

4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER 2024

my

Metra



Our Annual

# Holiday Issue



**HOLIDAY TRAINS**

Dashing through the snow

**HOLIDAY EVENTS**

Metra is your ticket

**SAFETY FIRST**

Competition winners



# my message

James M. Derwinski, CEO

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## The holidays are nearly upon us, and that means Metra's Holiday Trains are hitting the rails.

This will be our third year of spreading holiday cheer with specially decorated Holiday Trains, and we continue to expand those activities to reach even more of you. The trains will run on four Saturdays in November and December on the Metra Electric, BNSF, Milwaukee District North, Rock Island, Union Pacific Northwest and Union Pacific North lines.

These trains, which will also operate in regular service, are our way of thanking riders for choosing Metra. We hope they will put a bit of joy in your heart and spring in your step during the sometimes-stressful holiday season. Read about this year's plans on **Page 4**.

Speaking of trains, we wanted to update you on our efforts to acquire new locomotives and railcars. Our new SD70-MACH locomotives, which are easy to spot with their blue paint scheme and six axles, are performing so well that we recently ordered nine more in addition to the original 15. They're helping us improve reliability while reducing pollution. And we're getting closer and closer to seeing our new railcars delivered. See the updates on **Page 11**.

And another way we're planning to reduce your stress is through our new text messaging system. Riders have long asked us to create a text message service to alert you about train schedules and service issues, and we can now do that thanks to our new GPS tracking and communications system. You can find out more on **Page 9**.

Fall is our budget season, and you'll be happy and probably not surprised to hear that our budget for next year can be characterized as "status quo." We are nearing the end of our federal COVID-relief funding but expect to get through 2025 without running out, and no fare changes are planned. Meanwhile, the Illinois Legislature continues to grapple with an answer to the question of what happens in 2026 when those relief funds are gone. Read about those efforts on **Page 12**.

Our list of holiday season events and attractions that are reachable via Metra can be found on **Page 14**, and the latest Dine By Your Line restaurant is on **Page 18**.

Finally, with safety always our top priority, you can read about the winners of our annual Safety Competition on **Page 6**. This program is one of the key ways that we spread our safety message to the region's schoolchildren.

With that, I wish all of you a safe and happy Holiday Season.

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## HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO PLAY EDITOR

What kind of stories would you like to see in *My Metra*? Do you like the current content? What else could we be covering? What would really spark your interest? You can help us choose the content of our magazine. Simply scan the QR code and let us know your thoughts.

We invite you to take our very brief survey and help shape our future content. We really do want you to think of it as your magazine. That's why we call it *My Metra*.

**Thanks for your help!**



Take a 

 **HOLIDAY**



**RIDE**



with Metra



Metra's Holiday Trains are back on this year and ready to spread even more seasonal joy.



The hugely popular Holiday Trains will run this November and December on the Metra Electric, BNSF, Milwaukee District North, Rock Island, Union Pacific Northwest and Union Pacific North lines. The specially decorated trains will feature Mr. and Mrs. Claus, Santa's elves and many other famous holiday characters.



On the Metra Electric Line, your ticket also includes a visit to a North Pole winter wonderland at Millennium Station, featuring treats, holiday music, face painting and other fun activities. On the other lines, downtown stations will be decorated to spread holiday cheer to participants and regular riders, and the Holiday Trains will also be used in regular service.

“We hope these trains will spread joy to our riders and help them get into the spirit of the season,” said Metra Executive Director/

CEO Jim Derwinski. “It’s our way of wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday. Make Metra part of your holiday tradition and memories.”



The Holiday Trains will run on the following days and lines:

- NOV. 30:** Metra Electric—includes visit to North Pole at Millennium
- DEC. 7:** BNSF Line
- DEC. 14:** Rock Island, Milwaukee District North and UP Northwest lines
- DEC. 21:** Metra Electric (two trains, morning and evening, including visit to North Pole at Millennium) and Union Pacific North

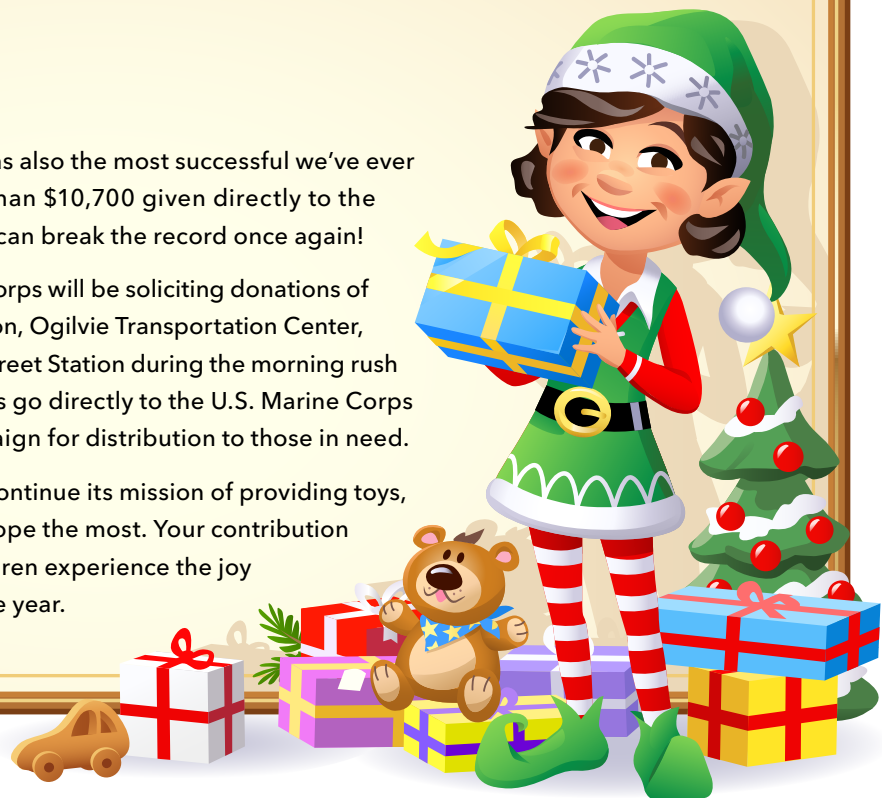
Tickets for Metra’s Holiday Trains cost \$5 each and must be purchased in advance. More details, including the schedules for each train, can be found at [metra.com/HolidayTrains](http://metra.com/HolidayTrains).



Last year, our annual Toys for Tots donation drive was also the most successful we’ve ever held, with nearly 3,000 items donated and more than \$10,700 given directly to the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve program. Let’s see if we can break the record once again!

Metra employees and members of the U.S. Marine Corps will be soliciting donations of new, unwrapped toys or cash at Chicago Union Station, Ogilvie Transportation Center, Millennium Station, Van Buren Station, and LaSalle Street Station during the morning rush period (6 - 9 a.m.) on Tuesday, Dec. 10. All donations go directly to the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation’s Chicago Campaign for distribution to those in need.

With your generous donation, the Foundation can continue its mission of providing toys, books, and emotional support to those who need hope the most. Your contribution goes beyond the holiday season, ensuring that children experience the joy of play and the power of imagination throughout the year.



# SAFETY FIRST

## METRA'S 17TH ANNUAL SAFETY COMPETITION WINNERS



Metra's 17th Annual Safety Competition was bigger and better than ever this year. K-12 students from all 11 regions represented by a Metra Board Member won prizes for their posters, videos, and social media posts highlighting this year's theme: Become a Safety Influencer.

Railway safety is incredibly important, and influencing others to stay alert, aware, and safe around railroad tracks and trains can help save lives. Students across Chicagoland

found many creative ways to spread railway safety awareness and portray what being a safety influencer meant to them. This year, Metra accepted not only poster submissions, but videos and social media posts as well — opening up new and exciting ways for students to embrace the theme.

With Metra's most successful Safety Competition yet, it was incredibly hard to pick winners out of a pool of so many talented students.



Students across Chicagoland found many creative ways to spread railway safety awareness and portray what being a safety influencer meant to them.



1st Place : Philip Lee, 1st Grade



1st Place : Maanya Chawla, 3rd Grade



1st Place : Victoriya Romanova, 7th Grade

First-, second-, and third-place winners were chosen from each grade level in elementary school, middle school, and high school. First-place winners received a \$500 gift card, while second- and third-place winners received \$250 and \$100 gift cards, respectively.

The school with the most submissions was also awarded a \$500 gift card. This year's winner was Proviso Math and Science Academy in Forest Park.

Metra also utilized social media this year by letting the public vote for each region's People's Choice Award winning posters via Instagram. The winner from each board-member-served region (11 winners total) was awarded a \$500 gift card.

Visit [metra.com/safety-competition](https://metra.com/safety-competition) for a complete list of winners.

Interested in learning more about Metra safety? Contact [metracontest@metrarr.com](mailto:metracontest@metrarr.com) for information on school safety presentations and promotional materials.

# LOOK FOR BLUE SIGNS FOR SAFETY

Did you know there is a quick and easy way to let railroads know about an issue with grade crossing protections?

At every railroad crossing there is a small blue Emergency Notification Systems (ENS) sign that lists its name and the emergency contact phone number of the railroad that owns and operates the tracks at that location. The signs also contain the U.S. Department of Transportation National Crossing Inventory Number, which identifies the exact location of the crossing to the railroads.

If you ever encounter an issue at a crossing—say a stalled vehicle, a broken gate, or a warning device either not activating for a passing train or continuing to operate without a train present—look for the blue sign and call the number.

The phones are answered by a dispatcher for the railroad responsible, who can halt train traffic and alert police and maintenance crews.



Because Metra operates over tracks that it owns as well as over tracks that are owned and dispatched by freight railroads, the name and number on the signs at Metra crossings will vary.



The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is launching a major survey called My Daily Travel this fall to better understand the travel needs of residents in north-eastern Illinois.

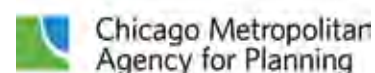
As travel behaviors change and technologies evolve over the next few years, transportation planners will use this survey data to guide future transportation investments and prioritize improvements.

At least 4,000 households in northeastern Illinois are expected to participate in the survey over the next year. Households will receive an invitation by U.S. mail to

## CMAP SURVEY TO IDENTIFY TRAVEL PATTERNS

participate in the survey and are strongly encouraged to complete the survey to help northeastern Illinois plan for a transportation system that meets their needs.

Invited households may complete the survey online, over the phone, or through a smartphone app (rMove™). Only invited households are eligible to take the survey, but if you don't receive an invitation this year there will be two more rounds of the survey in the near future.





# NEW TEXT SYSTEM COMING



We know you've been asking for it, and now it's almost here: soon you'll be able to receive texts from Metra about schedules and service disruptions.

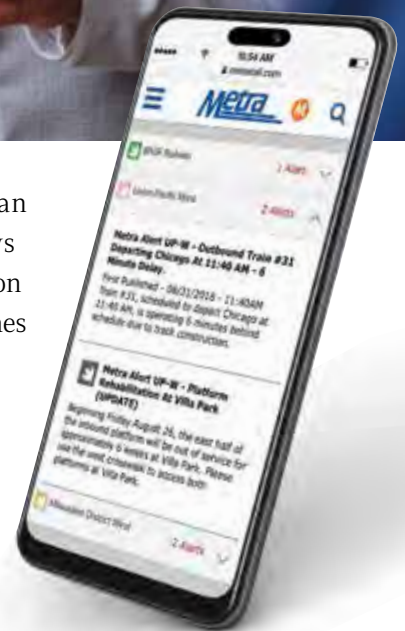
The new service is a function of our new train tracking system, which you can access at [metratracker.com](http://metratracker.com). Starting soon, you'll be able to sign up to receive two types of texts or emails from us:

- **Predictions:** You tell us which line or lines and which stations you use, and when and how often you want to receive them, and we'll send you the predicted times for the next trains that will make your trip. For instance, say you ride the BNSF Line from Naperville to Union Station in the morning between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. You can ask us to send predicted departure times for your trip (which may or may not vary from the scheduled times) during that time as frequently as you want.
- **Service alerts:** We'll alert you about major service disruptions on the line you use during the time you use it.

The new [metratracker.com](http://metratracker.com), which was made possible by a wholesale replacement of the previous, outdated train-

tracking system, features an interactive map that allows customers to see the location of trains along the line or lines that they select, so they can see exactly where their train is and how soon it will reach their station. Customers can click on stations or trains on the map to see real-time information about trains and schedules. It also allows riders to view schedules and plan a trip on Metra.

The new system will replace the current email alert system, which required customers to create My Metra accounts to sign up for alerts. We can't switch your current choices to the new system, so everyone will have to sign up again. The systems will overlap for a time, to give everyone a chance to sign up under the new system.





# CAB REPRESENTS YOU

*CAB Chairman Rob Hart*

Did you know there is a group of volunteers that meets once a quarter to share feedback with and provide advice to Metra staff?

That group is the Citizens Advisory Board, or CAB, established by the RTA Act and comprised of 14 appointees selected by the Metra Board of Directors and representing all six counties in the RTA area and Chicago.

“We have a wide range of experience in education, governance, finance, law, freight railroads and public transportation,” said CAB Chairman Rob Hart, who has headed the board since January 2023 and has been a regular Metra rider since 1978. “All of us have an interest in public transportation and have experience as Metra riders.”

As Mr. Hart points out, the CAB is an advisory body whose bylaws call for it to advocate for regional rail by learning about Metra’s operations and funding and to provide

advice to staff and share feedback from the community.

“To do our jobs as members we have to be well-informed about a lot of Metra stuff—ridership, fares, marketing, operations and safety, financial performance, funding sources, maintenance, stations, capital programs, and government relations,” he said. “There is a lot to learn!”

At its quarterly meetings, the CAB hears reports from staff and asks questions about those areas and other timely subjects, such as Metra’s fare restructuring earlier this year. Members have also taken field trips to see various aspects of Metra operations firsthand.

The schedule for 2025 meetings and the webcast of current and past meetings can be found at [metra.com/board-meetings](https://metra.com/board-meetings). Public comment at CAB meetings is welcome. Bios of CAB members can be found at [metra.com/citizens-advisory-board](https://metra.com/citizens-advisory-board).

# NEW LOCOMOTIVES DOING THE JOB

Customers who ride the Milwaukee District North and West lines have no doubt seen Metra's new SD70-MACH locomotives. With their six axles, longer length and bright blue color scheme, they're hard to miss.

And while they're notable for what you can see, they're also notable for what you can't—and that is the fact that the newly remanufactured locomotives are the cleanest-burning locomotives in our fleet.

Metra has taken delivery of all 15 SD70-MACH locomotives that it ordered in 2019. Because they've lived up to their promise of being more reliable and more environmentally friendly, we've exercised one of our options to buy nine more (we could end up buying another 18 after that, for a total of 42).

Under our contract with Progress Rail, former freight locomotives are being upgraded and reconfigured for passenger use. All components are either refurbished, upgraded or new. One major upgrade is that the remanufactured locomotives have AC traction motors, which are



far more durable and reliable than the DC traction motors in Metra's older locomotives.

The remanufactured locomotives also meet the Environmental Protection Agency's Tier 3 emissions standards. Replacing 42 of Metra's current locomotives that are rated Tier 0+ with 42 Tier 3 locomotives will eliminate 61 tons of nitrous oxide emissions annually—the equivalent to taking 6,600 cars off the road.

Newer locomotives not only increase reliability, but they reduce operating costs, since older locomotives are increasingly expensive to maintain and operate.

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# NEW RAILCARS STILL COMING

In addition to buying new locomotives, Metra also has new railcars on the way.

Metra has ordered 200 railcars from Alstom Transportation Inc., which is building them in upstate New York. Under the current schedule, the cars will be delivered between 2026 and 2029. The contract includes options for up to 500 cars.

The new multilevel cars will be more comfortable, accessible, reliable and safe than the outdated gallery cars they will replace.



The new cars will have two entrances 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 ADA-accessible cars will also have video screens, bike racks, storage for bags, charging outlets, cupholders, armrests and more.

# WORK TO ADDRESS 'FISCAL CLIFF' PROGRESSING

After six hearings around the region and dozens of hours of testimony, it would be hard to say a consensus has emerged about how to address the “fiscal cliff” that will face Metra and other Illinois transit providers in 2026.

The hearings were held this past summer and fall by the state Senate Transportation Committee to solicit feedback about the importance of transit and to judge support for more funding as well as for a plan to consolidate Metra with Pace and the CTA into one agency. More funding will be needed in 2026 when federal COVID-relief aid runs out, but Springfield has made it clear that more funding must come with governance reform.

There was plenty of support for more funding, with a broad cross-section of advocates insisting that transit is too important to let fail. But so far there has been little discussion of the amount or potential sources of that increased funding.

There was less support for consolidation. Most suburban officials said the legislation, as written, doesn't give the



collar counties enough representation. As an alternate, most said they favored giving the RTA more power to oversee the operations of Metra, CTA and Pace.

Lawmakers still must get down to the nitty gritty of crafting an agreeable bill that includes governance reforms and properly funds the system.

## 2025 BUDGET IS STATUS QUO

We know the message our riders want to hear about next year's budget, so here it is: no fare increases or changes are planned.

For 2025, Metra is budgeting operating expenses at \$1.070 billion, which is \$42 million, or 4.1%, higher, than the 2024 budget. Those increased costs are driven by expected inflationary and contractual increases along with headcount increases needed to comply with new regulatory guidelines and related training.

Metra expects to fund those operating expenses with a combination of fares, other operating income, sales tax receipts, and federal COVID-relief funds. We expect our COVID-relief funds to run out during the 2026 budget year, and we are working with the state legislature to come up with a new source of revenue before then.



On the capital side, we expect about \$366.4 million next year and \$2.1 billion over the next five years from our regular funding sources. While those are healthy amounts, they still fall short of our needs. Rolling stock, bridges/track/structure, and stations/parking are the areas that will receive the most funding.



# AREA RESIDENTS GAINING ACCESS

Six months after it was launched, the new Access pilot continues to see strong growth.

Under the program, residents of the six-county area enrolled in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, can apply for an Access permit that will allow them to pay reduced fares for Metra rides. The RTA, Metra, and Cook County are partnering on the 18-month program to extend this benefit to low-income Metra riders.

So far, more than 3,500 people have applied for and received a permit, and in July they took more than 12,000 rides — 6 percent of all reduced fare rides.

Metra studied the usage data to learn more about users of the new permit. It found that 28 percent of them are new to the system, 56 percent are existing riders who used to pay reduced fares on the Metra Electric and Rock Island lines under the Fair Transit South Cook County Pilot, and 16 percent are existing riders from outside South Cook County who formerly paid full fare on other lines.

Why Access? Fully funding and expanding regional reduced fare and ride free programs increases access for residents who need it most. Making paying for transit more seamless and affordable is a commitment RTA made in its most recent action and advocacy plan, *Transit is the Answer*.



Central to expanding free and reduced fare programs is first understanding the program's administrative cost and lost operating revenue borne by the transit agencies. Through partnership with Cook County, Metra, and RTA, the Access Pilot will answer these questions.

Anyone who is eligible for the Access permit can apply at [GetAccess.org](http://GetAccess.org).

# IT'S THE HOLIDAY SEASON!

## Let Metra Take You To All The Food, Festivals & Fun

Our region truly comes alive during the holiday season. You'll find festivals, music, lights, parades, celebrations for one and all. You'll also find crowded and expensive parking lots and bumper-to-bumper traffic. So, why not leave your worries and all that stress behind and let Metra be your holiday guide? You can also save some money for gift giving (and getting)!

Metra offers you great on-time service during the week and weekend, and there is an array of money-saving fare

options. Traveling as a group? Try our Day Pass 5-Pack. Heading out on the weekends? Metra offers Saturday, Sunday, Holiday and Weekend passes with unlimited rides. There are reduced fares for seniors and kids. With our Family Fares, up to three kids age 11 and under can ride free with fare-paying adults.

So, check out some of the events listed here, and let Metra be your sleigh to the best our area offers.





EVENT / ATTRACTION	DATE(S)	LOCATION
Walnut Room Dining	Through Jan. 12	Macy's State Street
Harry Potter and the Cursed Child	Through Feb. 1	Niederlander Theatre
Lightscape	Nov. 15-Jan. 5	Chicago Botanic Garden
Zoo Lights	Nov. 15-Jan. 5	Lincoln Park Zoo
Christmas Around the World	Nov. 16-Jan. 6	Griffin Museum of Science and Industry
Illumination: Tree Lights	Nov. 16-Jan. 4	Morton Arboretum
A Christmas Carol	Nov. 16-Dec. 20	The Goodman Theatre
Ice Skating	Nov. 17-Mar. 3	Millennium Park Maggie Daley Park
Yippee Ki Yay (A Parody of Die Hard)	Nov. 19-Dec. 15	Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place
Holiday Magic	Nov. 22-Dec. 31	Brookfield Zoo
Christkindlmarket	Nov. 22-Dec. 24	Daley Plaza (Chicago) RiverEdge Park (Aurora)
Magnificent Mile Lights Festival	Nov. 23	North Michigan Avenue
Chicago Thanksgiving Parade	Nov. 28	State Street
Holiday Sing-Along	Fridays, Dec. 6, 13 & 20	Millennium Park, Wrigley Square
Joffrey Ballet: The Nutcracker	Dec. 6-Dec. 28	Lyric Opera House
Celebrate The Holidays: Shakespeare Project of Chicago-	Dec. 7	The Newberry Library
The Hip Hop Nutcracker	Dec. 10-Dec. 15	CIBC Theatre
Jane Lynch's A Swingin' Little Christmas	Dec. 12-Dec. 15	Steppenwolf Theatre
TBOX Twelve Bars of Christmas Bar Crawl	Dec. 14	Starting in Wrigleyville
CSO—Merry, Merry Chicago	Dec. 15-Dec. 23	Symphony Center
Les Misérables	Dec. 17-Jan. 5	Cadillac Palace Theatre
Rocky Mount High Experience® John Denver Christmas	Dec. 19-Dec. 22	Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place



## NEVER MISS A KICKOFF, TIPOFF OR FACEOFF!

If you're heading out to a Bears, Bulls, Blackhawks, Blue Demons, or Wildcats game, let Metra get you there on time.

Metra makes getting to Soldier Field easy. From the south: take the Metra Electric Line and exit at 18th Street. From downtown: catch the No. 128 Soldier Field Express bus at either Ogilvie Transportation Center or Union Station. Buses start two hours before kickoff and run for an hour afterward.

For the Bulls and Blackhawks, catch the No. 19 United Center Express Bus that connects with Millennium, Ogilvie, and Union Stations. Buses begin 90 minutes before game time and run up to an hour after the game.

To catch Big Ten basketball action, take the UP North Line to Northwestern's Welsh-Ryan Arena, just a short walk from the Central Street Station.

DePaul Blue Demon fans can get to Wintrust Stadium via our Electric Line, which has a station right at McCormick Place.





## Frosty the Snowman

Frosty T. Snowman, a North Pole resident and all-around cool guy, relies on Metra to get him where he is most needed. Whether he's spreading holiday cheer, shopping for new buttons, or checking out a local farmers market for fresh carrots, Frosty hops on board Metra so he can drive less and do more

### ***How long have you been taking Metra?***

Oh, I've been taking Metra since I was just a small snowball. I loved being able to look out the window at all the snow-covered trees with their branches. It was a great way to shop for a new pair of arms too!

### ***Why do you take Metra?***

It's so easy and convenient. I can travel all around Chicagoland spreading Christmas cheer and get home in time for dinner. With the way traffic has been, it's nice to just get on Metra and chill. Plus, the nice conductors will turn down the heat for me whenever I'm feeling a little...melty.

### ***What do you like most about taking Metra?***

The people! Nothing gets me more in the holiday spirit than the smiling faces I see every day on the train. Kids, adults, employees—everyone

on the train is so friendly and warm. I've never encountered anyone from the Naughty List on Metra—the only coal you'll find is my eyes!

### ***Do you take Metra on the weekends with your family?***

Of course! Mrs. Snowman and I love taking the kids to different neighborhoods and towns and Metra is the easiest way to do that. We'll head out to grab snow cones, go sledding, or simply enjoy the ride as we go thumpity-thump-thump over the hills of snow.

### ***Do you have any big plans for after the holidays?***

We always vacation in Antarctica—we really enjoy the weather down there. I can't wait to relax with my corncob pipe on a beautiful snowy beach. I even bought a new swimsuit!





## Sean Mulholland

### ***When did you start with Metra?***

I started in May 2014. I had just turned 21 and started as a laborer, then machine operator, track inspector and now I am the roadmaster of the Milwaukee District, Elgin.

### ***What's a typical day for you?***

We deal with the actual maintenance of the tracks and make sure the trains run safely. On a day-to-day basis, we handle bigger projects, whether it be a road crossing, diamonds, replacing switches, and everything to make trains run smoothly.

### ***Did your dad give you words of advice when you joined Metra?***

My dad always told me, don't reach limits, reach highs, so I always strive to be better and try to find a way to make the work safe.

### ***What was it about Metra that piqued your interest?***

I'm like, a fourth-generation railroader.

My dad worked in the Mechanical Department. My uncle worked in the Communications Department. The railroad is more than a career, it's a lifestyle, and you adapt to that lifestyle.

### ***You have a long career ahead of you, what are you aiming for?***

I am a husband and father of three. Both my parents instilled their work ethic on me; they taught me to work hard, dream big and big things can happen. I try to teach my kids that now. I can't see the future, but I know that there are going to be opportunities, and I hope my next 30 years are here at Metra. I just want to better myself every day.

### ***You are very polite, where does that come from?***

Smiling and greeting someone with manners and kindness is an ice breaker. A lot of people may be having a bad day, and kindness and manners can help change that. But yeah, it comes from my parents.

Just as a solid foundation provides stability and support for a railroad, solid employees contribute to the strength and longevity of Metra. Engineering Roadmaster Sean Mulholland is one of those employees.



## PIT & TAP

1168 WILMETTE AVENUE  
WILMETTE, IL 60091

For this issue of Dine by Your Line, we're taking you to Wilmette Station on the UP-North Line for killer barbecue, great drinks, and, most importantly, some good old-fashioned holiday cheer. Welcome to Pit & Tap—a Wilmette staple serving up brisket, ribs, and more since 2021.

"I love eating and hanging out here. The staff is super cool and friendly. It's a fun and lively vibe with great barbecue. I like both the brisket and the pork belly. Lots of traditional barbecue sides are available and great salads," said one regular.

On top of the great food, Pit & Tap also runs a holiday pop-up called "Deck the Halls." You can enjoy wall-to-wall Christmas decorations, holiday drinks, and festive music. The pop-up begins the week before Thanksgiving and runs through the holiday season.

"It feels good to have created a place that people want to show their out-of-town guests. Where friends and co-workers get together for holiday

cheer. And there is nothing better than seeing a kid's expression when walking through the door for the first time," said Owner and Pit Master Michael Clarke.

"Deck the Halls" is now on its fourth year and has become a tradition for those in the area to come eat, drink, and get into the holiday spirit, all while enjoying some truly stellar eats.

Tuck into Pit & Tap's famous wood-smoked meats, including brisket, chicken, and pulled pork—all fresh out of their giant smoker aptly named "Big Earl." Looking for something lighter? Try the salmon lettuce cups with smoked salmon corn salsa and their southwest dressing.

So, if you're looking for a fun holiday pop-up with great drinks and good food, head into Pit & Tap and ring in the holidays the right way—with friends, family, and a plate full of barbecue.

For more information, visit them online at [pitandtap.com](http://pitandtap.com).



### THE THING TO TRY: THE KNUCKLE SANDWICH

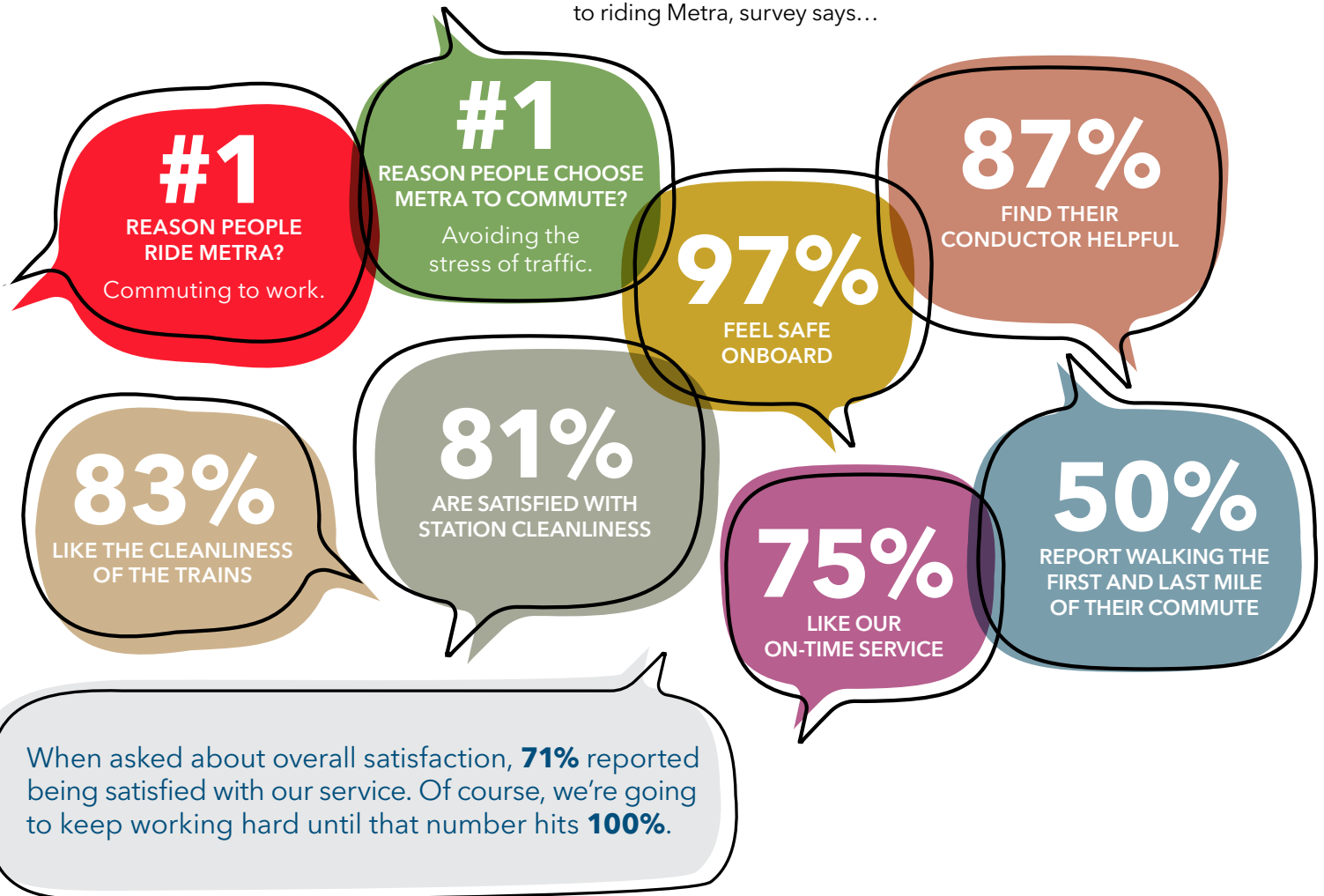
A smash burger, brisket, pulled pork, hot link and pork belly piled high with cheese and pickles.

If you have a favorite restaurant near a Metra station, let us know by emailing [marketing@metrarr.com](mailto:marketing@metrarr.com), and it could be featured in our next issue!

# METRA by the NUMBERS

We Keep Surveying Riders.  
Here's What They've Told Us.

Chances are you've seen those stickers with the QR code on our trains asking you to take a survey. Nearly 24,000 riders have taken it. As part of the survey, we ask riders about their satisfaction with Metra. The survey is ongoing, and we've learned a lot. When it comes to riding Metra, survey says...



## TAKE OUR SURVEY AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

If you haven't taken our survey, we would like to hear from you. If you've already taken it, take it again—we're always asking new questions. We value your input, and it will help us create the kind of service you and your fellow riders deserve.



## STATION BREAK: **BARRINGTON**

An early stop on what is now the UP Northwest Line was known as Deer Grove. But when two farmers there objected to selling land for a town, the railroad put the station building on a flatcar and moved it two miles northwest to Barrington. That building is long since gone, but the current station, rehabbed and expanded in 2003 for \$3.7 million, still connects Barrington to the rest of the region.



# *Congratulations!*

## Yujia Li

for being named one of the  
**15 emerging leaders of 2024**  
by the Institute of Internal Auditors.

Your dedication, innovation, and  
excellence are a beacon of inspiration.

*—Your colleagues at Metra*

# FAN PHOTO



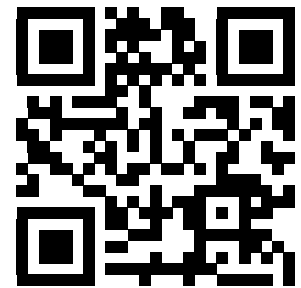
We're always excited to see photos of our trains taken by Metra riders—often featuring beautiful sunsets and the colors of the changing seasons. If you have a photo you'd like to share, send it to us at [social@metrarr.com](mailto:social@metrarr.com). Each week, our social media accounts post a rider-supplied photo for **#MetraFanPhotoFriday**. Then, each month, we choose one entry to win a **FREE** round-trip ticket. So enter today.



Photo taken by @d\_guthrie

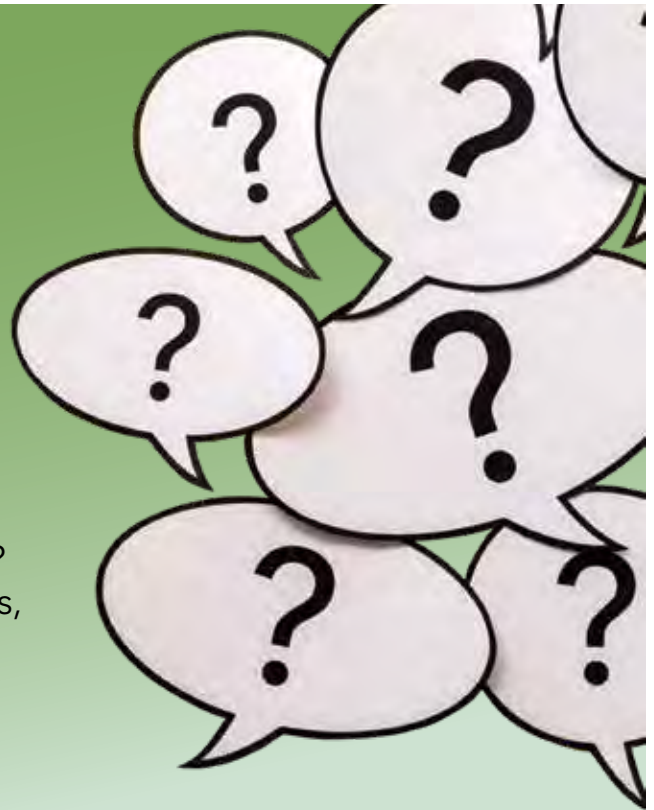
## SUDOKU

	8	4						
	2			3			1	
3		5	6		1		2	
9		1		4				
			3					
	4		1		7	5	6	8
4		6		1		2	9	
8	5		4	6				7
			2	5				6



Scan the QR code to find the solutions to this issue's puzzle.

# ASK US ANYTHING



Do you have something you'd like to ask us? It could be about our service, trains, stations, any question you have. Just submit your question to [mymetra@metrarr.com](mailto:mymetra@metrarr.com)

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## What's an interlocker?

– K

Good question! An interlocker or interlocking is a railroad intersection or switching complex whose switches and signals are designed in such a way that 1) switches for a route through the area are locked into place before a clear signal for a train to use that route is given and 2) there can only be a clear signal for one route through the intersection or switching complex. In other words, the machinery is "interlocked" so when the switches and signals are aligned and locked into place to allow one train to pass through, all other possible routes have a red signal.

**I learned that the F40PHM locomotives built in 1991/92 (with the slanted nose) have the nickname "Winnebago," and I'm curious:**

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**where did they get that name from? Winnebago is the name of a county – one that isn't served by Metra.**

– Cole

They were nicknamed Winnebagos because with their sloped noses they were thought to resemble the RVs by that name.

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**I'm riding the MD-W right now to Hanover Park. What is Metra doing to curb this residential expansion into farmland and forested areas outside of Chicago?**

– Matt

While land use planning and zoning fall under the jurisdiction of municipalities and counties, Metra has worked extensively with communities to develop land use plans and to support development that is transit-supportive and encourages the use of Metra and other transit

options. In addition, Metra is currently developing a Systemwide Network Plan which is focused on improving service in our existing corridors rather than on building new lines or extensions at the ends of our lines as we continue our evolution toward becoming a regional rail service.

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**How much time would skipping a stop save on a diesel powered line?**

– Ari

It is generally safe to say that one stop takes somewhere between 1 and 5 minutes. Some of the factors that influence that time are the speed limit in the portion of track where the stop will be made/skipped; the distance between the stop in question and the stops on either side; the type of locomotive being used; and the number of people waiting to board.



# BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES: METRA'S MECHANICAL APPRENTICE PROGRAM

At Metra, we're not just about trains; we're about building careers and fostering growth. Our Mechanical Apprentice Program offers a three-year, hands-on training opportunity for those looking to turn their passion into a lasting career. Through this program, participants gain invaluable skills, both in the classroom and on the job, preparing them for a future as a journeyman in their chosen craft. Whether someone is interested in becoming a carman, electrician, machinist, or sheet metal worker, the Mechanical Apprentice Program provides the tools and mentorship needed to succeed.



## Rising Through the Ranks

The ultimate goal of our apprentice program is to give workers the knowledge and skills they need to do the job, which ultimately helps Metra serve its customers. Below are two examples of program graduates who have risen through the ranks to do just that.

### EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: JANIDA GARDNER



Starting in 2012, Janida Gardner completed the Mechanical Apprentice Program, advancing from Apprentice to **Mechanical Foreman**. She credits the program for teaching teamwork, time management, and task delegation. "Be prepared to get down and dirty. Be great at your craft, learn as much as you can, and don't hesitate to seek advice from experienced colleagues."

### EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: STEVE AARDEMA



Celebrating 25 years at Metra, Steve Aardema began as a laborer before joining the apprentice program. Now a **Mechanical Foreman**, he values the hands-on training and advice he received. His advice to apprentices is to always remain open to learning: "Never say 'I know.' No matter how many times you learn a job from a different person, always accept the knowledge. Find a way that works for you, and you can teach someone else."

## Ready to Start Your Journey?

If you're interested in Metra's Mechanical Apprentice Program, watch for postings for apprentice positions on our Careers page, [metra.com/careers-employment](https://www.metra.com/careers-employment).



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