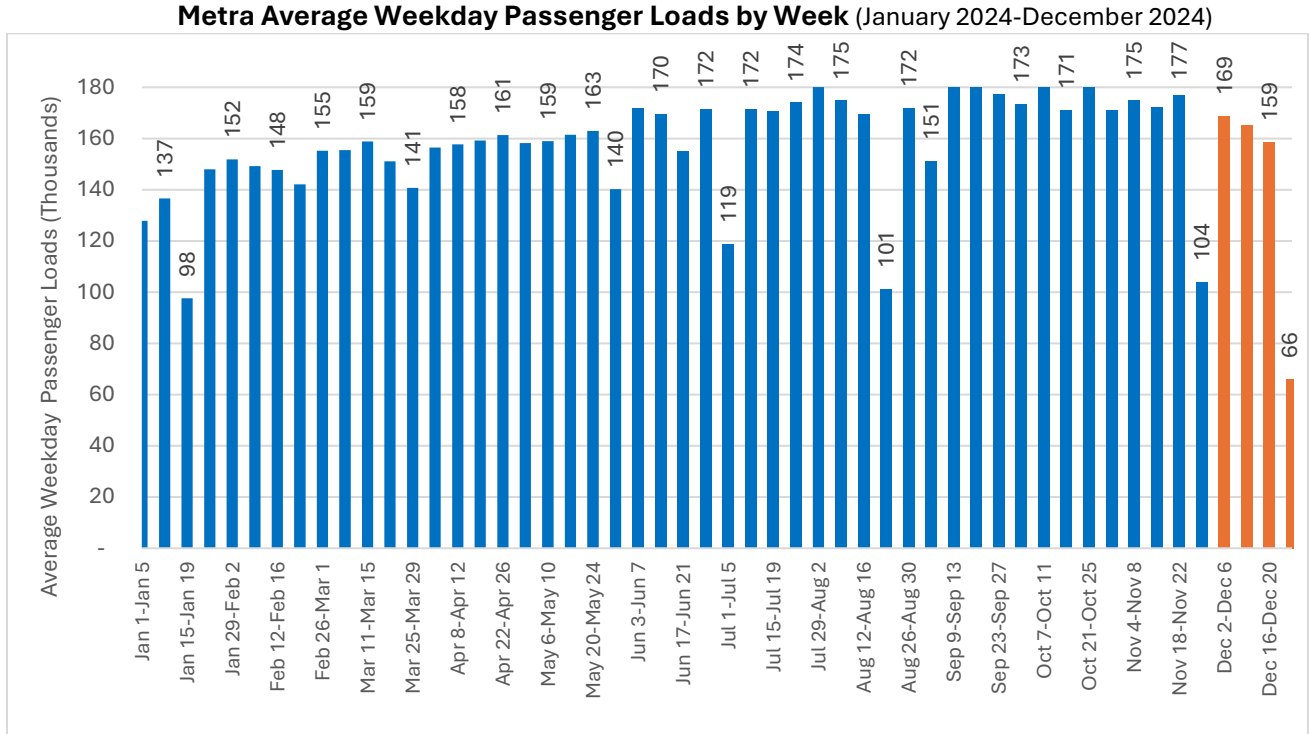


Exhibit 3

|   | 2024 |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |     |      |      |
|---|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|------|------|
|   | Jan  | Feb  | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep  | Oct | Nov  | Dec  |
| Avg Weekday Passenger Loads Chg. from Prior Month | 0%   | +13% | 0%  | +6% | +1% | +4% | 0%  | -6% | +13% | 0%  | -10% | -14% |

**Daily Passenger Loads for Month (Fridays shown with grey bars)**

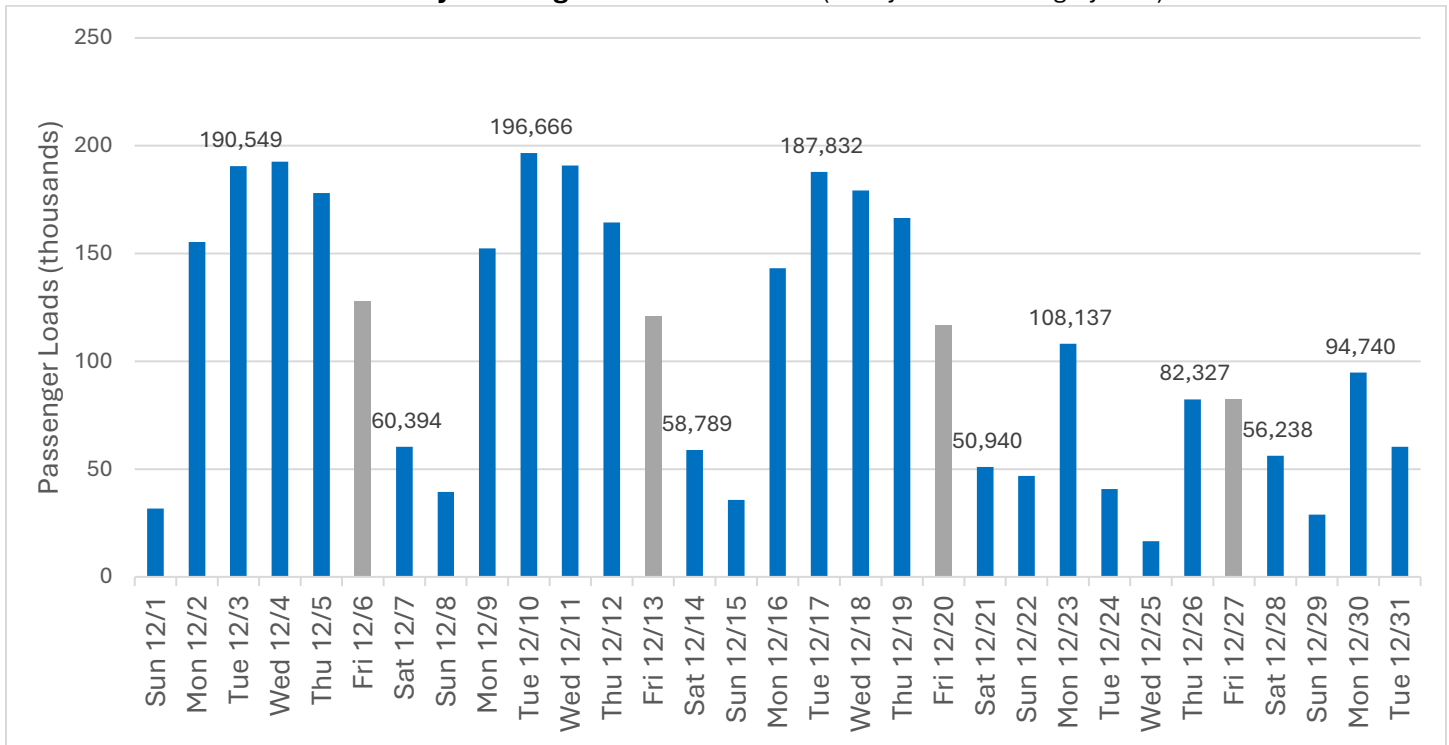


Exhibit 4

**November Ridership Highlights**

- Metra operated a reduced schedule on Dec 24, 25, and 31. Metra offered a \$7 pass on Dec 25 and free rides after 6 pm on Dec 31.
- Metra offered three additional trains for Chicago Bears games on Sunday, December 22. The UP-N extra train provided 800 trips that day while the ME extra train provided 350 trips.

Staff continues to monitor new policies related to fares and ticket purchasing changes. The table below provides a summary of the changes along with initial observations.

| Long Term Policy Changes   | Initial Observations   |
|--|--|
| UIC UPASS+   | Over 4,100 students continued enrollment in the UPASS+ program in December, recording 39,000 rides.  |
| Day Pass 5-Pack replaces 10-Ride Ticket                                    | The Day Pass 5-Pack made up about 15% of ridership in December 2024, compared to the 10-Ride Ticket share of 16% in December 2023.                           |
| Ticket Windows Close   | Metra closed ticket windows in February 2024. In December, the Ventra app was used for 82% of all rides and vending machines were used for 10% of all rides. |
| Bicycles always allowed on trains after Feb 1, provided space is available | Metra carried 18,400 bikes, 7% more in December 2024 compared to last year.  |
| Access Card  | In December, the Access Card program recorded 15,000 trips, accounting for 6% of all Metra reduced fare trips.   |
| Discount for Outer Zone Trips  | The share of Metra trips not going downtown increased to 9% in December 2024, up from 8% compared to December of 2023.                                       |

### **Service Status**

Metra continuously evaluates its service to improve operations and ridership outcomes as well as to move toward a regional rail service model as described in Metra’s 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, [My Metra, Our Future](#). Over the past two years, Metra has looked for opportunities to enhance schedules to standardize stopping patterns and to increase midday service levels, as has been done for five lines (BNSF, Metra Electric, Rock Island, Union Pacific North, and Union Pacific Northwest). These lines have demonstrated a stronger midday recovery than other lines. In May 2024, Metra implemented a new weekend schedule for the BNSF Line to achieve near hourly service in both directions on both Saturday and Sunday. Having the same level of service for both Saturday and Sunday is a first for Metra and something that will be considered for other lines going forward when feasible.

### **Ridership Recovery by Line & Service Period (December 2024 as a percentage of December 2019)**

| Line         | Peak       | Rev Peak   | Midday     | Evening    | Weekday    | Saturday   | Sunday     |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| BNSF         | 51%        | 66%        | 76%        | 66%        | <b>56%</b> | 86%        | 89%        |
| HC           | 48%        | -          | -          | -          | <b>46%</b> | -          | -          |
| MD-N         | 53%        | 50%        | 62%        | 58%        | <b>54%</b> | 77%        | 77%        |
| MD-W         | 41%        | 61%        | 62%        | 61%        | <b>46%</b> | 74%        | 69%        |
| ME           | 38%        | 100%       | 73%        | 76%        | <b>49%</b> | 71%        | 81%        |
| NCS          | 35%        | 31%        | 63%        | -          | <b>37%</b> | -          | -          |
| RI           | 42%        | 89%        | 70%        | 53%        | <b>46%</b> | 70%        | 60%        |
| SWS          | 46%        | 42%        | 46%        | 23%        | <b>45%</b> | -          | -          |
| UP-N         | 65%        | 94%        | 119%       | 118%       | <b>80%</b> | 101%       | 128%       |
| UP-NW        | 54%        | 81%        | 91%        | 82%        | <b>64%</b> | 112%       | 102%       |
| UP-W         | 62%        | 90%        | 82%        | 71%        | <b>67%</b> | 90%        | 80%        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>51%</b> | <b>78%</b> | <b>80%</b> | <b>72%</b> | <b>58%</b> | <b>89%</b> | <b>90%</b> |

Exhibit 5

## Monthly Pass and U-Pass Sales

Monthly Pass sales decreased -13% compared to last month which follows seasonal trends due to the holidays. Notably, December 2024 Monthly Pass sales were up 37% compared to December last year.

In August 2024, Metra began a pilot program with the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), introducing a new mobile-only U-Pass ticket. The ticket allows for unlimited rides during the designated month, delivered monthly to students, with a validity period aligned to the academic calendar. These tickets are included in the chart below.

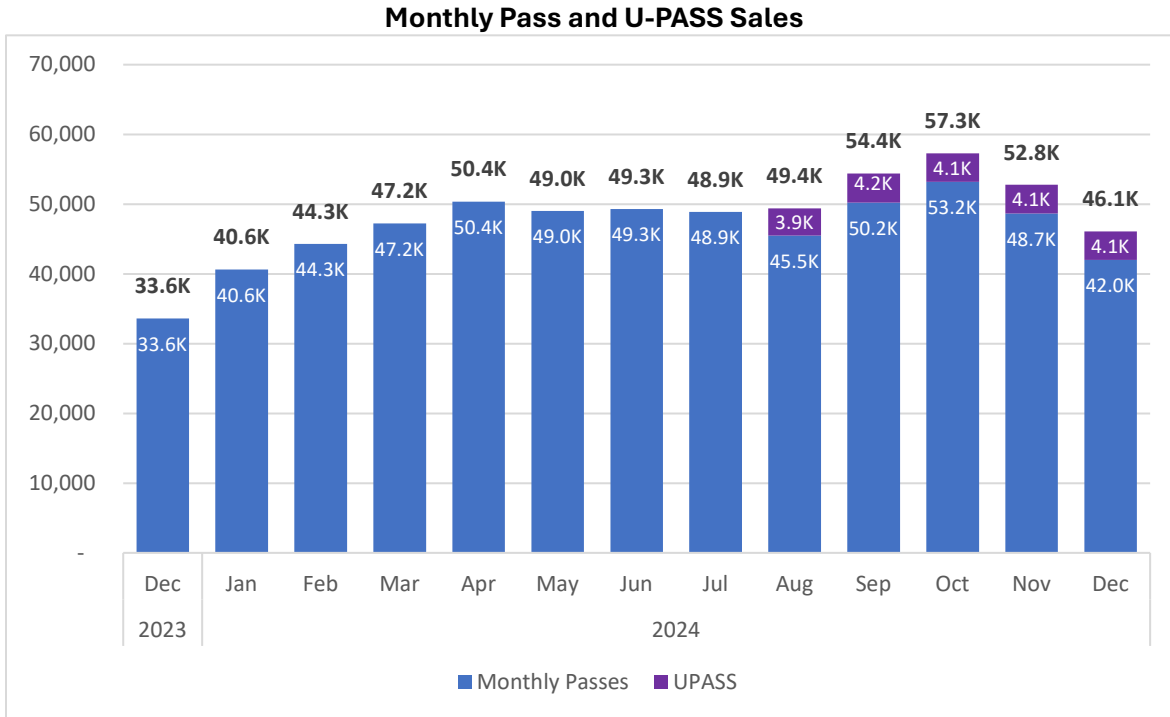


Exhibit 6

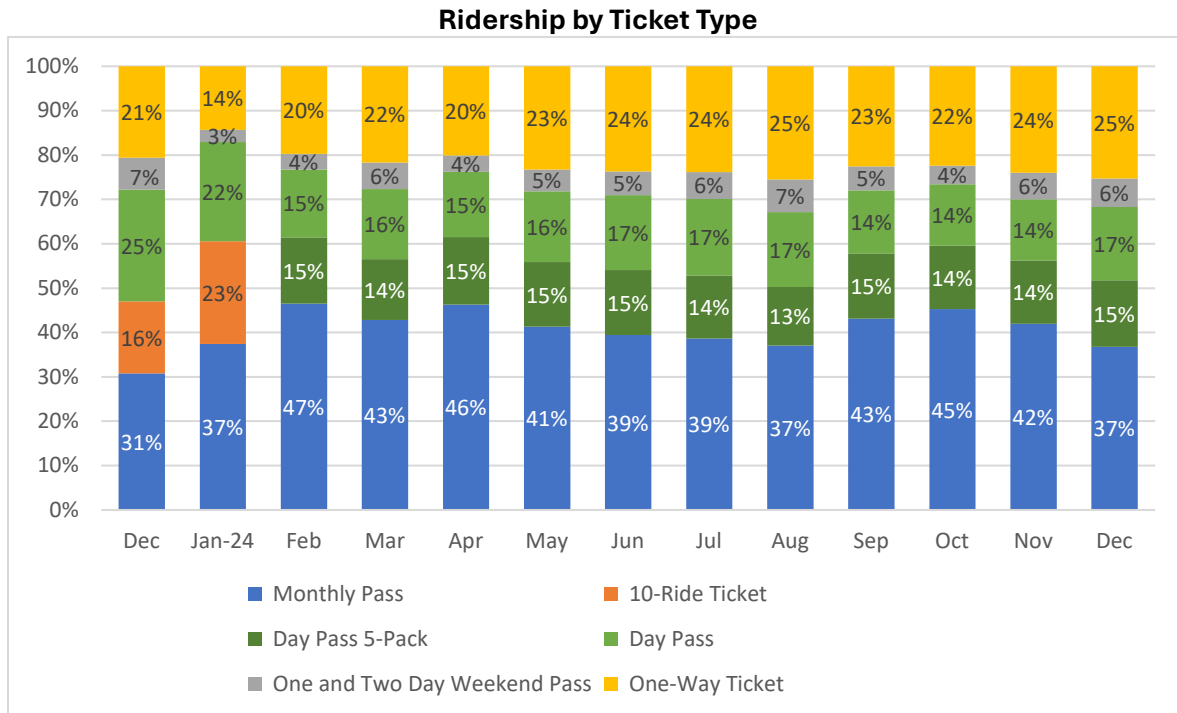


Exhibit 7

Note: Exhibit 7 excludes RTA ride free trips. U-PASS tickets are included with Monthly Pass.

## Ticket Sales

The following tables show ticket sales and ridership by ticket type and sales channel.

**Ticket Sales and Ridership by Ticket Type (thousands)**

| Ticket Type          | Ticket Sales |              |                |                | Ridership    |              |                |                |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
|                      | Dec 2023     | Dec 2024     | Dec 2023 Share | Dec 2024 Share | Dec 2023     | Dec 2024     | Dec 2023 Share | Dec 2024 Share |
| Monthly Pass         | 34           | 46           | 4%             | 5%             | 709          | 902          | 30%            | 36%            |
| 10-Ride Ticket       | 38           | -            | 4%             | 0%             | 376          | -            | 16%            | 0%             |
| Day Pass 5-Pack      | -            | 39           | 0%             | 4%             | -            | 367          | 0%             | 15%            |
| Day Pass             | 307          | 214          | 32%            | 21%            | 582          | 405          | 25%            | 16%            |
| One Way              | 484          | 621          | 50%            | 62%            | 484          | 621          | 21%            | 25%            |
| One Day Weekend Pass | 79           | 77           | 8%             | 8%             | 132          | 135          | 6%             | 5%             |
| Two Day Weekend Pass | 17           | 11           | 2%             | 1%             | 33           | 22           | 1%             | 1%             |
| RTA Ride Free Permit | -            | -            | 0%             | 0%             | 40           | 35           | 2%             | 1%             |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>959</b>   | <b>1,008</b> | <b>100%</b>    | <b>100%</b>    | <b>2,356</b> | <b>2,486</b> | <b>100%</b>    | <b>100%</b>    |

Exhibit 8

**Ridership by Sales Channel (thousands)**

| Sales Channel        | Ticket Sales |            |                |                | Ridership    |              |                |                |
|----------------------|--------------|------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
|                      | Dec 2023     | Dec 2024   | Dec 2023 Share | Dec 2024 Share | Dec 2023     | Dec 2024     | Dec 2023 Share | Dec 2024 Share |
| Conductor            | 83           | 68         | 9%             | 7%             | 94           | 74           | 4%             | 3%             |
| Commuter Benefit     | 6            | 5          | 1%             | 0.5%           | 101          | 100          | 4%             | 4%             |
| Ventra App           | 760          | 825        | 80%            | 83%            | 1,806        | 2,026        | 77%            | 82%            |
| Ticket Agent         | 80           | -          | 8%             | 0%             | 267          | -            | 11%            | 0%             |
| Vending Machine      | 21           | 100        | 2%             | 10%            | 41           | 241          | 2%             | 10%            |
| RTA Ride Free Permit | -            | -          | 0%             | 0%             | 40           | 35           | 2%             | 1%             |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>951</b>   | <b>997</b> | <b>100%</b>    | <b>100%</b>    | <b>2,348</b> | <b>2,476</b> | <b>100%</b>    | <b>100%</b>    |

Exhibit 9

Note: Values in Exhibits 8 and 9 do not add to total ridership due to Group Sales, Marketing Sales, and Refund Adjustments, 2024 data are preliminary and subject to revision as data are continuously reviewed throughout the year. UPASS tickets are included with Monthly Pass.

Prepared by: Aaron Maertins, Director, Operations Planning & Project Management  
 Steven Mannella, Manager, Transportation Planning, Operations Planning & Project Management  
 Cody Wolcott, Principal Transportation Planner, Operations Planning & Project Management