

# ON THE BI-LEVEL

Metra®

Metra's Monthly Commuter Newsletter

November 2014



## Metra seeks input on seats

Metra riders, we are looking for your input about proposed new seats. The current Metra seats flip so riders always sit facing the direction of travel. We are considering switching to seats that do not flip but are more comfortable, with armrests and cupholders. They would be permanently positioned facing the vestibule, so half the car would have to ride backward. A sample of the new seats will be touring downtown stations this month (schedule below). Come by and take a seat, and let us know what you think.

Union Station (near ticket windows):  
Nov. 12-13  
Ogilvie (near Customer Service):  
Nov. 14-17  
LaSalle St. (concourse): Nov. 18-19  
Millennium (waiting area):  
Nov. 20-21  
Van Buren (waiting area): Nov. 24-25



The new Englewood flyover bridge carries Rock Island trains over Norfolk Southern tracks used by freight and Amtrak trains.

## Flyover eliminates delays at crossing in Englewood

Federal, state and local officials last month celebrated the opening of the \$142 million Englewood flyover, a major railroad bridge that has eliminated a significant source of train delays on the south side of Chicago and has reduced emissions and noise from idling trains in the neighborhood.

The flyover bridge replaced a crossing between the Metra Rock Island tracks and a set of Norfolk Southern tracks at 63rd and State – a crossing that dates from

about 1859. With the completion of this project, 78 weekday Rock Island Line trains are now carried over the busy freight tracks used by approximately 60 freight and Amtrak trains, eliminating conflicts between trains that result in service delays.

The flyover is a major accomplishment of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program, a first-of-its-kind partnership between U.S. Department of Transportation, the State of

Illinois, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and the nation's freight railroads to eliminate railroad bottlenecks in the Chicago area.

“The Englewood flyover is one of the pillars of the CREATE program and helps to strengthen Chicago and Illinois as the transportation hub of North America,” Gov. Pat Quinn said. “Projects like these that invest in our infrastructure are economic engines that create jobs, encourage economic growth and  
*(Continued on Page 2)*



# Metra

## 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.

### Board of Directors

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## A Blue Star for veterans in Lake Forest

American astronaut Captain James A. Lovell (second from right) was the principal speaker at the dedication of a Blue Star Memorial, a tribute to our military veterans, which was placed in the award-winning garden in front of the Metra Milwaukee District North Line's Lake Forest station. Members of the Deerpath Garden Club designed and maintain the garden and underwrote the plaque. Standing next to Captain Lovell is club president Bonita Friedland. Others in the photo include co-chairs Connie Maines and Mary Carlson, Lake Forest Mayor Donald Schoenheider and Tom Marks, Commander of the McKinlock American Legion Post 264.

## Flyover

(Continued from Page 1)

improve the quality of life for residents throughout the region.”

“Chicago has been the rail hub of our nation for more than a century, yet for too long this area was plagued with freight congestion and bottlenecks that hurt productivity and rippled across the system. I’m proud to have played a role securing the funding needed to unsnarl the bottleneck and make the Englewood flyover a reality,” said Sen. Dick Durbin.

“We have been looking forward to this day for a long time,” said Wick Moorman, chairman and CEO of Norfolk Southern. “It’s impossible to overstate the positive impact this project will have on Norfolk Southern’s service, along with Amtrak’s and Metra’s.”

“Fourteen daily Amtrak trains

to and from Chicago have faced delays at this location that are felt in Michigan, Indiana and all the way to the East Coast,” said Tom Carper, Amtrak board member and past chairman. “Delays drive up cost and hold-down ridership, so CREATE projects such as this one are truly of national importance and big wins for Amtrak passengers, Metra commuters and the freight railroads, too.”

“The completion of the Englewood flyover means improvement in the quality of life for area residents,” said U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski. “The benefits include fewer delays for Metra and Amtrak users, fewer delays for area drivers, better air quality, a reduction in noise from idling trains, and an overall improvement in safety.”

“The Englewood flyover will ease congestion through this busy rail area, an essential step in maintaining Cook County’s position as the critical intersection for the transportation network

that serves America,” said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

“Metra could not be any happier to have this bridge completed,” said Metra Executive Director/CEO Don Orseno. “Our riders are already enjoying the benefits of passing through this area without experiencing any delays due to conflicts with freight or Amtrak trains. This project would not have come to fruition without the cooperation, funding and support provided by our partners in this project and our federal and state elected officials. It is a prime example of the progress we can make in the region when we all come together.”

The flyover was funded with \$126 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act High-Speed Rail funds, \$4.9 million in other federal money, \$8.2 million from the State of Illinois and \$3 million from the railroad industry, including Metra.

# SOUND OFF

## Turning a blind eye

Sadly, last week after boarding in Naperville for Chicago, a blind man came from behind me and was looking for a seat. Everyone was looking down at their gadgets or had ear-phones and couldn't hear. I too was standing and was midway through the train when I said loudly to people in those first few seats: "Is anyone able to give their seat to this gentleman?" I said it three times. You wouldn't believe the bewildered looks I got. Finally, a man did give up his seat and the blind man sat down, cane and all.

Why don't people jump up out of their seats to help the disabled? Why are people living in oblivion? Technology? Are we so tied to our gadgets and mind-numbing devices and music that we don't pay attention to the world around us, in front of us?

Somehow, people, WE HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION! We must extend courtesies and niceties to our fellow human beings and BE SAFE.

Cindy

*Thanks, Dr. Cindy. We think you have properly diagnosed the problem and expertly recommended the right solution: Pay attention. Be courteous. Be safe.*

## Parking lot safety tips

With it getting light later in the morning, at least on days when it's not cloudy, I think it's time for Uncle Greg's safety tips for parking lot pedestrians:

1) Put the phone/blackberry/Kindle/tablet/etc. away and pay attention to where you're walking. Then maybe you'll see the car you're about to step in front of. Besides, you're not really being all *that* efficient while you "multitask." Based on my observations, people with their heads



**Metra Conductor Dennis L. Malone (fourth from left) retired at the end of August after a 41-year career on the railroad, and many of his colleagues stopped by to wish him well on his last day. In this photo, he's wearing the suit and hat of the old Milwaukee Road, where he worked before Metra assumed control of that railroad. (Photo by Mark Llanuza/Metra)**

buried in their electronic devices tend to walk slower and weave rather than walk in a straight line. Not all that efficient.

2) Try not to walk down the center of the aisle. Drivers tend to use that part.

3) Use the crosswalks. Some worker got paid to paint it there for your use; try to show some appreciation, will you?

4) If you insist on not using the crosswalks, either wear bright colors or pay attention when stepping out from between parked cars. Or keep wearing dark colors and walk out like you don't have a care in the world and then get mad because the driver who almost hit you left his night-vision goggles at home and couldn't see you. Either one works, but the second one is more likely to win you a trip to the ER if your luck runs out.

Greg

*We are just full of sensible advice this month, aren't we? It's all the same theme: Pay attention. Be safe.*

## Line etiquette

I don't know how it works at other Metra stations, but at the one I frequent in Arlington Heights, people gather at the platform at the spots where they think the doors of the train will be when it finally comes to a stop. This is pure guesswork, and the train will usually wind up either way to the left or way to the right. Some commuters, including me, will reposition themselves on the platform when the train starts to pull into the station in order to be closer to the doors. The only way to do this is to gauge how quickly or slowly the train is approaching the station in the last few seconds before it finally comes to a stop. I don't push, shove or step on people's toes, but I do try to figure out where the door is going to be. I try to be courteous and let people board ahead of me, especially those with disabilities. This morning, however, one of my fellow commuters had what can only be described as a

meltdown when he thought there was a possibility that I might board the train before he did. He launched into an incredibly foul and profanity-laden rant directed squarely at me. He'd obviously been waiting on the platform for some time, and I stood right next to him, but when the train actually arrived neither of us was near the door. So I started walking towards the door, and it looked like I might reach it sooner than he did. Again, no pushing, no shoving. Just brisk walking. But it was too much for this guy to handle, and he was not shy about letting me know. "On the Bi-Level," help me out. I obviously want to avoid confrontations like this in the future. Any suggestions?

Joe

*We don't see anything wrong with your approach, as long as you are not clearly cutting in line and you continue to do what you're doing: Be polite, don't run or shove or block, watch the toes and stay safe.*



## Fall Travel Notes

### Reminder about Quiet Car guidelines

Metra would like to remind all riders about Quiet Car rules: No cell phone calls. If passengers must answer their phones, they should make it brief or move to the vestibule or another car. Conversations are discouraged; if they must be held they should be short and in subdued voices. All electronic devices must be muted, and headphones should not be loud enough for anyone else to hear. Quiet Cars are on inbound trains arriving downtown at or before 9 a.m. and all outbound trains leaving downtown between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., Monday - Friday. Metra expects Quiet Cars to be largely enforced by peer pressure and conductor intervention when necessary. On all lines except the Metra Electric Line, the Quiet Cars are the second car from the locomotive and the second car from the other end of the train on rush-hour trains with six or more cars. If there are five cars or fewer on the train, only the second car from the engine is a Quiet Car. On the Metra Electric Line, only the third car from the south end of the train is a Quiet Car. There are no Quiet Cars on two-car trains. Metra hopes all passengers will remember to treat fellow passengers with courtesy and respect, no matter where they are sitting.

### We want your help with fare collection

Passengers can help Metra make sure all fares are collected by letting us know when they see fare evasion or missed collections. Simply tell your conductor or go to [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com) and click on the "Fare Collection Form" under "Good to Know" on the right-hand side. Please provide as much information as you can. Metra will use the info to address the issue. Riders also can assist crews by keeping their tickets visible during their ride and alerting the crew before they depart the train if their ticket has not been collected. Our conductors take pride in their work and appreciate your help.

### Recycling bins available at OTC and CUS

Riders who use Ogilvie and Union Station are reminded that there are recycling bins in those stations for anyone who wants to recycle their morning newspapers. Simply take your papers with you and drop them in the bins on your way out each morning. At Ogilvie, the bins are in the suburban concourse, near escalators at track level and in the food court. At Union Station they are in the north and south concourses and near the ramp next to the baggage claim window.

### Metra to hold food, toy and coat drives

The holiday season is a great time to reach out and help those who are less fortunate and help make our neighbor's holiday a little brighter. Metra will be teaming up with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the U. S. Marines and Toys for Tots and NBC 5 for food, toys and clothes drives next month. More information will be provided in the December issue and throughout our trains and stations.

### Thanks to all veterans on Veterans Day

As the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs says, Veterans Day is "a celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good." In that regard, Metra would like to thank everyone who has put on an American uniform and served our country. Whether you were in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard, you deserve our gratitude and our praise. We salute you.

### Metra police chief honored

Metra Police Chief Joseph M. Perez is this year's recipient of the Hector Jordan Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hispanic Illinois State Law Enforcement Association (HISLEA). Chief Perez joined Metra in May 2014 following a distinguished career with the Illinois State Police. The award is presented annually to an individual who through the course of his/her duties has continuously lived up to the spirit and values of HISLEA. The award is in recognition for a lifetime of bravery, contribution, sacrifice and perseverance that has resulted in the advancement of Hispanics in law enforcement.

**UNPLUG FOR SAFETY**

**Metra 9th ANNUAL Safety Poster Contest UNPLUG FOR SAFETY**

**9th Annual Metra Safety Poster and Essay Contest**

**ARE YOU THE NEXT WINNER?**

**Who:** Students K-12  
**Theme:** Unplug for Safety  
**Deadline:** January 30, 2015

**Prizes and Awards:**  
 1st place - iPad  
 2nd place - \$250  
 3rd place - \$100

**Poster Contest Awards:**  
 One 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner will be selected from each grade.

**Essay Contest Awards:**  
 One 1st place winner will be selected from 3 grade groups: elementary, middle, and high school.

For more information visit [www.metracontest.com](http://www.metracontest.com)

### Contact Metra

If you have a complaint, compliment, 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@metrarail.com](mailto:metrarail_feedback@metrarail.com).