



## Metra riders and workers pitch in

Metra collected more than 3,000 toys and about \$3,500 in donations on December 11, when it conducted its first Toys for Tots drive in conjunction with the U.S. Marines and PODS of Chicago. Workers from Metra's Western Avenue Mechanical Department pose above with toys they donated and collected, while at right one of our generous riders drops a toy in a collection box at Union Station. We hope to make this an annual event. Many thanks to all of you who shared this year.



# Report highlights need for capital funding

A recent study from the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University has sounded the alarm about inadequate capital spending at Metra, the CTA and Pace, adding another voice to the chorus of advocates for greater investment in public transportation.

Metra has been saying for several years that it faces a huge capital deficit. Just to keep our system in a state of good repair will require an estimated \$7.4 billion over the next 10 years, according to a study done for the RTA. Metra relies mostly on federal and state grants for its capital budget and we optimistically can expect about \$2.6 billion in funding during that time.

The DePaul study, "Tending to Transit: the Benefits and Costs of Bringing Public Transport in the Chicago Region into Good Repair," provides new support for that assessment. The report

by Dr. Joseph P. Schwieterman, Dr. Laurence F. Audenaerd and Marisa Schulz concludes that there is "strong justification – and urgent need – for greater capital investment" in the region's mass transit system.

The study notes that the demand for public transit has been growing since a downturn in the recent recession. At the same time, public support for transit investment remains higher than support for highway investment.

And it found transit investment yields positive returns. Each dollar invested in transit generates \$1.21 to \$1.90 in benefits, such as direct labor effects, regional mobility effects, household savings from reduced auto usage, a reduction in accidents and improved air quality.

That doesn't count other benefits such as encouraging more physical activity and the role of transit in tourism and the city's image.

Transit also contributes positively to property values and employment. Proximity to major transit corridors contributes 5 to 20 percent to property values, and bringing transit into a state of good repair also provides about \$1.5 billion annually by giving employers access to a larger and more qualified workforce.

Most critically, the study found that the condition of the regional system has been deteriorating due to chronic underfunding. "The recent downturn in investment has left the system's needs, adjusted for inflation, approximately 20 percent greater than they were just two years ago," it said. The backlog of capital projects that has resulted from funding shortfalls creates a growing risk of declining system performance – and unless the region makes additional capital investment, ridership will begin to fall. The deterioration of

transit also will lead to increased costs on highway and transit users, the report said.

The report recommends that the region use the strong support for transit to develop policies that bring the system into a state of good repair. It says the region should build stakeholder awareness of the capital backlog and of the risks of continued underfunding. And it says we should develop a predictable funding stream that provides a minimum of \$2 billion in funding annually over several years.

"The instability of existing funding sources and the rising capital project backlogs highlight the inadequacy of current funding arrangements and the urgency of larger, more reliable, and more predictable monetary streams," the report said.

To read more about this report and about Metra's capital funding needs, please go to [www.metrail.com/SOGR](http://www.metrail.com/SOGR).