

Fall Travel Notes

Metra Board Approves 2011 Budget

The Metra Board of Directors on Nov. 12 approved a 2011 budget that includes \$634.2 million for operations and a \$407.5 million capital program. The budget calls for no fare increases or service cuts in 2011. Lower-than-projected ridership and transportation sales tax receipts, coupled with higher insurance and maintenance costs, forced Metra to transfer \$35 million from its 2010 capital program and \$25 million from its 2011 capital program to operations for use on preventive maintenance in 2011. The agency also will continue to delay filling vacancies and to combine job functions to reduce costs in 2011. The Metra budget now goes to the RTA for its review. The RTA will hold a public hearing on the region's 2011 budget at 6 p.m. on Dec. 6 in the RTA Board Room, 175 W. Jackson, Suite 1650, Chicago. The RTA will also hold "webinars" on the budget at noon on Dec. 7 and at 2 p.m. on Dec. 8. Register at www.RTChicago.com. The RTA is scheduled to vote on the budget at its Dec. 16 meeting.

Holiday Family Fares expanded

Avoid congested roads by letting Metra take you and your family to your destination quickly, comfortably and inexpensively this Holiday season. Metra's Family Fares program will once again be expanded to all weekdays from Dec. 20 through Dec. 31. Currently, Family Fares are applicable only on holidays and weekends. With Family Fares, up to three children 11 and under ride free when accompanied by a fare-paying adult.

Quiet cars to debut

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We had a lot of suggestions about how to enforce this policy. On the extreme end, some of you suggested using cell-phone blocking technology (we're pretty sure that's illegal) and one person suggested tasing violators (we're pretty sure that would be illegal too). But we hope this rule will be largely enforced by peer pressure and conductor intervention when necessary.

Many riders told us that having the policy in place will empower them to ask loud passengers to be quiet, whereas they now can't cite a rule limiting noise. As one passenger wrote: "I would have no problem asking a rider to cease a phone conversation in a quiet car; however, today I feel it's not my place to do so because there aren't any regulations against making calls, speaking loudly, etc."

That said, we ask our riders to be patient and polite with violators. There's going to be a learning curve here at first, and later on we suspect that those violating the policy will most often be occasional riders who are not familiar with train etiquette. We also intend to give our conductors special business-card-size notices that they can discreetly hand to noisy violators.

We would also like to address a concern raised by many riders, and that is their fear that designating some cars as quiet will only make the remaining cars a noisy free-for-all. We hope that doesn't happen. Common courtesy should still apply in the other cars, and everyone should always be considerate of their fellow riders no matter where they are sitting.



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Winter term starts
January 10.

Attend an
Open House
at our
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Wednesday, December 8, 4:00pm—7:00pm
Saturday, December 11, 10:00am—1:00pm

- Academic Advisors will be on hand to review your credits.
- Get on Track to Prepare for the Basic Skills Test: the Center for Academic Development will present a short (15 min) overview of resources for basic skills preparation at 5:00pm and 6:00pm on Wednesday and 10:30am and 11:30am on Saturday.

RSVP call 888.327.4206 or go to
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