



# Construction season underway

Spring construction season is well underway, which means several large Metra projects have started or are about to start throughout the Chicago area.

The projects are aimed at augmenting service, improving the commuting experience for our riders or making sure that the rails, bridges and other parts of our infrastructure are safe and reliable. The projects are funded through a variety of sources, including the federal stimulus program or other federal sources, and state and RTA contributions.

Metra plans to undertake a different set of projects if and when money from the new state public works program becomes available. That program was passed in 2009 but the money is not yet flowing.

Here's a roundup of scheduled projects, including the location, the work being done, the expected completion date and other relevant information:

**Lovana S. "Lou" Jones/ Bronzeville Station:** This new station at 35th St. along the Rock Island Line is being built with \$4.9 million in federal money secured by U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush and \$6.8 million in stimulus dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The fully accessible station will feature heated ramps, heated stairways, two eight-car platforms and heated, illuminated warming shelters.

Construction is expected to be completed by the end of the year.



**The new Metra station at 35th St. along the Rock Island line is expected to be finished later this year.**

**Belmont Road:** Metra is entering the final phase of construction to replace the grade crossing near the Belmont Station on the BNSF line with an underpass that will route Belmont Road under the train tracks. The \$54.1 million project will increase safety, eliminating the risk of motorists being stuck on the tracks after the gates come down and reducing the risk of pedestrian accidents.

The work is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2011.

**UP West Project:** As part of a \$112 million project aimed at helping commuter and freight trains operate more smoothly and efficiently, 10 stations on the Union Pacific West Line will see changes. Those stations are Maywood, Melrose Park, Bellwood, Berkeley, Elmhurst, Villa Park, Glen Ellyn, College Ave., Winfield and Geneva.

While the changes vary by station, they include an enhanced train warning system, new

pedestrian paths to safely guide commuters away from the tracks, more pedestrian gates and fences and some longer platforms. The work will be done this year.

**Winnetka Station:** This project on the Union Pacific North Line includes rehabilitating the street-level depot, constructing new heated platform shelters, replacing the pedestrian bridge and six stairways, installing new elevators and vestibules, and reconstructing the platforms.

Construction is expected to be finished by the end of the year. The project is being funded with \$5 million in federal stimulus funds.

**119th St. Station:** Both platforms at this Rock Island Beverly Branch station are being renovated. The work includes surface renewal, new headers and new tactile strips. The project started in March and is expected to be completed this summer.

**LaGrange Stone Ave. Station:** The inbound and outbound

platforms at this BNSF Line station are being renovated. The work includes new truncated-dome tactile strips that meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The project began last fall and is expected to be completed by summer.

**Lockport Station:** The existing three-car platforms at this Heritage Corridor station are being renovated and extended to accommodate six-car trains. The project includes replacing deteriorated tactile surfaces on the platforms with new truncated-dome tactile strips. The station improvements also include lighting and a sidewalk connection north to 11th Ave. from the outbound platform and sidewalk. Fencing along the west side parking lot is also included.

The project began in April and is expected to be finished by the end of the year.

**Metra Electric bridges:** Bridges that carry the Metra Electric over 59th, 60th, 73rd and 76th streets in Chicago are being renovated. The project calls for removing and replacing deteriorated concrete, rehabilitating deteriorated steel and removing and replacing waterproofing material. The work began this spring and will be done by late summer.

**Coming later this year:** Work will start on renovation of the 211th St. Station on the Metra Electric Line and a flyover bridge on the Rock Island Line in Englewood that will ease conflicts between Metra and freight trains.



## 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

### Loading issues

Can you consider using platforms at Union Station during rush hour (especially morning rush) that allow for loading and unloading from different sides of the train? With passengers boarding and exiting the train on one narrow platform, the two-way traffic is slowed in both directions to the aggravation of inbound and outbound commuters alike.

Sharon

*Union Station is not set up that way. Only one platform serves each track. The other side is a service area that doesn't lead to the concourse.*

### Why skip the stop?

I ride the Milwaukee District North Line and the North Central Service and I'm wondering why trains on these lines skip the stop at Prairie Crossing during the morning and evening rush? This seems strange since Prairie Crossing is a "transfer station" and makes it difficult to find a train to transfer to without an extending wait. Also, are there any future plans to run trains on the North Central line on weekends?

Jim

*Certain trains skip the Prairie Crossing station because there is only a single track between Rondout and Fox Lake. When*

*the station was added, we had to have some rush hour trains skip the new stop because we have to clear that single track as soon as possible to keep all trains flowing smoothly. All NCS trains stop at Prairie Crossing, except for the semi-express train.*

*As for weekend service, our agreement with Canadian National does not allow us to run weekend trains on their rails. They want to keep it free for freight trains.*

### Left is right

Went to catch the train in Glencoe, but the train didn't come in on the track I anticipated. Had to wait for the crossing gate to open, then had to scramble to the other platform, and nearly missed the train. The conductor seemed to think I should have known which track the train was going to be on. If you're going to do peculiar things like send the train up the left set of tracks instead of track on the right, you really ought to make an announcement or something, instead of assuming everyone will know what you are doing.

Anonymous

*That wasn't a one-time event. All trains on the three Union Pacific lines run on the left, instead of the right, all the time. That's the way they were built more than 100 years ago by the precursor*

*to the Chicago & North Western. UP retained that operation when they purchased the C&NW several years back. All the stations have signs that indicate which platforms are for trains to Chicago and which platforms are for trains from Chicago.*

### Save on fares

Leon was asking you how to save money on his monthly ticket (April). I cannot believe you did not request him to check with his employer about getting pretax transit vouchers.

Linda

*You're right, we should have. The RTA Transit Benefit Fare Program lets transit riders make pre-tax payroll deductions to pay for their trips - up to \$230 a month. You save money because the funds are deducted from your paycheck before taxes are taken out. See [www.lesstaxingcommute.com](http://www.lesstaxingcommute.com) for more info.*

### I heard a rumor

I heard that Metra is planning on deleting the Des Plaines 8:12 a.m. stop from UP Northwest train No. 630. If this is true, then it is just absurd! Des Plaines commuters have so few express trains. Why eliminate the one we have?

Carolyn

*You heard wrong. We have no such plans.*

## Metra's Title VI Policy

In accordance with Metra's responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and pursuant to 49 CFR 21.9 (d), it is Metra's goal to ensure that no one is denied participation in, or denied the benefits of, or is otherwise discriminated against in the provision of public transportation by commuter rail because of race, color, or national origin.

Metra is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 49 CFR 21.9 (d).

Any information regarding Metra's Title VI policy/procedures can be requested from Metra's Office of DBE Administration.

Metra has established a Title VI complaint procedure for anyone who believes he or she has been discriminated, against in violation of this policy. Complaints related to Title VI can be filed with Metra's Office of DBE Administration at (312) 322-6323.

# 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

## Unightly outside

This response is to “Clean Up Your Mess” Joe who, in the May issue, complained that “...people are NOT keeping their lawns and property neat enough to my liking.” I usually read something that gives me a chuckle, but Joe took the cake. What makes him think Metra can do anything about property that doesn’t belong to Metra? So, here’s a few suggestions for him: a) sit on the other side of the aisle and look at whatever the view is over there, b) do as Metra suggested and look at your wonderful fellow passengers, c) read a book, d) create yourself a new job by getting off the train and going door-to-door in the area that’s not to your liking and offer to beautify their lawn, and/or e) see a psychiatrist, because you definitely have issues.

Vicki

*We still think he should look at his fellow passengers. Except some of them, as the next letter shows, can be annoying, too.*

## Annoying inside

I’ve been riding various lines of Metra for over 20 years and have seen it all but I think the three things that annoy me most are: 1) clipping your fingernails on the train ... I mean REALLY?! 2) Taking your shoes off and putting your funky feet on the seat and not having the decency to remove them when another passenger sits down. 3) Lastly, women (I have never seen a man do this) who “pop” their gum. OK, do you have ANY idea how ignorant you look? First, in order to even accomplish this task you have to chew like a cow but some people act like



How many pops 'til Waukegan?

they’re going for a world record of how many pops they can get before their stop. Don’t think I’m talking about you? I am. You’re aggravating EVERYONE in the car because that annoying sound travels!!

Angela

*Maybe we should publish a pops-per-mile conversion so you can compute how far you have to go based on the noises your fellow commuters are making.*

## Not musically inclined

What is supposed to be a quiet early morning ride north to the suburbs on the UP North line on weekdays has been wrecked by some musical wannabes! One young man boards with his headphones on and proceeds to hum and even sing for all to hear as he rocks in his seat. The other is a middle-aged guy who thinks it’s okay to tune his guitar and play a few chords - nonstop for an hour - as the train speeds on. This is an annoyance and distraction and yet as often as I have witnessed one of the other forcing their bad music on the entire car, the conductors notice and do not-

ing. Can’t they enforce the rules? I move cars every time.

Patty

*OK, all you hummers and strummers out there, knock it off. Metra is not American Idol.*

## Sign your name

On May 4, I found a brand-spanking new monthly A to F pass for the Rock Island line (Mokena), complete with CTA Link-up. However, the user had neglected to sign the back or even put a contact phone number, so the best I could do was return it to my Metra station where the response was, “What do you want us to do if there isn’t a name on the back?” By my calculations, some poor guy (the ticket was stamped “M”) was out around \$170 for want of putting contact information on the back of his pass (or even keeping a business card in the pass wallet). I felt so bad for the guy that I thought I should write in and remind people that one small, simple act can help reunite you with your monthly pass and avoid a costly loss.

Kathleen

*That’s a great reminder. We actually heard from a guy who lost exactly such a pass on the same day you found it. But since it wasn’t signed, he was out of luck. And he wasn’t happy with our policy of not refunding for lost or stolen tickets, even though he could prove he bought one. We’re not trying to be harsh, but we view the pass like the bank views money: You wouldn’t expect your bank to give you another \$100 if you lost that amount, even if you could prove that you withdrew it the day before. So please, monthly pass users, sign your name and include a way to contact you. You fellow riders are nice people (mostly, even if some of them are annoying). Just read the next letter.*

## Thanks to kind riders

I have been reading the Sound Off section for years and have been amazed at all the things people complain about and all the ridiculous things people do on the train. I would like to talk about the exact opposite. I want to give a big shout out to those commuters who have been so very nice to me. I returned to work three months after major, major spinal surgery and struggled on and off the train in my back brace. Commuters, both male and female, helped me to sit down in a seat, and helped me up when I got to my station, they helped me put my coat or take it off, AND they gave up their seats so I could sit down. To all those smashing wonderful commuters who take the Aurora express train stopping at Route 59 and Naperville, THANK YOU!

Tricia

*And that’s a good way to close out this month’s issue.*

## Spring Travel Notes

### Family Fares extended to weekdays

Metra will extend its popular "Weekend Family Fares" program to include weekdays, starting Monday, June 14, through Labor Day. Normally available only on weekends and holidays, "Family Fares" allow up to three children under age 12 to ride free with a fare-paying adult. Families can realize further additional savings with Metra's \$7 Weekend Pass for unlimited Saturday/Sunday rides, or 10-Ride tickets, which can be used in conjunction with Family Fares.

### Metra honored for employee safety

Metra has once again been honored for its employee safety record, winning a silver medal in the E.H. Harriman Memorial Awards for 2009. The Harriman Award, named after Edward H. Harriman, a pioneer in railroading, is given annually to the top three railroads in each of four classes with the best employee safety records for the previous year. This year's honor marks the 12th time since Metra's formation in 1984 that it has been so recognized. Metra has received more Harriman Awards than all other passenger railroads in the nation combined. Metra also was awarded a Certificate of Commendation for showing gains in employee safety improvements over a three-year period and the most improvement between 2008 and 2009.

### Ride Metra to Ravinia

The 2010 concert season at Ravinia will run from Thursday, June 3 through Tuesday, September 7. On dates of scheduled weekday evening concerts, regularly scheduled trains will provide service to Ravinia Park. A special \$6 round-trip pass will be available for the 5:50, 6:00 and 6:44 p.m. departures from the Ogilvie Transportation Center in downtown Chicago. On dates of scheduled evening weekend concerts, the Ravinia Special will depart Ogilvie at 5:35 p.m. A return train to Chicago will depart approximately 15 minutes after the concert is over. Due to early concert times, the Ravinia Special will not run on the following Sundays: July 11 and July 25. In addition, the park is closed on July 4th. However, on Labor Day, Sept. 6, the Park is open and the Ravinia Special will operate.

### Alcohol restrictions for Blues Fest, Taste

To prevent disorderly conduct, alcoholic beverages and glass containers are banned on Metra trains on certain days. In June and July, restrictions will be in place for Blues Fest, June 11-13, and the Taste of Chicago, June 25-July 4. See [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com) for details. Anyone who is visibly inebriated will not be permitted onboard and anyone causing a disturbance will be removed from the train and subject to arrest. Unruly passengers will not be tolerated.



Summer Sizzles at NLU.  
Classes Start June 28th.

Teacher Preparation  
Graduate Education  
Social Sciences  
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Attend an Open House

Saturday, June 12, 2010 • 10:00am-1:00pm  
at Chicago, Lisle and Wheeling campuses.  
Learn more at [www.nlu.edu/openhouse](http://www.nlu.edu/openhouse).

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