

**CLIFF NOTES****Refinement of  
2012 budget  
continues**

As you may recall from the special *On the Bi-Level* in July, Metra is facing a shortfall next year due to rising fuel prices, the phase-out of credits used to meet our



**Alex Clifford**  
Metra CEO

mandated recovery ratio and our desire – make that our critical need – to stop using scarce capital dollars to pay for operations. We are doing everything we can to cut administrative expenses. But we also expect to raise fares next year, and I want to bring

you up to date on our discussions.

At July's meeting we talked about the  
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**Metra stresses  
fare collection**

Making sure that all fares are collected on our trains is always important. But we understand it's even more important when we are discussing a painful fare increase. Every penny counts, more than ever – and that's why we are now underscoring the need for fare collection and enforcement with our employees and our riders.

Metra CEO Alex Clifford recently sent letters to all onboard personnel, reminding them to be extra diligent in performing their fare collection duties. He pointed out that in a recent survey of riders, many complained that any fare increases could be mitigated if only Metra did a better job of collecting fares. We know this is an important issue and we are  
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Metra's safety contest winners pose with the Metra Board and CEO Alex Clifford.

**Winners of safety poster,  
essay contests named**

Metra has announced the winners of its annual Safety Contest, designed to promote and reinforce railroad safety to keep children safe around trains. Reaching record numbers, this year's campaign drew participation from more than 5,000 students from nearly 250 schools throughout the region. (See the full list of winners on Page 2.)

Each year, Metra's Safety Contest invites students in grades K-12 throughout its six-county service area to submit poster and essay entries highlighting the importance of railroad safety. This year's contest theme was "Safety First: Look, Listen and Live."

Tasked with selecting the winners were 20 judges, including government officials, representatives from safety and education advocacy groups, business and community leaders, members of the media and Metra representatives. Additionally, 600 members of the public participated in the Safety Poster

**Hubbard RADIO**

Contest "People's Choice Award," voting at displays at each of Metra's downtown commuter stations.

"Nothing is more important to Metra than keeping children – and the public – safe," said Alex Clifford, Metra CEO. "I would like to commend each and every person who participated in the safety campaign for their leadership – parents and schools who share safety lessons with children, our panel of judges and commuters who helped select the winners, and most importantly, the students who participated in the contest, learning  
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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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### Chief Executive Officer

Alex Clifford

# Safety contest winners

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what they can do to keep themselves and others safe around trains."

The first-place poster designs will be featured as safety posters and distributed to more than 2,000 schools in northeast Illinois. The posters will also be featured in station displays, in Metra's 2012 safety calendar, on monthly tickets and on Metra's contest website and Facebook page. Winning safety essays will also be featured in the safety calendar, the Metra contest website and Facebook page as well as in additional safety materials.

First-, second- and third-place winners were chosen from each grade level for the Metra Safety Poster Contest. One winner from each grade group – elementary school, middle school and high school – was chosen for the Safety Essay Contest. First-place poster and essay contest winners receive a laptop computer, while second- and third-place poster contest winners receive \$250 and \$100 gift cards, respectively.

The "People's Choice Award" winner receives a \$250 gift card. Metra also recognizes the school with the most entries submitted in the poster contest. The top participating school also receives a computer.

The annual contest would not be possible without the support of its sponsors, whose generous contributions have helped Metra defray the costs of the contest prizes as well as the production of the safety posters. This year's contest sponsors include the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and Hubbard Radio, owners of Chicago radio stations 97.1 FM The Drive, 100.3 Chicago's Rewind and 101.9 The Mix. In addition, the Illinois Commerce Commission's PEERS Grant program helps cover the costs of our contest outreach and the production of the safety posters and calendars.

To date, campaign outreach efforts include the distribution of more than one million safety posters, 10,000 Metra Safety Calendars and more than two million pencil kits to schools throughout the region. The organization also operates a Facebook page and a website, available in both English and Spanish, to educate students and reinforce safety rules. The website has garnered millions of hits and the Facebook page interacts with hundreds of students, teachers and parents on a day-to-day basis.

Information about the campaign along with all of the Safety Contest winners is available at [www.metrocontest.com](http://www.metrocontest.com) and [www.facebook.com/Metra-Contest](http://www.facebook.com/Metra-Contest).

## List of Safety Poster and Essay Contest winners

### The following students were chosen as the 2010-2011 Safety Poster Contest's first-place winners:

Ye Bin Park, Kindergarten, The Art School in Glenview  
Emily Wang, First Grade, Holmes Primary School  
Adrien Mehra, Second Grade, White Eagle Elementary School  
Giselle Garcia, Third Grade, Joseph E. Gary Elementary School  
Sam Cangialosi, Fourth Grade, St. Maria Goretti School  
Jasmine Meza, Fifth Grade, Winnebago Elementary School  
Maggie Caplice, Sixth Grade, McClure Junior High School  
Madison Kasbaum, Seventh Grade, Hickory Creek Middle School  
Alexis Zwerenz, Eighth Grade, Kimball Middle School  
Benito Galvez, Ninth Grade, Woodstock High School  
Danny Caplice, Tenth Grade, Lyons Township High School  
Youna Jang, Eleventh Grade, James B. Conant High School  
Grant Parry, Twelfth Grade, Cary-Grove High School

### The following students were chosen as the 2010-2011 Safety Poster Contest's second-place winners:

Samantha Chen, Kindergarten, Copeland Manor School  
Aliza Olivares, First Grade, Richard E. Byrd Elementary School  
Jeremy Krause, Second Grade, Robert Crown Elementary School  
Alec Renwick, Third Grade, Wegner Elementary School  
Michael Ibarra, Fourth Grade, Nathanael Greene Elementary School  
Ally Vonderheide, Fifth Grade, Millennium Elementary School  
Anna Lipkind, Sixth Grade, The Art School in Glenview  
Matt Stockmal, Seventh Grade, Clarendon Hills Middle School  
Molly Miklosz, Eighth Grade, McClure Junior High School  
Fred Mohr III, Ninth Grade, Victor J. Andrew High School  
Kristin Chapman, Tenth Grade, Cary-Grove High School  
Chelsie Tamms, Eleventh Grade, Cary-Grove High School  
Brittany Ippolito, Twelfth Grade, Cary-Grove High School

### The following students were chosen as the 2010-2011 Safety Poster Contest's third-place winners:

Anika Paranjape, Kindergarten, White Eagle Elementary School  
Trinity Contreras, First Grade, Robert Crown Elementary School  
Selena Gonzalez, Second Grade, Norman Bridge Elementary School  
Caitlin Nelligan, Third Grade, Chelsea Intermediate School  
Jorge Casas-Melchor, Fourth Grade, Richard E. Byrd Elementary School  
Alecia Corey, Fifth Grade, Cumberland Elementary School  
Toni DiPrima, Sixth Grade, Lincoln Middle School  
Maria Guadalupe Garcia, Seventh Grade, Elk Grove Junior High School  
Kelsey Hucker, Eighth Grade, Antioch Upper Grade School  
Joshua Andrew Moy, Ninth Grade, Deerfield High School  
Wyatt May, Tenth Grade, Cary-Grove High School  
Lexxi Hurley, Eleventh Grade, Plainfield East High School  
Brionne Bell, Twelfth Grade, McHenry West High School

### The following student was chosen as the Safety Poster Contest's "People's Choice Award" winner:

Adrien Mehra, Second Grade, White Eagle Elementary School

### The following school submitted the most entries in the Safety Poster Contest:

Grand Prairie Elementary School, Frankfort

### The following students were chosen as the Safety Essay Contest's first-place winners:

Emily Wisinski, Fourth Grade, Mokena Intermediate School  
Zach Erickson, Eighth Grade, Kimball Middle School  
Audrey Collard, Ninth Grade, Crystal Lake South High School

# 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

## Open the doors

Some of us who sit on our butts at a desk all day long choose to stand in the vestibule where we can enjoy the company and spirited conversations of our fellow commuters and adopted friends. It’s also out of respect to our other commuters in the coach who prefer not to hear our voices and laughter. Since both sets of outside doors never open at the same time we all huddle to the closed side and keep out of the way of the incoming and outgoing passengers.

Sometimes the conductor will keep the vestibule doors open so he, and we, can get some air or some heat. On occasion, like this morning, a passenger will insist that the conductor close the doors to the vestibule, depriving the conductor and us of some air circulation. If we’re too noisy, thank your lucky stars that we’re not sitting inside with you or you can go to the Quiet Car. The vestibule is part of the train.

Ray

*Oh boy. We have to disagree with you here. Yes, the vestibule is part of the train, but so are the vestibule doors, and if we wanted them open then they wouldn’t be there in the first place. Those people who are asking to close the doors are perfectly within their rights to do so. We hope they are doing it politely. Maybe it was the heat this summer but we’ve heard from a lot of people recently who want the doors closed. They would argue that they are not depriving you of heat or AC but that you are depriving yourself by choosing to ride in a part of the train that by design has no heat or air conditioning. The next letter spells out that view.*



**Shut the door, were you born in a ... oh, never mind.**

## Close the doors

Here’s a question that may save Metra some money: Why do the conductors prop open the doors to the vestibules so that on hot/cold days the AC/heat blows out of the cars at every station stop? I can understand them wanting a bit of relief from the weather, but couldn’t they simply stand in the car itself? Many times they don’t even stay in the vestibule although they leave the doors forced open to suck what amounts to money out of the train. Remember when your parents told you, “Shut the door! I’m not paying to heat the outside!”? With talk of raising the fares, shouldn’t this waste be prevented? I would also point out that riders who stay in the vestibules for the entire ride often keep these doors open for their own comfort as well. To them I say this: You’re in there

by choice. The penalty for that is facing the weather when the outer doors are opened. You have no right to infringe on the comfort of the rest of the passengers. Deal with the temperatures or sit in the seats closest to the doors.

Jim

## Clipping away

I’m peacefully reading on the Rock Island 4:10 p.m. train, when all of a sudden “clip,” “clip,” “clip.” I look across the aisle and this woman decides to clip all of her fingernails, leaving body remnants all over the floor and seat – totally uncouth and disgusting. I suppose I should be happy she didn’t do her toenails!

Lynn

*Fingernails flying through the air are, shall we simply say, pretty icky. But we love how you look on the bright side: Hooray, no toenails!*

## Piping away

I am so there with the bagpipe car idea! What better way to unwind after a stressful day than to holler into a cell phone and play bagpipes as loud as possible? Can you also add the free weights car and the lap swim car?

Jim

*We may have a bit of trouble with the lap swim car. Our cars aren’t long enough.*

## Away with smoke

I have another great idea for a car – how about a smoke-free car? Of course we all know you can’t smoke on the train but what about that individual who insists on getting that last drag on the cancer stick before they get on the train? Once on the train, the lucky individuals who are sitting with this future cancer patient get the pleasure of smelling that stench. If all smokers knew how bad they smelled I wonder if they would change their habits?

Mike

*We once published a poem from a rider that listed all the things a perfect Metra rider wouldn’t do. It concluded the perfect rider was a cadaver. At least cadavers don’t smell like smoke.*

## Gripping away

Instead of a hygiene car, Quiet Car, etc... how about a negative car – a car where people can just complain to each other about anything and everything and have others complain right back?

Rudy

*We have something like that already. It’s called “Sound Off.”*

## Budget

*(Continued from Page 1)*

option to raise fares alone or in conjunction with service cuts. We asked riders to weigh in by taking a survey on our website. One option we presented in July was to cut two to four trains on 10 of our 11 lines. But at the August meeting, we said we could not recommend that idea, because of the big impact it would have on our core riders. In addition, a majority of the more than 7,000 riders who took our survey told us it was important to maintain current service levels.

However, we did recommend a smaller plan to scale back weekend service that had been added in recent years on the UP North, Milwaukee North and SouthWest Service lines.

More than anything, the cost of fuel will dictate the size of the fare increase we will need. The board agreed that we should look

at locking in some or all of our fuel prices for 12 or 18 months. This would make the budget predictable but carries the risk that prices will fall and we will lose money. We are studying the matter very carefully.

We had also proposed using \$10 million from our capital budget for operations, down from the \$60 million we used this year. We know such transfers must end, and there was some direction from the board to end it this year. We are taking another look at how our operating budget can be balanced without such a transfer.

We will return to the board this month with more refinements and more details, and we will keep you posted through this newsletter and our website, [www.metrotransit.com](http://www.metrotransit.com). A preliminary budget will be presented to the board in October and public hearings will then be held throughout the six-county region.

*You can follow me on Twitter @MetraCEO*

## Fares

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continually looking for ways to improve.

We believe the vast majority of our crew members are conscientious and do an excellent job not only collecting fares but carrying out their other duties. And we know that crowded conditions, the need to aid passengers or other exceptional situations may prevent conductors from collecting from everyone. But we also know, based on your complaints, there's more we can and should do.

We investigate when we receive specific allegations about improper fare collection. We discipline crew members who are found to be in violation of Metra rules. We have initiated immediate steps to better identify and target problem areas. We are working on a more formalized program to enhance our existing efforts and are committing more

resources to step up our focus on this area. And we will continue to evaluate what changes are needed in our fare collection process to make sure it is as efficient and effective as possible.

You can help us with this by placing your fare or pass under the seat clip or keeping it visible for trainmen during your trip. This will assist the train crew in identifying new riders, and ensure that everyone has the proper fare. While we understand regular riders may know their trainmen, this is still necessary in assisting our train crew. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

In his letter to our onboard personnel, Clifford emphasized the need to follow the rules, to prevent the loss of needed revenue and to keep the public's trust.

"No one wants to be part of a team where even a few members don't follow the rules," Clifford wrote. "Our team works best when we pull together and everyone does their part."



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