

# Metra ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, August 2010



## Metra to begin work on UP North bridge project

### Schedule changes will start Aug. 22

Metra this month plans to begin a major eight-year project to replace 22 aging bridges along the Union Pacific North Line between Fullerton and Balmoral in Chicago.

The \$185-million project, which is being partially funded with federal stimulus money, also includes a brand new Ravenswood Station, the busiest stop on the line. The new station will offer longer, partially covered platforms, warming shelters, improved lighting,

**Open House Forums**  
5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**July 29**  
Waukegan City Hall  
100 N. Martin Luther King Jr.

**August 2**  
Lake Forest City Hall  
220 East Deerpath Road

**August 4**  
Evanston Public Library  
1703 Orrington Avenue

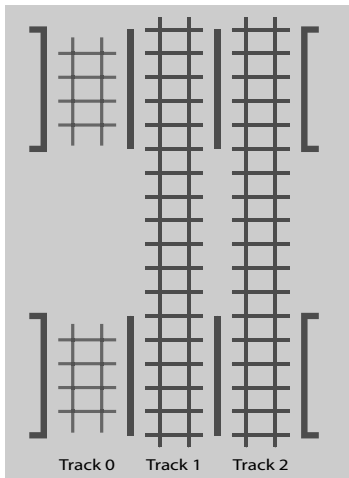
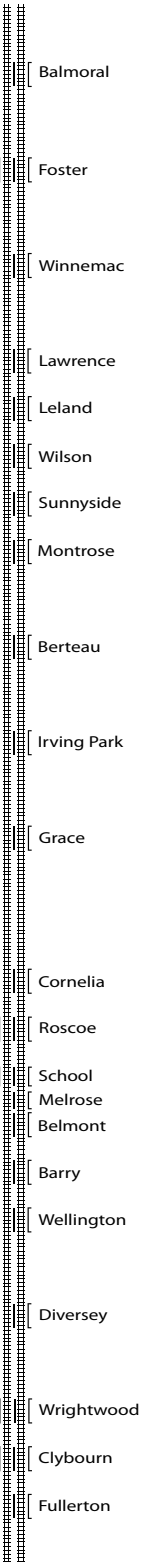
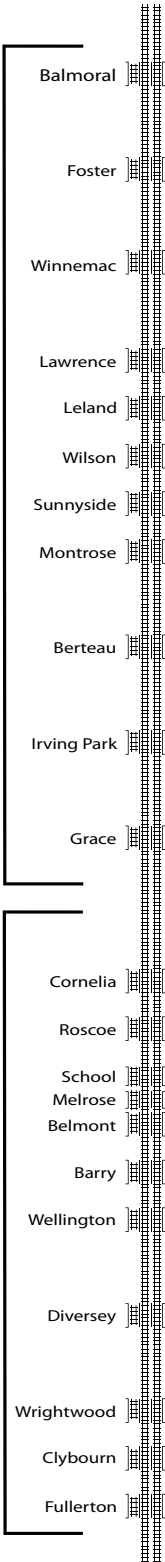
landscaping, a ticket office, vendor space, ramps and stairs. Because the bridge replace-

ment and related work on retaining walls will require inbound and outbound trains to operate on a single track in the construction zone, the UP North schedule will be adjusted starting August 22. Trains will stop at all stations along the line at different times, although the travel times will either stay the same or be a maximum of two minutes longer. Some busier stations will see more stops. In some cases, new ex-

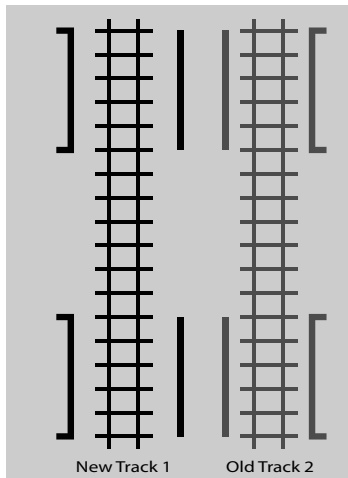
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Phase One 2010-2014

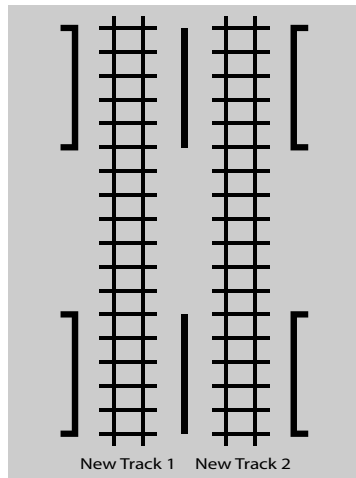
Phase Two 2014-2018



**The line today**  
The right of way in the project area on the north side of Chicago used to have three tracks. The third track, Track 0, was removed decades ago between the 22 bridges to be worked on, but the bridges still retain the third set of tracks. UP North trains now use Tracks 1 and 2.



**The work begins**  
Phase One covers 11 bridges from Grace to Balmoral. The portions of the bridges that carry Tracks 0 and 1 will be removed, while the old Track 2 will carry all UP North traffic. A new Track 1 bridge will be built at each location, and Track 1 will be aligned with the new bridges. A new Ravenswood Station also will be built in Phase One.



**Finishing the job**  
Once the new Track 1 is complete, it will carry all UP North traffic while the remaining portions of the old bridges are torn down and new Track 2 bridges are built. Track 2 will then be aligned with the new bridges. A similar construction plan will be used in Phase Two for the 11 bridges from Fullerton to Cornelia.



## On the Bi-Level

Published by Metra's Media Relations Department. Send letters, questions or feedback to On the Bi-Level, Metra, 547 W. Jackson, Chicago IL, 60661-5717. Or e-mail [onthebilevel@metrarr.com](mailto:onthebilevel@metrarr.com).

We can't guarantee all letters will be printed or answered. Please keep letters to less than 200 words and include your first name, hometown and what line you ride. (Names are not required but strongly encouraged.) We reserve the right to edit letter for length and grammar.

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## SOUNDING BOARD

Got a question? We've got an answer

### LaSalle St. work

What is the project that is going on at LaSalle St. Station?

Albert

*You're probably talking about a city of Chicago project designed to make it easier to transfer between Metra trains and CTA buses. A parking lot at Congress and Financial Place is being turned into an intermodal transfer center. It will include a bus turnaround, covered shelters, a lighted, landscaped plaza, bicycle racks, and an elevator and staircase up to our station. The project, now about 10 percent complete, should be done next spring.*

### Why Track 30?

Can you please tell me how much longer the Heritage Corridor will be loading and unloading on Track 30? It is really an inconvenience to be all the way down on this track, sometimes it even means missing your train, especially if there is a delay with any BN trains – then it is impossible to get through the “mob” of riders waiting for their trains to arrive.

Cynthia

*Heritage Corridor trains use Track 30 because that is the only one on the south side of Union Station that is connected to tracks on the north side. There is no room to service those trains in BNSF's yard south of Union Station, so we must send them to a yard north of Union Station for servicing.*

### Fair student fares?

I took the BNSF from LaGrange to Chicago with my 14-year-old son. I had to buy his ticket on the train and was



**This is a rendering of the intermodal transfer center that is being built at LaSalle St. Station. It will help riders transfer between the CTA and Metra.**

charged \$1.75 for one way. On the way home, I got in line to buy his ticket at the station, when I asked for the student fare, I was told the agent needed to see his student ID. I explained that he does not have a student ID, he will start high school this fall. Grade schools do not issue children school IDs. Then I was told he needed a letter from his school stating that he is a student. This is ridiculous! What is the point of asking children for IDs to prove that they are students? Aren't all children under the age of 16 in school?

Jocelyn

*We're sorry for the confusion but the ticket agent gave you the correct information.*

*Here's the deal: The intent of our student fare policy is to aid students who need to use the train to get to and from school and school-related activities. We get reimbursed by the state for some, but not all, of those costs. That's why the hours of that policy are limited to weekdays, and that's why we require an ID. Our policy is clearly spelled out on our web-*

*site and in our train schedules. The policy is not really intended for leisure trips for school-age children.*

*We do have a “Young Adult” fare that is available on weekends and selected holidays. Under that policy, children between 12 and 17 pay half price.*

### Sox specials coming?

With the Jones-Bronzeville station scheduled for completion later this year, is it possible Metra might institute special Sox game trains? The station is a mere quarter-mile from U.S. Cellular Field and gives fans another transit option when attending the game. For that matter, any plans for a Sox-Armour Square Station on the SouthWest Service Line on the other side of the stadium?

Kevin

*We'll assess the need for special White Sox trains after the station opens. As for a SWS stop, our long-range plans are to route SWS trains onto the Rock Island tracks in the vicinity of 75th St. So the new station being built could eventually serve both lines.*

# SOUND OFF

“...the snarky, snotty observations by Metra’s customers about fellow commuters ... offer some of the best free entertainment around.” - SouthtownStar, March 13, 2009

## Pack it up, or in

I have been riding Metra for years and find it the best way to get to work from the suburbs. But (you knew there would be a but), it drives me crazy when on RUSH HOUR trains, some shlub or shlubs bring enough luggage to fill a covered wagon! Come on folks, if you are too cheap to hire a cab to the airport or to barter passage shoveling coal on a tramp steamer for your African safari, at least stay off the crowded express trains full of people trying to get to work. Remember, it is us, the overworked, underpaid commuters who keep the economy from collapsing like a souffle so you can continue to accumulate more useless junk to take on your vacations. Bon voyage.

Brian

*Sorry, we understand your annoyance but can't entirely agree with your sentiments. We want people (including you) to use us to get to the airport, or anywhere else they need to go. Everyone should just remember to be considerate of their fellow riders.*

## Getting away with it

To the lady that gets on the train at Olympia Fields: The conductor may not see that you aren't really looking for your train ticket, but actually trying to get a free ride, BUT I DO! If they weren't so busy during the morning rush hours, they might actually have time to come back through the cars and remember to check and see if you found your PRETEND ticket. I've seen you do this several times and you look ridiculous. Shame on you!

“Maybelline”



## Is it too much to bear?

*If you see such chronic fare-dodgers, send us an e-mail with as much information as possible. We can try to track them down.*

## Playing footsie

I thought I had seen it all – feet on the seats, bare feet sticking through the seats, nail clipping, nose picking, all the rude behavior that has been mentioned in OTBL for years, but I have found a new one – feet on the top



of the seat! Glad it was a nice sunny day. Can you imagine the consequences of this on a rainy or snowy day?

Joanne

*Yes, we can. Because, unfortunately, we've seen it happen.*

## Not always obvious

This letter is to the lady at the Route 59 station who perceived my use of handicapped parking unnecessary. Ma'am, please educate yourself to the vari-

ety of medical conditions that legitimately warrant and justify the use of handicapped parking access – not all of which result in the use of a wheelchair or other visible assistance. I wouldn't wish my medical condition on anyone – not even an ignorant judgmental woman like you.

Dianna

*That's a good reminder that we should be willing to give people the benefit of the doubt.*

## What goes around

Seat-hogging and seat-saving is a chronic issue, but what I've observed recently on a UP-NW train really takes the cake!

There's a group of fortyish white-collar types who regularly stake out the first bench and row of handicapped seats behind the lavatory. These jerks have repeatedly refused to give up their seats (empty or occupied!) to people who qualify for them (loudly griping about their own “rights” to sit where they want without being “hassled” by “freaky” handicapped types!). One white-haired woman was forced to sit on the upper-level steps!

Yesterday, “their” seats were occupied, so this group com-

mandeered the handicapped seats across the aisle. Their last pal (he of the “freaky” comment) arrived to find no empty seat by his group. An elderly man across the aisle refused him a vacant handicapped seat, stating it was for his wife, to which this moron challenged, sarcastically, “Well, she's not here yet, is she?”

When the wife arrived and took her seat, I felt like cheering: it was the older, white-haired lady who'd been refused a seat the week before!

Karma, perhaps?

Anonymous

*Sure sounds like karma to us.*

## Pearl of a rider

Will you please publish my thank you in your Bi-Level so that hopefully the good samaritan will read my note and know how appreciative I am that he or she turned in my pearl necklace that apparently fell off of my neck, unbeknownst to me?

This occurred on Friday, April 23. I was on the 6:26 a.m. train out of Lisle. Upon arriving at my office I discovered my pearls were missing. I was convinced I would never see them again.

However later that day on the way to catch the train home I visited the Lost and Found office and to my extreme surprise a good and honest person turned them in.

I want to thank this person from the bottom of my heart and some of my faith in humanity was restored that day.

Nancy

*We do have nice riders, don't we? Even if they do occasionally put their feet on the seat, carry too much luggage or save a seat for their friends.*

## New Ravenswood Station part of UP North project

(Continued from Page 1)

press service will provide a shorter trip.

All UP North riders are urged to view the changes by going to [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com). Three open house forums are being held to inform riders about the changes (see box on Page 1).

The work on the bridges is being divided into two phases. Eleven bridges between Grace and Balmoral will be rebuilt between now and 2014. The new Ravenswood Station will be done during that phase. The remaining 11 bridges between Fullerton and Cornelia will be rebuilt from 2014 to 2018.

The bridges are being replaced because they are all more than 100 years old and can no longer be economically repaired and maintained. The new bridges will offer increased safety and will last for more than 100 years.

The work will be staged so that the western half of the bridges will be constructed first, leaving the eastern half of the bridges and the easternmost track (normally the inbound track) to handle inbound and outbound traffic. When the western half of each bridge is done, all trains will operate on the new western bridges and westernmost track (normally the outbound track) while the eastern half of each bridge is replaced.


Construction of the new Ravenswood Station, the only stop in the construction zone, will also begin on the west side. The work on the



**This is a preliminary rendering of the new Ravenswood Station, which will offer longer, partially covered platforms, warming shelters, improved lighting, landscaping, a ticket office, vendor space, ramps and stairs.**

west side will be completed in 2012 before work moves to the east side. Because the west platform will be closed during the first two years of the project, inbound and outbound passengers will share a single platform on the east side. A temporary platform big enough to handle the extra passengers will be built on the east side.

The new Ravenswood Station will be complete by 2014.



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