



my metra

SPRING 2023

**STATION
UPDATES
ARE ON
TRACK**

CARMAGEDDON
Fly Past Construction

CAPITOL IDEAS
A Talk with Illinois Senators

ALL ABOARD
Meet Our Newest Conductors



my message

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James M. Derwinski
CEO/Executive Director

Spring has sprung, and at Metra — especially this year — that means the construction season is underway.

That work includes a wide variety of projects, such as tie replacement, that are essential to maintaining our system and allowing us to operate safe, reliable service. But thanks to a big infusion of capital dollars from Springfield and Washington, we are also planning a great deal of work this year and into the future to rehabilitate our stations. We want them to be welcoming and accessible gateways to our system and to your communities. You can read about that work starting on **page 4**. We also put that capital funding to good use rehabbing railcars. We're quite proud of our rehab facility, because we save money doing it in-house while keeping tax dollars and jobs in Illinois. Read about that program on **Page 12**.

Two people responsible for helping Metra secure that funding are our state's senators, Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth. We talked to them to find out why they value Metra, public transportation, and infrastructure funding. You can read those interviews on **Pages 10 and 11**.

Speaking of construction, the work underway on the Kennedy Expy. represents a golden opportunity for Metra, and we aren't going to let it pass. We were a convenient and affordable alternative to driving before the work even started, and now we're even more attractive. Turn to **Page 6** to learn more.

Dodging road construction is just one reason for using Metra. Taking it to good fun and good food is another. Our Go Guide on **Page 14** and our Dine by Your Line feature on **Page 18** provide some ideas for places, events (such as the new NASCAR race) and restaurants to visit via Metra. You can also take Metra to the Pullman National Historical Park, and on **Page 19** we interview two brothers with a unique perspective on that destination.

Finally, we are continuing our feature on the members of the Metra Board of Directors. We want you to know the men and women who are guiding our agency. Turn to **Pages 8 and 9** to read about Director Paul Ruffin, appointed by south suburban Cook County Board members; Rodney Craig, who was appointed by northwest suburban Cook County Board members; and Don Orseno, appointed by the head of the Will County Board.

It's always nice to have winter in our rearview mirror so we can take advantage of what Chicago has to offer in spring and summer. Get out and enjoy.



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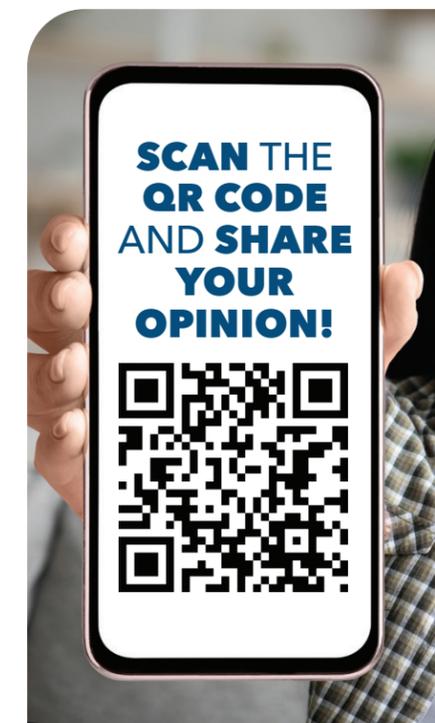
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TAKE OUR READERSHIP SURVEY!

We'd like to know what you think of *My Metra Magazine*. We invite you to scan the QR code you see here and share your thoughts about our publication. What do you think about the content? What would you like to see in future issues? We want to know.

The survey will take just a few minutes to complete. With your participation, you can help make certain that we bring you content that's informative, enlightening, and fun.

Thank you for your help.



METRA CONSTRUCTION FOCUSED ON STATIONS

Station improvements take center stage

My Metra is committed to improving our customers' experience, and this begins with first impressions. Modern, clean, and accessible station facilities increase customer confidence, demonstrating that we care about their safety and comfort. Throughout 2023, the bulk of our capital spending (\$119.5 million) is allocated to rebuilding and renewing station facilities. In fact, our five-year plan includes improvement projects for about 20% of Metra's 242 — soon to be 244 — stations.

Under the Metra Electric Community Initiative, a multiyear plan to improve 13 stations on the line, work is scheduled to continue this year at the 147th St. Station and begin at six more: Homewood, 95th, 79th, 87th, 103rd and Millennium (South Water entrance). These projects will completely renew station facilities and focus on accessibility features, such as elevators.

In addition, we will replace the existing wooden platforms at 83rd and 67th and replace the stairs and retaining walls at 27th. Major station projects are also being planned in future years for the Van Buren, 59th-60th St./University of Chicago, 111th Street/Pullman, Harvey, Olympia Fields, and University Park stations.

Work will also continue this year on two new stations: Peterson Ridge on the UP North Line, slated for completion this year, and Auburn Park on the Rock Island Line, scheduled for completion

next year. Work is continuing on the new Grayland Station (and Milwaukee Ave. bridge) on the Milwaukee District North Line and will finish on the Blue Island Vermont Street Station on the Rock Island Line and the new inbound Ravenswood Station on the UP North Line.

Rehabilitation is also expected to begin this year on the 132-year-old Kenilworth Station on the UP North Line and the 97-year-old La Grange Road Station on the BNSF Line.

Platform replacement and repair projects are scheduled at the Grayslake, Wood Dale, Big Timber, Brainerd, Oak Lawn/Patriot, Kenosha, Clybourn, and Kedzie stations. We also will add 340 new bicycle parking spaces at 17 stations. And we will also focus on smaller ADA accessibility projects such as replacing worn tactile edging on platforms and improving pathways.

The Metra system is a \$35 billion asset that requires ongoing investment in maintenance to provide the standard of service our customers rely upon. Our focus on stations in 2023 is part and parcel of living up to the goals set out in Metra's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. Each of the projects will enhance Metra service to help us grow ridership and provide mobility choices for the entire Chicago region while ensuring the Metra experience is safe, easy, and enjoyable for all our customers.



AVOID CARMAGEDDON WITH METRA



Driving on the Kennedy and Edens expressways is going to be an even bigger mess for three years. Good thing you're riding Metra.

The Illinois Department of Transportation this spring began a major, three-year project to rehabilitate the Kennedy between the Edens junction and downtown. The work will require closure of two lanes of traffic at a time, creating a bottleneck that is already leading to long, painful backups on the Kennedy and Edens.

Even before that work began, Chicago earned a reputation for having the worst traffic in the country. According to the 2022 INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard, Chicago is the country's most congested city, with drivers

losing an average of 155 hours and \$2,618 due to congestion annually.



Metra is putting out the word that it is a fast, reliable, and affordable alternative for Kennedy and Edens drivers. The four lines that serve the northern part of the region — the UP North, Milwaukee District North, North Central Service and UP Northwest — have plenty of capacity and can whisk you past traffic jams into downtown Chicago.

With our \$100 flat-rate "Super Saver" Monthly Pass, Metra is more affordable than ever. And our 95 percent on-time performance rate can't be beat. Leave the driving to Metra, and leave the traffic jams behind.



MEET THE RECENT GRADUATING CONDUCTOR CLASS

Metra's newest assistant conductor class celebrated its graduation on Feb 10, 2023. Each of the graduates has a unique story of success and perseverance. They are great representatives of Metra's values, opportunities, and diversity. Among the graduates are three women and 13 men whose ages range from 18 to 55, proving that you are never too young or too old to try something new.

Metra's Assistant Conductor Class is taught by a dedicated group of individuals who understand the rules and demands of the job. The program consists of a 14-week training session that is broken into three parts.

The first phase is spent in the classroom. This is where recruits learn all

about passenger rail operations — from how to log hours of service to railroad vocabulary to effective technical communication to ticket sales. The second and third phases are composed of nine weeks of on-the-job training where candidates are assigned various jobs to help them become familiar with each line, safety rules, and rail yards.

Collin D. Uyttebroeck, one of the graduates, likes the way the course is divided into both classroom and field work. "The classroom portion does a good job of giving us the fundamentals needed to perform our tasks," he said. "However, the field training is where we are able to put everything into action."

Working as a conductor is not as easy as it may appear. It is not a 9-to-5,

Monday-through-Friday job. Conductors must be able to work outside, exposed to all weather conditions including heat, rain, ice, snow and cold. The job also requires the ability to stay focused and help riders travel safely to and from their destination.

Operation trainer Fabian Ochoa says it takes a certain kind of person to make the ideal conductor. "The perfect candidate has the ability to multitask and knows how to do a lot of things safely, at the same time," he said.

With new Metra employees like this graduating class, we are confident we will continue to provide our customers with safe, reliable, efficient, and affordable service.

MEET THE METRA BOARD

Helping to manage the nation’s fourth-busiest commuter rail system is no easy task, but that’s the role of the 11-member Metra Board of Directors. The Board is made up of members representing the six-county Chicago metropolitan area. They meet once a month to discuss and address matters related to Metra’s operations today and into the future.

Over the next few issues of *My Metra* magazine, we’ll be introducing you to the members of the Board. In this issue, we invite you to meet Rodney Craig, Don Orseno and Paul E. Ruffin.

FOR COMPLETE METRA BOARD INTERVIEWS VISIT: metra.com/MeetTheBoard

MEET DIRECTOR RODNEY CRAIG

Rodney Craig, who serves as the Board Secretary, was appointed to the Metra Board of Directors in 2013 by north-west suburban members of the Cook County Board. He is now in his fifth term as Village President of Hanover Park, just one example of his extensive involvement in public service. He worked in systems operations with the Federal Aviation Administration, retiring in 2009 after 39 years. He and his family have lived in Hanover Park since 1974.

What do you like most about being a Board Member?

As a mayor, I like contributing my perspective about the trials and tribulations of suburban mayors. My goal is the safety of our residents. I am always seeking to understand across all borders and boundaries.

Tell us something surprising about you or something most people don’t know about you.

I served in the U.S. Navy, where I enlisted after being drafted in 1968. I ultimately had three tours of duty in Vietnam over six years.

What hobbies or activities do you enjoy?

I am a car enthusiast. And I enjoy being a political activist

for the people of Hanover Park and our excellent schools.

What do you like best about living in the Chicago area?

There are lots of things to like about living here, but what I like best is the diversity across the region.

What does *My Metra* mean to you?

It means taking ownership for an exceptionally managed commuter railroad.



MEET VICE CHAIR DON ORSENO

Don Orseno worked for the railroad for 43 years, including four years as Metra’s CEO/Executive Director. He retired from that position and from the railroad in 2017 but was tapped to serve on the Metra Board in 2019 by the head of the Will County Board. He lives in Manhattan with his wife; they have two children and five grandchildren.

What do you like most about being a Board Member?

I enjoy serving our community and staying connected with the railroad I grew up on. I am ready to share my experience, background and knowledge of Metra and railroad operations.

Tell us something surprising about you or something most people don’t know about you.

I play pickleball. I started playing about five years ago and really enjoy it.

What other activities do you enjoy?

We are very involved grandparents and try to go to every jiu jitsu, basketball and cheerleading event. Family is very important to us.

A friend who has never been to the Chicago area is in town — where do you take them?

How long is the friend staying? Because there is a lot to do. Navy Pier, and along the lakefront, of course. I’d also have to take them to some local treasures like Al’s Beef because nothing says Chicago like an Italian beef or hotdog.

What does *My Metra* mean to you?

Pride. It’s humbling to see both our customers and employees take pride and ownership in their public transportation.



MEET DIRECTOR PAUL E. RUFFIN

Paul E. Ruffin of Homewood was appointed to the Board in June 2021 by south suburban members of the Cook County Board. A St. Louis native and U. of Missouri grad, he has nearly three decades of experience in account management, sales, and IT, with special focus on process improvement, supplier diversity and minority business development. He is employed at Cigna in their government and education division. He has two children and three grandchildren.

What do you like about being a Board member?

I like the fact that we have a direct connection and impact on something that people depend on every day.

Why is the issue of diversity so important to you?

I’ve just never been in a situation in my personal or professional life where diversity of thought and diversity of ideas didn’t positively contribute in the short term or long term.

Tell us something surprising about yourself.

I was a professional jazz musician in Manhattan, in New York City, for a number of years before I moved back to the Midwest. I was a jazz drummer and a jazz pianist. I was with a pretty tight group back then.

What hobbies or activities do you enjoy now?

I have three grandchildren. I love spending time with them. I have a daughter who’s a sophomore in college. I like going through the ups and downs with her in regard to where she is in life. She’s a band nerd, like her dad was. Same college (Mizzou), same band.

What does *My Metra* mean to you?

Metra meets the individual needs of the individual person. That’s what I love about that tagline, because Metra means so much to so many different people.



ILLINOIS SENATORS DELIVER FOR METRA

The Chicago area's congressional delegation delivered for Metra in 2022, helping secure \$204.1 million in competitive federal grants for Metra projects—the most by far in any year in Metra's history. This includes the largest discretionary grant Metra has ever received—\$117 million for the next phase of the UP North Line bridge replacement program—and All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP) grants to improve accessibility at two Metra Electric Line stations. We talked to Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth about why this issue is important to them.

Sen. Dick Durbin

Why was it important to advocate for Metra and public transportation?

Chicago area residents have relied on Metra's services to get to work and into the city since the commuter rail began operating in the 1980s. To keep the economy of both the city and its surrounding suburbs up and running, it's vital that Illinoisans have access to reliable, efficient public transportation. Metra meets that need. I want to ensure it's running in the best possible condition, which is why I consistently advocate for Metra to receive the federal funding it needs.

As a backer of the All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP), how gratifying is it to see the Chicago area—CTA and Metra—receive significant grants to improve accessibility?

Public transportation should be accessible for all Illinoisans. ASAP has made that accessibility a priority, which I share. I'm encouraged to see funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act allocated toward upgrading CTA and Metra to meet the mobility needs of their riders.

In a post-pandemic future, what role do you see for public transportation? Is it still as important as ever?

We are rebuilding after the COVID-19 pandemic took a



toll on our state's economy and the life of every Illinoisan. That's why I worked across the aisle to pass the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) into law. With the significant funds carved out for public transportation in the new bipartisan law, Illinois will see much-needed improvements to our state's public transportation, roads, and bridges. In addition to smoother roadways, Illinoisans will be hired on these projects—jumpstarting our economy.

We've already begun to see the law's impact. In January, Senator Duckworth and I announced that Metra was

awarded a \$117 million grant through IIJA to support improvements to the Union Pacific-North Line. The funding is expected to replace four miles of track structure, nearly two miles of retaining walls, and 11 bridges. I look forward to seeing the tremendous impact this legislation will continue to have on our state's public transportation and economic standing.

What more investment would you like to see in public transportation and/or infrastructure?

As we fortify our transportation systems, I will continue to be a strong advocate of moving toward the use of renewable fuel sources and electric vehicles. Illinois is poised to become a leader in the electric vehicle industry, and that

extends to our public transit systems as well.

Illinois is benefiting from a significant increase in funding in the IIJA for green transit buses with \$71 million in grants for Illinois transit agencies announced last year. In addition, I secured an additional \$15 million over the last two years via the appropriations process to help our transit agencies invest in lower emission transit buses. And I also secured \$1.5 million in FY2022 for Metra for a zero-emission locomotive pilot on Metra's Rock Island Line. But I won't stop there. I'll continue to be a strong federal partner advocating for more federal funding for Illinois transit and commuter rail agencies so that Illinoisans can get where they need to go, on time and safely.

Sen. Tammy Duckworth

Why was it important to advocate for Metra and public transportation?

So many Illinoisans rely on Metra and other modes of public transit to get to school, get to work and move throughout Chicagoland, so it's critical that they can get where they're going safely, easily and efficiently. Federal resources can go a long way toward helping make those things possible while also protecting jobs in the process. So, I'll keep working to do all that we can to help improve transit development.

As a champion of the ASAP Program, how gratifying is it to see the Chicago area—CTA and Metra—receive significant grants to improve accessibility?

As we work to repair and enhance our infrastructure—we must make sure that the upgrades benefit ALL Americans. That is why I pushed so hard to include my All Stations Accessibility Program—or ASAP Act—in the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Seeing these resources coming in makes me proud that my ASAP Act is helping make Illinois a more inclusive place for our state's disability community.

In a post-pandemic future, what role do you see for public transportation? Is it still as important as ever?

Public transit is often what connects one community to the next, strengthens our workforce and helps fuel recreation,



and I believe it will continue to be just as important for generations to come—especially with continued investment and prioritization from all levels of government.

What more investment would you like to see in public transportation and/or infrastructure?

Making our nation's transit stations more accessible isn't just about elevators. It's also about ensuring Americans with vision impairments, hearing loss or any disability can more easily and independently access mass transit and get where they need to go too. I'm glad my ASAP Act is addressing this, and I will continue pushing for transit upgrades that meet or exceed accessibility standards.

PRIDE AND TEAMWORK ARE KEY TO METRA'S SUCCESSFUL RAILCAR REHAB PROGRAM



Wedged between the Dan Ryan and Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood sits Metra's 47th/49th Street Yard. To the casual observer, the yard is the daily servicing site for the equipment used on our Rock Island Line to Joliet, but in a little more than a decade, it has also become home to Metra's successful in-house railcar and locomotive rehab programs.

Since 2010, more than 373 passenger railcars have been overhauled at the 49th Street Car Shop. Overhauls are essentially gut rehabs that replace and upgrade the interiors and undercarriage, extending the car's life by 10 to 15 years. Keeping the program in-house versus outsourcing has been a win-win for the agency: reducing costs, providing better quality control, and keeping skilled jobs in the region.

"The talent in this shop is unbelievable," says Rich Keating, Assistant Director, Mechanical Capital Projects. "We all

bought into the program: it's quicker, better quality and we all work together. That job looks easy due to the hard work, unparalleled talent and dedication each Metra employee brings with them every day."

Overhauling a railcar is a welcome challenge for the Metra team of carmen, electricians, sheet metal workers, laborers, coach cleaners and foremen. They can gut and rebuild a car in 24 working days.

"We take the cars and make them new again," said Marlon D. Wilson, 15-year veteran electrician. "We break it down to the lowest level and bring it back to the highest pristine level that we can get, with rewiring, modifications, cleaning, you name it, whatever it takes to get it from what it looked like before to showroom-new."

See page 21 for some impressive numbers from this program.

METRA BRINGS RAIL SAFETY TO THE COMMUNITY

The Chicago region is one of the biggest rail hubs in the nation, and the need to understand safe behaviors around trains, tracks and crossings extends to everyone. For this reason, Metra's safety department provides free rail safety presentations for schools, businesses, and other organizations throughout the six-county area we serve.

Recently, Metra Public Safety Coordinator Jarrett Sardin visited the American School Bus Company in Orland Park to conduct a safety presentation for its drivers who transport thousands of the region's children to and from school.

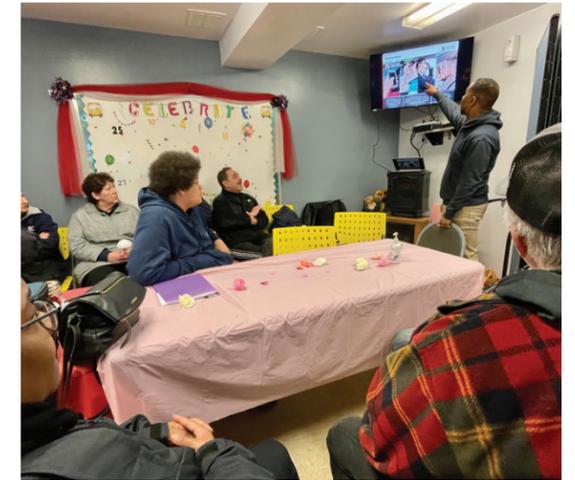
Metra's safety presentations for school bus operators are part of its work with Operation Lifesaver, a national nonprofit public information and education organization dedicated to eliminating collisions, injuries, and fatalities at highway rail-grade crossings. Sardin is certified by Operation Lifesaver as a presenter.

"Operation Lifesaver is for everyone," Sardin said. "I facilitate these presentations for preschoolers all the way to 8th grade, high schoolers, adults, and companies who are open to railroad safety. I think the drivers and the school bus companies in general really appreciate Metra coming out and giving Operation Lifesaver presentations. Our presentation is a tool to reinforce information that they already know. Keeping the children, our precious cargo, safe is important to us all."

Jim Morgan, who drives a school bus agrees.

"It's very important," Morgan said. "Every bit of information I can get from Metra, I use that in my training."

Schools and businesses interested in hosting a free safety presentation can contact Metra's Public Safety Coordinator Jarrett Sardin at JSardin@metrarr.com or 312-322-8182.



Spring Has Sprung... You Loose!

LET METRA TAKE YOU TO AREA EVENTS!

The days are long. The thermometer is rising. And our entire region is opening up with fairs, festivals, sports, and shows. Metra is your connection to everything Chicagoland has to offer in spring and summer. And with Metra you can fly by road construction and avoid paying for expensive gas and parking. The chart on the accompanying page is only a brief listing of all that's happening.

Remember, Metra offers money-saving fares for your entire family. And with metratracker.com, you can plan out your trip. So, shake off those winter blues and avoid the tension, hassles, and headaches of driving. Let Metra get you where you want to go — on time and for less.



NASCAR IS COMING TO THE STREETS OF CHICAGO

July 1 and 2 will find Chicago the location for NASCAR's first-ever street race. In fact, there will be two races—the NASCAR Xfinity Series on Saturday and a Cup Series race on Sunday. Along with the races is a music festival featuring artists like Miranda Lambert and the Black Crowes. Metra is your ticket to all the action without all the traffic headaches. Learn more at nascarchicago.com.



EVENT / ATTRACTION	DATE(S)	LOCATION
Chicago Fire FC	Through October 21	Soldier Field
Chicago White Sox	Through October 1	Guaranteed Rate Field
Chicago Cubs	Through September 24	Wrigley Field
Buckingham Fountain	Through Mid-October	Columbus Drive
Pompeii: The Exhibit	Through September 4	Museum of Science & Industry
Salvador Dali Exhibit	Through June 12	Art Institute of Chicago
Luke Combs Concert	May 6	Soldier Field
Aladdin: The Musical	May 17-28	Cadillac Palace Theater
Chicago Sky WNBA Basketball	May 26-September 8	Wintrust Arena
El Festival Latino Suenos	May 27-28	Grant Park
Chicago Area Beaches	Memorial Day-Labor Day	
West Side Story	June 2-25	Lyric Opera
Taylor Swift Eras Tour	June 2-4	Soldier Field
Chicago Gospel Music Festival	June 3	Millennium Park
Canoe Adventure	June 3-4	Chicago Botanic Garden
57th Street Art Fair	June 3-4	Hyde Park
Blues Festival	June 8-11	Millennium Park
Grant Park Music Festival	June 14-August 29	Millennium Park
Gold Coast Art Fair	June 17	Butler Field
Chicago Pride Fest	June 17-18	800 W. Waveland
Hadestown	June 20-June 25	CIBC Theatre
Millennium Park Music Series	June 22-August 21	Millennium Park
Taste of Chicago	June 24 July 15	Humboldt Park Pullman Park
Millennium Park Summer Film Series	July 11-August 29	Jay Pritzker Pavilion
Windy City Smokeout	July 13-16	United Center Parking Lot



FREE RIDES TO RAVINIA!

The Ravinia Festival is holding over 100 events this summer and getting there is not only easier on Metra—it's free. Starting June 15, all trains on the Union Pacific North Line will honor Ravinia tickets as train fares. Just show your dated concert ticket or e-ticket for a free train ride to and from the park on concert days.

Remember, the train stops right at the front gate of Ravinia during the concert season. With Metra, you can avoid all the summer road construction and have a truly relaxing experience.

So, join the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Carrie Underwood, Brandi Carlisle, John Legend, and many more at the Ravinia Festival and let Metra get you there on time for free!

Check out the Ravinia schedule at Ravinia.org



Pamela Lonzer

Chicago native Pamela Lonzer is an enterprise compliance director for a Lake Forest pharmaceutical company. In her global role she is focused on developing policies, research, and development. When she's not jetting to Boston she can be found on her new favorite form of transportation, the Milwaukee District North Line.

How long have you been riding Metra?

I have been riding Metra since October 2022 and I love it. Taking the train is a great option for me since I go to the office three times a week.

Why did you start riding Metra?

I started riding Metra because it gives me flexibility and it's efficient –no traffic, I get to either conduct business or relax before work. I found it's beneficial to my work-life balance, and it reduces stress on my way home.

Are you going to keep taking Metra?

Yes! When I was driving all the time it would take me 45 minutes to an hour and 20 minutes, now with the construction on the Kennedy my commute would be more than two hours.

What do you tell your friends or colleagues who are not riding Metra yet?

Try Metra! I tell them it's a relaxing ride and that there are options. You will not be controlled by traffic times. You can do more riding Metra vs sitting in traffic. You can look at your phone or laptop. I would also tell them it's not as complicated as you think. The train crew is there to help.

How has your overall Metra experience been?

It's been great, clean, and comfortable. I love the rehabbed cars—the outlets are very important because they help charge my work phone. The conductors are great, and I love using the Ventra app because I don't have to worry about losing my tickets.

Are you going to stop taking Metra?

No, I'm not going to stop. I am looking forward to the summer and not dealing with traffic. I also enjoy taking Metra to Ravinia, that's fun.



Joseph Miles

What do you remember about that day?

The way the individual was acting, the way he was responding to people around him, it caught my attention. I had to ask the hard questions and make quick decisions. Those decisions saved somebody's life.

How did your Metra team respond to your calls for help?

People came out to help. I had a nurse on the train who said it seemed like the child needed attention. That's when I touched the baby's forehead—it was unresponsive so there was a lot of support. It was a wonderful thing that everybody came together for that cause.

How does it feel to be recognized by Metra?

It was a great honor, and I am very proud. We don't do what we do looking for awards, we're doing

our job. I'm just trying to create an environment where everybody can feel safe, an environment where you can bring your family.

This is more than just a job for you, isn't it?

I retired from the Navy on April 30, 2008. I got hired at Metra the same year. I left a structured environment and came into another structured environment where I feel that what I have to offer, what I bring to the table, and what I try to do on a daily basis makes a difference.

Being a conductor, out in the front line, feels familiar to you?

Yes. I think about people. I put myself in their shoes. I rode trains all around the world when I was in the Navy. I remember Japan and I know how it feels to not speak the language. I try to help people and get them where they need to go.

On Sept. 9, 2022, Conductor Joseph Miles noticed a man acting strange while carrying an infant. He noticed the child was unresponsive and immediately called for police and medical assistance to make sure the baby was safe. His quick thinking did not go unnoticed—he was honored by his peers with the My Metra Honors Annual Service Award for 2022.



AL'S CAFE

In this issue, we take you to the Elgin Station on the Milwaukee District West Line to Al's Café – a neighborhood favorite serving up everything from schnitzel to their famous old-fashioned Burns Malts.

Located in the historic Ranstead Building in the heart of Elgin, Al's truly captures the spirit of a local café with their cozy décor and delicious comfort food.

Although current owners Tony and Patricia Jamin purchased the restaurant in 2005, Al's Café has been around since 1982 when William Alan (Al) Berg purchased the Ranstead Building with the idea of opening a restaurant. After acquiring the famous recipe for Burns Malts, Al renovated the building and was open for business.

Chef and Co-owner Tony Jamin plays upon the history of the café while adding his own flair to the menu.

"I'm always trying to put an 'Al's Twist' on the dishes here," he said.

Of course, Al's is still serving their famous malts, but Chef Tony has expanded the menu. With themed

monthly dinner specials that include Salmon Run, A Taste of Europe, and Shrimp Fest, it's safe to say the Jamins have taken the café to new heights.

The menu at Al's Café highlights Chef Tony's desire to serve both comfort food favorites and culinary creations from around the world. For example, you can dine on a classic Hot Ham and Swiss sandwich for lunch and come back for Zigeuner Schnitzel at dinnertime. There's something for everyone at Al's, which makes it such a favorite in the neighborhood.

Whether you're looking for a comforting home-cooked meal, an old-fashioned malt, or simply to take in the ambiance of historic architecture, Al's Café is the place for you.

Al's Café is at 43 DuPage Ct. in Elgin. For more information visit alscafe.com.



THE THING TO TRY:

Al's World Famous Burns Malt
A rich & thick homemade malt with more than six scoops of deluxe vanilla ice cream that comes in a variety of flavors.

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



Al and Ray Quiroz. Courtesy—Historic Pullman Foundation, Jeff Brown



Al and Ray Quiroz on Langley Garden—circa 1946.

BROTHERS KNOW THE REAL PULLMAN

Brothers Al and Ray Quiroz are part of a community rich with history and an unparalleled work ethic. The brothers, now in their 80s, were born, grew up, worked, and still live in Pullman. And where did they work? As you may have guessed, they kept it close to home as employees of the Pullman-Standard Company from 1959-1981, making railcars that are still in use today.

What did you do at Pullman-Standard?

Ray: I was lucky enough to work on every aspect of building railroad cars. When I left Pullman-Standard, I had essentially learned how to put together an entire train car from start to finish.

What did you like best about working on train cars?

Ray: Pullman taught me a lot. In fact, I used my knowledge and experience of working at Pullman Standard to

create several miniature wooden ships by hand. To do that, you'd need to know how to build a foundation and a structure. You'd need to know that if you don't have the ribs in the right place, you're not doing it correctly. I learned all of that from my time at Pullman-Standard.

Do you have a favorite memory or relic from your time at Pullman?

Al: In the 1970s, while clearing out some old offices, we found original glass-plate negatives of Pullman railroad cars from the 1880s. I knew the value of these objects and didn't want to see them thrown away like garbage. These objects now make up part of my 300-piece collection of railroad artifacts.

Was it fun working with your brother, really?

Al: I can say without a doubt that my brother Ray has been my absolute best friend for 85 years. I would be



Al Quiroz and Ray Quiroz, Family Aboard Superliner—circa 1981.

lost without him.

How do you feel about Pullman being a historical landmark now and why is it important?

Al: We're so proud to be named a National Historical Park and run by the wonderful people at the National Park Service. We are the last two remaining former employees who continue to live here. And we wouldn't have it any other way.

Metra, the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners and the Historic Pullman Foundation are joining forces for the second annual Pullman Railroad Days: People, Progress, and Innovation May 20-21 at the Pullman National Historical Park. Go to www.pullmanil.org/special-events for more information.

EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY AT METRA



Using Metra is an inherently green activity, good for reducing pollution and helping our environment.

But that doesn't mean we ignore the Earth Day observance. This year, for the second year in a row, Metra observed Earth Day with activities aimed at making our planet—specifically, our little corner of the planet—a bit nicer.

Working with community groups and other stakeholders, Metra volunteers fanned out across Metra-owned lines to clean up litter and debris along the tracks and plant flowers and trees at various locations. We hope we inspired

Chicago area residents to make their own green contributions towards a cleaner world.

“We feel good about the role Metra plays in helping the environment, primarily by taking cars off the road and reducing pollution, but we can always do more,” said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski. “It’s all part of the *My Metra* philosophy to take personal responsibility for our riders and for each other.”

Go to earthday.org for more information on how your actions can help the planet we all share.

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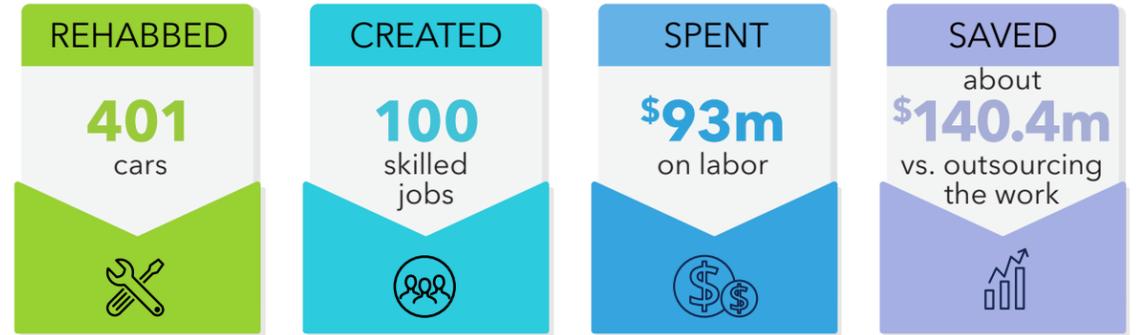


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METRA BY THE NUMBERS

To date, Metra's railcar rehabilitation programs (see page 12) have:



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. 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.

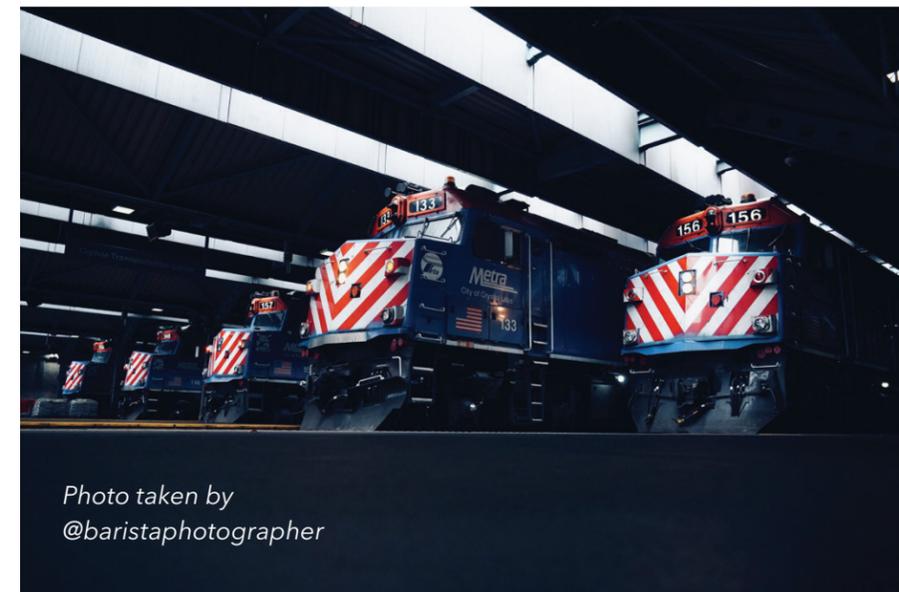


Photo taken by @baristaphotographer

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ASK US ANYTHING

Here's an opportunity for you to ask us anything about Metra. If you have something to ask us, email your question to mymetra@metrarr.com.



I understand that Metra hasn't been able to purchase a large number of Tier 4 locomotives due to budgetary reasons and the lack of funding needed to replace all the F40s that are over 30 years old. Does Metra at all intend to pursue the funding it needs to purchase up to 120 new Tier 4 locos as opposed to buying used locomotives? Either through the state or through the Infrastructure and Jobs Act of 2021?

— Cole

We are *always* pursuing new funding. But it may not be realistic to expect we could get a grant that would cover the purchase of 120 new Tier 4 locomotives, which would cost \$960 million to \$1.2 billion. That is roughly what we expect to get from the latest state public works program, and that is an amount to be spread out over several years. We can't spend it all on locomotives because we have so many other needs that can't be ignored.

One of the frequent annoyances on the Heritage Corridor line is at the various freight crossings north of Summit, especially during the AM rush. Don't the freight dispatchers have the Metra schedules to be able to hold freight trains behind stop signals close to the expected HC northbound and southbound crossings? Since Amtrak also uses the same routing and probably experiences delays as well, shouldn't the passenger railroads consider constructing a flyover in that area to avoid freight conflicts?

— Ronald

You're right that freight interference is a major issue on the tracks used by our Heritage Corridor trains and Amtrak. Yes, the freight railroads know our schedules and should hold their trains to allow for us to pass without interference, and for the most part they do. But the corridor is extremely busy and there are a variety of freight railroads involved. The good news

is that there are flyovers planned for two of those crossings under the CREATE Program, which is an effort by all the region's railroads and transportation departments to eliminate conflicts. However, that work is not yet funded.

Why are there so many trains that stop at Oak Park? The frequency of the stops seems completely disproportionate to the rest of the UP West line. Just curious.

— Michael

There are more frequent stops at Oak Park because it is a transfer point to the CTA Green Line.

SUDOKU

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Scan the QR code to find the solution to this month's puzzle.



STATION BREAK

West Chicago

West Chicago could be called the first Illinois community created by railroads, and it remains a railroad city today. Chicago's first railroad, the Galena & Chicago Union, reached the area in 1849, and nearby towns soon built branches to West Chicago to connect to the mainline. Industry and settlers followed. One of the city's original names—Junction—reflected this history. A depot built in 1912 still stands, serving as a community center; the current depot with a Victorian design dates from 1990.



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