



## CLIFF NOTES

# Dashboard to show how we're doing

## On-Time Performance – February 2013

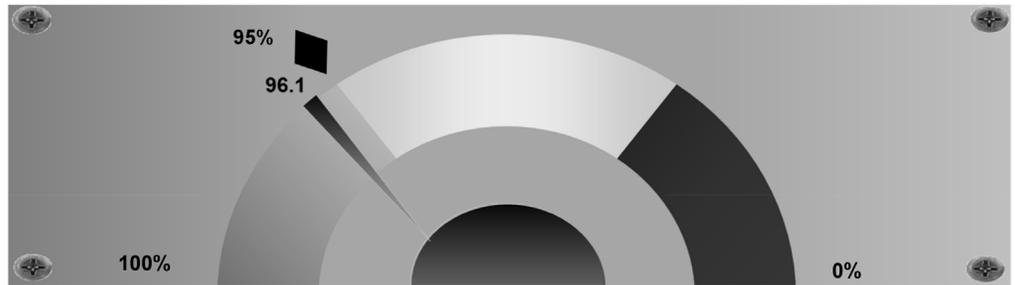
Think for a minute about the dashboard on your car. It's designed to give you critical information in a simple, easy format, so that with one quick glance you can check your speed, your engine temperature, your engine's revolutions per minute, even the time of day. It can't be complicated because it can't distract you from keeping your eyes on the road.



**Alex Clifford**  
Metra CEO

That's the idea behind a "dashboard" we have been developing. In management speak, it will show key performance indicators, or KPIs. In simple terms,

it will give you a quick, easy way to see how the Metra "engine" is doing in a variety of important



- On Track
- Below But Can Recover
- Significantly Under Goal

areas – just like your car's dashboard. And the new dashboard will tell us what areas need more

attention – just like the "check engine" light on your car.

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## CHAIR CHAT

# A different kind of green for Earth Day

If you saw "green" in the same sentence with "Earth Day," you would more than likely think it refers to being green – being environmentally conscious and Earth-friendly. Certainly Metra and the region's other transportation and



**Brad O'Halloran**  
Chairman

planning agencies like to think of ourselves as green by that definition.

But when we all gathered for Earth Day last month at an annual Transportation Summit, our agenda was dominated by a different kind of green – the monetary kind. More specifically, our meeting brainstormed ways to address the enormous financial challenges we all face to repair and upgrade our existing infrastructure. If you're a regular

reader of this newsletter, you already know about our huge, unmet capital needs, but what you may not realize is that Metra is not alone, and that the needs across the region are significant and daunting.

The summit featured representatives of Metra, the CTA, RTA, Pace, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Tollway. Together, we preliminarily esti-

mate the five-year capital needs for northeastern Illinois at more than \$25 billion.

That's a big number, a big problem, certainly not one that lends itself to easy solutions. Among the ideas suggested at the summit were an increase in gas taxes, some sort of tax based on the number of vehicle miles travelled, some sort of congestion pricing, expanding the sales tax base and some sort of combi-

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## 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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# SouthWest Service emerged from old Wabash Railroad

*This is a highly condensed version of "Follow the Flag: Chicago's Metra 'Wabash Extension,'" by Paul Burgess, from the Spring 2013 edition of First & Fastest, published by the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society.*

In 2006, the town of Manhattan, Ill., had long been off railroading's beaten path. The farm village still boasted just two traffic lights and a quiet, weatherworn section of ex-Wabash Railroad mainline that saw only sporadic use. Passenger service had ended long before, and Manhattan's tiny depot was rapidly succumbing to the elements. But on Jan. 30, 2006, a stainless steel streamliner led by modern diesels once again prowled the Wabash main, bringing passengers to Manhattan on scheduled commuter service for the first time since 1971!

This was not a return of the Wabash back from railroading's graveyard. Instead, Metra had started a new commuter service on 12 miles of line that soon became known as the "Wabash Extension."

The tracks over which Metra operates the SouthWest Service (SWS) date to the mid-to-late 19th century and were built as the Wabash mainline running north from Strawn, Ill., to a connection with the Chicago & Western Indiana near downtown. From there, the road's passenger trains ran into Dearborn Street Station. The track, laid in 1880, was a relatively late addition to the Wabash system, an attempt to capture freight and passenger business headed to the Windy City.

The Wabash's origins date to 1834 as the Northern Cross Railroad. In 1858, the Toledo and Illinois was chartered, and from there, what eventually

emerged as the Wabash went through the mergers, bankruptcies and changes of ownership that characterize late 19th century railroading. Proxy control (via stock ownership) by the Pennsylvania Railroad came in 1927, and in 1941 the Pennsy solidified its grip, though the Wabash remained more or less independent. Finally, in 1964, the Wabash merged with the Norfolk & Western, and eventually, following the 1982 merger of N&W and Southern, the Norfolk Southern (NS).

Wabash existed as a "paper railroad" as late as 1991, when NS finally merged it completely out of existence. The mainline out of Chicago ran south to Bement, Ill., where it joined Wabash's east-west mainline across south-central Illinois. A 1990 trackage rights agreement with nearby Illinois Central (since 1999, Canadian National) allowed NS to operate over one of the IC's secondary lines between Gibson City and Gilman, then on the IC mainline to Chicago. This allowed NS to abandon the Wabash main between Gibson City and Manhattan. NS maintained ownership of the 41-mile portion of the line that ran from Chicago south to Manhattan. The primary reason for the railroad's continued existence was Metra's operation over the northern part of the line.

At one time, the line had been home to famous Wabash passenger trains like the "Banner Blue," "Blue Bird," and "Midnight Limited." Commuter service appears to have begun as early as 1893, operating as far south as Orland Park. By the 1930s, service on the line declined but the Wabash did continue to operate a small commuter service to Chicago: the "Chicago Express" ran north

in the morning and the "Decatur Express" rolled south in the evening. Following the N&W merger in 1964, this service was cut back to serve just the north end of the line, terminating in Orland Park.

In 1976, the RTA began to assume control of the various privately owned commuter services. At the same time, the line's Chicago terminus was moved from Dearborn Station to Union Station via a new connection at 21st St. RTA subsidies to N&W began in 1978. Metra, which assumed control of commuter operations from the RTA in 1984, took over full operation of the service in 1993. The line became known as the SouthWest Service. NS still owns the track but leases it to Metra.

By the mid-1990s, Metra had extended service from the line's original commuter terminus at 143rd St. to 179th St. To add more capacity, Metra decided to extend service south approximately 12 miles to Manhattan. At the same time, track and stations north of Manhattan would be upgraded to handle almost double the traffic from 16 to 30 trains daily. In October 2000, the extension project obtained final funding approval. Total program costs worked out to slightly more than \$198 million.

Metra planned to nearly double service on the line, requiring a significant upgrade of signaling systems as well as some additional track and sidings. The portion south of Orland Park also needed upgrades to accommodate Metra's 79 mph operating speeds.

Metra began the expanded service in 2006, marking the first passenger trains to Manhattan in more than 30 years. Starting in March 2009, service on the line was extended to Saturdays as well.

## Metra workers hailed for safety commitment

Two Metra workers who have been instrumental during our 47th St. Diesel Shop's remarkable, unblemished safety record were recognized last month by the American Association of Railroads at its Railroad Safety Leadership Forum.

Carman Steve East and Machinist Larry Evans serve as safety captains at the diesel facility, which is nicknamed the "Rocket House." That facility's 43 workers have now gone more than six years without an injury.

"We believe that these two men serve as model employees, with a commitment towards safety for Metra, their peers and the industry," said Hilary Konczal, director of safety for Metra.

The forum recognizes exemplary team safety by employees from AAR's member railroads.



### Students tour huge Metra bridge project

About two dozen Engineering students from the Rail Transportation and Engineering Center at the University of Illinois took a lengthy tour last month of Metra's Englewood Flyover project, a complex bridge being built in Chicago's Englewood community on the South Side. The \$141 million bridge will separate Metra's Rock Island line tracks from a set of freight railroad tracks owned by Norfolk Southern and used by freight trains and Amtrak intercity passenger trains from points east. By separating the two sets of tracks, the project will eliminate conflicts between trains, reduce delays, improve air quality and eliminate noise from idling trains. In addition to crossing the NS tracks, the bridge also must span the Dan Ryan Expy.

## Metra to help Red Line riders during project

Metra will be offering a combined fare product with the CTA and Pace and will be modifying the schedule of some of its Metra Electric line trains in order to assist CTA riders during the upcoming five-month shutdown of the Red Line on the South Side.

The CTA on May 19 will close a 10-mile stretch of the Red Line from the Cermak/Chinatown stop to the 95th/Dan Ryan stop for five months in order to completely reconstruct the tracks and improve the stations. The CTA has arranged for extensive alternative service for Red Line riders that relies on the Green Line and shuttle buses. For details about the project and the CTA's alternative service, please go to [www.transitchicago.com/redsouth](http://www.transitchicago.com/redsouth).

For CTA Red Line riders at the southernmost end of the line, the Metra Electric and Rock Island lines may also be alternatives. The Metra Electric line runs to the east of the Red Line and transports riders to Van Buren Station and Millennium Station downtown. The Rock Island line runs to the west of the Red Line and transports riders to LaSalle St. Station downtown.

To assist Red Line riders and encourage them to use a combination of CTA, Metra and/or Pace, the three agencies are offering a joint fare product that will be sold through the existing CTA retail network (Jewel, Walgreens, etc.) in the vicinity of the Red Line.

The prepackaged fare product will include a CTA or CTA/Pace

5-day pass and a Metra 10-ride ticket:

- CTA will issue a 5-day pass to be sold with Metra Zone B or Zone C 10-ride tickets. The price for the combined fare product will be \$52 for Zone B and \$64 for Zone C.

- CTA and Pace will issue a 5-day pass to be sold with Metra Zone D 10-ride tickets. The price for the combined fare product will be \$74.

To further assist Red Line riders, Metra will change flag stops to regular stops at five Metra Electric stations located in proximity to the Red Line for two inbound trains, Nos. 100 and 102, during the weekday morning rush hour, and two outbound trains, Nos. 227 and 241, in the weekday evening rush hour.

Those stations are: 63rd St., 75th St. (Grand Crossing), 79th St. (Chatham), 87th St. (Woodruff) and 95th St. (Chicago State University). Trains will automatically stop at regular stops, but they will stop at flag stops only when passengers are visible on the platform or when passengers on the train inform a crew member that they want to get off there.

Several Saturday trains also will make regular stops, instead of flag stops, at those five stations. Those are Nos. 100, 102, 210, 227, 233, 235 and 241.

Metra will be monitoring ridership demands closely during the Red Line project to determine if further adjustments are needed.

Full details are available at [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com).

# Spring Travel Notes

## Carlson joins Metra Board

Norman Carlson was appointed to the Metra Board of Directors last month by the chairman of the Lake County Board, replacing James C. LaBelle. Mr. Carlson spent 34 years with Arthur Andersen Co., being appointed as the North American Rail Industry Head in 1985 and the Worldwide Managing Partner of the Transportation Practice in 1990. He served in that capacity until exercising an early retirement option in 2000. He then formed Carlson Consulting International, serving as a short-term executive in challenging situations. He is a member of the Business Advisory Committee to the Transportation Center at Northwestern University, pro bono advisor to the City of Lake Forest on transportation matters and managing editor of *First & Fastest*, a publication about rail passenger service in Chicago. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois with a bachelor's degree in accountancy and is a certified public accountant.

## Dine at MetraMarket this weekend

Take a ride on Metra and discover the essence of a true dining experience at Ovie Bar & Grill in MetraMarket at the Ogilvie Transportation Center this weekend. Enjoy Ovie's contemporary, relaxed dining room, including a 40-seat full service bar, for a casual dining experience. With the opening of the outdoor patio, Ovie has created the ideal Saturday getaway in the heart of the developing Fulton River District. Sit back, relax and enjoy half-priced bottles of wine, available every Saturday, while indulging in their well-crafted menu, featuring items such as their signature smoked corned beef reuben, Judith Point calamari and their Kentucky bourbon glazed double pork chop. For spring, Ovie is offering rhubarb-inspired seasonal specials, such as their spring flatbread with rhubarb, prosciutto and baby arugula and shaved Grana Padano. Make Ovie the go-to destination for your weekend dining.

## Green

(Continued from Page 1)

nation of those ideas and others. We talked about the pros and cons of every idea and we talked about how realistic some of them are or aren't.

Believe me, none of us likes

the idea of higher taxes or new fees. On the other hand, none of us likes the idea of our public infrastructure falling into such disrepair that it would be more costly in the long run to ignore the problem. We didn't coalesce around any one proposal, other than the idea that our chances of successfully addressing the issue

will be greatly aided by presenting a united front and clearly communicating our needs.

One final note: on the issue of congestion pricing, we heard an informative speech by Dr. Jonas Eliasson, the director of the Centre for Transport Studies at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden, who shared

some insights from Stockholm's successful implementation of a congestion pricing strategy. One interesting takeaway is that public opinion was against the plan before it started but quickly turned favorable after it was launched and the benefits were realized. Is there a lesson there for Chicago?

## Dash

(Continued from Page 1)

Historically, Metra is not an agency that tracked KPIs or displayed them to its board, riders or the public. But I have been introducing staff to the concept since I started here two years ago and we have now refined them enough that we have started to display them.

Let me give you an example. One of the areas that is important to you as a rider is the on-time performance of our trains. We've designed a speedometer-like graphic that will show you whether we have met our monthly goal of having 95 percent or more of our trains arrive on time. If we are meeting or exceeding that goal, the dial on the new graphic will point to a green area indicating we are "On Track." But if we are falling

short, the dial will point to a yellow area indicating "Below But Can Recover" or a red area indicating "Significantly Under Goal." We also made a separate bar graph that shows the on-time performance of each line.

Other dashboard graphics will have similar designs. The idea is to highlight an important area, identify a goal that makes sense based on industry standards, historical trends or other criteria and then show whether we are meeting that goal or whether we are falling short.

We may use the speedometer graphic, a bar graph, another graph or a combination, and we may show our monthly progress, our year-to-date progress or both.

Some of the other areas that we are proposing to illustrate graphically include the number of mechanical delays, number of freight delays, number of

customer complaints per 100,000 boardings, the average time it takes for us to fill vacancies and our employee injury ratio. In each case the graphic shows how we are doing in meeting the goal we selected.

We have been presenting these graphics to our Board of Directors each month and asking for their feedback and direction. For now you can view them by going to our website, [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com), clicking on the "Newsroom" tab at the top and then clicking on the board meeting PowerPoint presentations. Samples of these graphics are near the end of those presenta-

tions starting with the February meeting. We soon will create a KPI dashboard tab on our website so you can quickly link to the most recent monthly report, take a quick glance at our dashboard and check on our status and progress.

I welcome any comments about how we are presenting this information or choosing our goals. And, of course, I'd like to hear any suggestions you might have for areas that you think deserve our dashboard treatment. Just send them to [onthebilevel@metrarr.com](mailto:onthebilevel@metrarr.com).

You can follow me on Twitter @MetraCEO.

## Contact Metra

If you have complaint or compliment, or a service issue or any other issue, we want to hear from you. You can call a Passenger Service Representative at (312) 322-6777 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays) or send email to [metrarail\\_feedback@metrarr.com](mailto:metrarail_feedback@metrarr.com).