



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.

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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Got a question? We've got an answer

Going to the dogs

It seems like many people enjoy the pictures on the train of the Metra security dogs. Any chance you can print them on the monthly tickets?

Jan

Right now we're committed to using that space for the winners of our annual Safety Poster contest. But those posters are on our website, and see Page 1 for more on our lovable dogs.

Let's go fly a kite

I ride the Metra Electric and have just tried to use one of the new format printed schedules that fold out to the size of a road map. I take it you're somewhat familiar with the windy streets downtown? Have you ever tried to read one of these while walking? I'm curious what the thought process was, if any.

Al

We're sorry you don't like the new format, but the general response to it has been positive. The benefits are that the font size is bigger, the entire day's

sked is on one page and the new format is cheaper to produce than the old one. On all the other lines, we're able to fit the "To Chicago" and "From Chicago" on one page, which also makes viewing easier. We can't do that on the Electric because there are too many trains, a problem that riders of other lines probably wish they had.

Let's make a deal

My money is tight. How can I cut the cost of buying a monthly ticket from zone C to downtown Chicago? How about making a ticket Monday through Friday only, no weekend rides, and what would the cost of this ticket be for the month?

Leon

We've been asked that before, because many people only use their monthly pass on weekdays. Our response has been that the monthly pass is already significantly discounted. For instance, a one-way fare for Zone C is \$3.50. So it would cost \$7 a day round trip, multiplied by about 22 weekdays a month, or \$154. But a Zone C monthly is \$90.45.

We can't afford to make it much cheaper than that.

A scheduled gap

On all of the UP lines, there is a two hour gap in trains in each direction, every weekday. Inbound, the gap is around midday, and outbound it's around 8:30 to 10:30 in the morning. Why?

Garry

We insert that window into our schedules between rush periods to perform routine track maintenance.

Union Station work

Can someone please have a chat with the person who continues to route two morning incoming trains into Union Station on the same platform?

Patti

We have received a lot of complaints about platform assignments at Union Station over the last few months. All were the result of temporary changes necessary because of the city's Jackson St. viaduct project. The good news is that track assignments are back to normal now.

BNSF riders, we need your cooperation

Attention BNSF riders: We need your cooperation.

You want our trains to leave Union Station on time. We want our trains to leave Union Station on time. But we've had a problem lately that makes it hard for us to do that. Here's how you can help:

Many times at departure time there still is a line of people hoping to get on the train. We could wait until that line disappears, of course, but then the train would never leave, on time or at all, because late-arrivers would keep showing up. At a certain

point – a point determined by our printed schedule – our crews have to decide to close the doors. If you're in line and you see the doors closing, that is a sign for you to wait for the next train. It's not a sign for you to sharpen your elbows, lower your shoulders and push your way on board.

We hope our riders understand that we're not trying to be mean. We just can't wait forever. It's not fair to the people already on that train and it's not fair to people on other trains that could also be affected by the first train's

tardy departure. And it's not safe for riders to try to press their way onto a train as the doors are closing.

If you're trying to board a train at the last moment, remember: the last car of the train is going to be the most crowded. You might have better luck getting on if you aim for the middle cars. But if you hear the announcement that the doors are closing and you're on the wrong side of those closing doors, you're too late. Wait for the next one, please pretty please. Thanks.