

Metra ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, November 2009



Budget Public Hearing Schedule

**Wednesday, Nov. 4
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

DuPage County
Clarendon Hills
Village Board Room
1 N. Prospect Avenue
Clarendon Hills

McHenry County
Woodstock City Hall
City Council Chambers
121 W. Calhoun St.
Woodstock

Suburban Cook (North)
Arlington Heights
Village Hall
Village Board Room
33 S Arlington Heights Rd.
Arlington Heights

Suburban Cook (South)
Homewood Village Hall
Village Board Room
2020 Chestnut Road
Homewood

**Thursday, Nov. 5
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

City of Chicago
Metra
547 W. Jackson Blvd.
13th Floor Board Room
Chicago

Lake County
Grayslake Village Hall
Village Board Room
10 South Seymour
Grayslake

Kane County
Geneva City Hall
City Council Chamber
22 S. First Street
Geneva

Will County
Joliet City Hall
West Wing
Conference Room
150 W. Jefferson Street
Joliet

Metra releases \$613m budget

Despite tough economic times and base sales tax receipts that have eroded to a 10-year low, the Metra Board of Directors has unveiled a \$613 million operating budget that calls for no changes in commuter rail service in 2010 and includes some revisions to its fare structure.

Metra is grateful to our elected officials in Springfield, first for addressing its operating needs by increasing the regional transportation sales tax last year and then for addressing its capital needs by approving a public works bond program earlier this year. Those efforts are greatly assisting Metra in balancing its budget and investing in its infrastructure.

The new fare structure includes adjustments in one-way fares and the first change in the cost of weekend passes since the program began in 1991. ***But the impact of the new fare structure on regular Metra riders will be limited, since most use 10-ride tickets and monthly passes and those fares won't change.***

"Any fare adjustment is difficult, particularly in today's economy, but we believe we are taking a responsible, targeted approach that is sensitive to the needs of our

One-way fares

Between downtown and the zone indicated:

Zone	2009	2010
A	\$2.15	\$2.25
B	\$2.35	\$2.50
C	\$3.35	\$3.50
D	\$3.80	\$4.00
E	\$4.30	\$4.50
F	\$4.75	\$5.00
G	\$5.15	\$5.50
H	\$5.65	\$6.00
I	\$6.10	\$6.50
J	\$6.60	\$7.00
K	\$7.05	\$7.50
M	\$8.05	\$8.50

passengers," said Metra Chairman Carole R. Doris.

Metra's new fare structure, which would start Feb. 1, 2010, is intended to encourage customers to use 10-ride tickets and monthly passes, which already offer a discount over the one-way fares. Those multiple-ride options are easier than ever to purchase, because Metra recently launched a new website that allows riders to buy 10-ride

tickets and monthly passes online with credit and debit cards.

To encourage riders to buy tickets at stations and over the Internet, Metra would increase the penalty for on-board purchases to \$5 from \$2. That penalty is not assessed on riders who board at stations where agents are not on duty.

One-way fares would increase about 6 percent, an average of about 30 cents a ticket. In order to simplify on-board fare collection, the increases have been rounded to the nearest quarter. (Please see the fare chart.) Weekend fares would increase to \$7 from \$5. This would be the first increase since the weekend fare program started in 1991.

Metra has adopted a variety of cost-containment measures that will save about \$4 million in administrative costs next year, including leaving about 150 positions unfilled, freezing management salaries and asking non-union employees to pay more for their health insurance.

Public hearings on the proposed budget and presentations to the boards of the six counties in Metra's service area will be held over the next few weeks. (See the schedules on this page.)

County Board Presentations

McHenry County Board
Tuesday, Nov. 3, 9 a.m.
County Board Room
667 Ware
Woodstock

Cook County Board
Wednesday, Nov. 4, 10 a.m.
County Board Room
118 N. Clark Street, 5th Floor
Chicago

Lake County Board
Tuesday, Nov. 10, 9 a.m.
County Board Room
18 N. County Street
Waukegan

DuPage County Board
Tuesday, Nov. 10, 7:30 p.m.
County Board Room
421 N. County Farm Road
Wheaton

Will County Board
Thursday, Nov. 19, 9:30 a.m.
County Board Room
302 N. Chicago Street
Joliet

Kane County Board
Tuesday, Dec. 8, 9:45 a.m.
County Board Room
719 Batavia Avenue, Building A
Geneva

SOUNDING BOARD

Got a question? We've got an answer

Bears service

Does the Metra Electric line still run the Bears extra trains before and after the games? If so, where is the information to get times for the trains running before the game?

Lynne

Yep, it's still running. The Metra Electric has added a "Bears Extra" train for all Sunday noon games, as well as the Sunday 3:15 p.m. and Sunday 7:20 p.m. kickoffs. Regular daily train service will serve the Monday, Dec. 28 game. For more info click on "Service Updates" at www.metrarail.com.

LaSalle St. painting

I've read that Metra has plans

to paint sections of LaSalle Street Station. Will this involve a change in color scheme?

Kyle

We're painting the steel, which is now unpainted. The color will be a familiar one to Chicago area residents – it will be "Bolt Brown," the same shade of brown that Chicago bridges are painted.

Loading problems

The 5:18 p.m. SouthWest Service out of Union Station has been hell to board. An Amtrak train arrives around 5 p.m. on the track next to the SWS train and hundreds of passengers are still unloading from the Amtrak when the Metra passengers begin arriving to board the 5:18.

It has been impossible to enter the tunnel and Metra passengers have no choice but to fight and push their way through or stand in the hallway entrance until it clears and by then the 5:18 has pulled out!

A.M.E.

We're sorry for the problems you're been having. Let us explain what's going on:

Amtrak owns and operates Union Station and we lease it from them. That Amtrak train is scheduled to arrive at 4:41 p.m. and SWS No. 827 is scheduled to depart at 5:18 p.m. When the Amtrak train is on time, it does not interfere with the Metra train. But when it's late, it's too difficult for Amtrak to rearrange track assignments in the middle

of rush hour. We will continue to follow up with Amtrak regarding the situation.

Why the honking?

I recently moved near the LaSalle Street Station and for the most part I have gotten used to the regular Metra trains running by my apartment. However, every weekend since I've been here, the trains have been honking on their way out of the station.

Melissa

There has been temporary track construction going on on weekends. In accordance with Federal Railroad Administration rules, the trains must sound their horns to protect workers near the rails.

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.

Board of Directors

Carole R. Doris
Chairman
DuPage County

Larry Huggins
Vice Chairman
Chicago

Edward W. Paesel
Director
Suburban Cook County

Jack Schaffer
Treasurer
McHenry County

Jack E. Partelow
Director
Will County

Arlene Mulder
Secretary
Suburban Cook County

Willis E. Pennington Jr.
Director
Cook County

Jim Dodge
Director
Suburban Cook County

Caryl J. Van Overmeiren
Director
Kane County

James C. LaBelle
Director
Lake County

William A. Widmer III
Director
Suburban Cook County

Philip A. Pagano
Executive Director

METRA PASSENGERS

Providing the safest, most secure travel environment is Metra's highest priority. Passengers can help keep Metra safe and secure by reporting unattended packages and suspicious activity. **Never assume someone else will make the call.**

**IF YOU SEE SOMETHING,
SAY SOMETHING**

**Metra Passengers Call
Metra Police 312-322-2800**

**Union Pacific Passengers Call
UP Police 888-877-7267**

**Burlington Northern Passengers Call
BN Police 800-832-5452**



Let's count on each other for a safe ride

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

Spitting image

After riding various Metra lines for the past 28 years, I thought I had seen it all. I’ve had my share of nail clippers, seat hogs, knees in my back, rude cellphone users, nail polish, strong cologne, nose pickers and many more. Last week on the Rock Island line I saw something new – a well-dressed man sat in the upper-row seats and proceeded to get out a brown paper bag and his bag of chew. He wadded up a bunch, loaded it into his mouth and proceeded for the rest of the ride to spit into his brown paper bag, reload with more chew and spit some more. Yuck!

L.S.
Rock Island

You’re right, that is a new and most unwelcome one. I suppose we should count ourselves lucky he had that paper bag.

Please, no ‘no hands’

Here’s a suggestion to certain riders. Please don’t put your tickets in your mouth while you’re going through your bags looking for something. Often I have seen this happen. Then the rider sticks the ticket in the holder or takes the ticket out of his/her mouth and then hands it to the poor conductor. Ick!

Anonymous
Wow, that’s one “Yuck” and one “Ick” and we’re just getting started...

Feet-on-seat etiquette

I know there is a policy regarding feet on the seat. Several people including myself are very respectable and use newspaper or a bag to prop our legs and feet as to not dirty the seat in front of



We can hear you now – and we don’t want to

An idea occurred to me after I couldn’t help overhearing a phone conversation on the SouthWest service today. How about a column devoted to funny, outrageous, odd, and weird conversations overheard on the train. Here’s what I heard today (edited):

“Guess what I had for lunch today. Yeah, I had some cheese fries. I wasn’t feeling that well today so I thought that would be a good choice. Somehow, eating cheese settles my stomach.”

We could call it “Someone’s Listening!” And then maybe the phone conversations would decrease? What do you think?

Carole

Great idea! How about it, riders? Send us any zany quotes picked up from when you’ve unintentionally and unavoidably eavesdropped on someone and we’ll print them next month. Send them to onthebilevel@metrarr.com.

us. Yes, I know we should not do it regardless, but those seats are most uncomfortable. However, can we address the increasing number of passengers that decide to forgo the aforementioned method and take off their shoes instead! Yuck, on more than one level. One passenger in boards train No. 1371 to Aurora. Kind sir, please keep your shoes on! We do not want to see your toes poking out of your socks! It is too early in the morning for this blatant display of disrespect.

Monica
BNSF

For those of you keeping score, it’s “Yucks” two, “Icks” one. Yucks win! But really, you know you shouldn’t put your feet on the seat even if you put a newspaper or bag there first.

Please be aware

I am six months pregnant and just walked up and down the aisles of two full Metra cars on the BNSF line and not one person offered to give me their seat. I finally had to climb up the stairs and sit sideways in the front seat. Even those in the seats marked for handicapped people

did not offer to move.

For those of you who are capable of standing or trying to find another seat, this is an opportunity to help someone who is not as physically able to get around as you. Think of your wives, sisters and mothers when they were pregnant. Would you have wanted them wandering around a moving train, climbing up stairs on that moving train and sitting uncomfortably sideways?

Kate

We suspect this is a case of riders being oblivious, not intentionally rude. In any case, it’s a good reminder to everyone to watch out for fellow passengers who might need a seat.

Backpack backers

To the “longtime rider” who hates backpacks [Oct, 2009]; I’m not sure briefcases are any better, and may be worse. In my line of work they are more or less de rigeur, and I’ve inadvertently jostled (and been jostled-by) fellow passengers with them.

Keith

If you are getting bumped by my backpack it can only mean that you are standing behind me or following me TOO CLOSELY. You can solve your problem of getting bumped by people wearing backpacks by respecting our personal space!

Scott

Those are just two of the many letters we received in defense of backpacks. As we expected, not everyone – in fact, not anyone – agreed with the backpack-hater last month. The bottom line: Please try not to whack people with backpacks or briefcases – or anything else.

Fall Travel Notes

Metra starts work on Winnetka station

Metra broke ground last month on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Winnetka train station on the Union Pacific North line.

The nearly \$5 million project includes restoring the street-level depot, the pedestrian bridge and six stairways, installing new elevators and vestibules, and replacing the platforms and platform shelters. New landscaping also will be included in the project, which is expected to take about a year to complete.

The project is one of several that Metra is funding with its \$140.9 million share of money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, better known as the federal stimulus bill. The project is expected to create or retain about 40 jobs. Blinderman Construction Co. of Chicago was awarded the contract for the work.

Chicago French Market set to open this month

Sixteen new local artisans and purveyors have signed on for MetraMarket's Chicago French Market, a 15,000-square-foot, European-inspired market that will open in mid-November at the Ogilvie Transportation Center. The lineup now includes more than 25 individual vendors offering an array of local and certified organic produce, meats, breads, pastries, small batch cheese and wine,

chocolates and sweets, artisan-made goods, flowers, and distinctive prepared meals and snacks for busy customers. Unlike seasonal outdoor farmer's markets, Chicago French Market and its vendors will stay open year-round, six days per week.

New vendors include: **Abbey Brown Soap Artisan**, natural soap and bath products; **Bowl Square**, Korean food; **Buen Apetito**, a family-owned taqueria; **Chundy's Gourmet**, Indian-fusion food; **City Fresh Market**, a European-styled grocery shop; **Delightful Pastries**, authentic European pastries; **Frietkoten**, grab-and-go Belgian fries; **Fumare**, cured and smoked meats; **Juicy Orange**, squeezed-to-order fruit and vegetable juices; **Les Fleurs**, fresh-cut flowers, potted plants, orchids and European-style floral arrangements; **Necessity Baking Company**, artisan bread baking; **Pop This!**, gourmet popcorn; **Produce Express**, seasonal and locally grown fruits and vegetables; **Provo's Village Bake Shoppe**, homemade baked goods; **RAW**, meals, drinks and snack items based on a raw-food diet; and **Saigon Sisters**, Vietnamese cuisine with French-accented flavors.

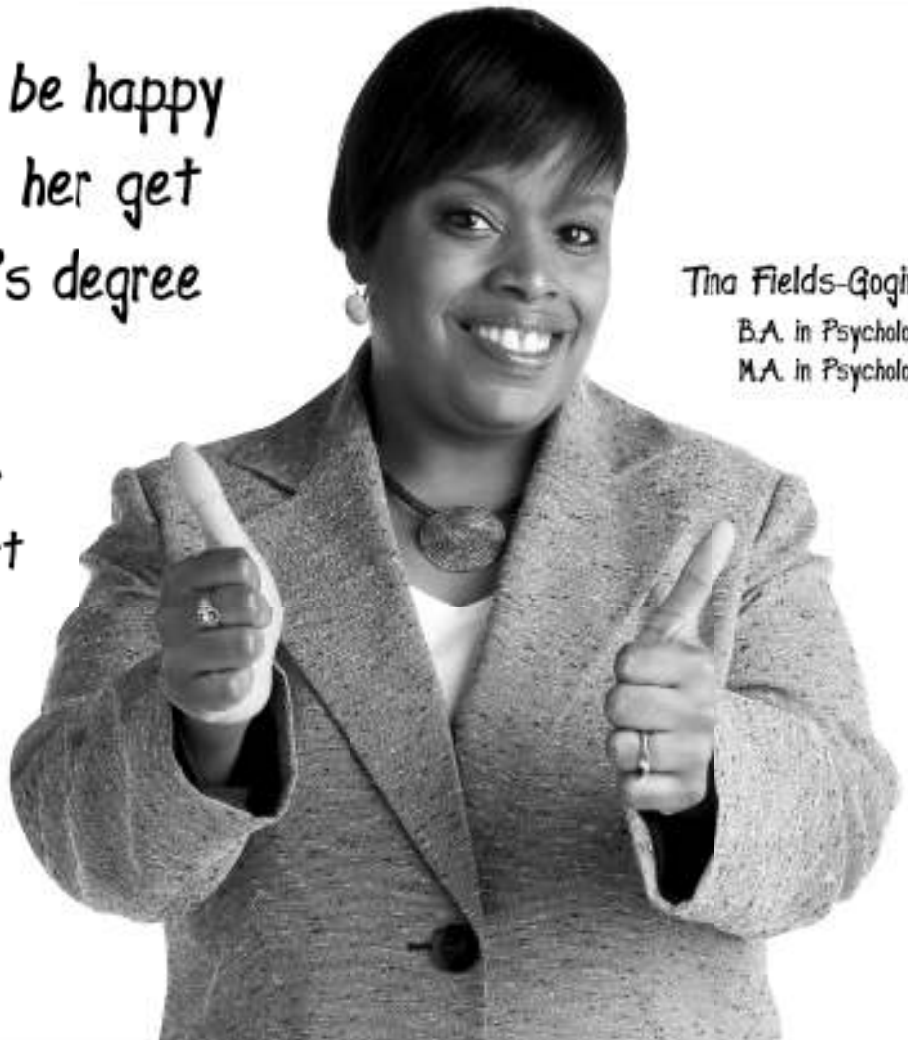
Chicago French Market is part of MetraMarket's first development phase, which encompasses 66,000 square feet of the total planned 100,000-square-foot development and is already 50 percent leased. A CVS store opened in September.

For more information, visit www.chicagofrenchmarket.com.

"I want my mother to be happy
AND healthy. I'll help her get
there with my master's degree
in psychology."

Classes start the week of
January 11th. Learn more at
www.nl.edu/groupstarts.

NLU
I got it here.



Tina Fields-Gogins
B.A. in Psychology
M.A. in Psychology